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Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride: Organisational Decoupling, Institutional Isomorphism, and Quality Culture in Pursuit for International Accreditation

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Abstract

For much of the past decade, international accreditation process has been widely adopted in top schools in developed countries. Little is presently known about the process by which the pursuit for international accreditation happens in emerging countries. This paper attempts to shed light on this issue through an in-depth field study of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. Using an institutional approach, this study shows how institutions coevolved with organisational forms. It then led to the expansion of bureaucratic forms, which differed from the original logic of institutional theory. Thus, I argue that schools in developing countries are facing external pressure to be the best, but has not yet been the best due to its peculiar characteristics and bureaucratic structures.

Keywords: decoupling, accreditation, quality, business education, Indonesia

1 Introduction

This article studied the international accreditation process to show how institutions coevolved with organisational forms. In particular, I was primarily concerned with integrating institutional isomorphism and organisational decoupling by focusing on the interaction between business school and its stakeholders in examining whether selection or adaptation drove institutional changes. Correspondingly, I am interested in the institutional dynamics and organisational behaviour in pursuing international accreditation compared to the already earned national accreditation. To a great extent, the majority of the studies published have analysed this phenomenon in the context of developed countries (e.g. Brink et al., 2018). In addition, since such an accreditation system is impact-focused and relies on mission alignment; thus,

it is also interesting to examine the effect of the school's mission statement on organisational legitimacy as well.

This paper aims to make a theoretical and empirical contribution to management and business education studies. First, this paper examines the key organisational and strategic circumstances under which business schools decouple their policies from practices. Second, the paper complements these critical studies on the conditions that force schools to decouple the structural effects of their engagement in the standardisation process. Following Snelson-Powell et al. (2016), it is pivotal to understand what decoupling actually means in the context of business school administration. Third, and perhaps more importantly, this paper offers distinctive characteristics of business school in establishing its legitimacy in the context of developing countries. If business school administrators are indeed one of the central features of the modern business school, then we need to theorise the identity and the practice of managerial work in business school – a task I undertake in the theoretical contribution of this paper.

In keeping with the rigour tradition, this study has relied on qualitative analysis to scrutinise the phenomena Creswell and Poth (2017). Quantitative studies have been criticised in a way that sometimes sacrifices breadth by depth (Galvin and Arndt, 2014). It is also quite difficult to gather additional and relevant information regarding how to construct the mission statement in the organisation (Alegre et al., 2018). Thus, to take into account contextual factors, this investigation was based primarily on published primary sources, internal documents, as well as interviews and observations. The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of organisational decoupling, institutional isomorphism, and quality culture in pursuit for international accreditation, and based on this, put forward directions for future studies on the field of management education and business school administration.

To answer such important questions, this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 describes the literature review on management organisation and education studies to provide the rationale of this study. Section 3 focuses on the methodology. Section 4 describes the case study profile, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Gadjah Mada (hereinafter referred to as FEB UGM), and its experiences in pursuing international accreditation and keeping up with the Joneses, in conjunction with its already earned national accreditation status. Section 5 observes the aforementioned case, discusses it, and analyses it accordingly with the extant literature in the field of management education and business school administration. Section 6 concludes the paper with implications and lessons learned for other business schools administrators, particularly those in developing countries.

2 Literature Review

Business schools all over the world are currently facing institutional pressure to respond to emerging issues such as ethics, sustainability, globalisation, and technological innovation (Snelson-Powell et al., 2016). Their legitimacy has been challenged by recent corporate scandals, financial crises, sustainability, and responsibility in management education (Boyle, 2004; Cornuel, 2005; Schoemaker, 2008; Wilson and Thomas, 2012). Business schools have also been accused of decoupling their espousal from their actual practices of providing responsible business and management education (Boyle, 2004; Cornuel, 2005). Such decoupling can be detrimental since it causes discordant perception of legitimacy (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

Indeed, business schools respond differently to similar institutional pressures (Meyer and Rowan,

1977). They might adjust their behaviour to be perceived as rational and legitimate to their outside stakeholders, including prospective students, fundraising donors, and regulators. Due to the peculiar characteristics of business schools and the distinctive nature of their institutional pressures, the probability of business school decouples their relevant structural effects are increasing significantly (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015). Although such existing studies have increased our understanding about changes in business school administration, we know surprisingly very little about the dynamics of such phenomena in the context of developing countries.

