Perceptions of Reputation Drivers in Business Schools: A Study of Two Australian Non-accredited Business Schools

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Business education continues to be very popular among students across the globe. Over the decades, Australian business schools in higher education institutions have experienced a huge increase in student enrolments in business courses. The majority of these students come from the neighbouring Asian countries. With the increasing demand from international students and reduced government funding, universities and business schools are criticised for behaving more like ‘corporate’ organisations. In an attempt to increase their own funding, business schools’ strategies include raising more revenue from international students, which may have adverse repercussions for the reputation of business schools.

While business education continues to be in demand, business schools face criticism of the quality of business programs and business graduates. Business programs have been criticised for not preparing students for the work place, and graduates are criticised as not work-ready. To counter this criticism, individual business schools are trying to enhance their reputation in the sector by embarking on strategies to differentiate themselves from other business schools. However, in doing so, there is a tendency for schools to imitate each other, which is counter to their aim and results in homogeneity across the sector. Therefore, it would be useful to learn how business schools enhance organisational reputation, and in particular, how relatively younger and non-accredited business schools (non-accredited with international accreditations) compete with longstanding business schools and business schools with established reputations.

The study examines the question of how younger and non-accredited business schools can strategise to compete effectively in such a challenging sector. To do so,
the study investigates the reputation drivers that are perceived to give business schools a competitive advantage. The study presents the findings of qualitative research involving four groups of participants: academics from two non-accredited business schools; Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching (L&T) of business schools; and postgraduate students at a business school.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify the key reputation drivers that are perceived to be advantageous to business schools. In the process, the study elicits some of the strategies that business schools implement to gain a competitive advantage in the higher education sector (HES). A coding system was developed and using NVivo software interview responses were classified into themes. The analysis produced five main themes: historical reputation; international accreditations and rankings; industry and community engagements; teaching and research; and quality of students.

The results of the study indicate that industry and community engagement is the key to achieving quality business programs and to producing quality business graduates. The participants considered industry engagement to be vital to improve all aspects of teaching and research at higher education. In addition, two emerging themes surfaced that were not anticipated but formed a significant part of the interview discussions. These are work placement (WP) and transnational education (TNE) programs. The concern around both WP and TNE was the quality of students in the programs. A review of the Australian business schools’ websites revealed that TNE programs are mostly offered by the non-accredited business schools. The participants suggested that TNE programs are mainly revenue-driven and are part of
the massification of business education, and there are suggestions that such programs may damage the reputation of the institution.

The findings suggest that business schools should aim to improve their internal resources to provide differentiated and unique programs and services. The participants at the non-accredited business schools perceived enhancing the quality of the internal resources of the school as more important to gaining positive recognition and enhancing the institution’s reputation that leads to a competitive advantage than gaining external recognition via international accreditations and rankings. Additionally, business schools need to have a sustained differentiation strategy that cannot be easily imitated.
Pursuing the PhD has been one of the toughest journeys in my life – a seemingly never-ending emotional journey. Working on the thesis during the nights and over weekends was exhausting and a great sacrifice of family time. This arduous journey could not have been completed without the help of many. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to all who have been a part of this journey.

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Dedication

To my late parents.
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<td>AACSB</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business</td>
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<td>ABDC</td>
<td>Australian Business Deans Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Government</td>
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<td>ALTC</td>
<td>Australian Learning and Teaching Council</td>
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<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>Australian Research Council</td>
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<td>ARWU</td>
<td>Academic Ranking of World Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAANZ</td>
<td>Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training, Australian Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFMD</td>
<td>European Federation of Management Development</td>
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<td>EQUIS</td>
<td>European Quality Improvement System</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Excellence in Research for Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go8</td>
<td>Group of Eight Universities (in Australia)</td>
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<td>HES</td>
<td>Higher Education Sector</td>
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<td>L&amp;T</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching</td>
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<td>LTRS</td>
<td>League Tables and Ranking Systems</td>
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<td>TEQSA</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency</td>
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<td>THES</td>
<td>Times Higher Education Supplement</td>
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<td>TNE</td>
<td>Transnational Education</td>
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Chapter One  INTRODUCTION

Every leading nation needs universities

Universities are the engine room of every successful nation. Universities are critical pillars that power Australia’s economy, productivity, research, innovation, global engagement and industrial transformation. Universities and their graduates create new products, services and industries that underpin the industrial renewal and economic diversification of Australia. The research undertaken in Australian universities solves global problems, improves the health and wellbeing of the world’s citizens and positions us to meet the challenges of the future. Consciously building on the achievements of the Australian university sector is essential to leverage the opportunities to expand the nation’s economic, social and cultural wellbeing (Universities Australia, February 2013, p. 8).

1.1 Introduction

Increasing competition in the business world, including for non-profit organisations such as educational institutions, has led organisations to develop unique and differentiated resources to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals. Corporate success, nowadays, depends more on the intangible assets of an organisation than on traditional financial and non-financial indicators (Alniacik, Cigerim, Akcin and Bayram, 2011). One such intangible asset is organisational reputation (Roberts and Dowling, 2002). The intangible character of organisational reputation makes replication for competing organisations more difficult (Roberts and Dowling, 2002).

The concept of organisational reputation has been, and still is, a focus for scholars and practitioners and has been recognised as enabling sustainable competitive advantage (Alniacik et al., 2011). According to Barnett and Pollack (2012, p. 1), it has become “increasingly important – and increasingly problematic – for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand the creation, management, and role of reputation in corporate life”.
In recent decades, the organisational reputation of not-for-profit institutions, particularly that of higher education institutions, has become a great concern, as suggested in the extant literature. Specifically, business schools in higher education institutions have been criticised for their research (Lubbe, 2015), business programs (Mitroff, Alpaslan and O’Connor, 2015) and graduates. Employers state that business school graduates are not ready for the work place and business school graduates are facing challenges in the work place (Hancock, Howieson, Kavanagh, Kent, Tempone and Segal, 2010). Business studies is one of the most popular courses in universities, especially among international students (DET, 2016). Given the increased funds received due to growing student numbers (Altbach, 2016) it would be expected that business schools would improve the quality of their programs and services but this does not seem to the case, as highlighted by many research studies (for example, see Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Masrani, Williams and McKiernan, 2011; CPA Australia and CAANZ, 2015).

Therefore, this study is motivated by criticisms of business schools to investigate how business schools respond and what actions they take to counter these criticisms. Various stakeholders either directly or indirectly involved with business schools are affected and have expressed their concerns about the quality of business schools. This study examines how business schools enhance their reputation to compete in a dynamic market in order to provide empirical evidence of reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools. The researcher, having worked at a non-accredited business school, is highly motivated to undertake such a research project.
The study details an investigation of perceptions of reputation drivers of business schools and, in particular, that of non-accredited business schools. Accreditations, including international accreditations and rankings of institutions, are often discussed in the literature and are considered important criteria legitimising the quality of products and services provided by institutions. In the absence of perfect information, stakeholders tend to rely on external verifications to signal quality, which in turn is believed to reflect the reputation of an organisation. If business schools that are internationally accredited and high in the ranking ladder are prominent among the various stakeholders, then the question is how do and/or how can non-accredited schools compete with those schools in such a dynamic educational sector? Participants at the non-accredited business schools believe high quality internal resources such as teaching and research, including student learning and improved learning programs will enhance the reputation of business schools. Industry and community engagement was recommended by the participants to enhance higher education.

Before venturing into a discourse about business schools and reputation drivers, it is important to understand the concept of organisational reputation. The next section provides a brief discussion of organisational reputation and how institutions can strategically manage their organisational activities to enhance organisational reputation.

1.2 Organisational Reputation

Reputation has been identified as an intangible asset that achieves competitive advantage (Rindova, Williamson and Petkova, 2010), and reputation is believed to moderate the effects of organisational activities in relation to the perception of
quality. Different stakeholders rely on the reputation of an organisation to make different decisions. A good reputation is thought to positively affect organisations because of the advantages that come with it including attracting various stakeholders (Dowling, 2016). Dowling (2016) highlights that reputation may be a concept perceived in relation to an organisation’s peers and competitors. For example, customers may consider the reputation of a vendor to assess the quality of the products and services they buy. If reputation is perceived to be high, then the products and services provided are considered to be of a good quality. Similarly, organisations with a high reputation may charge higher prices for their products and services (Fombrun, 1996).

Based on Fombrun’s (1996) ideology of reputation, Fombrun (2012) suggests that there are three key attributes in the definition of corporate reputation. These attributes include “reputation as based on perceptions, it is a collective judgement of all stakeholders, and it is comparative” (p. 100). The author summarises corporate reputation as “a collective representation of a firm’s past actions and results that describe the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple constituents” (p. 99).

