

DOES BENCHMARKING HINDER MISSION DIVERSITY OF AACSB-ACCREDITED SCHOOLS: EVIDENCE FROM THE U.S. AND EUROPE?

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ABSTRACT

Since 1991, business schools in the US and Europe that are affiliated with AACSB have been urged to employ a mission-driven philosophy and approach into their programs. An annual Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) is conducted and shared among members to provide characteristics related to their school and its program, including what priorities are emphasized with regards to both their mission's general (teaching, research, and service) and scholarly (discipline-based, contribution-to-practice, or pedagogy) orientations. The BSQ results are encouraged to be used for benchmarking. This study conducted an analysis of the self-categorizations to determine the extent of diversity among school mission orientation. The results indicate more conformity than diversity. The authors attribute the lack of variance to the established practice of benchmarking.

JEL: I20, I21

KEYWORDS: Accreditation, Mission, Objectives, Benchmarking, General Orientation, Scholarly Orientation, Conformity

INTRODUCTION

Business education has been impacted by globalization more than any other discipline in higher education. Geographic partitions no longer exist as they once did; the entire planet is now a wide-open field for recruiting the best student and faculty candidates. Due to substantial decreases in financial support from traditional funding sources, business schools are forced to rely more on alternative revenue sources, such as private funding and sponsorships. This imperative to reconfigure financial resources comes when schools are also attempting to improve their programs' academic quality and competitive offerings. Consequently, to increase market competitiveness, a growing number of business schools are seeking professional recognition and affirmation through accreditation from well-established and highly reputed agencies, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), and the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

Accreditation is defined by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as, "a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement," (Hunt, 2015, p. 23). Founded in 1916, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) is the oldest accrediting agency for business schools. Its stated mission is to, "foster engagement, accelerate innovation, and amplify impact in business education" (www.aacsb.edu). AACSB International accreditation is widely regarded as the highest level of accreditation for business schools and has been described as, "a gold standard that is coveted by high quality business schools around the world," (Shiffler and Bowen, 2015). One substantive

benefit of being accredited by AACSB is access to highly desirable benchmarking information of other business schools; especially those identified as either peers, aspirants, or competitors. AACSB provides this information through its *Data Direct* division, described as, “the most comprehensive database on business schools in the world” (www.aacsb.edu). *Data Direct* conducts an annual survey of its members, the Business School Questionnaire (BSQ). It then, “grants access to data on business schools’ institutional characteristics, budgets, faculty, students, and salaries, among others, for schools that participate in the questionnaires,” (www.aacsb.edu). Completing the BSQ is mandatory for member schools. The results provide a range of data points of school characteristics especially designed for benchmarking purposes (<http://aacsblogs.typepad.com/dataandresearch/aacsb-business-school-questionnaire-bsq>).

Benchmarking allows a school to ensure its mission is relevant, competitive, and fulfills the needs and desires of the market it serves. It is essential conduct for any business school having (or seeking) accreditation to validate their program, improve their standing in the academic community, or to be better able to recruit high-caliber faculty and students. Farquhar (1998) reports that when universities engage in true benchmarking, they do so by independently looking for (and at) other organizations believed to do one or more processes better than the seeker does; for example, these processes could include student recruiting, degree plan offerings, or faculty management. Schools then study what the benchmarked schools do differently and how they achieve their results. They then attempt to introduce newly learned measures that are considered to foster greater success or to remove existing measures determined, post-benchmark analysis, to be disadvantageous.

AACSB asserts that, “a quality business school has a clear mission, acts on that mission, translates that mission into expected outcomes, and develops strategies for achieving those outcomes” (www.aacsb.edu). These standards address three critical areas of a business school’s operations: mission and strategy; scholarship and intellectual contributions; and financial strategies. The school’s mission, its program and orientation (both generally and scholarly), expected outcomes, and strategies should clearly define the school’s focus on educational activities; the type of intellectual contributions produced by faculty, and other expected faculty engagement. AACSB elevated its expectations of current and prospective member schools in 2013 to demonstrate and document specific outcomes in the following areas: engagement, innovation, and impact. These new levels are driven by the increased level of accountability and oversight institutions of higher education face from internal and external stakeholders (e.g., current and prospective students, parents; alumni; employers; governing agencies; donors; funding bodies; etc.). This could, and should, lead to unique missions across member institutions.

