Marketing

MBAD822

Individual Assignment

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24 August 2019

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SOLEMN DECLARATION - INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT

Solemn declaration by student

Module: **Marketing** Module Code: **MBAD822** Assignment No.: **1** Assignment due date: **24 August 2019**

I hereby declare that the assignment which I herewith submit to the North-West University as partial completion of the requirements set for the MBA degree, is my own work.

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Executive summary

The report examines and evaluates if additional international accreditation is required to strengthen the NWU Business School's competitivity and if it can be used to strengthen its position to increase its international footprint. The report also focusses on factors influencing prospect MBA students' choice of business school.

The report draws attention to literature on the subject matter of additional accreditation as well as the criteria and standards required for accreditation and advantages and disadvantages of each. What was determined from literature is that international accreditation of an MBA programme or business school is seen as a competitive advantage, an indication of quality of the programme and credibility of the business school.

Questionnaires were used and circulated to current MBA students and former MBA students currently in managerial positions. The data was analysed and summarised to clearly indicate findings within graphs and tables. The results of the analysed data show that current and former MBA students perceive additional international accreditation as a competitive advantage but are not willing to pay higher intuition fees associated with accredited programmes. The data draws attention to former MBA students in managerial positions who indicated that online MBA are to be consideration. The feedback on external factors for enrolling for an MBA at a particular business school also gave valuable insight with regards to the location, the mode of delivery and reputation of the business school. Data also indicated that a larger sample group is required to perform an effective study. The feasibility and cost associated with distance and digital education also need to be investigated in more detail.

Recommendations discussed include:

- Not to seek and apply for additional international accreditation
- Investigate the cost and future possibility of an accredited online MBA programme.
- Insure relevance of MBA programme by partnering with business schools in other countries globally.
- Create interest in a South African MBA from abroad.
- Marketing of the NWU Business School

Table of Contents

Introduction

According to the 2017 GMAC Prospective Students Survey Report 60 percent of future business school applicants seek to study outside their country of citizenship and prospective students look at “geographic destination, the school’s reputation, rankings, curriculum, career services, fees”, scholarship, quality and the experience of alumni to assist them in their decision (Wanot, 2018, Murray, 2019a). With an estimate of 15 000 business schools worldwide, business schools are getting more competitive and use accreditation of their MBA programme or business school to their competitive advantage (Wanot, 2018).

Currently three dominating accreditation bodies for MBA programmes and business schools exist namely Association of MBAs (AMBA), Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) and EFMD Quality Improvement System (EQUIS). A common characteristic of these three accreditation bodies is that they provide accreditation to MBA programmes and business schools internationally independent of their origin or the economic model and culture of their country of origin.

Accreditation by one of the accreditation bodies might seem more relevant than the others as a function of traditional influences. AMBA with its headquarters in London is considered relevant in Latin America, Caribbean, Oceania regions and parts of Africa as a result of British traditional influences while EQUIS with its headquarters operating from Brussels are more relevant to the European market and AACSB with its headquarters in Florida are more relevant to American markets (Miles Morgan, 2016). University of Stellenbosch Business School and UCT Graduate School for Business are considered as the top business schools in South Africa with their “Triple Crown” – accreditation granted from all three dominating accreditation bodies.

Background and problem statement

Background

For a business school to display a high level of quality they need to seek accreditation with internationally recognised organisations (Lagrosen Stefan, 2017). The consequence of business school and programme accreditation is significant. It impacts higher education's prestige and outlook, provides momentum for quality improvement, assures that programmes meet or exceed accreditation standards, helps business schools to achieve international recognition and provides assurance that an independent agency has assessed the school's portfolio of activities to intending students (Kundu Goutam, 2016). Business schools can manage their brand equity by co-branding with one of the three major accrediting agencies, namely AMBA, ACCSB, and EQUIS, though none of the three are exclusive options and some business schools become accredited by all three (Miles Morgan, 2016). Accreditation at all three accrediting bodies is known as "Triple Crown" and is usually the consequence of a business school's strategic decision to invest in more than one accreditation (Miles Morgan, 2015).

Only a small group of elite business schools subject themselves to rigorous review processes of the three major and most influential accreditation agencies to obtain a Triple Crown in accreditation. Only 90 business schools worldwide has this distinction (MBA Today, 2019).

Problem statement

Internationalisation of higher education is a growing phenomenally and business schools around the world are forced to compete in the global market and engage in activities to sustain themselves (Singh et al., 2015). Though accreditation processes are fruitful quality improvement exercises accreditation agencies unknowingly encourage competition between business schools to belong to "the club" through their exclusivity (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2018).

As a result of the high cost of accreditation incurred and the unwillingness of the majority students to pay higher intuition fees Triple Crown accreditation it not within reach of every business school (Bal et al., 2014). Each business school will need to understand his current market's requirements with regards to additional accreditation and if it will be seen by students, global employers and educators as a competitive advantage.

Research questions

The purpose of the study is twofold. Frist, to understand what current and former MBA students perceive as accreditation of business schools and programmes and if they consider it to be important to them. Second, to determine the factors and attributes of business schools to attract students to enrol for MBA.

Research objectives

The research objectives of this study were:

To establish if students considered accreditation of business schools and programmes to be relevant or important in their decision making.

Test the average current and former MBA student's knowledge on accreditation of business schools and programmes.

To determine which accreditation body current and former MBA students will prefer for accreditation and if they are willing to pay more for it.

To establish if current and former students would have preferred more contact time or online programmes.

To determine the influential factors for enrolling at a specific business school.

Literature review

AMBA accreditation

Business Graduates Association (BGA) started in June 1967 with their business education through five objectives: help the development of existing business schools, support the founding of new business schools, encourage employers to take on MBAs, help increase the number and quality of students attending business school, and advocate the importance of professional business education. In 1983 BGA established an accreditation programme and evolved in 1987 into graduate members, accredited business schools and MBA employers giving birth to AMBA (Association of MBA's, 2019). Today AMBA is a charity registered in the United Kingdom and governed by the International Management Board (IBM) who is responsible to develop accreditation oversight for the International Accreditation Advisory Board (IAAB) (Association of MBA's, 2017a).

AMBA focus in detail with accreditation on individual programmes and connects MBA graduates internationally through AMBA membership. Member services include career advice and support, job portal, access to latest research, offers and face to face (Association of MBAs, 2019).

Key features of the AMBA criteria for accreditation as compiled by Iliev and Pikington (2018) is as follow:

Figure 1: AMBA criteria required to adhere to for accreditation (Iliev and Pikington, 2018)

AMBA accreditation is only awarded to the best available programmes internationally and promotes the highest standard in postgraduate business education. The accreditation provides a list of tested programmes for prospect students and assist business schools to realise potential shortcomings as AMBA provides a comprehensive report with recommendation for improvements (Association of MBAs, 2019).