As one of the most rigour accreditation standards, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has grown into a global consortium aimed at creating a comprehensive set of business and accounting standards that can be implemented by any business school anywhere (White et al., 2009). It becomes a gold standard of excellence and provides external validation of high-quality business schools worldwide (Espiritu, 2007; Trapnell, 2007). Thus, it is no wonder that AACSB is playing an important role in guiding business schools to excel in management education (Scherer et al., 2005). In general, the AACSB accreditation process will also benefit all of the school's stakeholders (White et al., 2009). For example, faculty members will benefit from increased respect, enhanced support, as well as boosted salaries compared to those non-accredited business schools (Levernier et al., 1992).

Departing from the strategic management and organisation literature, the idea of adaptation within the same environment over time is not that new. Since Weber (1905), the notion of "iron cage of rationality" and competitive forces in external environment have been considered as driving forces for organisations to be similar in structure and action (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Scott (2001) then argued that such similarity results from efficiency-seeking adaptation to a similar task environment. However, institutional isomorphism differs from the perspective of competitive survival and selection forces in the sense that it focuses on adaptation through a socially constructed environment.

However, when organisations all over the world are forced to adapt to external rationalised myths about what organisations should look like and do, they face at least two different problems: (1) the rationalised myths might not consist of an optimal and efficient solution for the business school and (2) competing and inconsistent myths can exist simultaneously (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017). Thus, it makes sense for organisations to attempt to decouple their practices from their espoused or formal structure to solve these problems (Bromley and Powell, 2012; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Such loosely coupled behaviour (e.g., Weick, 1979) is perceived as a solution to problems of change. These organisations deliberately disconnect their practice and structure due to efficiency-seeking motives (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

By decoupling themselves, organisations could achieve legitimacy via espoused action and efficiency and consistency through actual action, which enhances their survivability (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017). Consequently, organisations that decouple should avoid close inspection to avoid being considered fraud because they are not relying on the "logic of confidence and good faith" (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p. 357). It then became obvious that organisations that are being institutionally pressured will deliberately avoid scrutiny and/or control the process of scrutiny. However, this is not always the case of business schools. On the contrary, they are aiming for accreditation despite perhaps their decoupling practices (Thomas et al., 2014).

Although prior research has already attempted to address the challenge of optimal distinctiveness, there is still ambiguity in this area, especially in the context of management education (Trapnell, 2007). Little attention has been paid to examine the relationship between institutional isomorphism and or-

ganisational decoupling in the context of an immature institutionalised environment such as developing countries.

3 Methodology

This study focuses on the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation and re-accreditation pursuit of Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Gadjah Mada (FEB UGM) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which took place from 2006 to 2019. I argue that this particular case is revealing since it provides the opportunity to observe the stages of international accreditation in the context of developing countries that are relatively new to such a process. At the outset, the case is interesting considering the longstanding history of the school at the national level, but relatively unknown in the international level, making FEB UGM quite remarkable in its context.[1]

As mentioned by (Pettigrew, 1990), I aimed to go "beyond chronology to develop analytic themes" (p277). Departing from Bell et al. (2018), the case of FEB UGM is also revelatory since it captures a type of phenomenon that seems to have been previously inaccessible to empirical investigation. As expected, the business school administrators and the accreditation insiders are typically do not conduct scholarly research in this particular area. Moreover, the accreditation experiences do not serve the faculty members research interests or simply providing partially publishable findings. But in this case, my experiences with accreditation management are converged with my scholarly interests in examining business schools administration in a broader sense.

The main approach during this accreditation experiences was self-ethnographical since the author was actively involved in FEB UGM's accreditation process (Alvesson, 2003). This method is not uncommon for studies in the field of higher education (e.g. Bryman and Lilley, 2009). In this case, the author was primarily pre-occupied by his administrative roles at the Quality Assurance Unit. Thus, participation should come first and was only barely complemented with debriefing or observation in a research-oriented sense (Alvesson, 2003). Data collected during the process should also follow an iterative reflection to guide my search for relevant theories to enable us in specifying and contextualising phenomena (Siggelkow, 2007).

Indeed, being an insider to the school being studied has both pros and cons. Insider research can be disqualified since it is not particularly exercising intellectual rigour due to the researcher's personal emotional connections and personal stakes in the setting (Morse, 1998). Yet, Brannick and Coghlan (2007) assert that it is respectable research and is not problematic. Instead, such insider research provides a more thorough understanding of the research settings, including its history, culture, and other contextual aspects. The challenge in self-ethnographical approach, however, is distancing the researcher from the setting and breaking out from the taken-for-granted organisational context (Alvesson, 2003). Thus, to break out from the FEB UGM context and to overcome weaknesses, I openly reinforce my roles as researchers during interviews and informal discussions.