In the United States, business schools are attached to universities. In Europe, stand-alone business schools have been and still are more common. Irrespective of the organizational arrangement, the school’s mission, expected outcomes, and strategies should clearly define the school’s focus on educational activities (e.g., range of degree and non-degree programs offered; the constituents these programs are intended to serve); type of intellectual contributions produced by faculty and other expected faculty engagement (e.g., civic, community, professional, etc.). The school should also have clearly defined its future strategies to maintain its resource needs, assign responsibilities to appropriate parties, and set a timeframe for the implementation of actions that support the mission. The school concurrently systematically evaluates and documents its progress toward mission fulfillment.

Conforming to this established framework gives schools the opportunity to create and maintain a strong environment for their students, faculty, and stakeholders. Business schools seeking accreditation would naturally be expected to benchmark schools that are already accredited. Once accredited, member business schools are required to go through a continuous improvement review process every five years. This provides yet another compelling reason for business schools to engage

in a continuous benchmarking of accredited peer, aspirant, and competitor schools via *Data Direct* supplied information to ensure they are engaging in accepted practices.

AACSB-accredited business schools present a comprehensive and rational choice for the focus of our study. AACSB International has had a presence in the historical development of collegiate business education for over a century. Accredited schools go through a continuous improvement review every five years. Current accreditation standards were voted on and approved in the spring of 2013 at the International Conference and Annual Meeting (ICAM). The 2013 AACSB International business accreditation standards preserve the long-standing foundation of the AACSB's mission-driven accreditation standards and processes; evidence of overall academic high quality and continuous improvement assessed through self-assessment and peer-review process and introduce key extensions into accreditation process. This study is also the first, its authors believe, that concentrates on what general and scholarly areas premier business schools are emphasizing in their mission and program, based exclusively on data provided directly by the schools to AACSB. We believe the agency's desired diversity of the missions of its members is being greatly impeded due to the tradition and habit of these schools benchmarking each other.

Despite having many category options available to describe the prioritization of their mission's general and scholarly orientations, too many schools appear to be simply mirroring each other, thus creating a business schools in the twenty-first century more geared to conformity than diversity. Initially, the paper gives an overview of the global accreditation environment for business schools. A review of relevant existing research and the propositions put forth by this work then follows. The next section will address the research design and the results of the conducted analyses. Finally, the research's limitations, future opportunities for supplemental research, and the authors' conclusions are shared. We hope that this work will generate needed dialogue among colleagues and help stimulate needed research into this very important area.

The Global Accreditation Environment for Business Schools

Founded in 1916, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) is the oldest accrediting agency for business schools. Their published mission is: "to foster engagement, accelerate innovation, and amplify impact in business education." Their vision is the "transforming" of business education. The agency's website (www.aacsb.edu) purports it to be a worldwide association with over 1,500 member organizations in more than 90 countries and territories and that 761 business schools in 52 countries and territories have been accredited by them. AACSB International accreditation is widely regarded as the highest level of accreditation for business schools and has been described as, "a gold standard that is coveted by high quality business schools around the world," (Shiffler and Bowen, 2015).

In Europe, an emerging counterpart to AACSB International is the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), begun in 1997 by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD). Whereas AACSB stresses academic quality and continuous improvement, EQUIS provides market information, an instrument for benchmarking and comparison, quality improvement and to award the European Quality Label (Proitz, Stensaker, and Harvey, 2004). Another major European organization for accrediting management education is the Association of MBAs (AMBA). At the very beginning accreditation was not the main goal of AMBA. This was added in the mid-1980's and has been refined and expanded over the years. Simply put, the market for a "label" of academic quality and continuous improvement in management education exist on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to the website, www.mba.today, as of January 2017, only 74 business schools in the world have received accreditation by these three most sought-after international accreditation entities for business education (AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS) (www.mba.today/guide/triple-accreditation-