Between 2011 and 2014 applications for AMBA-accredited programmes declined by 14% and showed a net growth of 5 % between 2014 and 2015 of which the majority was business schools in Western Europe followed by four years of decline according to the Application and Enrolment Report (Association of MBA's, 2017b).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)

The AACSB was set up to defend business studies as an academic discipline and its membership consisted mainly of academic business schools (Emerald Publishing, 2019). Since 1916 AACSB provides quality assurance, business education intelligence and professional development services to achieve a common goal of creating the next generation of great leaders by connecting educators, students and business. AACSB has a global mindset and inspires innovation throughout their member network and business community (AACSB, 2019h).

AACSB has a set of criteria that business schools have to adhere to and covers ethical behaviour, collegiate environment, commitment to corporate and social responsibility, accreditation scope and AASCB membership, oversight, sustainability and continuous improvement and policy on continued adherence to standards and integrity of submission to AACSB (AACSB, 2019g). The standards are divided underneath four headings and is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

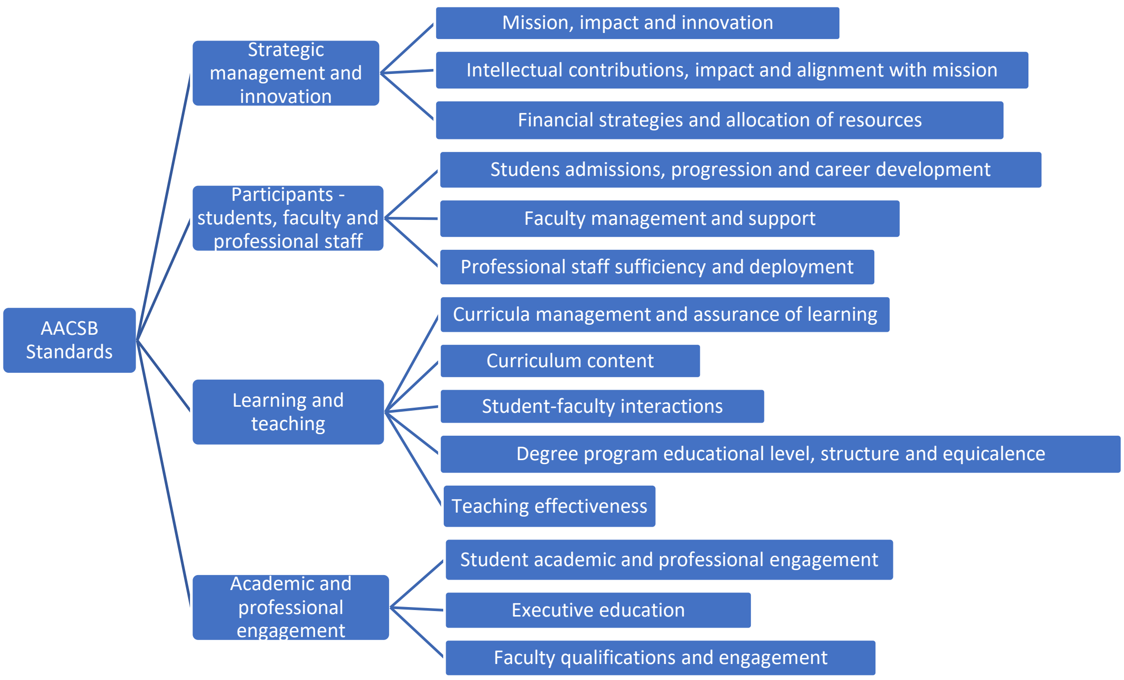


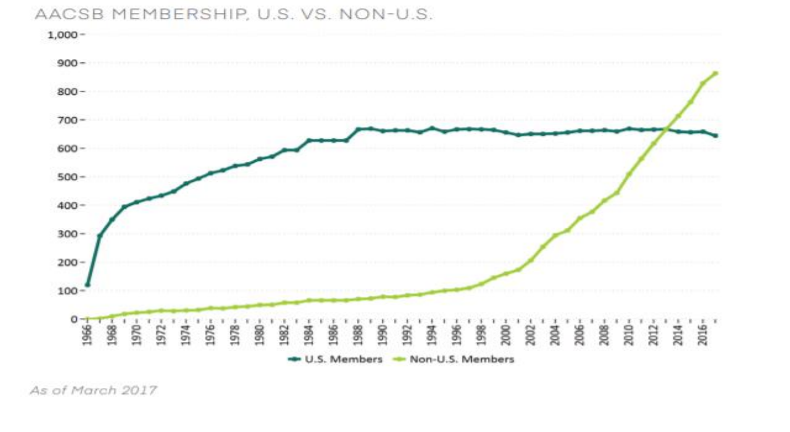
Figure 2: AACSB Standards (AACSB, 2019g)

AACSB provides accreditation at bachelor's, master's and doctoral level for business and accounting programmes and require excellence in all their standards (AACSB, 2017b).

AACSB consider themselves as the benchmark of quality for global business education and AACSB-accredited schools to be the best business schools in the world as their degree programmes have passed rigorous standards for quality. According to AACSB AACSB-accredited schools have better programmes, better faculties, more international students, more recruiting employers, graduates receive higher salaries, will provide graduates with a higher rate on investment, many top corporation only recruit from AACSB-accredited schools and companies are knowledgeable to differentiate between employees that have attended AACSB-accredited business schools and those that have not (AACSB, 2019c). It is not only how AACSB consider themselves. A study conducted by Jalbert *et al.* (2011) at large firms in the United States indicated that 76% of CEO's holding an undergraduate degree earned it from an AACSB-accredited school and 94% of graduate degrees were earned from an AACSB-accredited school (Jalbert et al., 2011).

AACSB has only experienced growth globally as indicated by Graph1. Graph2 is a good indicator of growing demand for AACSB accreditation outside the United States. The majority of non-United States members causing the increase in the graph are from business schools situated in Asia, excluding the Middle and near East, and Europe (AACSB, 2017a).

Graph1: Global AACSB membership and accrediation growth (AACSB, 2017a)



	Graph2: United States AACSB membership versus non-United States AACSB membership (AACSB, 2017a)

EQUIS issued by EFMD

EFMD launched their standards of accreditation, the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) around the same time in 1999 as ACCSB revised their standards to meet the international market (Emerald Publishing, 2019).

EQUIS has ten standards where each standard has each own set of criteria that have to be met in order to apply or considered for accreditation. The standards and criteria are set out in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: EQUIS standards and criteria (EFMD, 2019a)

EQUIS assess the school as a whole " from first degree up to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), as well as research, any e-learning unit, executive education, and community outreach" with special focus on the school's interface with business and its international aspect (Emerald Publishing, 2019). EQUIS benchmarks business schools against international standards "in term of governance, programmes, students, faculty, research, and foremost, internationalisation, ethics, responsibility", sustainability and corporate governance covering all degree and non-degree programmes offered (Wanot, 2018).

The balance between high academic quality and close corporate interaction is as strong requirement and research potential to create a learning environment to develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills as well as a sense of global responsibility and personal development (Wanot, 2018).