Dowling and Moran (2012) show how reputation emerges from the strategic choices of the organisation. The authors illustrate that reputation is derived when an organisation makes strategic choices of how to utilise its internal resources, referred to as the ‘internal fit’ (Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2001) to engage with its environment, which is referred to as the ‘external fit’. The utilisation of the internal resources usually stems from the organisation’s mission and business model.
Organisational reputation, being identified as a complex concept, must be carefully and strategically managed. Managers should ensure that organisational reputation is an important aspect of the strategic management process of an organisation, and strategies that enhance organisational reputation should be included in the organisation’s long-term strategic plan.

Strategic management includes decisions and actions that contribute to the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve an organisation’s objectives (Pearce and Robinson, 2007); and is “concerned with the character and direction of the enterprise as a whole – what the enterprise is now, and what it is to be in the future” (Morden, 2007, p. 14). Hoskinson, Hitt, Ireland and Harrison (2008) highlight that activities carried out during the strategic management process are necessary for ensuring that an organisation stays competitive and earns above average returns.

The term strategic management has also been used synonymously with the term strategic planning (David, 2012). Strategic planning is an evolution of different phases in the decision-making process of an organisation. The strategic management process, including strategic planning, should incorporate decisions about allocation of resources (Bower and Gilbert, 2005) to produce outcomes that meet organisational and institutional expectations. The relationship of an organisation with its external environment and the external forces that act on the organisation are explained, in this study, using institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Institutional theory is based on the premise of three forms of external pressures on organisations – coercive, normative and mimetic pressures. An example of coercive pressure includes governmental pressure on higher education institutions to provide
quality education that will improve the economy of the country. Normative pressure can be in the form of conformance to regulations of professional bodies to gain legitimacy and to be recognised or accepted by peers and various stakeholders. Mimetic pressure is where organisations tend to imitate actions of other successful organisations regardless of whether such actions will benefit the organisation. Utilisation of institutional theory to explain the effects of external pressures on business schools is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

In addition to institutional theory, this study uses strategic choice theory (Child, 1972) to explain that managers do make choices of organisational actions and activities regardless of environmental pressures. In most cases, management decisions are based on the availability of internal resources such as human capital, intellectual capital, and physical and financial resources. The study shows that both institutional and strategic choice theories need to be utilised to explain how business schools may strategise their reputation drivers to gain competitive advantage.

In conclusion, the study is presented on the basis that strategic management is a complex process that entails the process of engaging with the external environment and making choices that fits the organisation to its environment. The study concentrates on the higher education sector (HES) in Australia with an emphasis on business schools. The following section discusses the HES, including the Australian HES and business schools in higher education institutions.

1.3 Overview of the Higher Education Sector

Over the last few decades, the demand for higher education has soared (Abbott and Doucouliagos, 2003) due to ‘globalisation’, ‘internationalisation’, ‘cross-border education’ and demand for foreign education. Numerous discourses detail the
immense pressure on higher education institutions to provide quality education and quality students. Forces external to these institutions, such as governmental pressure and global competition in the education market, drive the way higher education institutions strategically design their missions and visions, structure their organisation, and make strategic decisions.

Globalisation has created extensive knowledge transfer across the globe, which has transformed higher education into a global business where higher education institutions confront competition from around the world (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009). On-line courses, including virtual teaching, offered by some higher education institutions have grown in popularity and have contributed to the increased competition across nations.

Consequently, government expectations of higher education institutions have increased even though funding from governments has reduced gradually over the decades (Vidovich and Currie, 2011). Reduced government funding has forced universities to become more entrepreneurial and corporate in nature, competing to increase student enrolments. Universities have been competing for private funding in terms of tuition fees, especially from full-fee paying international students (Marginson and Corsidine, 2000) for decades. Governmental pressure, in turn, causes university management to put pressure on individual schools to perform with available resources (Pfeffe and Fong, 2002; Goedegebuure and Schoen, 2014).

This institutional pressure is evident in the Australian HES (Marginson, 2007; Goedegebuure and Schoen, 2014). The reduction of Australian Government funding of universities has changed the functionality of universities in Australia. Australian universities have become more corporatised with the reduction in government
funding, the uncapping of student numbers and greater autonomy in conducting higher education (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Currie, 2005; Vidovich and Currie, 2014).

1.3.1 Background of the Australian Higher Education Sector

Since the 1970s, the Australian HES has been mainly funded and centrally controlled by the national government (Abbott and Doucouliagos, 2003; Vidovich and Currie, 2011, 2014). However, in the last few decades, the nature of the Australian HES has undergone changes with an increase in the accountability of academics to universities, and universities to government (Currie and Vidovich, 2009), and a significant reduction in government funding of universities in Australia, resulting in universities conducting their business like for-profit organisations (Vidovich and Currie, 2014).

Higher education institutions, including universities around Australia, are competing not only with institutions within the country but also with institutions around the world for both domestic and international students. The number of international student enrolments in Australia has increased threefold over the ten-year period from 1995 to 2005, and doubled in the next decade from 2005 to 2015 (Australian Education International, 2015). Education services have become Australia’s third largest export industry (Harmon, 2015), and in the international market for education, Australia is third in the rank with 6% of the market share after the US (16%) and UK (13%) (Productivity Commission, 2015).

The increase in demand for foreign education is important for universities because international students pay comparatively higher fees. This has created a more competitive higher education environment, with the Australian Government “pushing
for a more corporate model of university governance from the late 1980s, and subsequently during the 1990s” (Vidovich and Currie, 2011, p. 47). The effect of this government push has caused tensions in the HES, such as “the rise of greater bureaucratisation, managerialism and corporatisation versus the erosion of collegiality and/or collaboration and academic freedom” (Holloway, 2006, p. 239).

With Australia’s success in developing education as an important export industry, higher education institutions have become central to the development of the Australian education industry (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent and Scales, 2008, known as The Bradley Report). The Bradley Report (p. 124) states that the reach, quality and performance of Australia’s higher education system is central to Australia’s economic and social progress, and “the reputation of Australia as a quality provider of international education depends on it being able to provide a clear and unequivocal statement about its intention to maintain a world-class university system”.

The Australian Government in its 2014–2015 Budget¹ proposed an overhaul of Australia’s tertiary education system. The recommendation was for universities to have greater autonomy in determining how much they charge students for degrees while government funding of universities would be cut by about 20%. If adopted, there would be real capacity for universities to increase fees significantly, particularly the Group of Eight² (Go8) universities. This would result in a significant increase in domestic fees although they were not expected to increase above international student fee levels, which are currently about two and a half to three

² Group of Eight (Go8) is a coalition of research-intensive Australian universities. https://www.go8.edu.au/ (accessed 14 June 2015)
times higher than domestic fees. In the 2016–2017 Budget, however, the Government announced that it would abandon its proposal to deregulate fees and the other changes to the HES to be implemented from 2018.³

Australia being geographically well-positioned, is attracting large numbers of students from neighbouring Asian countries. Business schools are popular destinations for these Asian students, in particular the study of business, management, finance and accounting (ABS, 2012, 2015).

### 1.3.2 Business Schools in Higher Education Institutions

Business schools in higher education institutions have expanded worldwide and have become an industry, as explained by Thomas and Wilson (2011, p. 444): “business schools have become a business in their own right”. To compete globally and to get a fair share of foreign students, business schools in Australia attempt to improve their international reputation. Through global recognition these schools aim to attract international students, thus increasing their revenue and that of the university. With globalisation of higher education, business schools are highly competitive, resulting in schools mimicking other schools leading to more homogenised institutions, especially in their missions and strategic objectives.

Business schools are increasingly adopting “a short term oriented financial performance culture and financially focused strategies” (Parker, 2013, p. 19). The financially oriented culture of business schools may be a cause for numerous criticisms of business school practices, business programs and the preparedness of business graduates for the work place (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Hayes and Abernathy, 2007; Thomas and Peters, 2012; Wilson and Thomas, 2012), leading

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some academics, including some of the academic participants in the study, to argue that the short-term revenue-driven culture of business schools is damaging the reputation of business schools and these should instead be replaced with long-term strategic planning that is more likely to result in a long-term sustainable competitive advantage.

In taking a long-term strategic planning approach, schools may incorporate ‘differentiation’ strategies. Differentiation is a key concept that many business schools aim for in order to attract stakeholders and to increase revenue, particularly from international students and domestic postgraduate students. Interestingly, as business schools aim to differentiate, they tend to imitate other successful institutions and differentiation becomes no longer a unique strategy. For example, an increasing number of business schools are aiming to gain affiliations with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) as this accreditation gains popularity in many countries. In April 2012, there were 649 AACSB accredited schools in 43 countries and territories around the world[^4] and these numbers increased to 777 business schools in 52 countries and territories as at December 2016[^5].