business-schools). The majority, 68.5%, of schools with this status are based in Europe. No business school based in the US has this status, despite that 68.5 of all AACSB-accredited schools are based there. One of the reasons given for this is that most US institutions are willing to admit students into their Masters programs with only an undergraduate degree and many of those enrolled bring very little direct work experience with them into the program. The AMBA, in contrast, considers the MBA degree as a postgraduate degree and one of its requirements is that students must have at least three years of work experience, with the program cohort averaging five years of work experience. Additionally, the AACSB accreditation body is widely recognized in North America and, perhaps because of this, US-based institutions are willing to pursue the time, energy, and expense of obtaining a second, let alone a third, accreditation.

It is with these thoughts in mind that this study examines the general and scholarship orientations of accredited business school missions among AACSB business schools located in the US and Europe. Systematic quality assurance in both national and international contexts raises the very important question concerning at what point is it acceptable for business schools to sacrifice institutional diversity and development and risk becoming more standardized. The increasing conformity and standardization of higher business education implies a trade-off between the need to establish certain threshold levels of quality, as a response to growing globalization and deregulation of the sector especially in many fast-growing international markets across the Atlantic, and the wish to preserve the uniqueness and diversity of higher education in business (Proitz, Stensaker, and Harvey, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Farquhar (1998) provides a superb overview of higher education benchmarking in the United States and Canada, defining it as being, “related to such other ‘customer-oriented’ contemporary approaches to better management,” adding that it, “can be viewed as the end of a procedural continuum which begins with management information and progresses through performance indicators....and best practices,” (pp. 32-33). Shiffler and Bowen (2015) stress the cruciality of having a thorough and well-research list of peers, aspirants, and competitors to any business school in the accreditation process, initial or review. They encourage the use of AACSB’s *Data Direct* service for school benchmarking, suggesting that, “a very rough first cut would be to screen based on the categories of general orientation and scholarly orientation,” (p. 141).

Ruhul Amin and Amin (2003) share the benefits to be gained in higher education by benchmarking best practices of learning assessments. Likewise, Tasopoulou and Tsiotras (2017) find that benchmarking can improve academic excellence by means of comparison and assessment. Brink and Smith (2012) provides an extremely insightful comparison of the three major accrediting agencies of US-based business programs AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE (International Assembly of Collegiate Business Education); highlighting the differentiating appeal factors of each for business schools. Kozmützky and Krücken (2015) suggest universities attempt to differentiate themselves from other competing universities while simultaneously promoting commonly held institutional specifics; i.e., we’re different even though we’re the same. Husted’s (1998) account of a self-described ‘liberal arts’ college candidacy for AACSB accreditation is a prime example of the agency’s perspective regarding mission diversity.

Husted explains that the AACSB, “wanted to know what the School of Business and Economics did that was any different than any other college with a general education requirement,” (p. 43). Hunt’s (2015) questioning of AACSB’s claims of superiority among accrediting agencies with regards to the value to schools, student job placement, faculty recruitment, and teaching quality raises possible concerns for non-US schools contemplating affiliation. Along a similar vein, Stepanovich, Mueller,

and Benson (2014) discuss the possible unintended negative consequences that can accompany AACSB accreditation by applying Deming's philosophy.

Nicholls, Hair, Ragland, and Schimmel (2014) point out that the Ethics FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section of AACSB states, "The focus of current higher education is turning to learning, not teaching. A focus on what students have learned...is displacing a focus on how a subject is taught" (p. 129). A major shift in accreditation standards such as this will undoubtedly have schools actively benchmarking PAC schools to learn how other institutions are responding to these changes; especially as they come up for their five-year accreditation review. Xie and Steiner (2013) report on the challenges faced within management education in implementing changes, suggesting that a collaborative approach between business schools and businesses could help improve this situation.