The main objective of EQUIS is to contribute to the improvement of business schools involved in their accreditation process. Peer review visits also creates an occasion of substantial improvement as it creates a sense that quality assurance is a real concern, interviewees get insight to improve on their responsibilities and feedback after the assessment on the quality of the school as well as with the required and suggested actions for improvement. After accreditation the school is expected to select three strategic development objectives. Accredited schools should report annually on progress to "pursue substantial improvement , while continuing to pay attention to everyday activities (Thomas and Urgel, 2007).

Comparison of AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS

Table 1 below gives a comparison of AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS on main features of each institution's accreditation programmes.

	AMBA	**AACSB**	**EQUIS**
Scope of accreditation	Focused scope. Accredits individual programmes perceived as an unique, in-depth and detailed approach (Association of MBA's, 2017a).	Broad scope. Accredits the institution which may be defined as a sub-unit within the institution and assess business and management programs (AACSB, 2019d)	Assess school as a whole with all programmes (first degree up to Doctor of Philosophy), but not the university and not specific programmes. Concerned with school's international aspect and relationship with business(Emerald Publishing, 2019)
Duration of accreditation process	9 – 18 months (Saghafi, 2013)	4 – 5 years (AACSB, 2019f) but can be up to 7 years (AACSB, 2019b)	2 – 3 years (EFMD Global Network, 2019c)
Reaccreditation	Required after 3 – 5 years (Association of MBA's, 2017a)	Required after 5 years (AACSB, 2019g)	Required after 3 – 5 years (Saghafi, 2013)
School audit team	Includes deans, vice-chancellors and an international adviser of AMBA (Association of MBA's, 2017a)	Deans/heads of business units from AACSB accredited schools (AACSB, 2019e)	Consist of deans (EFMD Global Network, 2019b)

Evaluation report content	Compliance with criteria, conditions and recommendations	Compliance with AACSB standards	Compliance with EQUIS standards
Accreditation criteria sets	MBA, DBA, MBM (Association of MBA's, 2017a)	Business school with review of programs included in accreditation process (AACSB, 2016)	School accreditation system (EFMD, 2019c)
Criteria/standards document size for MBA	14 pages (Association of MBA's, 2016)	Business accreditation: 77 pages Accounting accreditation: 36 pages (Saghafi, 2013)	77 pages (EFMD, 2019a)
Number of standards for MBA	10 key principles (Association of MBA's, 2016)	15 standards in 4 categories ("strategic management and innovation, participants – students, faculty, and professional staff, learning and teaching, and academic and professional engagement" (AACSB, 2019g))	10 standards each with its own set of criteria (EFMD, 2019a)
Quantitative vs qualitative criteria	Qualitative and quantitative	Quantitative (Emerald Publishing, 2019)	Qualitative (Emerald Publishing, 2019)
Global representation	International	International	International
Faculty numbers	No prescribed ratio for faculty to students (Saghafi, 2013)	Has prescribed faculty ratios for academic qualified and professional qualified (Saghafi, 2013)	Prescribed minimum (Saghafi, 2013)
Visiting faculty	Accepted if faculty is integrated and managed by the institution (Iliev and Pikington, 2018)	Invite prominent scholars from partner universities abroad (AACSB, 2016)	Disapproves of heavy use of visiting faculties (Saghafi, 2013)
Research	Research and publications in international journals or impactful research at national level (Saghafi, 2013)	Research in line with the mission of the school (Saghafi, 2013)	Research should have an international dimension (Saghafi, 2013)
Program-specific criteria	>500 contact hours for full-time MBA >120 contact hour for distance-learning MBA MBA student should have >3 years full-time work experience	No program specifics as entire school is evaluated (Saghafi, 2013)	No program specifics as entire school is evaluated (Saghafi, 2013)

	>19 students enrolled for MBA program (Saghafi, 2013)		
Accreditation fees	£22 000 for accreditation £5 000 for MBM programme £4 500 for DBA programme (Association of MBAs, 2019)	$34 950 for initial accreditation $15 100 for accredited institutions (AACSB)	£55 200 for initial accreditation for 5 years (EFMD, 2019b)
Number of accredited schools	>240 (Association of MBAs, 2019)	845 of which 188 institutions hold specialised AACSB accreditation (AACSB, 2019a)	176 (MBA Today, 2019)
Number of online accredited MBA programs		571 (Guide to online schools, 2019)	
Number of schools offering online accredited MBA programs	3 (Find MBA, 2019a)	150 (Guide to online schools, 2019)	5 (Find MBA, 2019b)
Countries	>70 (Association of MBAs, 2019)	56 (AACSB, 2019a)	52 (EFMD Global Network, 2019a)
Work experience of students required	Minimum 3 years (MBA Today, 2019)		

Table1: Comparison of AMBA, AASCB and EQUIS accreditation programmes

Research methodology

The outcome of the study will be used to draw general inferences on further international accreditation and if it will be a requirement to strengthen the competitivity of the Business School. This was firstly done by a literature review on the current three biggest international accreditation institutions, namely AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS. The literature review focussed on what the accreditation bodies stand for, benefits of accreditation, what they accredit and possible pitfalls when applying for accreditation at any of the accreditation bodies.

The literature review was followed by a quantitative study. This was done by means of questionnaires distributed by an online survey tool which is available as Appendix A. The quantitative data collected covered some demographic information as well as some attribute-ordinal data according to the Likert scale.

The criteria of participants in the study was to be a current or former MBA students in a managerial position. The survey was sent to people currently studying MBA at North West University Business School as well as former MBA students currently in managerial positions.

The data analysed and interpreted to identify patterns, generalisations and tested for relationships between variables to draw findings and conclusions.

Research design

The research design is cross-sectional in design as it is associated with surveys (Bryman et al., 2014) where more than one case were examined at a single point in time where patterns of association were determined and where relationships between variables were investigated. The criteria of reliability, replicability and validity is applicable in the study design as the questions of the quality measures captured concepts, procedures were enforced in respondent selection, administration of research instrument and analyses of data, and questionnaires were completed in a relative natural environment to the respondents (Bryman et al., 2014)

Sample

The rationale for the selection of the sample was due to access to current MBA students studying at the NWU Business School and access to former MBA students through networking. The unit of analysis was current MBA students and former MBA students in a managerial position. The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter emailed to the sample group consisting of 15 potential respondents. 15 responses were returned and usable which represents a response rate of 100%.

Measuring instrument

A questionnaire was compiled after the literature review utilising information from *Bal et al.* (2014) consisting of 11 questions and 2 matrixes (Bal et al., 2014). The questionnaire consists of two sections, the first section was used to collect demographic information from participants which included age, gender, university of attendance and if the participant is a current of former MBA student. The second section was used to determine participants knowledge and perception on business school accreditation and factors they took into consideration applying for an MBA and their preferences with regards to accredited business schools.

Only two of the top global five business schools have Triple Crown accreditation namely INSEAD and London Business School (Find MBA, 2019c), excluding Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and University of Pennsylvania. One reason for top business schools not to pursue Triple Crown accreditation is that additional accreditation financial implications do not justify additional recognition particular for business schools whose brand name is better known than that of the accrediting institutions or that the specific requirements of the accrediting institutions are not aligned with those of the schools (Zhao, 2016).