Repeated criticism of business schools has prompted an interest in studying the reputation drivers of business schools. The present study aims to contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence of reputation drivers that are perceived as vital for business schools to enhance their reputations, especially their practices, programs, research, and teaching and learning. In the process, the study aims to provide examples of reputation drivers that have been successful or considered successful tools to gain sustained competitive advantage.


1.4 Motivation and Benefits of the Study

With increasing criticisms of business schools in the literature, it is important to understand how business schools enhance their reputations. Despite being referred to as the ‘cash cows’ and the ‘financial engine’ for universities, financing other schools within a university (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Masrani et al., 2011), business schools have been criticised for their research performance (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002), the programs offered (Rasche, Gilbert and Schedel, 2013; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015) and the quality of business graduates and students (Watty, 2006; Hancock et al., 2010; Cappelletto, 2010; Foster, 2012).

The main aim of the study is to provide insights on how business schools can strategise to enhance their reputation and compete in the HES. An assumption is that the more prominent a business school is, particularly with brand names derived through affiliations with the AACSB and the European Federation of Management Development (EFMD) (for the European Quality Improvement System, EQUIS), the more likely stakeholders will perceive the school as a quality provider of education, thus enhancing its reputation. The present study concentrates on investigating the reputation drivers of non-accredited business schools with an emphasis on the perceptions of academics at these schools. Younger and non-accredited business schools are considered to be more likely to face greater challenges in competing in such a dynamic and increasingly competitive HES compared to accredited or historically-reputed business schools.

High-profile academics are more likely to choose an internationally affiliated business school than a non-accredited business school when seeking employment in a new institution. Similarly, high-performing students are likely to attend one of the
highly-reputed business schools, further enhancing the reputation of the school. The question to ask then is how do younger and non-accredited business schools try to compete with accredited business schools and highly reputed schools? One strategy may be differentiation. However, differentiation may be sustainable only if it cannot be imitated, which is a challenging task.

A positive reputation of an educational institution is also dependent on the perceived quality of its products and services. However, despite generating huge amounts of revenue for universities through international student fees, some business schools are struggling to provide good quality programs, including teaching and learning facilities, due in part to a lack of funding as fees are diverted elsewhere in the university (Norton and Cherastidham, 2015). ‘Quality’ is a very subjective term, a term that may be based on one’s perception. Some schools are perceived to provide quality programs and services, whilst others are not. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of different groups of stakeholders on how business schools may build and maintain a good reputation, one that attracts both quality staff and students, amidst the constraints that many business schools face.

The findings of this study will provide accredited and non-accredited business schools, with insights into the perceptions of reputation drivers that may enhance the reputation of business schools that will give the schools a competitive advantage. Business school managers may make the choice to gain legitimacy through international accreditations and/or concentrate on how the school’s internal resources may be utilised efficiently and effectively to provide a better quality of education.
1.5 Research Objective and Research Questions, Theoretical Framework of the Study and Research Approach

The research objective was developed based on the extant literature on organisational reputation and higher education. The literature review provided insights into the type of research questions that will assist in answering the research objective. A theoretical framework was then developed to frame the parameters within which the investigation takes place.

1.5.1 Research Objective and Research Questions

The investigation is guided by the research questions developed in the study. The research questions were designed to assist in finding answers or solutions that will inform the research objective. The overarching research objective that is addressed in this thesis is as follows:

*To investigate how business schools aim to enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage in a dynamic educational market. What reputation drivers are perceived to be advantageous?*

To address the research objective, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools in order to gain competitive advantage?*

2. *Do non-accredited business schools prioritise reputation drivers to gain competitive advantage and, if so, how?*

3. *Do non-accredited business schools face constraints in competing in a dynamic market? If so, how are they strategising to overcome the problem?*

Prior studies have highlighted the benefits that can be derived through international accreditations and high rankings. However, not all schools are able to enhance their reputation through international accreditations, which utilise huge amounts of
resources, both financial and non-financial. Therefore, an investigation of the reputation drivers of non-accredited business schools was undertaken to provide insights into how business schools, in general, can enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage, particularly those with financial constraints.

1.5.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

A theoretical framework is developed to show how competitive advantage can be derived from an institution’s prominence in the educational milieu and through the high quality of its internal resources. The internal resources of a business school include the business programs, the academics and professional staff members, the students and the facilities. An organisation’s environmental opportunities and threats and its internal strengths and weaknesses have traditionally been focused upon when attempting to gain competitive advantage (Barney, 1995). Barney (1995, p. 49) suggests that “firms that use their internal strengths in exploiting environmental opportunities and neutralizing environmental threats, while avoiding internal weaknesses, are more likely to gain competitive advantages than other kinds of firms”.

Therefore, a logical analogy to be derived is that environmental prominence and the perceived quality of the internal resources of an organisation can create competitive advantage for the organisation (Rindova, Williamson, Petkova and Sever, 2005). A theoretical framework utilising two the theories, institutional and strategic-choice theories, is developed to frame the research study. Institutional theory informed how institutions face pressures from the institutional environment. Institutions then react to these institutional pressures. Strategic choice theory, however, posits that
managers make decisions despite external pressures. Combining these two theories provided a wider framework for the study.

The HES is situated in a dynamic environment that is continuously changing due to the demands of the various stakeholders, including employers, professional bodies and the government. As such universities and business schools are expected to perform to the expectation of these stakeholders. In the context of insufficient resources, institutions may struggle to gain legitimacy. Institutional theory allows the examination of the various external forces that impact on institutions, and the subsequent reaction of the institutions to these forces. For example, business schools in the HES are expected to provide business education that satisfies the relevant professional bodies and at the same time attempt to fulfil the demands of industry.

The demands of the stakeholders act as the coercive force that drives business schools to follow regulations set by, for example, professional bodies to gain legitimacy which is referred to as normative isomorphism. Business schools then may mimic successful and reputed institutions to be considered as part of the ‘group’ and to gain recognition in the sector. However, despite these external forces, managers at some business schools may develop their own strategies to compete successfully in the sector, which has been identified as the strategic choice theory.

The choices that managers make may be influenced by external forces or internal forces such as the availability of resources and skill sets of the organisation. Therefore, there is a need to frame the study around the two theories – institutional theory and strategic choice theory, to understand the social construct. The framework developed within the two theories informed the structure of the research.
questions, which were qualitative in nature. Therefore, to interpret the qualitative data, an interpretivist or social constructivist view to research was adopted.

In understanding the different perspectives of a concept, in this case the different perspectives of reputation drivers of business schools, a social constructivist view was considered the most appropriate philosophical stance to adopt. In social constructivism, multiple realities are constructed through a researcher’s lived experiences and interactions with others (Creswell, 2013). To understand a social construct, a qualitative study involving interviews was considered most appropriate to elicit the views of individual participants or a group of participants. Siebert and Martin (2013, p. 432) argue that “understanding business school reputations and the factors which shape them would be better served by taking a social constructionist perspective to explore how different actors make sense of formal and informal signals, what, why and how schools come to communicate identities and images”.

1.5.3 Research Approach

The study is based on qualitative research involving four groups of participants at business schools in Australia: academics from two non-accredited business schools; Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching (L&T) of business schools at various universities in Australia; and postgraduate students at one of the business schools. The two non-accredited schools had not obtained (at the time of data collection) either one of the international accreditations discussed in this study – AACSB and EQUIS. One of the interview groups (from one of the non-accredited business schools participating in the study) is from the university in which the researcher had worked as an academic.
Non-accredited business schools were selected for the study because of the many more challenges that these schools are likely to encounter than accredited business schools. Internationally accredited business schools can use the accrediting bodies’ brand name, which may be perceived as an external verification of quality that is relied on by stakeholders to verify the quality of the school. One of the greatest challenges that non-accredited business schools have is to compete against accredited schools that have the international accreditation logo or brand.

Adopting a social constructive view, data was collected via individual interviews, which were then transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. Data analysis was conducted by coding transcribed data and grouping them into themes. A thematic approach allowed the researcher to identify the various reputation drivers that the participants perceived as important to enhancing a business school’s reputation. Interviews provide greater insights into participants’ views and choices of reputation drivers, and the reasons given for the participants’ views add depth to the data collected.

1.6 Key Research Findings

As suggested in the literature, some of the reputation drivers that benefit business schools include international accreditations and rankings, and teaching and research. The findings show that external verifications, including international accreditations and rankings, are likely to enhance a business school’s prominence amongst peers and the industry. The participants believe that society at large may not be familiar with international accreditations or rankings.

Industry and community engagement was identified as the ‘dominant theme’ because of its impact on higher education. Collaborative work with industry was found to
significantly contribute to research, teaching and learning, and the student experience. The participants at the non-accredited business schools perceived industry and community engagement to be more important than international accreditations and rankings in enhancing a business school’s reputation to gain competitive advantage.