Lin (2015) observes that the "tremendous growth" in the number of schools accredited by AACSB was, "due to the change to a mission-driven accrediting policy." (p. 25). Miles, et al (2014), provides a very insightful and in-depth overview of AACSB's 2013 standards revision and its potential impact in the current business environment. AACSB's 1991 standards called for business schools to develop an individual mission and meaningful goals in the pursuit of this mission. Schools were required to measure accomplishments of these goals through outcome assessments, therefore providing a foundation for continuous improvement. Outcomes assessment include input of school's stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students, employers, etc.), thus it created a much-needed bridge between the business community and business schools. Medenica's (2016) work discusses how universities could benefit by implementing a structural framework for organizational development as is practiced by businesses.

However, Henninger (1998) finds "only modest changes in faculty selection and work resulting" from adoption of 1991 AACSB standards. Similarly, Jantzen (2000) determines that "the adoption of "mission-related" standards, by itself, has not resulted in change in either the number or reputation of schools being accredited." Davis, Ruhe, Lee, and Rajadhyaskal (2007) point out that AACSB member schools are expected to articulate their school's performance with its mission. The relevancy and benefit of the post-1991 mission-driven accreditation on a business school has also been well covered by academic research. Julian and Ofro-Dankwa (2006) proclaim the, "core process characteristics of accreditation" are not well suited for today's business environment (p. 225). Along those same lines, Miller and Nouri (2015) found having AACSB accounting accreditation had absolutely no impact on the pass rate of its students on the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam.

Roberts, Johnson, and Groesbeck's study (2004) revealed that although accreditation is seen to provide benefit to the school and its students, there was little benefit perceived by the faculty for going through the accreditation process. Palmer and Short's (2008) study looked at similarities and difference in the content of mission statements of 408 US AACSB accredited business schools. It finds a considerable variance of organizational mission statements. Their analysis shows business school missions lack comprehensiveness; however, they also detect pockets of commonality among comparable schools. They find that significant difference in mission content and performance are a function of configurations of similar schools based on structural characteristics.

Baker and Balmer (1997) suggest that the missions of institutes of higher education must reflect generally accepted criteria for high quality education, and therefore, follow industry-wide guidelines. Bisoux (2003) echoes these sentiments and states that in higher education the quest for legitimacy has left business schools stuck in a "sea of sameness." AACSB-accredited institutions have great variability in developing their missions to differentiate themselves. However, the presence of conformity pressures influences mission statements content. Therefore, alignment arises between business schools when they define organizational purpose (Glynn and Abzung, 2002). Davis and Glaister (1997) find for institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom, "the mission statement

is not based on a feeling of need, but to conform to the requirements of external bodies” (p. 596). Palmer and Short (2008) report that they find considerable variance between mission statements of the US colleges of business.

The quality of higher education is one of the strongest reform issues in Europe (Sporn, 1999). Previous research into quality-related trends in European higher education is extensive (e.g., Brennan and Shah, 2000; Jeliaskova and Westerheijden, 2002; Stensaker, 2000; Yorke, 2000). It examined the subject from internal and external perspective. Internally, teaching emerged as one of the most prominent evaluation subjects. Moreover, Antunes and Thomas (2007) point out the key features of European schools and their competitive advantages over their US counterparts. These include a strong international mindset; flexibility and innovation, and adoption of alternative delivery technologies much faster than U.S.-based business schools. They proclaim European-based institutions of higher education feature stronger corporate ties and partnerships (extremely successfully translated to the classroom) and a very strong knowledge development tradition.

Engwall (2007) presents an overview of management business education in the US and Europe over the past century. He concludes that management education has become a growing industry on a global scale. Over the years, competition, reputation, and benchmarking on the global scale elevated the importance of accreditation and assessment. Furthermore, he predicts that market forces will continue make a greater impact on education in general, and on management education in particular. Regardless of geographical location business schools face the same market forces such as globalization; fiscal, financial management, and governance concerns; loss of public confidence; changing demographics and new workplace requirements; rapid advances in technology; quality assurance and management issues; lifelong learning and collaborative research, and a host of other societal challenges that have forced business education to undertake a critical review of their mission and societal impact.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The 1991 AACSB standards called for each business school to develop its own unique mission statement. Palmer and Short’s (2008) study utilized an eight-item topology (Pearce and David, 1987) created to analyze and measure different components in the mission statements of Fortune 500 companies, not institutions of higher education. As Fortune 500 organizations operate differently than colleges of business administration do, the authors of this study elected not to utilize Pearce and David’s (1987) topology. Instead, data on how schools categorize both the general and scholarship orientations of their missions was obtained from DataDirect – the most comprehensive online database, exclusively dedicated to business schools worldwide and maintained by AACSB International and from accrediting agency websites. AACSB member business schools are asked to complete Business School Questionnaires (BSQ) on an annual, basis.