Data analysis and results

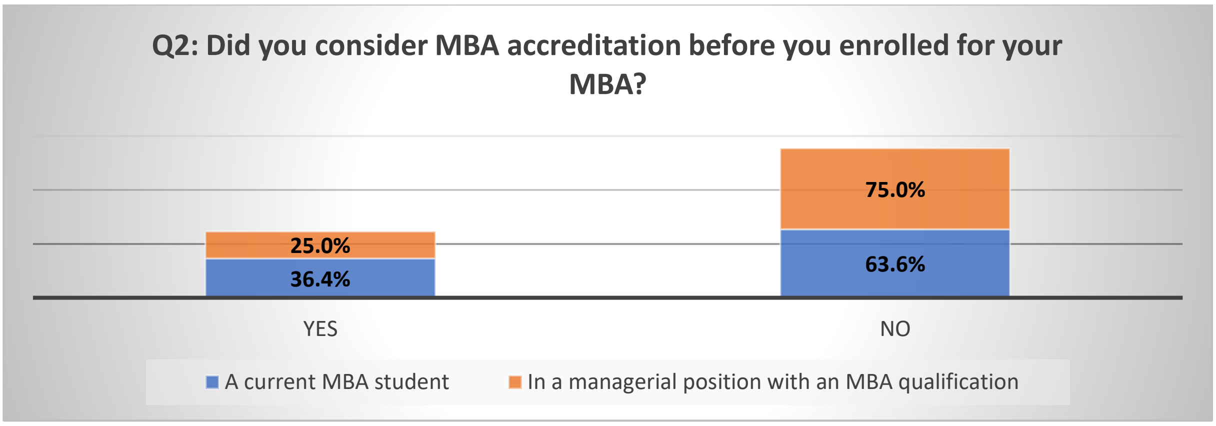
The data refers to the structured questionnaire that was presented and circulated to current and former MBA students. The data is presented in table format and where applicable in graphs for visual presentation and for descriptive statistical interpretation. Data is also presented in percentage scores that has been converted by means of Multivariate analysis. Raw statistical data is available as Appendix B. The study meets the variables between how current and former MBA students perceive MBA accreditation.

Only data analysis and outcomes that is considered as significant will be discussed.

Profile of the study population

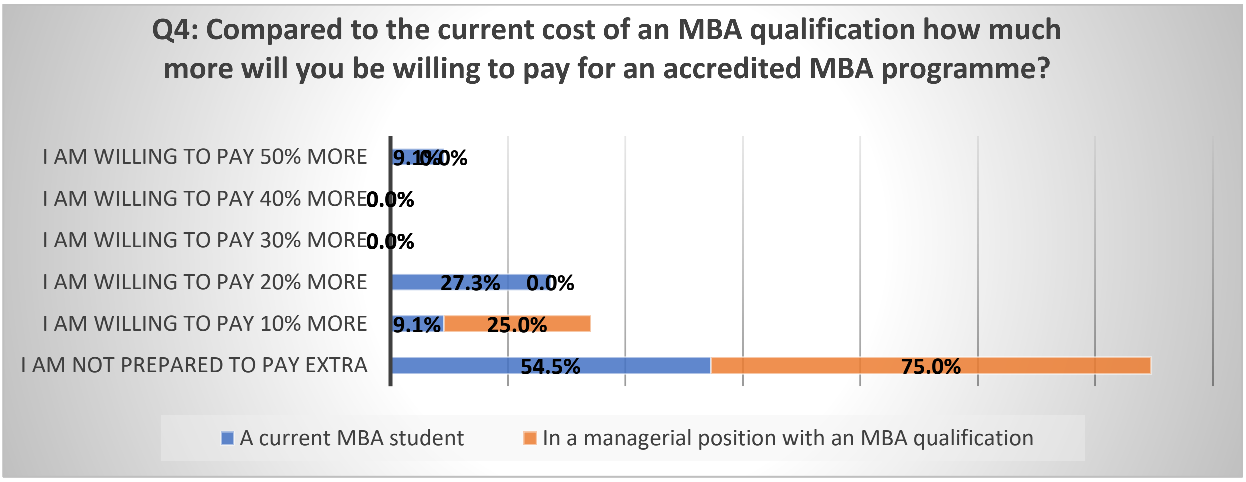
A total of 15 respondents participated in the study. Brackets were used to determine the current position of respondents with regard to current MBA students which totalled to 11 respondents and former MBA students that is holding managerial positions which totalled to 4 respondents.

Graph 1: Consideration of MBA accreditation before enrolment at a Business School



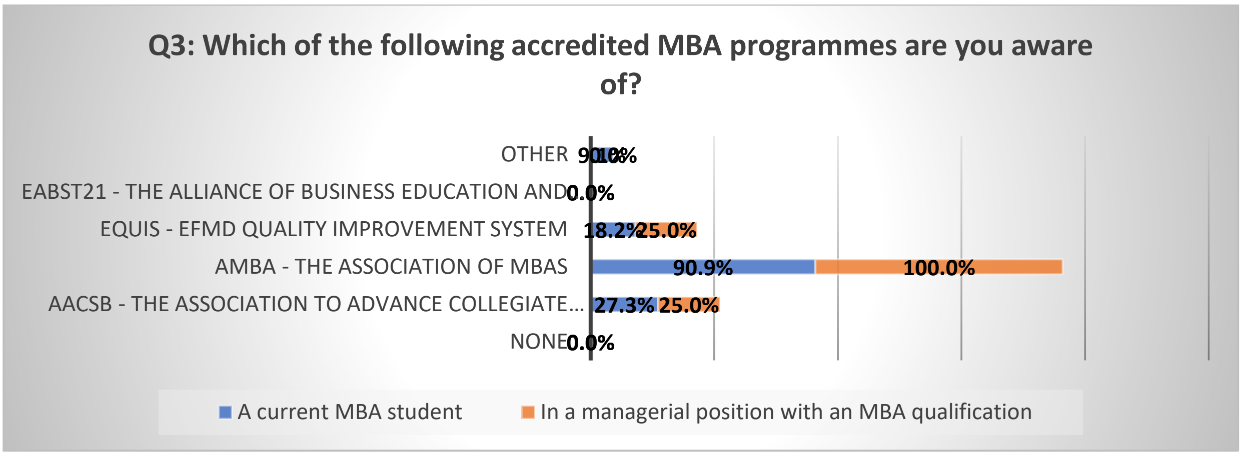
Information obtained from Graph 1 is indicative that the majority of students (69.15%) enrolling at a Business School for MBA did not consider accreditation as a requirement.