Two themes were identified as emerging themes, namely work placement (WP) and transnational education (TNE) programs, which were frequently discussed in relation to quality issues. The concerns surrounding WP and TNE were the quality of students enrolled in the programs and the quality of delivery at offshore campuses. The poor quality of students and teachers in these programs may damage the reputation of business schools.

The evidence suggests that business schools need to maintain a high quality of internal resources, including business programs, academics and professional staff members, students and facilities. Currency of knowledge and relevance of programs to practice were found to be important for business education to be perceived as of a high quality.

1.7 Thesis Presentation

The thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the research area, giving insights into organisational reputation, the HES, theoretical framework of the study and the research approach, and the motivation of the study. Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature on organisational reputation and the HES including the Australian higher education sector. Following this macro-level discussion is a micro-level analysis of business schools in higher education institutions, and finally, a discussion of the reputation drivers of business schools that
may help them to gain competitive advantage. Chapter Three discusses the research approach of the study, highlighting the research philosophy, theoretical perspectives that guide the study, and the methodology adopted to conduct the research.

Chapter Four presents the intra-group findings. NVivo software was used to analyse and create themes from the qualitative data that was obtained through semi-structured interviews. Based on the findings in Chapter Four, Chapter Five provides an inter-group analysis, concluding with a recommended theoretical model for business schools. Following the discussion of the findings, Chapter Six of the thesis presents the implications of the findings and recommendations. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by presenting the key research findings in relation to the research questions and highlights the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.
Chapter Two  LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of two separate bodies of research literature: the literature on organisational reputation and the literature on the HES, including global and Australian higher education perspectives. The discussion of organisational reputation in higher education leads to exploration of organisational reputation of business schools and the reputation drivers that business schools pursue to gain a competitive advantage. The review also reflects on the implications of organisational reputation on higher educational institutions and their business schools.

The extant literature addresses the importance of a ‘good reputation’ and discusses approaches adopted by organisations to building organisational reputation, addressing issues ranging from theoretical to practical, and includes conceptual papers and empirical studies. Organisational reputation is a strategic tool adopted by organisations in the strategic management of the organisation. Strategic management is the process of how decisions are made to move an organisation from what it is to what the management or owners want it to be (Bourgeois, 1984).

The literature on higher education addresses current issues surrounding the educational sector, including problems and criticisms, and suggestions for future directions of educational institutions. Emphasis is placed on the reputation of business schools, which is the subject of the present study, reflecting on critique relating to practices, programs and graduates/students of business schools.
Two theoretical perspectives are utilised to frame the discussion of the HES and its organisational reputation. These include the institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) and strategic choice theory (Child, 1972) perspectives. The purpose of adopting a dual perspective is to identify important elements or factors that may arise both externally and within the organisation that influence the way organisational activities are conducted.

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the structure of the discussion of the literature that informed the present study in identifying the research objective. The first section of the chapter reviews the literature on organisational reputation. This section is followed by a discussion of organisational reputation in the HES. The review of the HES incorporates perspectives of the global and Australian HES, and includes a discussion of organisational reputation of business schools. The third section of the review highlights reputation drivers of organisations including business schools in higher education institutions. Based on the literature review, the fourth section explains the focus of the study, outlining the contributions of the present study to the literature. The final section concludes the literature review chapter.
Organisational Reputation

Organisational Reputation in Higher Education (HE)

Global HE Perspective

Australian HE Perspective

Business Schools in HES

Reputation Drivers

Figure 2.1 Design of Chapter Two
2.2 Organisational Reputation

The concept of organisational reputation is often discussed in the management literature and more recently in the accounting literature, particularly in relation to the advent of the impact of climate change, and triple-bottom-line, corporate social responsibility reporting (CSR) and Integrated Reporting. The definition and measurement of organisational or corporate reputation has been a continuous debate with differing definitions and understanding of the term.

In defining the term ‘organisational reputation’, numerous questions have been asked. What is organisational reputation? Why is organisational reputation important? How is organisational reputation measured? How can organisational reputation be managed? (Fombrun and van Riel, 1997; Davies, Chun, da Silva and Roper, 2001; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; Lewellyn, 2002; Wartick, 2002; Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty, 2006).

Organisational reputation is described as a diverse topic with many intertwined levels, disciplines and theoretical perspectives (Fombrun and Rindova, 2001). Fombrun and Rindova (2001) regard corporate reputation as an ambiguous concept because of the application of the corporate reputation concept by scholars in different disciplines. Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000, p. 242) summarise corporate reputation as a “collective construct that describes the aggregate perceptions of multiple stakeholders about a company’s performance”. The authors summarise how the reputation construct has been used in the various disciplines and is reproduced in Table 2.1 below.
Table 2.1  Definitions of Corporate (Organisational) Reputation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Reputations are traits or signals that describe a company’s probable behaviour in a particular situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Reputations are intangible assets that are difficult for rivals to imitate, acquire, or substitute, and so create mobility barriers that provide their owners with a sustained competitive advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Reputation is one of many types of intangible assets that are difficult to measure but create value for companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Reputation describes the corporate associations that individuals establish with the company name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Reputations are corporate traits that develop from relationships companies establish with multiple constituents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation theory</td>
<td>Reputations are cognitive representations of companies that develop as stakeholders make sense of corporate activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Reputational rankings are social constructions emanating from the relationships firms establish with stakeholders in their shared institutional environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fombrun et al. (2000, p. 243)

Organisational reputation is said to be a perceptual phenomenon, emerging from the collective judgements of stakeholders about an organisation based on the assessment of the organisation’s performance over time in areas deemed important to the stakeholders (Ertug and Castelluci, 2013), and an evaluation of an organisation’s resources and capabilities by a clearly defined audience (Baden-Fuller, Ravazzolo and Schweizer, 2000).

Another view is that reputation is a means of certifying quality (Kay, 1993) where the relevant stakeholders are not able to assess quality themselves due to insufficient information or lack of speciality in assessing quality. Thus, it reduces stakeholder uncertainty (Rindova et al., 2005). Fombrun and Shanley (1990) describe reputation as “a signal to the public about how a firm’s products, jobs, strategies and prospects compare to those of competing firms” (p. 233), and it “represents publics’
cumulative judgements of firms over time which in turn hinge on a firm’s relative success in fulfilling the expectations of multiple stakeholders” (p. 235).

One of the most cited definitions of organisational reputation is by Fombrun (1996, p. 72), who states that organisational reputation is “a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals”. The present study uses this theoretical understanding of the concept of ‘organisational reputation’ to drive the research.

Frequently, reputation of an organisation is used synonymously with the words ‘image’ and ‘identity’. Image and identity can be construed as perceptions of an organisation at a point in time or for a short period of time (Brown, Dacin, Pratt and Whetten, 2006). Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yarr (1997) describe image as a photographic view of an organisation at a point in time whereas reputation (whether good or bad) takes time to build and is a long-term impression of an organisation.

Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002, p. 175) provide a succinct differentiation of the terms ‘image’ and ‘reputation’:

An image is the immediate set of meanings inferred by a subject in confrontation/response to one or more signals from or about a particular institution. Put simply, it is the net result of the interaction of a subject’s beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an institution at a single point in time.

A reputation is a subject’s collective representation of past images of an institution (induced through either communication or past experiences) established over time.

Identity, on the other hand, is expressed as a concrete, often visual, manifestation of an organisation’s reality (Argenti, 2000; Brown et al., 2006). In the case of an educational institution, this would include the name of a university or school, its logo, buildings, publications, websites, course offerings, faculty and other things that
are real about the school. The school’s image is a reflection of that identity – it is how the stakeholders, such as students, staff, employers, affiliation bodies and the community at large, view the organisation. Therefore, image and identity may be construed as similar concepts that represent an instantaneous perspective of reputation.

In marketing studies, image and identity may be referred to as the brand of an organisation. Brand may refer to the name of an institution and/or the affiliation logos associated with an institution. Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen and Wilson (2016, p. 3019) highlight that brand identity enables higher education institutions “to communicate more effectively with stakeholders including faculty, students, alumni, employers, and others”. Studies have also highlighted that elements of a brand, including perceived quality of academic staff influence students’ satisfaction and commitment (Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014; Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos and Bourlakis, 2016). Jillapalli and Jillapalli (2014) show that professor brand characteristics, such as quality of instruction, competence and reputation of professor, have an influence on students’ feelings of attachment to the professor. Academic staff reputation is likely to have an impact on the reputation of the institution.

In recent times, discourses distinguishing ‘organisational reputation’ and ‘organisational status’ have emerged. Barnett and Pollock (2012) argue that reputation is commonly considered as arising from observations of an organisation's behaviours while status is commonly viewed as arising from observations of an organisation's affiliations. Reputation fills the gaps where formal regulation and direct interaction are lacking. Patterson, Cavazos and Washington (2014, p. 73)
explain that “reputation has been linked with a history of quality, and status has been identified as an externally assigned measure of social position”.