The initial investigation involved collectively coding and uploading data from 63 different variables (i.e., the school, undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty) across 541 separate schools. This led to the creation of a single spreadsheet containing 34,083 individual cells. Initial data analysis implied not every AACSB-affiliated business school had fully completed its transition to 2013 standards. Therefore, following the precedent set by McKenna, Cotton, & Auken (1995) and Palmer and Short (2008), it was decided to limit inclusion in the study to only those schools who supplied general and scholarly orientation codes.

The number of respondent schools included in this study is 337; 285 from the United States and 52 from Europe. Two key characteristics of respondent schools - whether they are publicly or privately controlled and the highest degree offered by the program – are provided in Table 1 below. The majority of responding AACSB-accredited business schools from both regions are publicly controlled (74.4% in the

United States and 61.5% in Europe). A conspicuous difference is found in the highest level of degree offered: 86.5% of respondent European schools offer a doctorate degree, while only 29.1% of US schools do. Data Direct provides coding options in the BSQ for respondent schools to report the level of priority emphasis placed on their program’s general orientation and scholarly orientation, from high to low. General orientation codes are used to classify general orientation of a program; i.e., teaching, intellectual contribution (research), and service.

Table 1: Respondent School Characteristics

CONTROL	US-Based Business Schools		European-Based Business Schools	
	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
Public	212	74.4	32	61.5
Private	73	25.6	20	38.5
TOTAL	285	100	52	100
HIGHEST DEGREE				
Doctorate	83	29.1	45	86.5
Masters	181	63.5	7	13.5
Bachelors	21	7.4	0	0
TOTAL	285	100	52	100

This table shows whether respondent schools in the US and Europe are publicly or privately controlled, as well as the highest degree offered.

There are seven different combinations available (BPA-1 to BPA-7) for schools to use in categorizing the level of emphasis each component receives. Table 2 below provides A key to the BPA coding options used by accredited schools in the BSQ.

Table 2: General Orientation Emphasis Codes Used in Data Direct’s BSQ

Code	High Emphasis	Medium Emphasis	Low Emphasis
BPA-1	Teaching	Research	Service
BPA-2	Research	Teaching	Service
BPA-3	Teaching	Service	Research
BPA-4	Research	Service	Teaching
BPA-5	Teaching + Research (equally emphasized)		Service
BPA-6	Teaching	Research + Service (equally emphasized)	
BPA-7	Teaching + Research + Service (equally emphasized)		

This table provides a key to each of the seven categorical options provided by AACSB’s Data Direct for business schools to self-report the general orientation of their mission.

Scholarship orientation codes are used to classify the priority emphasis placed on the intellectual contributions made by the school faculty. scholarship orientation as “BPB.” Thirteen (13) different options are given to schools to choose from to most accurately describe the scholarship orientation (discipline-based, contributions to practice, or learning & pedagogy) of their mission. The coding options in the BSQ to categorize scholarship orientation in the BSQ are in Table 3 below.

Once the spreadsheet of reporting schools was created, a frequency analysis of both priority and emphasis categories was conducted to ascertain how member institutions self-categorized the emphasis of general and scholarship orientations of their mission.