Graph 2: Willingness to pay additional cost for MBA accreditation



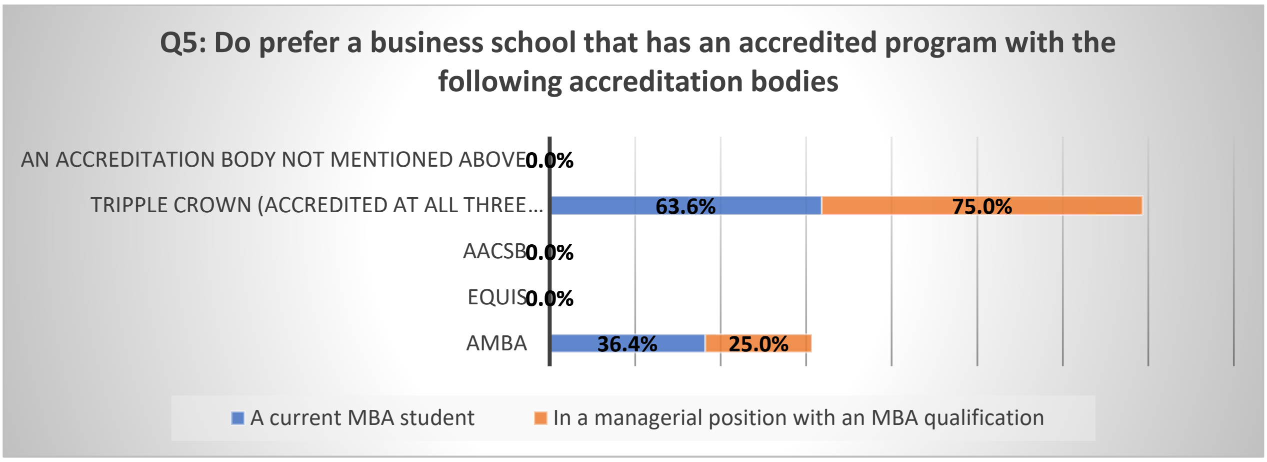
Information obtained from Graph 2 indicates that current (54.4%) and former (75%) MBA students are not willing to pay more for accreditation.

Graph 3: Most known MBA accreditation



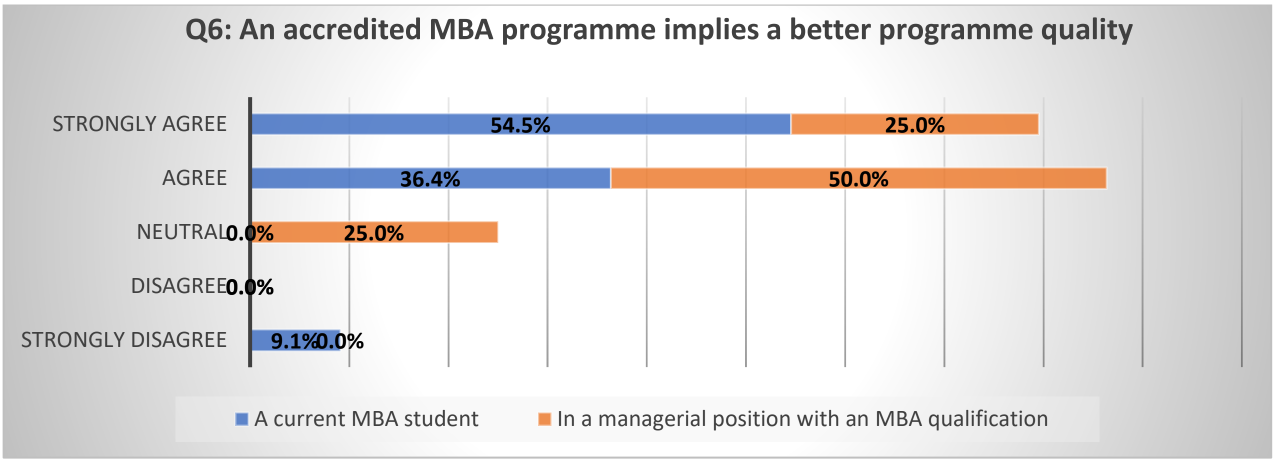
According to the information from Graph 3 it is evident that AMBA is the most know accreditation body in the sample group as 95% indicated that have knowledge of AMBA.

Graph 4: Preferred accreditation body



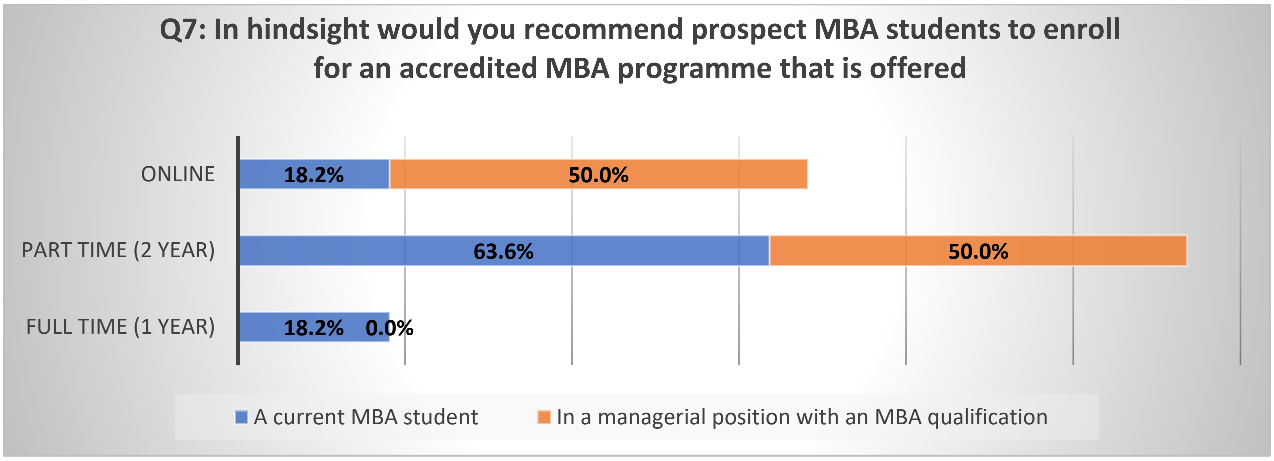
Information as received in Graph 4 indicates that current (63.6%) and former (75%) MBA students prefer triple crown.

Graph 5: Perception of MBA accreditation on programme quality



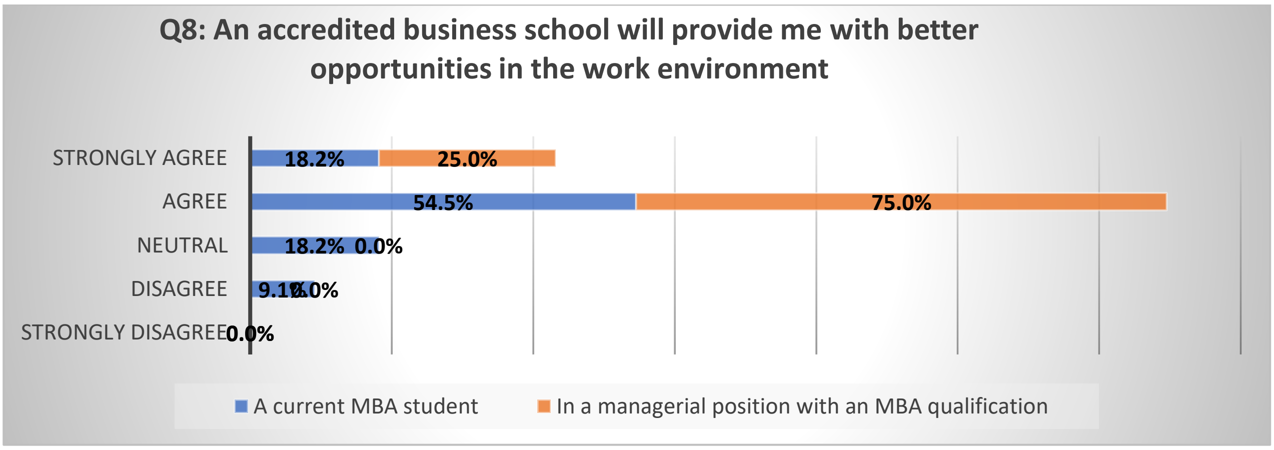
Graph 5 indicates clearly that both current (90.9%) and former (75%) MBA students perceive MBA accreditation as an indication of programme quality.