Patterson et al. (2014, p. 73) argue that “certification contests can be used to increase organisational reputation and tournament rituals can be used to increase organizational status”. Certification contests may include associations with certified professional and accreditation bodies that may be construed as providing external validation of an organisation’s products or services. Tournament rituals may be reflected by ranking competitions, and in the case of higher education institutions, rankings of universities and business schools.

Podolny (1993, p. 830) defines market status as “the perceived quality of that producer’s products in relation to the perceived quality of that producer’s competitors’ products”. Status being a positional concept (Podolny, 2010), an organisation’s position in a ranking system relative to similar competitive organisations is an example of an indicator of the status of the organisation. Both the terms ‘status’ and ‘reputation’ seem to be intertwined terms that may be difficult to separate as one may lead to another.

Studies have shown that organisational reputation is a vital construct in organisational studies because organisational reputation will affect an organisation’s “overall and long-term performance” (Clardy, 2012, p. 301), and there has been considerable support among practitioners and management of educational institutions for the idea that organisations with positive or better reputation outperform their rivals (Boyd, Bergh and Ketchen, 2010). Boyd et al. (2010, p. 606) emphasise that “the determinants of reputation appear to have synergistic relationships that create more value when considered collectively”.
Dowling and Moran (2012) emphasise that creating reputation should not be a short-term strategy; rather it has to be ‘built in’ to long-term strategy – a sustainable strategy. The authors outline two models of reputation formation – ‘built in’ and ‘bolted on’. The ‘bolted on’ model is “where the desired organisational reputation is designed around one or more tactics unrelated to strategy” (p. 38). In this model, organisational reputation is “effectively managed by public relations” which is based on the perceptions of an organisation’s “integrity, fairness, ethics, vision, leadership, distinctiveness, visibility, authenticity, transparency, consistency, and communication” (Dowling and Moran, 2012, p. 38). The authors stress that it is a difficult task achieving excellence in all or most of these attributes.

In the business world, organisations may give money to charitable organisations (which may be construed as a marketing tool) or create social responsibility programs in the hope that they will be recognised by society and appeal to their stakeholders (Dowling and Moran, 2012). Such strategies are said to be ‘bolted on’ rather than ‘built in’ and are also easy for competitors to imitate. Therefore, in order to have a sustainable competitive advantage it is suggested that organisations should build a reputation that is “grounded in the strategy of the organisation” (Dowling and Moran, 2012, p. 25).

The ‘built in’ model, which is like a strategy being ‘embedded’ in a higher education institution, on the other hand, proposes that “the strategy of the organisation is the DNA of its reputation” (Dowling and Moran, 2012, p. 38). Dowling and Moran recommend the ‘built in’ model over the ‘bolted on’ model because in the ‘built in’ model actions reflect the strategy rather than “public relations words about the organisation’s honourable intentions” (p. 39). Dowling and Moran focus on how
reputation emerges from the strategic choices of organisations, suggesting that strategy is guided by the organisation’s statements of purpose and driven by its objectives and business model, which is termed “internal fit” (Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2001). Strategy then addresses how an organisation will engage its environment. This relationship has been referred to as an “external fit” (Dowling and Moran, 2012, p. 28). Similarly, Kay (1993, p. 18) emphasises that the strategy of a firm is “the match between its internal capabilities and its external relationships”. Kay further explains that strategy is how a firm “responds to its suppliers, its customers, its competitors, and the social and economic environment within which it operates” (p. 18). The concepts of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ fit are utilised in conceptualising the research framework of the present study.

Dowling and Moran (2012) emphasise that organisations need to build a strong reputation that can give a competitive advantage such as ‘positional’ advantage, which is based on reputation for quality, or ‘status-based’ advantage. Dowling and Moran (2012, p. 26) further outline that a strategy-based reputation has three roles:

- reveals the viability and effectiveness of an organisation’s strategy;
- forges links to and reinforces other facets of the organisation that underpin and support its strategy (such as its culture); and
- makes the organisation’s future behaviour more predictable for stakeholders and competitors.

Similarly, educational institutions need to implement a strategy that offers consistent quality and reliable services and that is repeatedly demonstrated (Morden, 2007). Quality and reliable services reflect on student experiences at an institution, and positive experiences and positive references to others are likely to enhance the reputation of that institution. Argenti (2000, p. 177) highlights some factors that will strengthen the reputation of business schools. These include:
• association with a reputable university (for example, historical reputation);
• high-quality faculty and high-quality students;
• strong image in the corporate sector;
• strong alumni with high affiliation; and
• survey rankings (which is based on various criteria including research quality and quantity).

Scholars highlight some of the benefits higher education institutions, including universities, enjoy with strong or positive reputations. These institutions can:

• charge premium fees (Argenti, 2000; Rindova et al., 2005; Devinney, Auger, Eckhardt and Birtchnell, 2006; Morden, 2007);
• attract the best students, academics, employers and recruiters (Devinney et al., 2006) (the quality of students will eventually be reflected in their academic performance, which will further reinforce the reputation of the institution);
• enjoy lower staff turnover, have fewer crises, and get the benefit of the doubt by stakeholders (or constituents) (Argenti, 2000);
• enhance the perceived quality of the student’s educational experience (Devinney et al., 2006);
• create a feeling of pride and achievement among alumni, faculty, staff and trustees (Devinney et al., 2006);
• help the dean raise funds for the school (Devinney et al., 2006) (and with availability of more funding the school can further provide better learning facilities, and engage high-profile professors and researchers); and
• raise the reputation of the parent university (Devinney et al., 2006).

A good reputation is attractive not only to external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders, such as employees, assess the reputation of the organisation when considering whether to continue their employment in that organisation. Studies have shown that an organisation’s good reputation has a positive effect on employees in terms of performance and retention (Swider, Zimmerman, Boswell and Hinrichs, 2011) and employee recruitment (Alniacik, Alniacik and Erdogmus, 2012).
Swider et al.’s (2011) results suggest that managers concerned with increasing employee attachment should focus on increasing the organisation’s reputation as well as their employees’ perceptions of their standing in the organisation. Alniacik et al. (2012) highlight factors internal to organisations that contribute to reputation of the organisation. Their theoretical premise is that the better a firm’s reputation is perceived, the more likely it is to be targeted by prospective employees. Of the various reputational factors considered in the study, workplace conditions exerted the strongest effect on potential employees’ intentions to seek employment with an organisation.

2.2.1 Competitive Advantage and Organisational Reputation

Gaining competitive advantage is a process established over time and is a product of the corporate strategy of an organisation (Bowman and Faulkner, 1997). Studies have shown that organisations gain competitive advantage through positive or high reputation (Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Rindova et al., 2005; Antunes and Thomas, 2007; Thomas and Li, 2009). Antunes and Thomas (2007, p. 395) highlight that an organisation with a good reputation is classified as part of the ‘elite’ group that creates ‘self-reputation’, and “reputation hierarchies act as mobility barriers for the entry of new, upcoming schools into the elite, high reputation category or strategic group”. Roberts and Dowling’s (2002, p. 1090) study suggests that “superior-performing firms have a greater chance of sustaining superior performance over time if they also possess relatively good reputations”.

Rindova et al. (2005) emphasise that a strong corporate product or service reputation may generate value by reinforcing the competitive position of the organisation, especially where repeat purchase of product or repeat use of service is expected.
Competitive advantage is achieved when perceived reputation establishes preference in the minds of customers, especially where customers cannot monitor or influence quality for themselves.

Porter (2004, p. 3) defines competitive advantage as deriving through the “value a firm is able to create for its buyers that exceeds the firm’s cost of creating it”, and competitive advantage is said to be derived from the many activities that an organisation performs collectively. The author emphasises two basic types of competitive advantage: cost leadership and differentiation. The term ‘differentiation’ has a greater significance in the educational sector than the term ‘cost leadership’. Providing differentiated products and services, in an educational sector, is likely to give the institution a competitive advantage given that there is demand for such products and services.

Differentiation may be achieved through uniqueness. An organisation may “seek to be unique in its industry along some dimensions that are widely valued by buyers” (Porter, 2004, p. 14). To achieve and sustain differentiation, Porter recommends that the price premium exceeds the extra costs incurred in being unique, and this is usually achieved by above-average performers in the industry.

In the HES, organisations may differentiate their products, such as programs, courses and subjects, offered to different groups of people, or services rendered to students such as support for first year students or accommodation support services. These comprise the internal resources of a higher education institution. Studies have highlighted that differentiation of the internal resources has been beneficial to the organisation (Antunes and Thomas, 2007). Therefore, it is important to understand how institutions in the HES aim to differentiate, particularly with constraints in the
available internal resources. Educational products may be specifically adapted for undergraduate and postgraduate students, or for executive education. Executive education is a rapidly growing concept where programs are run for industry and professional executives. However, Porter (2004) stresses that there is a risk in any strategy. For example, differentiation is not sustained when “competitors imitate, or when bases for differentiation become less important to buyers” Porter (2004, p. 21). Therefore, establishing strategies that are non-imitable is vital for sustained competitive advantage.