Table 3: Scholarship Orientation Emphasis Codes Used in Data Direct’s BSQ

Code	High Emphasis	Medium Emphasis	Low Emphasis
BPB-1	Discipline-Based	Contribution-to-Practice	Learning & Pedagogy
BPB-2	Contribution-to-Practice	Learning & Pedagogy	Discipline-Based
BPB-3	Learning & Pedagogy	Discipline-Based	Contribution-to-Practice
BPB-4	Discipline-Based	Learning & Pedagogy	Contribution-to-Practice
BPB-5	Learning & Pedagogy	Contribution-to-Practice	Discipline-Based
BPB-6	Contribution-to-Practice	Discipline-Based	Learning & Pedagogy
BPB-7	Discipline-Based AND Contribution-to-Practice equally		Learning & Pedagogy
BPB-8	Contribution-to-Practice AND Learning & Pedagogy equally		Discipline-Based
BPB-9	Discipline-Based AND Learning & Pedagogy equally		Contribution-to-Practice
BPB-10	Learning & Pedagogy	Discipline-Based AND Contribution-to-Practice equally	
BPB-11	Discipline-Based	Contribution-to-Practice AND Learning & Pedagogy equally	
BPB-12	Contribution-to-Practice	Discipline-Based AND Learning & Pedagogy equally	
BPB-13	Discipline-Based AND Contribution-to-Practice AND Learning & Pedagogy equally		

This table provides a key to each of the thirteen categorical options provided by AACSB’s Data Direct for business schools to self-report the scholarship orientation of their mission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Orientation (BPA)

The frequency analysis of the data supplied by accredited institutions reveals a surprising trend among business schools in the United States. The majority of respondent schools, 125 out of 285 (43.9%) that supplied a response regarding how they categorize the priority of their mission’s general orientation (BPA) opted for BPA-1 (teaching – research – service), wherein teaching receives the highest emphasis, research a medium amount of emphasis, and service received the least. The second most selected BPA code by U.S. schools was BPA-5 (teaching and research – service), with 31.9% of respondents. Under BPA-5, teaching and research receive an equal amount of emphasis, with service, again, receiving the least emphasis. BPA-2 (Research – Teaching – Service) rounds out the top three with 16.1% of schools selecting this option. These three coding options, out of seven, represent over 91% of all participating business schools based in the United States. Table 4 below shows the number and percentage of the three most chosen categories of general orientation.

An even larger percentage of respondent European schools (98.1%) also selected just three of the seven coding options as being most reflective of their mission: BPA-7 (40.4%), BPA-5 (38.5%), and BPA-2 (19.2%). BPA-7 represents a program where teaching, research, and service receive equal emphasis. These rankings are shown in Table 5 below. The most striking difference between U.S. and European business schools is that where the US-based schools clearly put teaching above all other components of their mission, European schools see business education as requiring a balance of all three elements, not just teaching. In fact, BPA-1, where teaching alone receives the highest emphasis among US. Schools, was chosen by only one European school. The top three orientations of all respondent schools, regardless of region, are in Table 6. As with the individual region analysis, collectively, three options represent almost ninety percent (86.9%) of how AACSB accredited business schools prioritize the general orientation of their program. It is important to note that three choices (out of seven coding options given) represent over ninety percent of both reporting US schools and reporting European schools. This lack of variance in the general orientation of business school missions seems to indicate that Palmer and Short’s (2008, p. 461) conclusion that “diversity” exists in business school missions is limited to statements and does not extend to orientations or priorities.

Table 4: Most Commonly Reported General Orientation Emphasis Codes Among US-Based AACSB-Accredited Business Schools

US-Based AACSB Schools Reported General Orientation	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPA-1	125/285	43.9
BPA-5	91/285	31.9
BPA-2	46/285	16.1
TOTALS	262/285	91.9%

This table shows the three most commonly reported categories of what is emphasized in the general orientation of the program mission of US-based AACSB-accredited schools that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools.

Table 5: Most Commonly Reported General Orientation Emphasis Codes among European-based AACSB-accredited Business Schools

European-Based AACSB Schools Reported General Orientation	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPA-7	21/52	40.4
BPA-5	20/52	38.5
BPA-2	10/52	19.2
TOTALS	51/52	98.1%

This table shows the three most commonly reported categories of what is emphasized in the general orientation of the program mission of European-based AACSB-accredited schools that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools.