Graph 6: Preferred contact during MBA programme



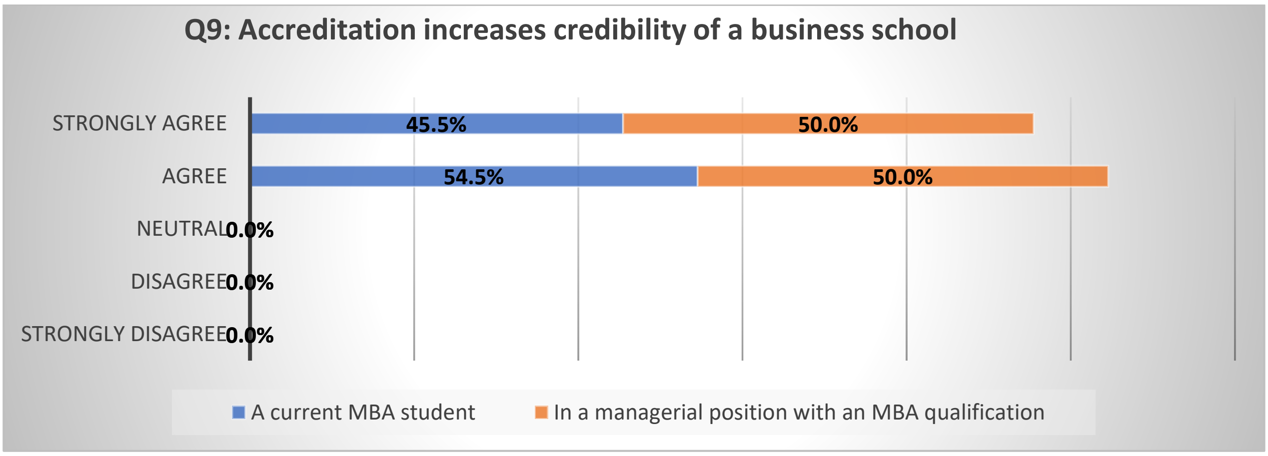
According to information gained from Graph 6 current (63.6%) and former (50%) MBA students prefer to study part time. It is of interest to note that 50% of former MBA students in managerial positions would prefer an online MBA programme.

Graph 7: Perceived business opportunities as a result of accreditation



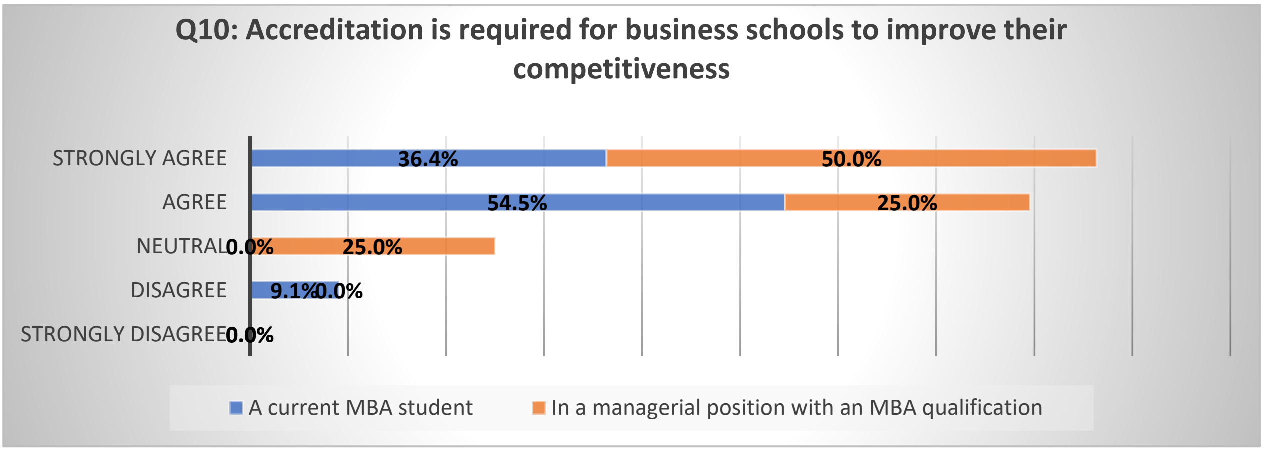
The information in Graph 7 indicates that current and former MBA students believe business school accreditation will provide them with better opportunities in their work environment. It is also noteworthy that 75% of the former MBA students in managerial positions perceive accreditation as an advantage to pursue opportunities in the work environment.

Graph 8: Increased business school credibility as a consequence of accreditation



Graph 8 indicates that both current and former students perceive accreditation to increase the credibility of a business school.

Graph 9: Accreditation requirement to improve competitiveness



According to the information obtained from Graph 9 it is clear that former (75%) and current (90.9%) MBA students is of opinion that a business school will improve competitiveness when accredited.

Other factors that influenced current and former MBA students are covered in Table 2.

		A current MBA student	In a managerial position with an MBA qualification
Q11_2: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Location	Disagree	18.2%	0.0%
	Neutral	9.1%	25.0%
	Agree	27.3%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	45.5%	25.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q11_6: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Reputation of the business school	Strongly disagree	9.1%	0.0%
	Disagree	0.0%	25.0%
	Neutral	18.2%	0.0%
	Agree	63.6%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	9.1%	25.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q11_7: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Duration of the MBA programme	Strongly disagree	9.1%	0.0%
	Disagree	0.0%	25.0%
	Neutral	18.2%	25.0%
	Agree	54.5%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	18.2%	0.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q11_13: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Mode of delivery	Strongly disagree	9.1%	0.0%
	Neutral	18.2%	25.0%
	Agree	45.5%	25.0%
	Strongly agree	27.3%	50.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q12_2: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Improving knowledge and skills	Neutral	9.1%	25.0%
	Agree	36.4%	25.0%
	Strongly agree	54.5%	50.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q12_5: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Promotional opportunities	Disagree	9.1%	25.0%
	Neutral	36.4%	0.0%
	Agree	18.2%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	36.4%	25.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q12_6: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Opportunity for independence	Neutral	27.3%	50.0%
	Agree	36.4%	0.0%
	Strongly agree	36.4%	50.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q12_8: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Solve business problems	Disagree	0.0%	25.0%
	Neutral	27.3%	0.0%
	Agree	45.5%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	27.3%	25.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%
Q12_9: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Market yourself skilfully	Disagree	0.0%	25.0%
	Neutral	18.2%	0.0%
	Agree	54.5%	50.0%
	Strongly agree	27.3%	25.0%