In addition to that, my observations as participant build on several written evidence, including internal

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[1]To be sure, I do not intend to suggest that FEB UGM violated any ethical conducts or even involved in any illegitimate acts. On the contrary, I aim to highlight that despite all of the constraints and difficulties, FEB UGM is able to achieve and maintain its accreditation status. Furthermore, this study has been communicated and discussed with the faculty management, and they took considerable efforts to ensure the mission alignment, compliance to the national and international standards, as well as the sustainability of the school operation in the long run.

memos, e-mail correspondences, and accreditation documents which were accessed in the course of usual organisational life at FEB UGM. The data sources used in this research of FEB UGM accreditation process are internal reports, marketing materials, magazine and newspaper articles, websites, statistics, scholarly publications, as well as social media to help me elaborate both the FEB UGM case and the business schools in Indonesia more thoroughly. To reduce potential bias, I prioritise primary sources over my own memories of events. A timeline of important events, meetings, and e-mail communications was formed, which made it available to construct more accurate sequences regarding discussions and decisions that had been made by the FEB UGM administrators (see Table 1).

4   Case Study Profile

The Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Gadjah Mada (hereinafter referred to as "FEB UGM") is part of the oldest state and national university in Indonesia, Universitas Gadjah Mada or UGM, which was established on 19 December 1949 as a response towards Universiteit van Indonesie in Jakarta. In his inaugural speech, Ir. Soekarno, the first President of the Republic of Indonesia, stated that UGM had great meaning, as the centre for nationalism, as part of the fight against colonialism, and for its spirit of dedication to the nation and the people. These values remain very important and shape the school vision to the present day.

UGM has 18 faculties, a vocational school, a graduate school, with 251 programs. It comprises of 2,581 faculty members and 5,009 employees. More than 55,000 students, both domestic and international, are studying at UGM in a myriad of vocational (13.13%), undergraduate (56.77%), and graduate programs (30.10%). Academically, UGM has high requirements for its admission test scores, compared to other universities in the country. As a research university, UGM has also been paying a great deal of attention to its research activities, by supporting 21 study centres in diverse scientific fields. According to QS World University Ranking, UGM is number 391 in the world or 74 in Asia.

Since its inception, UGM has been a pioneer of, and remains, a strong promoter of community services and social empowerment activities in Indonesia. This is manifested in many ways, one of which is by assigning every student to participate in a mandatory Social Community Service (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata* or KKN) program, which is widely dispersed around the country. The government requires that universities play their role in education, research, and also contribute to society, and issued Three Principles of Higher Education (*Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi*) as part of National Development Program (*PROPENAS*) 1989-1994, but UGM had already been doing this for a number of years before it was issued.

The FEB UGM, is the first and the only business school in Indonesia that has earned accreditation from The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in 2014. FEB UGM was established in 1955, as a result of the reorganisation of the university's Faculty of Law, Economics, Social Studies and Politics. Since the early stages, FEB UGM students have come from all across the nation. After finishing their studies, they return back home to contribute their skills and resources to the development of their areas of origin. As mandated by the university's regulation, FEB UGM is employing affirmative action to increase diversity, through several schemes such as Bidikmisi or "Scholarships for the underprivileged" and 3T (*Terdepan, Terluar, dan Tertinggal*) or "Outermost, Frontier, and Disadvantaged".

In 2016, FEB UGM began to review and reconstruct its mission statement to ensure that the mission reflects the significant changes, fits the current environment, and remains constant throughout FEB

Table 1: Accreditation Stages at FEB UGM

No	Milestone	Date
1	AACSB Membership	10 March 2006
2	Pre-Accreditation Eligibility Application submission	10 August 2006
3	Eligibility Application accepted	3 November 2006
4	Accreditation Plan submission	15 April 2009
5	Accreditation Plan accepted by PAC and IAC	12 January 2010
6	Assurance of Learning Workshop	29-30 January 2010
7	Progress Report submission to IAC to review (year 1)	22 October 2010
8	Progress Report submission to IAC to review (year 2)	14 October 2011
9	Mentor visit by Michael Tearney	31 January - 2 February 2012
10	Mentor visit by Michael Tearney and Eileen Peacock	28-29 August 2012
11	Progress Report submission to IAC to review (year 3)	28 September 2012
12	Assurance of Learning Workshop	10-13 January 2013
13	Invitation by IAC to submit SER and confirm PRT visit	8 August 2013
14	Submission of the Self-Evaluation Report	31 October 2013
15	Mock Team Visit	19 January 2014
16	AACSB Peer Review Team visit	28 February - 3 March 2014
17	Earned AACSB Accreditation Status	12 May 2014
18	Submit Continuous Improvement Review Application	1 July 2016
19	Mock visit by Gerard George	5 November 2018
20	CIR Report submission to AACSB	26 December 2018
21	Peer Review Team CIR visit	23-26 February 2019