Table 6: Most Commonly Reported General Orientation Emphasis Codes Among Both US- and European-Based AACSB-Accredited Business Schools

All Reporting AACSB Schools	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPA-1	126/337	37.4
BPA-5	111/337	33.0
BPA-2	56/337	16.6
TOTALS	293/337	86.9%

This table shows the three most commonly reported categories of what is emphasized in the general orientation of the program mission of both US and European-based AACSB-accredited schools, that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools.

Scholarship Orientation (BPB)

The frequency analyses of the emphasis on the intellectual contribution (scholarship orientation) alignment with the school’s mission of AACSB accredited schools in the United States and Europe resulted in some enlightening results. The vast majority (58.2%) of schools in the U.S. reported the first option, BPB-1, wherein each category is emphasized at a different level from the others: Discipline-based (D-B) gets the highest emphasis, Contribution to Practice (CTP) receives medium emphasis, and Learning & Pedagogy (L&P) qualifies for the least amount of emphasis). BPB-7 is a distant second (13%) where D-B and CTP are given equal emphasis and L&P places third. BPB-2 (8.8%) is the third most commonly emphasized scholarship orientation among US schools, as shown in Table 7 below. Collectively, these three options – out of thirteen – represent eighty percent (80%) of all reporting US business schools.

Table 7: Most Commonly Reported Scholarship Orientation Emphasis Codes Among US-Based AACSB-Accredited Business Schools

US-Based AACSB Schools Reported General Orientation	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPB-1	166/285	58.2
BPB-7	37//285	13.0
BPB-2	25/285	8.8
TOTALS	228/285	80.0%

This table shows the three most commonly reported of thirteen options concerning what is emphasized in the scholarly orientation of the program mission of US-based AACSB-accredited schools that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools.

Reported scholarship orientation in European schools of business exhibit more variance among the options provided. Although BPB-1 was the most reported coding option, slightly less than one-third (30.8%) of respondent schools aligned with it (compared to almost twice that percent for the top choice of US-based schools). Also, as with US schools, BPB-2 was the second most commonly chosen, but in Europe, it was a close second with 26.9% of the schools selecting it, compared to 13% of schools in the US. The third most popular codes for European schools was BPB-11 (19.2%), which was not chosen by a single US-based school. The results are given in Table 8 below. Like the United States institutions of higher education, the European missions seem to value research focused on theory first, practice second.

Table 8: Most Commonly Reported Scholarship Orientation Emphasis Codes Among European-Based AACSB-Accredited Business Schools

European-Based AACSB Schools Reported General Orientation	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPB-1	16/52	30.8
BPB-7	14/52	26.9
BPB-11	10/52	19.2
TOTALS	40/52	76.9%

This table shows the three most commonly reported categories of what is emphasized in the scholarly orientation of the program mission of European-based AACSB-accredited schools that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools.

Combining both regions’ reporting of scholarship orientation results (Table 9 below) in three options having less dominance than the top three options of general orientation (76.8% compared to 86.9%), that three categories out of thirteen possible classifications, does not appear to be reflective of diversification among accredited business school mission orientations. The three coding options, BPB-1, BPB-7, and BPB-2 account for almost eighty percent of reporting schools from the US and Europe.

Table 9: Most Commonly Reported Scholarship Orientation Emphasis Codes Among Both US- and European-Based AACSB-Accredited Business Schools

All Reporting AACSB Schools	# Schools Reporting	% Schools Reporting
BPB-1	182/337	54.0
BPB-7	51/337	15.1
BPB-2	26/337	7.7
TOTALS	259/337	76.8

This table shows the three most commonly reported categories of what is emphasized in the scholarly orientation of the program mission of all AACSB-accredited schools in the US and Europe that participated in the Data Direct Business School Questionnaire, along with the number and percentage of reporting schools choosing these options.