	Total	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Important factors for students when considering MBA excluding accreditation

According to the information obtained from Table 2 it is clear that former and current students' decisions to enrol at a specific business school was influenced by the location and reputation of the business school, duration of the MBA programme and the mode of delivery. Students also enrolled for an MBA to improve their knowledge, market themselves skilfully, for promotional opportunities and the opportunity to become independent. In both sets of motivation for enrolling for an MBA at a specific business school correspondence is clear between former and current MBA students.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study indicated the South African market for accredited MBA programmes and business schools differ substantially from the market in the USA in several ways. The literature review indicated that US students consider the business school's reputation, ranking, curriculum, location, career services, scholarship, fees, quality and feedback from alumni to form their decision to apply to a particular business school. In South Africa MBA students considered location and reputation of the business school as well as the mode of delivery and the duration of the programme in their decision-making process. is clear that accreditation of the business school or the MBA programme were not considered in their decision-making process of enrolling for an MBA.

Top business schools in the USA has seen a sharp decrease in applications the past two years (Byrne, 2019a) while others are shutting down as their MBA programmes are losing money (Byrne, 2019b) due to high cost and a decline in applications. According to the general manager of the South African Business School Association, Anne Wilson, business schools in South Africa has seen an increase in student applications of 23 percent since 2011 (Murray, 2019a). The UK, Canada, India, East and Southeast Asia also indicated an increase of MBA applications (Le, 2017).

With regards to business school and MBA programme accreditation it is of interest to note that the majority of current and former MBA students did not consider accreditation before enrolling. This seems in contrast with research results as they feel that accreditation will give a business school a competitive advantage, increase the credibility of the business school, is an indication of the quality provided by a business school and will have a positive impact on their work environment. Respondents also indicated that they would prefer “Triple Crown” even though accreditation was not a contributing factor for applying for an MBA at a particular business school and they are also not willing to pay higher fees for additional accreditation. This leads to the conclusion that additional accreditation will be a nice to have but is not valued enough by the respondents to bear higher costs associated to business leader programmes.

It is also important to take note of the personal factors driving former and current students to enrol for an MBA. The personal requirement to develop skills and to solve business problems are of interest to the business school.

The preferred method of contact was also investigated. The majority of current and half of former MBA students indicated that they prefer to participate in an MBA programme part-time. It is interesting though to see that the rest of the former MBA students indicated that they would prefer an online MBA programme in hindsight. This phenomenon might be due to better understanding of the work environment from an organisational perspective. It is also noteworthy to look at the increasing availability of online accredited business school programmes. Online MBA programmes have increased their application volumes by more than seven percent the past four years. The growth reflects student’s growing interest in online education. One of the reasons for the growth in online MBA applications is that managers are time-poor. Also considering that the average age of online MBA students are 35 indicating that these students have family responsibilities as well (Murray, 2019b).

From a research perspective the following is recommended for future research:

- Increase the sample group size to have a thorough understanding how organisations will support online and part-time MBA programmes in future and determine what organisations are seeking after in MBA graduates.

From research and evaluation, the following is recommended to the NWU business school:

- Not to seek and apply for additional accreditation, although it is perceived that it will increase the competitiveness of the business school, as current MBA students and former MBA students in managerial positions are not prepared to pay higher fees that is associated with additional accreditation for an MBA programme.

- Investigate the cost and future possibility of an accredited online MBA programme. From an employer's point of view, it is more important what an MBA graduate can do for the organisation as how the MBA degree was obtained. Online graduates may also be seen as more in touch with technology than MBA graduates that preferred contact time with lecturers.
- Insure relevance of MBA programme by partnering with business schools in other countries globally. This will increase the international possibilities for MBA students by utilising such networks.
- MBA programme is of good quality at the major business schools in South Africa at a decent price. Creating interest in a South African MBA from abroad, especially India, East and Southeast Asia, will create an international competitive advantage.
- One of the core aspects that contributed to the NWU Business School's success is it's focus on localised prospective MBA students. Ensure organisations in the target area are well aware of the gap organisations will fill in their operations and the relevance to their business when they employ MBA graduates from the NWU Business School.

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Appendix A - Questionnaire

Perception and awareness of accredited MBA programmes and drivers for pursuing MBA

I am Martha van Schalkwyk, conducting research for an assignment as part of my MBA study at the North West University.

The aim of this survey is to investigate and understand the awareness and perception of current MBA students and managers with an MBA qualification towards academic accreditation. The sole purpose of this study is to obtain information related to the research topic and the data will only be used for the purpose of this assignment. Information is obtained through quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire. The survey covers demographics and questions on accreditation of business schools with regards to MBA programmes as well as drivers for enrolling for an MBA. Should you feel uncomfortable at any point during the questionnaire you have the opportunity and option to end your participation. No sensitive or personal questions will be asked. Results and information obtained from the questionnaire are confidential.

A. Demographic information

1. Are you
    a. A current MBA student
    b. In a managerial position with an MBA qualification
    c. Other
2. Age
    a. 20-29
    b. 30-39
    c. 40-49
    d. 50-59
    e. >60
3. Gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
4. At which South African Business School are you enrolled for your MBA or at which Business School did you complete your MBA qualification
    a. North-West University Business School
    b. University of the Free State – UFS Business School
    c. University of Pretoria – Gordon Institute of Business Science
    d. University of Stellenbosch Business School
    e. University of Cape Town – UCT Graduate School for Business
    f. University of the Witwatersrand – Wits Business School
    g. Rhodes University Business School
    h. University of Kwazulu-Natal – Graduate School of Business and Leadership
    i. University of Limpopo – Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership
    j. UNISA – Graduate School of Business Leadership
    k. Other

B. Research questions

1. Did you consider MBA accreditation before you enrolled for your MBA?

   a. Yes
   b. No
2. Which of the following accredited MBA programmes are you aware of?
   a. None
   b. AACSB – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
   c. AMBA – The Association of MBAs
   d. EQUIS – EFMD Quality Improvement System
   e. EABST21 – The Alliance of Business Education and Scholarship for Tomorrow
   f. Other
3. Are you prepared to pay higher tuition fees for an MBA program accredited by one of the best international MBA accreditation bodies? Compared to the current cost of an MBA qualification how much more will you be willing to pay for an accredited MBA programme?
   a. I'm not prepared to pay extra
   b. I'm willing to pay 10% more
   c. I'm willing to pay 20% more
   d. I'm willing to pay 30% more
   e. I'm willing to pay 40% more
   f. I'm willing to pay 50% more
4. I prefer a business school that has an accredited MBA programme at the following accreditation bodies
   a. AMBA
   b. EQUIS
   c. AACSB
   d. Triple crown (accredited at all three accreditation bodies mentioned above)
   e. An accreditation body not mentioned above
5. An accredited MBA programme implies a better programme quality
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly agree
6. An accredited business school will provide me with better opportunities in the business world

a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neutral
d. Agree
e. Strongly agree

7. In hindsight would you recommend prospect MBA students to enrol for an accredited MBA programme that is offered
    a. Full time (1 year)
    b. Part time (2 years)
    c. Online
8. An accredited business school will provide me with better opportunities in the work environment
    a. Strongly disagree
    b. Disagree
    c. Neutral
    d. Agree
    e. Strongly agree
9. Accreditation increases credibility of a business school
    a. Strongly disagree
    b. Disagree
    c. Neutral
    d. Agree
    e. Strongly agree
10. Accreditation is required for business schools to improve their competitiveness
    a. Strongly disagree
    b. Disagree
    c. Neutral
    d. Agree
    e. Strongly agree
11. Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme (1-lowest and 5-highest).