Antunes and Thomas (2007, p. 394), in their comparative study of European and US business schools, state that “the European sensitivity to international business, languages, diversity and culture is a competitive advantage”. The authors highlight the advantage that European business schools have over those in the US, including for MBA programs, with European programs being taught by more international staff resulting in a more diverse set of students than equivalent US students. Internationalised programs are likely to provide greater opportunities in both the national and international competitive markets.

Flexibility and innovation are two other factors of differentiation identified as key elements for gaining competitive advantage. For instance, the flexible one-year MBA model, and the focus on learning style rather than teaching style has gained popularity among stakeholders which then enhances the reputation of the institution. Antunes and Thomas (2007, p. 395) contend that European schools have gained advantage by adopting “problem-centred, project-based learning with field studies and consulting projects and an emphasis on practice and critical, reflective thinking”. The authors emphasise that the success of their programs has led to “more practical-
based learning, incorporating research and learning programs with corporations that are directly linked to corporate problems and issues” (p. 395).

Unique programs and flexible learning programs are attractive to higher education stakeholders including prospective students. Institutions are better recognised due to these attractive programs thus enhancing their reputation which leads to competitive advantage.

2.3 Organisational Reputation in Higher Education

With intense competition in the HES, institutions attempt to differentiate themselves to attract students, including high-quality students, and high-quality staff. Similarly, the public seeks to differentiate institutions from one another in the growing, complex market (Dill and Soo, 2005). Differentiation may take the form of differentiated products and services, or specialised products and services to suit a specific group of stakeholders.

Organisations providing better products and services are likely to be perceived to have established a good or better reputation than rivals. However, as these institutions attempt to differentiate themselves they are “at risk of becoming more similar to one another because of the content, frequency and depth of assessments by accreditation agencies and research rankings” (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011, p. 464).

The following sections discuss the HES and its business schools. The discussion draws on how higher education has moved to become a more revenue-driven sector and comprises more international students. Due to this massification of higher education, the reputation of some providers may be damaged by the performance of
students, particularly international students and students of non-English speaking background (Foster, 2012). Foster (2012, p. 596) provides evidence that “both international students and students from non-English speaking backgrounds earn persistently lower marks than other students”.

Drawing on discourses about business schools and business programs, the study focuses on the issues relating to business school reputation highlighted in the literature. Business schools in the HES are frequently referred to as the finance-engine of universities, excessively cross-subsidising other schools within the university (CPA Australia and CAANZ, 2015). This leads to reduced funds available to business schools to reinvest to enhance the schools’ programs. CPA and CAANZ’s (2015, p. 8) recommendation is to include a clause in future legislation on higher education reforms that “the majority of fees paid within a field of education be retained and reinvested back into that field”.

2.3.1 Global Higher Education Perspective

Over the last few decades, globalisation, internationalisation and cross-border operations in higher education have received increased attention from researchers across many countries (Altbach, 2004; Marginson, 2006; Knight, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2010; Altbach and Knight, 2007; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011; Wilkins and Huisman, 2013; Vidovich and Currie, 2014; Marginson, 2015; Waterval, Frambach, Driessen and Scherpbier, 2015; Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman and Palari, 2016). Implementing and delivering curriculum outside an institution’s home country is an internationalisation strategy that is gaining increasing popularity among higher education institutions (Waterval et al., 2015). The terms ‘globalisation’, ‘internationalisation’ and ‘cross-border’ in relation
to education are frequently used to refer to education offered by a home institution to students in a host institution located outside the ‘home’ country (Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011) or education obtained by foreign students in a ‘home’ institution.

Globalisation has arisen as a result of a combination of economic and cultural change, with new information technology and knowledge (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007), and as the context of economic and academic trends (Altbach and Knight, 2007). The term ‘internationalisation’ is referred to as “any relationship across borders between nations or between single institutions situated within different national systems” (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, p. 11), and that includes “policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions – and even individuals – to cope with the global academic environment” (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p. 290).

In the 1980s, internationalisation of education involved the movement of students and staff across countries, but in the 1990s, internationalisation included not only movement of students and staff, it included the transfer of entire curricula across borders (Lane, 2011). This trend is even more evident in the last ten years with a sharp rise in global demand for high-quality education, with increase in curricula transfer across borders, which is commonly referred to as transnational education (TNE) (Waterval et al., 2015). Internationalisation of higher education may be aimed at enhancing international reputation (Chan and Dimmock, 2008) and/or to increase student enrolments (Horta, 2009). Seeber et al. (2016) show that internationalisation is frequently perceived as instrumental to prestige.
Knight (2006b, p. 18), in her report to the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), define the three terms as follows.

**Globalization:** A process that is increasing ‘the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders, resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world’.

**Internationalization of higher education:** Typically, ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, service) and delivery of higher education’; a different process than globalization.

**Cross-border education:** The movement of people, knowledge, programs, providers and curriculum across national or regional jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education is a subset of ‘internationalization of higher education’ and can be an element in the development cooperation projects, academic exchange programs and commercial initiatives.

Based on the above definitions, internationalisation and cross-border education may be considered subsets of globalisation. In simple terms, internationalisation of higher education is the process of incorporating different cultures and languages into the curriculum, and transferring such curriculum that is available to international students in foreign countries and to students gaining foreign education in their home countries.

The number of students studying outside their home country was estimated at 1.65 million in 2001, rose to 3.3 million in 2008 (Altbach, 2010), and 4.1 million in 2013 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). In 2001, over 70% of international students were educated in universities in the US, UK, Australia, Germany and France (Altbach, 2004). Since then, there has been a significant increase in international student numbers in these countries.

In recent times, the top four destination countries hosting 40% of global international students are: US (16%); UK (13%); Australia (6%); and Canada (5%) (Productivity
Commission, 2015), with similar domination by the top three countries in tertiary education (OECD Education, 2015, see Appendix A). These countries have been dominating the international student market over the decades with students coming mainly from Asian countries, with China (712,157 students) and India (181,872 students) topping the list (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). There is a clear indication that the movement of international students is from developing countries seeking high-quality foreign education mostly in English.

Globalisation, internationalisation and cross-border higher education has resulted in issues related to the quality of programs offered, quality of staff members and quality of students enrolled in higher education programs. These issues have created concerns and imbalance in the higher education milieu especially affecting the reputation of certain institutions.

Studies have identified issues surrounding overseas students who are from a non-English speaking background studying in institutions that deliver courses in English, and exporting of higher education as affecting the reputation of the higher education institutions engaged in these activities (see Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011; Wilkins and Huisman, 2013; Marginson, 2015; Waterval et al., 2015). One such example is cited in an episode of a *Four Corners* program on Australian television where the program’s investigation revealed alarming evidence of “a decline in academic standards at institutions around the country”.6 Its criticism targeted the decline in government funding of higher education, which forces universities to seek other avenues of funding, and the increase in full fee-paying overseas students in Australia. The program’s investigation revealed that “lecturers and tutors are grappling with a

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tide of academic misconduct and pressure from faculty managers to pass weak students”, and that “commercial imperatives are overtaking academic rigour”.

Furthermore, international branch campuses have suffered “due to newness and limited customer experiences” (Wilkins and Huisman, 2013, p. 618). One factor that affects branch campus reputation is students’ perceptions of home campus reputations. Offerings at home campuses may be quite different in terms of the breadth of curriculum, quality of academic staff, and other facilities, when compared to those available at the branch campus, and as such branch campuses have to “perform the complex task of managing multiple interrelated images simultaneously” (Wilkins and Huisman, 2013, p. 618).

Waterval et al. (2015) categorise factors that influence the success and failure of cross-border curriculum partnerships into four domains: student; teacher; curriculum; and soft and hard project management. The first three domains were considered factors related to contextual differences between the host and home institutions and are considered to have a significant effect on TNE.

Although many issues surrounding globalisation, internationalisation and cross-border education exist, according to Parker (2012, p. 247), an “engagement in the education export trade emerged as primary financial management strategies for a self-generating profit-oriented business model of higher education”. Australian experts predict that by 2025 around 15 million students will study abroad, which will be a huge increase from the current number of four million (Altbach, 2016).
2.3.2 Australian Higher Education Perspective

Global pressure has driven universities into an environment that is more competitive with increasing numbers of private providers entering the higher education domain previously limited to relatively protected public universities (Goedegebuure and Schoen, 2014). Australian universities are no exception facing a “series of global pressures that will fundamentally alter the nature and dynamics of its tertiary education system” (Goedegebuure and Schoen, 2014, p. 1381).