UGM's existence. To do so, FEB established a team, developed a vision and mission sketch, and arranged a series of group discussions with the faculty and key stakeholders, as well as taking into account comments and suggestions from Peer Review Team (PRT). Following those processes, three major themes emerged: leadership, ethics and internationalisation. These three themes are particularly indispensable and emphasised in the school's mission, without neglecting the importance of their contribution to the nation and the people.

In accordance with the values inherited from the founding fathers, nowadays the school realise that the lack of integrity is alarming. CEOs worldwide are getting pushed out for unethical behaviour. Political figures also have been arrested, indicted, or convicted for corruption. According to the 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Indonesia is the 96th least corrupt country. Therefore, in nurturing the leaders of the future, the school places a great deal of emphasis on integrity and ethical behaviour among students. Looking outwards, the school also realise that globalisation has not only affected the rapid economic growth and political dynamics in the region, but also promoted greater integration with the world economy. A change of this magnitude screams for a change in strategies and processes, and demands that the school revisit the very core of its values to ensure they are appropriate for the current environment.

FEB UGM has about 5,100 students and 144 faculty members. The school offers a range of subject areas for prospective students, at undergraduate, master, and doctorate levels through three departments: Economics, Management, and Accounting (see Table 2). Each department's strength comes from its highly competent professors, almost all of whom hold doctoral degrees from reputable universities overseas. FEB UGM currently has the largest number of professors in accounting. All of the programs are

accredited and ranked 'A' (the highest) by the Board of National Accreditation while also being accredited by the international accreditation institution, AACSB. The undergraduate programs in accounting and economics are also certified by the Asean University Network (AUN) for their quality. With its profile, academic resources, systems and processes, FEB UGM is widely acknowledged as the best in the country.

Location wise, FEB UGM is situated in Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, one of the smallest provinces in Indonesia, which has been widely known as a centre for education and learning, as well as the centre of Javanese culture. It is free from big city distractions such as air pollution and noisy traffic, making it one of the most wanted and admired places to study nationally. Geographically speaking, Yogyakarta is also central to the country and is becoming the hub of traditional, cultural, and educational life that attracts lots of students from across the nation. FEB UGM contribution is not only limited to Yogyakarta or Java, since the school have mitigated the widespread social problems in Indonesia through its community services, mentoring, and training programs, among others.

FEB UGM has historically been involved in many successful collaborations, partnerships, and understandings, both nationally and internationally, and continues to build on this success. FEB UGM is the first and only school accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in Indonesia. FEB UGM is currently the Chairman and the Permanent Secretariat for the ASEAN University Network for Business and Economics (AUN-BE) network. It is also a member of the Network of International Business and Economic Schools (NIBES) and the Association of Asia-Pacific Business Schools (AAPBS). FEB UGM is also the first school in UGM to offer an international undergraduate program. Student exchanges and international faculty exposure are highly encouraged through various schemes, including lectures by guests, collaborative research, and case and study material development.

As mentioned above, according to Law No. 12/2012 on Higher Education, and Government Regulation No. 26/2015, UGM has been granted the status of an autonomous state university (Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Badan Hukum or PTNBH). On the one hand, it gives the university the flexibility to recruit faculty and staff, to initiate research programs and funding, as well as to utilise performance measurement standards. On the other hand, several challenges and limitations prevail. For example, most faculty members and staff are civil servants in the MRTHE of the Republic of Indonesia. Firing a civil servant requires a complicated process and takes a considerable amount of time. They are often allowed to get away with poor performance. The school, however, make efforts to mitigate such risks and carefully screen its potential new employees.

With regard to the government's regulations, the minimum qualification required to become a faculty member in Indonesia is a master's degree. FEB UGM still has several faculty members without doctoral degrees, but it raises that bar by only accepting new faculty members who have a doctoral degree, or who hold a master's degree and an admission letter for pursuing a doctoral program. The government is also enforcing a standard national curriculum that is too rigid and not adaptive to local and international dynamics, making changes to the curriculum difficult at best and controversial at worst. Despite its freedom and flexibility as a PTNBH, the school budget and cost structures are still regulated by the government, making it quite challenging to compete against its peers in the region. Consequently, faculty salaries are still not on par with other ASEAN universities and attracting visiting scholars or adjunct faculties from overseas remains an arduous task.

