A Review of Research on Business School Accreditation in China

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Abstract. Business school accreditation has become an attracting topic in past few decades. Although many scholars have carried out a wide range of research, the researchers did not provide a chronological picture of the themes. To give a comprehensive picture of business school accreditation in China, bibliometrics analysis methods were employed to analyze the 113 articles collected from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) between 2006 and 2019. The distribution characteristics of documents, published journals, research institutions and research methods were revealed in content analysis. The law of change on research topics were described in co-word analysis with VOSviewer. Based on the results, this study also suggests directions for further work.

Introduction

With the deepening of the popularization of higher education in China, the scale of business education has expanded rapidly, and the structure of postgraduate education has also changed greatly under the policy impetus. Given the new trend of the development of education volume and structure, how to ensure the quality of business education has become a new issue for business schools. At the same time, with the impact of market, globalization and technological change in recent years, business schools must also consider new development strategies to adapt to the impact of the external environment[1]. Accreditation system is a quality assurance method of voluntary participation, and its process itself is a process of continuous improvement of education quality. From the perspective of global business school development, whether it passes the mainstream accreditation standards is also the key to improve its competitive advantage[2]. Therefore, business school accreditation has become a common topic of concern for the practical development and theoretical research.

Scholars have done some systematic research on business school accreditation. Hunt (2015) systematically reviewed AACSB accreditation's research on four important topics: enrollment, employment, teacher recruitment and teaching quality[3]. Recently, Teixeira et al. (2018) systematically analyzed the literature of business school accreditation since 2002 from seven aspects (theme, research hypothesis, theoretical basis, methodology, research background, results and future research suggestions) in order to study the organizational practice, value and decision-making of business school globalization orientation from the perspective of institutional theory[4].

In summary, numerous reviews have provided various research issues, but these researches were more dependent on subjective analysis and can’t disclose precisely the nature of the field in China. Specifically, this study adopted the quantitative method to analyze the domain as a whole.

Research Design

Research Methods

Content analysis is a systematic and quantitative method, which can give a comprehensive description of the status of information from literature. The key processes of content analysis include determining
the analysis unit and analyzing the categories. In this paper, year, journals and institutions were used to analyze the distribution of papers.

Co-word analysis draws upon the assumption that a paper’s keywords can give an adequate description of content. VOSviewer is a software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric maps. Unlike most computer programs that are used for bibliometric mapping, VOSviewer is especially useful for displaying large bibliometric maps in an easy-to-interpret way, and pay more attention to drawing and clustering. So we hope to use it to make a clearer and richer keyword co-occurrence analysis of business schools accreditation.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a set of procedures. First, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database was selected as the data source. Second, according to the purpose of this study, the search criteria were formulated by including “business school”, “business education”, AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA and “accreditation”. The data were extracted in September 2019, with the search in the topic field covering the period from 2006 to 2019. Finally, a total of 113 articles were retrieved.

Results of Content Analysis

The Distribution of Years

After analyzing the literature collection of business schools accreditation from the CNKI database, the publication growth from 2006 to 2019 was shown in Fig. 1. Although there were only a few studies before 2013, the number of documents has been a steady increase since 2013 and the quantity reached to a high tide in 2019.

![Figure 1. Growth of literature over time.](image)

The Distribution of Journals

From 2006 to 2019, 67 journals contributed 113 articles. We ranked journals on their total contribution to the list of articles. The top 9 journals were identified, which is presented in Fig.2. According to the Fig.2, most of journals are educational journals, *Shanghai Management Science* and *Shanghai Journal of Educational Evaluation* are the journal with the highest number of papers, followed by *Beijing Education (Higher Education)* and *Education Modernization*.
The Distribution of Institutions

From 2006 to 2019, only 54 institutions contributed 113 articles. We ranked institutions on their total contribution to the list of articles. The top 15 institutions were identified, which is presented in Fig.3. According to the Figure 3, Beijing Union University is the institution with the highest number of papers, followed by Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and University of Shanghai for Science and Technology.

The Distribution of Research Method

As concerning research type and methodology, we distinguished among theoretical, case, review and quantitative contributions, which are presented in Fig.4. According to the result of Figure 4, there are more theoretical researches from 2006 to 2019, which suggests this method is main form. At the same time, quantitative and case researches began to increase in 2013 gradually.
Results of Co-word Analysis

Cluster Analysis

The Fig. 5 visualized the relationships among the high-frequency keywords (over 2). The study categorized those keywords that appeared multiple times into nine themes.

The first cluster focused on business education, including Business School(15), Business Ethics(2), Education(2), Education Mode(3), Internationalization(10), MBA(5), MBA Education(8), Professional Accreditation(3), Training Mode(2) and U.S.A(2).

The second cluster focused on AACSB and standard, including AACSB(33), Business Education(7), Business School Accreditation(2), Curriculum Setting(2), International Standard(2), New Standard(2) and Undergraduate Education(3).

The third cluster focused on the accreditation and cultivation, including AACSB Accreditation(22), AOL System(2), Cultivation Path(2), Department of Commerce(3), Enlightenment(2) and General Ability(2).

The fourth cluster focused on accreditation and quality, including Accreditation(9), AMBA(4), DBA(2), Higher Education Institutions(2), Implementation Path(2) and Quality(2).

The fifth cluster focused on accreditation and major, including Construction Path(2), Curriculum System(3), Financial Management(2) and International Accreditation(18).

The sixth cluster focused on accreditation standard and compare, including Accreditation Standard(5), Common Characteristics(2), Difference Analysis(2) and Higher Business Education(3).

The seventh cluster focused on accreditation standard system, including Accreditation New Standard(2), Standard Characteristics(2) and Standard Framework(2).

The eighth cluster focused on AACSB International Accreditation(2) and AOL(11).

The eighth cluster focused on Accounting Major(4) and Mission(2).

Hot Topics

According to the Fig. 6, in recent years, the most prevalent keywords were “aacsb accreditation”, “aacsb international accreditation” and “aol system” etc.
By contrast, traditional hotspots include “amba”, “education”, “quality” and “mba education” etc. These results can be seen from the Figure 7.

![Figure 6. Overlay visualization of keyword co-occurrence based on year of publication.](image)

**Summary**

Based on bibliometrics and co-words analysis, this study produced a reasonable result. This study can analyze the characteristics and trends of the previous studies, and describe systematically development situation, which can give reference for other researches.

The results of co-word analysis show that the research focuses mainly on accreditation system, business education, quality and major etc.

Our study has got some valuable conclusion, but it is not free from limitation. In the future, we can enlarge the sources of publication and use other quantitative approaches to learn more about the intellectual structure of research of business school accreditation in China.

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