Last, several crosstab analyses were conducted between the variables of Priority, Emphasis, Participating Faculty, and Supporting Faculty to determine if there were any noticeable leanings between how

reporting business schools define their mission's orientation and how they define qualifications of their faculty. The analysis did not reveal the existence of any association. However, as the 2013 standards are in the early stages of adoption, especially as they relate to the hiring of new faculty across business schools, it is expected that it may simply be soon for any such linkages to be overtly detectable. This is, however, a prime area that should be revisited in a few years to determine if new standards have influenced faculty classifications among member schools.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Limitations and Opportunities

There are several constraints to this research. The foremost is the limited number of schools that provided a response to DataDirect. The AACSB website provided several school classifications for BPA and BPB orientations where DataDirect did not. This is seen as most attributable to the fact that many schools that are still transitioning to the only recently adopted 2013 standards; they may have simply opted not to participate in DataDirect's surveys; 2014-2015 data was utilized in this study, when the transition period to 2013 AACSB-standards was still ongoing. Another potential limitation is that it is not known who, within responding schools, completed the surveys; it may have been the Dean, an Associate Dean, committee chair, administrative assistant, or it could be outsourced to Office of Institutional Research or other similar administrative department outside of the business school entity less vested in data reporting. There may also have been time constraints involved in the submitting of surveys, thus resulting in a hurriedly completed, and less accurate, survey. The above limitations inspire a range of opportunities for future research. The first subsequent study should look into why there is such a dearth of variance in mission orientation; the range of options exists for a reason, yet, most schools ignore them. Why do so many schools in both the United States and Europe self-report that "Teaching" receives the highest degree of emphasis in their mission while "Learning and Pedagogical" research is virtually ignored?

There are several other possible areas for future investigation. One would be a comparative study between to extend this study to other geographical regions, such as Asia, Canada, or South America. How does a school's mission influence its recruiting of students and of faculty? As noted above, many schools are still in a state of transition between the standards introduced in the 1990's and those introduced three years ago. It could prove quite thought provoking to revisit DataDirect two or three years from now, after the 2013 Standards have had some time to take hold and mature within the environment of business schools. There is a tremendous amount of data available through DataDirect and a veritable laundry list of topics exists. Research into the degree of impact or influence that organizational culture has on a business school's mission; does school size, control, type of faculty, etc. is calling out to be done.

AACSB's Standard 2, specifically, emphasizes that a school's research should have a positive impact on the advancement of theory, practice, and/or teaching consistent with the school's mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. Impact is broadly defined by AACSB as making a difference by contributing to the practice of business. There are three coding options (BPB-2, -6, and -12) where contributions to practice receives the most emphasis in a business school's mission. Regrettably, less than 20% (18.6%) of all participating schools selected *any* of these three as being indicative of their mission. Options BPB-7 and BPB-8 list contributions to practice as sharing an equal amount of emphasis as discipline-based research. Again, only 20% (57 out of 285) of participating schools chose either of these coding options to describe the scholarship orientation of their mission. It is neither the desire nor the intent of this study to be too controversial. However, if business education and research are to be relevant and impactful, both on and for, the practice of business in today's rapidly changing world environment, intellectual contributions should be aligned accordingly with the school's mission and recognized accordingly.

Our research shows that despite the many options available for business schools to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive global market via the orientation of their missions in general or their scholarship specifically, the majority only avail themselves of the same two or three choices. This is especially noteworthy given the focus on the mission-driven organizational performance that has transpired over the past two to three decades in business higher education. Further, it seems almost contradictory in nature that the majority of accredited institutions who chose to respond to surveys conducted by their own accrediting agency, claim that teaching receives the highest emphasis among their general orientation priorities, yet learning and pedagogical research is emphasized the least concerning scholarship emphasis. The analysis undertaken in this study of self-reported data supplied by accredited business schools to *Data Direct*, a division of AACSB, shows that most respondent business schools clearly categorize themselves in conformity with each other regarding the priorities assigned to how they emphasize the general and scholarly orientations of their missions. The authors believe this high level of conformity is a direct result of accredited business schools benchmarking their PAC institutions to achieve or maintain accreditation status.

Benchmarking is a time-honored and valuable tool for both the practice and education of business. However, the results of this study undeniably show that this practice may be creating more conformity - not diversity - in what accredited business schools emphasize in their programs. The desire and, perhaps, necessity in some cases, to be able to compete more successfully in an increasingly crowded market for funding, to have a school's program recognized and affirmed by the world's leading accrediting agency of business schools may unintentionally be hindering diversity and eradicating differentiation.

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