The school tried its best to attract international students, but it faces problems beyond control, regarding the regulatory complexity of student visas. International students who take exchange and

Table 2: Study Programmes at FEB UGM

No	Study Program	Established	Period of validity
1	Bachelor in Accounting	1964	26 September 2019
2	Bachelor in Economics*		22 August 2019
3	Bachelor in Management	1955	20 September 2019
4	Master in Accounting	2002	28 February 2020
5	Master in Economics Development*		8 August 2019
6	Master in Management	1988	29 August 2020
7	Master in Management (Jakarta Campus)	2001	21 March 2022
8	Master of Science in Accounting	1980	14 February 2022
9	Master of Science in Economics*		15 August 2020
10	Master of Science in Management	1980	29 August 2020
11	Doctor in Accounting	2000	2 May 2020
12	Doctor in Economics*		6 April 2020
13	Doctor in Management	2000	2 May 2020
14	Accountant*		26 September 2019

*) outside the scope of accreditation

double degree programs are encouraged to use limited-stay visa (VITAS). Previously, the VITAS online application quota allocated by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia (MRTHE) was only used by a few universities. However, since the 2018/2019 academic year, the quota has been used by more universities in Indonesia, not only UGM. If previously the school could use around 50 applications per day, recently it can only apply for five to ten student visas. Moreover, the procedure for international students to get VITAS is no less complicated because it involves not only the MRTHE but also the Immigration department.

In relation to the learning environment, the interaction between faculty, staff, and students is close and warm. FEB UGM is located far from the big cities such as Jakarta or Surabaya, where large numbers of business communities and industrial areas exist. However, to fill this gap, FEB UGM maintains a close relationship with its alumni and industry to provide company visits, immersion programs, and other learning opportunities for students, to make them familiar with the current market conditions.

Historically speaking, back in the 1990s, the number of universities and schools providing a good business education was rather limited, mostly comprising of public institutions on the main islands. Faculty members graduating from overseas at that time were also quite minuscule in number; but nowadays many schools and universities nationwide are offering new, innovative programs covering a wide range of subjects. Many of their faculty members also come from reputable universities overseas. These schools and universities are not shying away from global collaborations and partnerships. This situation will not only tighten the competition to attract new students, but also to retain the faculty members. One of the most difficult challenges currently being faced by FEB UGM is hiring new faculty members, particularly those who are aligned with the school's mission and have a strong research background. In compliance with the national regulations and budget limitations, it is also almost impossible to recruit foreign academics. Given the status of the school as a public institution, FEB UGM has to balance concerns about the school's budget as well.

Furthermore, the rise of globalisation and increasing economic integration in the Asia Pacific fuels the competition for new students. In 2016, Indonesia recorded the world's fourth largest middle class with

19.6 million households (Euromonitor, 2017). Parents from this group are starting to turn to overseas universities in search of a broader education for their children. They could comfortably afford tuition and living costs in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, or Australia.

Universities in developing countries such as Indonesia have pivotal roles to play by augmenting such distinctive and effective academic systems, thus allowing their countries to participate in the global epistemic community. All developing countries need at least one university of sufficient quality to participate in the globalised environment of higher education, and to conduct research in fields relevant to their nation's development. FEB UGM is highly committed to being that "one" by continuously raising the bar for its reputation and competitiveness in the global knowledge economies, as reflected by UGM's motto, "Locally Rooted, Globally Respected". Research, intertwined with teaching and engagement with society, are two of the strongholds of the school. FEB UGM is no ivory tower and it is relevant to the wider community, since much of its research is carried out in collaboration with policymakers as well as practitioners. Such activities are purposively designated to address particular issues and problems in developing countries, e.g. anti-corruption and public accountability, tax policy and government subsidies, poverty eradication, and authentic leadership, among others.

FEB UGM also provides avenues for its students to develop themselves. For example, recently the school has launched the soft skills development program, which has been a great success and students have greatly benefited from the course. This program includes, but is not limited to, training in communication skills, writing skills, personality development, as well as ethics and integrity. There is also a Leadership Enhancement and Acceleration Program (LEAP), a series of non-credit academic events aimed at fostering the spirit of leadership with ethical and creative decision-making. At present, it has been organised for Master in Management (hereinafter MM) students, but in the future it will be extended to other programs as well. The school believes that such initiatives will ensure its graduates remain relevant, not only in the current job market, but also in the coming decades.