There are 43 universities in the HES in Australia, comprising 40 Australian universities, two international universities and one smaller private speciality university.7 Since the 1970s, Australian universities have been financed and centrally controlled by the national government (Vidovich and Currie, 2011), however, the nature of the Australian university sector underwent changes with a significant reduction in government funding of universities and a significant increase in the accountability of universities to the Government (Currie and Vidovich, 2009; Vidovich and Currie, 2011). Due to the long-term reduction of funding, higher education institutions had “sought to repair its own budgetary shortfall through its own entrepreneurial means” (De Lange and Watty, 2011, p. 629), and to act more as corporate organisations (Vidovich and Currie, 2011).

From the late 1980s, the Australian Government pushed for a more corporate model of university governance (Baird, 2006). This government push has caused tensions in the HES. Universities suffered as a result of such pressures with “greater bureaucratisation, managerialism and corporatisation” and an “erosion of collegiality and/or collaboration and academic freedom” (Holloway, 2006, p. 239).

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Increasingly, international student fees are a huge contributor towards the revenue of the education sector, including the HES. The competition for a share of full fee-paying international students seeking foreign education, especially those from neighbouring Asian countries, has increased. By the late 1990s, overseas student fees totalled A$791 million compared with domestic Australian student fees amounting to A$195 million (Winter and Sarros, 2002), and the number of international students increased more than ten times from 25,000 to 254,414 between 1990 and 2007 (Marginson and Sawir, 2011).

However, Australia saw a decline in the sector after 2010, perhaps as a result of the strong Australian dollar (Productivity Commission, 2015) and the high cost of living. Subsequently, the sector experienced growth and, in 2015, international education exports approximated A$18.8 billion (DET, 2016), and the international education sector became Australia’s third largest export industry (DET, 2016), an improvement from its eighth position in 2002 (Bohm et al., 2002).

The HES experienced an increase in international enrolments with onshore international students amounting to nearly 20% of total enrolments for 2015 (see Appendix B). Business courses have been one of the most attractive courses to international students with enrolments in management and commerce courses more than doubling in the period 2002 to 2014, and a fivefold increase in accounting courses over the same period (DET, 2015).

The highest levels of demand in the early 2000s for Australian education came from China and India (Bohm et al., 2002), and by 2012 students were coming from more than 180 foreign countries (Australian Education International, 2012). In the third quarter of 2016, the largest numbers of international students in higher education in
Australia came from China (37.4%, see Appendix C), India (14.1%) and Malaysia (4.9%). Altbach (2004) emphasises that the flow of students from developing countries to developed countries is due to the inability of developing countries to educate everyone at home. Altbach (2004, p. 19) further adds that “industrialized countries are recognizing the need to provide their students with a global consciousness and experience in other countries in order for them to compete in the global economy”. Similarly, Naidoo (2015) uses the term ‘capacity building’ to refer to TNE as a way for developing countries to fulfil the unmet demand for education locally and to increase the capacity for quality education often from developed countries.

Asian countries are also favourite destinations for offshore campuses of Australian universities. The four countries where the majority of Australian offshore programs are being delivered are Malaysia (24%), Singapore (20%), China (11%), and Hong Kong (11%) (Universities Australia, 2014). The reliance on the participation of Asian countries in Australian markets has been highlighted in the 2012 White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century* (Australian Government, 2012):

*The rise of Asia provides great opportunities for Australia. To achieve the vision of a more prosperous and resilient Australia, fully part of the Asian region and open to the world, the Government has identified 25 objectives for the nation for 2025* (p. 9).

The paper reports that the Australian government aims that:

*Australia will remain among the world’s best for research and teaching in universities, delivering excellent outcomes for a larger number of Australian students, attracting the best academics and students from around the world and strengthening links between Australia and the region, and*

• by 2020, 20 per cent of undergraduate higher education enrolments will be people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, up from 17 per cent in 2011;

• by 2025, 40 per cent of all 25 to 34-year-olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above, up from 35 per cent in 2011;

• by 2025, 10 of Australia’s universities will be in the world’s top 100; and
The report shows the Australian government’s support for the HES, which resonates with what had been said in The Bradley Report (2008) stating that Australia has been a world leader in international education. The 2014 Budget, however, proposed a radical change to the higher education system in Australia. The report proposed government funding of universities to be reduced by about 20%. The 2014 Budget announcement, if implemented, would have given universities greater autonomy in determining how much they charge students for degrees, which would have resulted in an overhaul of Australia’s HES. It was predicted that there would have been a significant increase in course fees, especially by the Go8 universities, which would have significantly affected domestic students, who are paying about two and a half to three times lower than international fees. The proposal to deregulate fees was subsequently abandoned, as announced in the 2016–2017 Budget, and the other changes to the HES to be implemented from 2018.

Even though Australia is well situated in the international market for higher education, there is concern as to whether Australia can survive the competition. Marginson (2007, p. 26) highlight that “most Australian research collaborations are in North America, United Kingdom, and Europe, whereas the fee-paying students come mostly from Asia. Australia is weak in international doctoral education, where the potential nexus between global research and teaching is maximised”. Marginson (2012) uses Bourdieu’s idea of the two poles in describing higher education market

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competition – namely status competition and the commercial mass market – to explain the divide in the Australian HES. Status competition is defined by Bourdieu as a competition for cultural and social goods, whereas commercial mass market competition is solely for economic goods (without much status), based on volume, unit cost, market share and profit.

Marginson (2012) explains that in Australia the status market comprises the top 60 to 70% of the Australian HES. This market is dominated by the top 20% of the higher education institutes, that is, the Go8. He argues that in the global market, Australian international education is part of the mass commercial market and even in such a market brand power depends on status, a positional concept where one institution stands in relation to others, and status depends on research. He suggests high-profile institutions are able to survive because “high quality students bring status to elite institutions and have their own status confirmed and augmented in return” (p. 4).

Cutler (2008, p. 70) writes that domestic and international networking should be promoted to ensure that the benefits of specialisation and concentration of research activity are spread across universities. Similarly, Sheil (2010, p. 69) contends that “rather than debating whether Australia can support two or three ‘world-class’ universities, the focus should switch to establishing a hundred or more world-class research facilities and research groups across the whole university system”.

A greater share of the global higher education market delineates global reputation, and a strong competitive edge in the global market attracts more customers (Bloom, 2005). Bloom’s findings show a strong positive correlation between the higher education enrolment ratio of a nation and its global competitive performance (p. 23). If Australia builds on having a greater share of the global higher education market,
Australian universities are likely to be the agent that changes the way higher education is directed (Marginson, 2010). The flow of argument is that although higher educational institutions are often seen as objects of globalisation, in actuality, they are also its agents. One can, therefore, conclude that although global effect is said to influence the way universities are conducted, the universities (and their activities) themselves are part of the cause of the global effect.

One school that enrolls the largest number of students within a university, especially international students, is the business school which in most cases comprises disciplines such as accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing. Management and commerce are the most common courses in business schools (Gore, Steven and Bailey, 1998), with the greatest demand coming from overseas students (Australian Government, 2014).

2.3.3 Business Schools in Higher Education Institutions

Business schools have been described as the ‘cash cow’ and ‘finance engine’ of universities because they provide finance to other schools or departments within universities (Zimmerman, 2001; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007; Podolny, 2009; Masrani et al., 2011). Despite the fact that business courses are popular and attract large number of students (CPA Australia and CAANZ Report, 2015), business schools have been criticised for not preparing students for the workplace, the lack of relevance of their business programs, the gap between research and practice, and their academics’ lack of industry experience and connection to industry (for example, Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Podolny, 2009; Fragueiro and Thomas, 2011; Thomas and Wilson, 2011; Wilson and Thomas, 2012).
Findings that business schools’ practice and theory are becoming less relevant (Wilson and Thomas, 2012) could indicate problems with the quality of the programs which is damaging to the reputation of business schools. Hancock et al. (2010) highlight that employers found many business school graduates to be not ready for the workplace and many business school graduates are facing challenges in the workplace. Such perceptions of employers could be indicative of the poor quality of students and graduates, and employers may not hire graduates from a particular business school because of their previous experience with students or graduates from the school. These business schools negatively impact on their reputation with low quality of graduates suggesting low quality programs.

Courses offered at business schools are criticised because they are not preparing students adequately with appropriate skills, specifically in instilling ethical and leadership qualities (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Hayes and Abernathy, 2007). Business schools are said to be institutionalised resulting in “ritualized practices” (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, p. 92). These criticisms span several decades, with Fragueiro and Thomas (2011, pp. 18-19) summarising that business schools are:

Carrying out irrelevant research; doing a poor job of preparing students; being too market-driven; pandering to the ratings; failing to ask important questions; and, in the process of responding to the demands from their environment, losing their claims to professionalism as they ‘dumb down’ the content of courses, inflate grades to keep students happy and pursue curricular fads.