	1	2	3	4	5
Tuition fees					
Location					

Ranking of business school					
Whether the MBA programme has international accreditation					
Admission requirements					
Reputation of the business school					
Duration of the MBA programme					
Curriculum of MBA programme					
Student testimonials					
Supporting facilities					
Employment perspective					
Alumni profiles					
Mode of delivery					

12. Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme (1-lowest and 5-highest).

	1	2	3	4	5
Personal satisfaction					
Improving knowledge and skills					
Career opportunities					
Income prospects					
Promotional opportunities					
Opportunity for independence					
To recognise business opportunities					
Solve business problems					
Market yourself skilfully					
Competing in the job market					
Job security					
Business qualification was required					
Family pressure					

Information to compile the questionnaire were obtained from Bel *et al.* (2014)

Appendix B – Raw data

Comparison of current and former MBA students' perceptions

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q2: Did you consider MBA accreditation before you enrolled for your MBA?	Yes	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	No	7	63.6%	3	75.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q4: Compared to the current cost of an MBA qualification how much more will you be willing to pay for an accredited MBA programme?	I am not prepared to pay extra	6	54.5%	3	75.0%
	I am willing to pay 10% more	1	9.1%	1	25.0%

		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
	I am willing to pay 20% more	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	I am willing to pay 30% more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	I am willing to pay 40% more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	I am willing to pay 50% more	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q3: Which of the following accredited MBA programmes are you aware of?	None	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	AACSB - The Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	AMBA - The Association of MBAs	10	90.9%	4	100.0%
	EQUIS - EFMD Quality Improvement System	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	EABST21 - The Alliance of Business Education and Scholarship for Tomorrow	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Other	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q4: Compared to the current cost of an MBA qualification how much more will you be willing to pay for an accredited MBA programme?	I am not prepared to pay extra	6	54.5%	3	75.0%
	I am willing to pay 10% more	1	9.1%	1	25.0%
	I am willing to pay 20% more	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	I am willing to pay 30% more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	I am willing to pay 40% more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

	I am willing to pay 50% more	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q5: Do prefer a business school that has an accredited program with the following accreditation bodies	AMBA	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	EQUIS	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	AACSB	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Triple crown (accredited at all three accreditation bodies mentioned above)	7	63.6%	3	75.0%
	An accreditation body not mentioned above	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q6: An accredited MBA programme implies a better programme quality	Strongly disagree	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	Agree	4	36.4%	2	50.0%
	Strongly agree	6	54.5%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q7: In hindsight would you recommend prospect MBA students to enroll for an accredited MBA programme that is offered	Full time (1 year)	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Part time (2 year)	7	63.6%	2	50.0%
	Online	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q8: An accredited business school will provide me with	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	9.1%	0	0.0%

better opportunities in the work environment	Neutral	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Agree	6	54.5%	3	75.0%
	Strongly agree	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q9: Accreditation increases credibility of a business school	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	6	54.5%	2	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	5	45.5%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q10: Accreditation is required for business schools to improve their competitiveness	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	Agree	6	54.5%	1	25.0%
	Strongly agree	4	36.4%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q11_1: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Tuition fees	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_2: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Location	2.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	3.00	1	9.1%	1	25.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	2	50.0%
	5.00	5	45.5%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_3: Please rank the following factors you considered when you	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	2	18.2%	3	75.0%

enrolled in your MBA programme: Ranking of business school	3.00	5	45.5%	0	0.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	5.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_4: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Whether the MBA programme has international accreditation	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	3.00	5	45.5%	1	25.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	2	50.0%
	5.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_5: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Admission requirements	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_6: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Reputation of the business school	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	4.00	7	63.6%	2	50.0%
	5.00	1	9.1%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_7: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Duration of the MBA programme	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	4.00	6	54.5%	2	50.0%
	5.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_8: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Curriculum of MBA programme	2.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	4.00	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_9: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Student testimonials	1.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	2.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	4.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	5.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_10: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	2.00	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	3.00	6	54.5%	2	50.0%

programme: Supporting facilites	4.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_11: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Employment perspective	1.00	1	10.0%	0	0.0%
	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	3	30.0%	1	25.0%
	4.00	6	60.0%	2	50.0%
	Total	10	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_12: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Alumni profiles	1.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	2.00	3	27.3%	3	75.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	4.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q11_13: Please rank the following factors you considered when you enrolled in your MBA programme: Mode of delivery	1.00	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	4.00	5	45.5%	1	25.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%

		A current MBA student		In a managerial position with an MBA qualification	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Q12_1: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Personal satisfaction	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	5.00	6	54.5%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_2: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Improving knowledge and skills	3.00	1	9.1%	1	25.0%
	4.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	5.00	6	54.5%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_3: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Career opportunities	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	4.00	4	36.4%	2	50.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_4: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Income prospects	2.00	0	0.0%	2	50.0%
	3.00	5	45.5%	0	0.0%
	4.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	5.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
	2.00	1	9.1%	1	25.0%

Q12_5: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Promotional opportunities	3.00	4	36.4%	0	0.0%
	4.00	2	18.2%	2	50.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_6: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Opportunity for independence	3.00	3	27.3%	2	50.0%
	4.00	4	36.4%	0	0.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	2	50.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_7: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: To recognise business opportunities	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	4.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_8: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Solve business problems	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	4.00	5	45.5%	2	50.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_9: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Market yourself skilfully	2.00	0	0.0%	1	25.0%
	3.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	4.00	6	54.5%	2	50.0%
	5.00	3	27.3%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_10: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Competing in the job market	3.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	4.00	5	45.5%	3	75.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_11: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Job security	2.00	0	0.0%	2	50.0%
	3.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	4.00	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
	5.00	4	36.4%	1	25.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_12: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA programme: Business qualification was required	1.00	2	18.2%	1	25.0%
	2.00	6	54.5%	2	50.0%
	3.00	1	9.1%	1	25.0%
	4.00	2	18.2%	0	0.0%
	Total	11	100.0%	4	100.0%
Q12_13: Please rank the following reasons you considered when you enrolled for your MBA	1.00	7	63.6%	2	50.0%
	2.00	4	36.4%	2	50.0%

programme: Family pressure	Total	11	100.0%	2	100.0%