With regard to its degree programs, there have been several developments since FEB UGM obtained AACSB accreditation status. For instance, in conjunction with its international undergraduate program, in 2016 the MM (Jakarta Campus) program also started its international class. The school involvement with ASEAN peers through AUN-BE has resulted in several future opportunities. For example, the school will launch an integrated, international study program, jointly delivered by an AUN-BE consortium, similar to those Erasmus Mundus schemes in Europe. As reported in the recent CIR report, consistent with its mission, the school continue to improve themselves in four main categories: strategic management, leadership and integrity, teaching and curricula development, and impactful engagement with its stakeholders.

5   Discussion and Analysis

From the case aforementioned above, it is evident that the pursuit of achieving the AACSB international standard is a long and arduous journey. It requires strong commitment, not only financially, but also intellectually – that many business schools worldwide were simply difficult to achieve (White et al., 2009). It is also evident that the AACSB is relying on mission alignment of the school, signalling that the school has been willing to devote a substantial amount of resources to achieve and maintain its mission. However, what this study has shown from the perspective of institutional theory, similar to what Marquis

Table 3: Internal, National, and International Accreditation

Level	Internal	National	International
Name	AMI-SPMI	AIPT/BAN-PT	AACSB
Standard	Internal Quality Audit (AMI)	9 standards (Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives; Output and Impact of Tridharma; Teaching; Research; Community service; Students; Human Resources (HR); Finance, Facilities and Infrastructure; Governance and Cooperation)	Strategic Management and Innovation (3 standards)
			Participants - Students, Faculty and Professional Staff (4 standards)
	Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI)		Learning and Teaching (5 standards)
			Academic and Professional Engagement (3 standards)
Period	1 or 2 years	5 years	5 years

and Huang (2010) have been done, is that business schools are influenced not only by their present institutional environments, but also by their past ones.

While FEB UGM has been successfully maintaining its national accreditation status, it seems that the motive of pursuing international AACSB accreditation is to separate itself from those that are less dedicated to excelling in management education in the country (White et al., 2009). The school has established many years ago and has been receiving A (highest level) accreditation status within the country. However, it is because of the pursuit of AACSB that really motivate the school and its stakeholders to change. This is perhaps due to the underlying differences between national standards and international standards (Table 3). Both internal standard (AMI-SPMI) and national standard (AIPT/BAN-PT) are only focusing on input, process, and output (see Table 4).[2]

My review of the case has also provided us with useful insights into the way in which business schools respond to institutional pressures (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). However, similarly to a woman who assumedly has acted as bridesmaid at weddings but has not yet married, it is quite difficult for the school to stand out in front of its competitors due to its peculiar characteristics and bureaucratic structures which comes from rigid national regulation and university-level policies. The school might be able to keep up with the Joneses, but pursuing international accreditation will not take directly the school ahead.

The argument has been that, in addition to inflexible regulation, the school is also had to respond to competition in attracting good resources and adapt to recent technological innovation. However, due to high levels of density during the pursuit of accreditation, it implies that the particular school cohort confronts resource scarcity and often has to settle for inferior resources. These conditions are then likely to leave its mark, making the school relatively weaker competitors and leading to the unfavourable path in the future. This is perhaps the main reason why business schools decouple themselves from their

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[2]It was just recently that the criteria for the national accreditation process began to move toward the outcome. Meanwhile, since its inception, the AACSB standard was already focusing on its impact (Trapnell, 2007).

Table 4: Different Level of Focus

Level	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
Classroom lecture	Course syllabus	Lesson delivered	Students acquired the attitude, skills and knowledge (learning outcomes) of the lesson.	Students used the acquired attitude, skills and knowledge to solve real life problems.
Study Programme	Lab equipment	Number of graduates	Graduates with relevant attitude, skills and knowledge are employed and able to perform as expected.	Graduates contributed to the improvement of the organisations and society.
University	Resources available	Number of graduates and postgraduates	High employability of graduates and quality workforce for the labour markets.	Graduates contributed to the betterment of society and the country.

Table 5: Standard Comparison

	National Standard	International Standard
Assessment method	Input-based	Impact-based
Measurement	Standardisation, looking for similarity	Accreditation, embrace diversity
Main focus	Homogeneity	Accountability
Threshold	Very low baseline	High quality baseline
Inclusion criteria	All inclusive, no one left behind	Exclusive, distinguish the best from the rest
Timing	One point at a time	Continuous improvement
Completion stage	Done once the report has been submitted	Never complete
Main actor	Performed by the government or regulatory body	Performed by independent association

actual practices of providing high-quality and responsible management education (Boyle, 2004; Cornuel, 2005; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

It has been argued that recent changes in the AACSB accreditation standards have been slightly easier (White et al., 2009), making it possible for business schools in developing countries to pursue the accreditation status. However, the pursuit of such international accreditation will not be made possible without internal changes. In FEB UGM case, it appears that internal drive to change was rather limited. Thus, the AACSB accreditation standards become the pressure to enforce changes. This prerequisite for changes should also be accompanied with the focus on impact – a paradigm that was alien for internal standard and national accreditation board (see Table 5). Without such paradigm changes, accreditation will simply become just another labelling and certification that lead the school to do business as usual.

In the case of AACSB accreditation, it is expected that the school would move from loose coupling to tight coupling (see Figure 1). However, it probably turns out not as I expected. Too many peculiarities, institutional challenges, regulatory restrictions, and indecisive leadership that eventually stimulate even a higher degree of decoupling (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017). The school seemed to move away from what has been initiated before in the first place. I suspect that the aim for maintaining its international accreditation status has swiftly moved from a vehicle to internally improve its internal processes to a
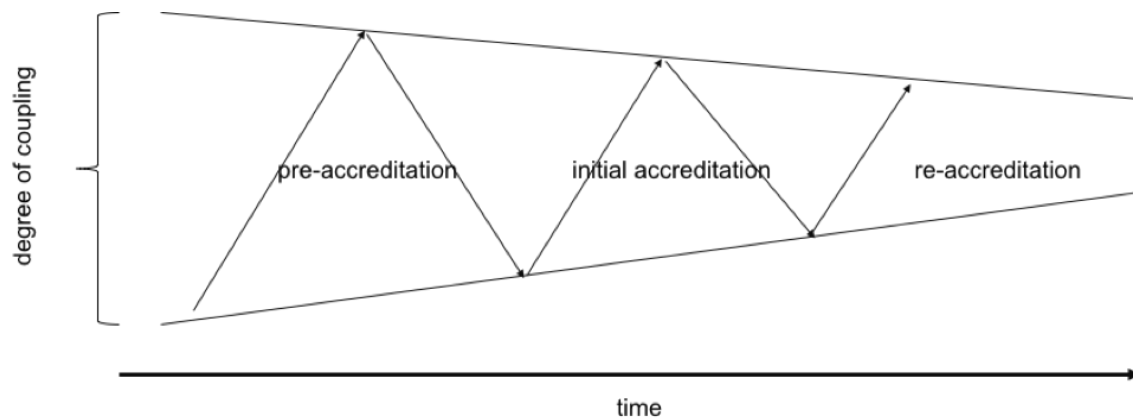
Figure 1: Expectation: Promote Tight Coupling

means to entertain external recognition and legitimacy.

It seems that both aims (AACSB as a driver for internal improvement and as a tool to exercise legitimacy and recognition) are equally valid as *causes* for undergoing accreditation (Trapnell, 2007). In other words, it is perhaps quite difficult to claim that the initial aim was to drive internal change and then the legitimacy aim came afterwards. Both aims could present at the same time when the school took the commitment to be a member of AACSB. Since then, events and practices tend to reflect more of the decoupling phenomenon rather than the actual changes in the internal business process.

For example, faculty management *exploit* or *force* faculty members to perform exceptionally well in research, teaching, and services, but often without the structural changes necessary to support the compliance. AACSB then becomes a *sacred word* that shall not be questioned by faculty members. Furthermore, junior faculty members were sometimes forced to do the grunt works – often without a clear vision by the leadership – for the sake of fulfiling the necessary administrative requirements for accreditation.

Thus, decoupling has become the solution to resolve the dis-junction between expected values and daily practices (see Figure 2). As the accreditation process went by, faculty members realised that some aspects of the current practices simply cannot (or, are very difficult to) be changed (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015). Hence, the school attempted to re-interpret reality to fit into (or *retrofitting*) the standards expected by AACSB (Thomas et al., 2014). Indeed, it does not mean that the subject did not comply to the standard. It also does not mean that there is such an illegitimate and disobedience actions taken. However, if such *ignorance* does not addressed carefully, in the long run, the sustainability of the school will be at structural risks (Scott, 2001). Indeed, such shock-respite mechanism will result in institutional fatigue and less optimal of resource use.

6   Conclusion and Implications

To conclude the paper, I would argue that business schools in an immature institutionalised context such as Indonesia will be necessary for the development of the country, but they will never be a bride – never be the most important entity in a broader context. An external pressure to be the best is apparent, but has
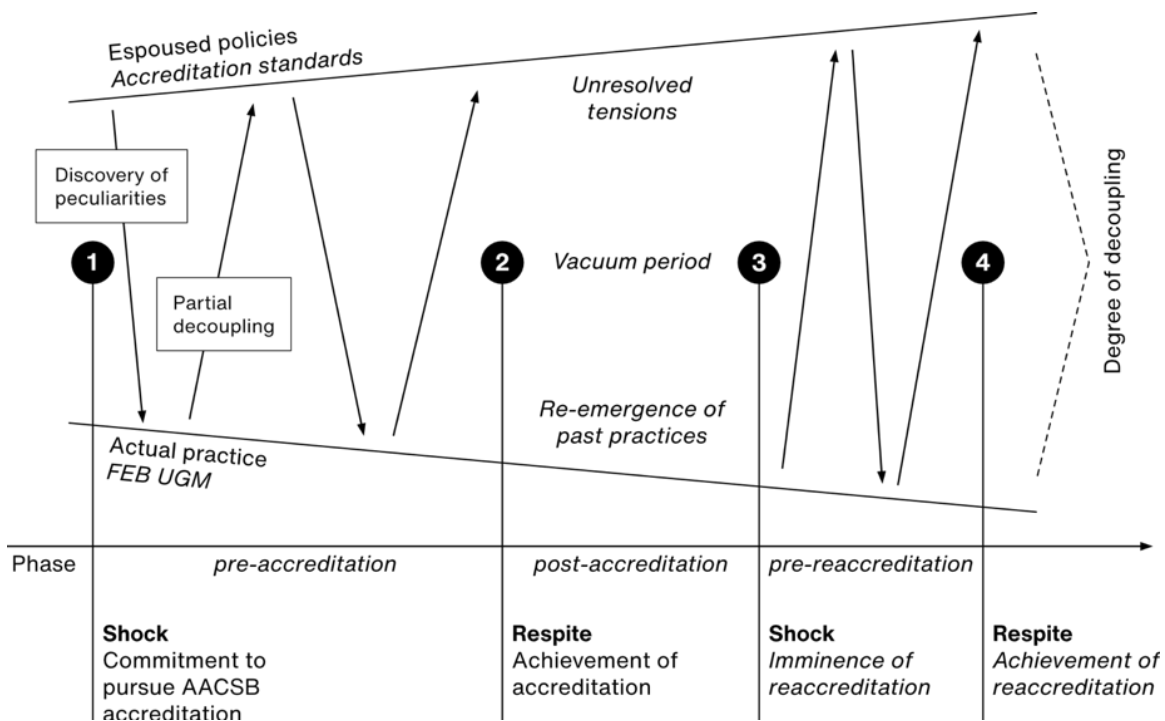
Figure 2: Reality: It Becomes Loosely Coupled

not yet forced the business schools to be the best in a global environment. I would venture to say such school is a good school and knows its quality when it chooses to pursue the more rigorous accreditation, or in this case, is international accreditation. However, while examining changes and dynamics in pursuing international accreditation seemed like a natural fit, but that potential has somewhat surprisingly only been realised to a very limited extent.

As this observation indicates, the formation of identity has been associated, at least in part, with the influence of the business school administrators and its subsequent persistence with internal and external inertial forces. Examining how environmental challenges drove business schools to decouple or, instead, to develop new organisational solutions – solutions, which displayed some common elements but were also deeply embedded in their local and national institutional contexts, in turn creating powerful legacies conditioning their subsequent trajectories and limiting the potential for convergence. Thus, if an institution wants to championing change, it has to not only initiate change, but more importantly, also align it with the existing norms by emphasising on legitimate fact over politics and culture in any decision making process.

With that said, it is important to note that my examination is not the only, or even the first, study of its kind in the academic domain. Indeed, the findings need to be interpreted with caution, since the study was only conducted at one school in an emerging country. Further studies could be directed to analyse how individual-level factors aggregate to the institutional level. Such microfoundational level of investigations could bring clarity into the discussion, particularly by examining how routines and capabilities can be built up from these peculiar foundations.

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