Contemporary management education does a disservice to the profession by standardising content, being too analytical and not action-oriented, focusing on business functions (instead of the process of managing) and training specialists (rather than general managers)...being too parochial and not global in their thinking and values, and for not fully integrating experience, theory and reflection into group (as opposed to individual) decision-making processes...do not provide sufficient ethical and professional guidance.

Concerns have been raised about business schools’ ‘business model’ and the sustainability of current practices of business schools (De Onzoño and Carmona,
2007; Thomas and Peters, 2012; Wilson and Thomas, 2012). Thomas and Peters (2012) express concern over the sustainability of current business school models with a tension between producing research publications and the teaching demands of larger student cohorts (O’Connell et al., 2015). Thomas and Peters (2012, p. 377) suggest that “the goal of producing knowledge and the goal of educating students” has led to business schools lying on a spectrum – “at one end of the spectrum there are research-intensive institutions while at the other there are teaching-led, or even research-less schools”. The authors argue that the majority of business schools lie in the middle of the spectrum resulting in a “dual system of purposes and corresponding metrics that are all too often contradictory and confusing rather than cohesive” resulting in choices being made which are “financially unstable and probably unsustainable” (p. 377).

In relation to business school research, Wilson and Thomas (2012, p. 370) contend that many academics consider “relevance to pedagogy or practice to be unimportant for perhaps ideological and certainly for career progression reasons. Career progression for academics is largely a function of research output (4*/A-rated journals) and research income”. Such individualistic culture may be a consequence of academic staff being rewarded, in terms of promotion, for publications and citations in top journals rather than for teaching excellence (Adler and Harzing, 2009). Prioritising individual achievement may result in negligible added benefit to students but substantial benefit to individual academic staff (O’Brien, Drnevich, Crook and Armstrong, 2010).

In a 2005 Harvard Business Review article, Bennis and O’Toole, describe business schools as being “on the wrong track” because of their focus on so-called scientific
research and their hiring practices, in which academics are recruited despite their lack of business experience. The authors argue that “by allowing the scientific research model to drive out all others, business schools are institutionalizing their own irrelevance” (p. 100). The business school model is also criticised by the former dean of Yale School of Management, Jeffrey E. Garten, in his interview with The New York Times in 2005, emphasising the need to include ‘real-world’ experience as a criterion for promotion:

(I think) the current model of business school education needs to change dramatically. I think there should be different criteria for tenuring faculty. Right now, a professor would get tenure on the same qualifications as he or she would if they were in a department of economics or a department of history. What business schools need to do is add some criteria for promotion. One of them should be some real-world experience, in the same way that a doctor teaching at a medical school would have had to see patients (cited in Holstein, 2005, p. 1).

Similarly, the former dean of the MIT Sloan School of Management, Richard Schmalensee, remarked in Business Week that business students are “taught by faculty who are more interested in impressing their academic colleagues than in confronting real-world business problems” ((Business Week November 2006\(^1\)).

Nearly a decade later, there is still concern over the industry experience of business school professors and their connectedness with industry. Dostaler and Tomberlin (2013) support the need for professors to have business experience and connection with industry. They state that the proportion of business school professors having significant contact with the business community is low. The authors enforce that “research carried out by professional school instructors should contribute to the better understanding of the profession and positively affect practice (p. 119).

Another concern is the ‘commercialisation’ of business education. As government funding is continuously reducing, business schools are seeking various means to meet the funding required to produce programs that place them in a better position or at least on par with competing institutions. McKiernan and Wilson (2014, p. 249) suggest that “by weakening the close ties between b-schools and for-profit organizations, b-schools would be presented with a series of strategic choices (Child 1972) that may enable them to attain greater intellectual rigour and relevance”.

Fragueiro and Thomas (2011) equate the educational sector to the professional services sector, in which human interaction and service to customers are key to enhancing organisational reputation. The authors note that business schools are professional organisations and thus business schools should be considered as a particular form of professional service firms. The key resources in these types of organisations are people and “the main assets and services delivered are intangible” (Fragueiro and Thomas, 2011, p. 88), and these drive the reputation of an organisation. In a professional services firm, good reputation reduces uncertainties and provides the basis for the development of trust (Pettigrew and Fenton, 2000), and it further “reduces the risk of individual opportunism and promotes cooperative behaviour between different constituent parts” (Fragueiro and Thomas, 2011, p. 87).

In relation to management education, Fragueiro and Thomas (2011) suggest that business schools need to improve their image and move management education beyond acquisition of indispensable knowledge and skills toward lifelong learning processes. The authors (pp. 3-5) recommend that:
• business schools should concentrate on their academic offerings – particularly with respect to MBA and executive education programmes (great emphasis in business school literature on these two aspects of business school offering) – so as to reinstate the value of management education as a lifelong endeavour;

• business schools should teach students that business leadership roles require sound judgement based on a comprehensive, long-term perspective that complements knowledge and managerial skill; and

• business schools should enlighten the path to globalisation with new knowledge, educating corporate leaders to work in a world that is essentially different from that of the late twentieth century.

Fragueiro and Thomas further suggest that business schools should revisit and reshape their core activities: research and teaching. Other scholars also suggest that business schools should enhance their curriculum with international content by upgrading the international perspectives and skills of students and enhance foreign language programs as well as provide cross-cultural understanding (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

Business schools are dependent on a number of stakeholders, such as government and research councils, academic researchers (as employees or collaborators), and undergraduate and postgraduate students for the necessary finance and educational resources (Cornelissen and Thorpe, 2002). In order to attract these groups, business schools need to maintain their image and reputation, and also gain competitive advantage in the current aggressive higher educational market. To do so, business schools seek various reputation drivers to differentiate themselves via products and services offered, and affiliations with professional and other organisations.

Product differentiation is a key term that is frequently mentioned in business school studies and by business school management. However, Parker (2010, p. 20) argues that product differentiation is a commercial weapon employed in universities, while internally schools are “standardising knowledge production” resulting in a “low-cost
mass production educational delivery system”. With particular reference to the accounting discipline, Parker believes that both accounting academics and accounting professionals are guilty in relation to the status of accounting knowledge delivered and the resultant graduates. Parker asks: “Can accounting survive such a high-volume, low-cost, lean, casualised higher education delivery model?” (p. 20).

The next section of this chapter discusses the key reputation drivers of business schools that have been identified in the review of the literature. These reputation drivers are discussed under two main concepts: ‘prominence’ – which relates more to an institution’s recognition in the industry and society; and ‘perceived quality’ – which relates to the quality of an institution’s internal resources, including aspects of teaching and research and its students as perceived by stakeholders.

2.4 Reputation Drivers

Reputation drivers are discussed in this thesis according to two categories or dimensions: ‘prominence’ and ‘perceived quality’, which were developed by Rindova et al. (2005) in their study on organisational reputation. The authors utilised two perspectives – the economic perspective and the institutional theory perspective, to propose the two distinct dimensions of reputation.

The economic perspective is defined by Rindova et al. (2005) as the observers’ expectations or estimations of a particular attribute of an organisation, especially an organisation’s ability to produce quality products (Milgrom and Roberts, 1986). According to the economic perspective, reputation is based on “past actions through which firms signal to stakeholders their ‘true’ attributes” (Rindova et al., 2005, p. 1033; Clark and Montgomery, 1998). The evaluation of a firm’s attribute is identified by Rindova et al. (2005, p. 1034) as the ‘perceived quality’ dimension of
organisational reputation. According to Rindova et al., scholars that maintain an economic perspective of reputation view uncertainty as a function of information asymmetries between competing firms and their stakeholders. Thus, organisations make strategic choices to reduce information asymmetries in order to reduce market uncertainty (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990).

Rindova et al. (2005, p. 1033) highlight that scholars who draw on institutional theory to understand reputation, “tend to characterize it as a global impression which represents how a collective – a stakeholder group or multiple stakeholder groups – perceive a firm” (see also, Rao, 1994; Fombrun, 1996). The authors suggest that as the institutional perspective is concerned with “the collective awareness and recognition that an organization has accumulated in its organizational field” (p. 1034) it emphasises the ‘prominence’ dimension of organisational reputation.

According to Rindova et al. (2005), scholars taking the institutional theory perspective of reputation maintain that uncertainty of the ‘true’ attributes of an institution is reduced through exchange of information across stakeholders. Stakeholders tend to rely on associations with institutional intermediaries and high-status actors; in the case of higher education institutions, affiliations with professional bodies and information from ranking bodies, to make judgements about an institution.

Consequently, Rindova et al. (2005) propose that organisational reputation consists of two dimensions – perceived quality and prominence. The authors argue that some stakeholders view reputation in terms of how organisations provide goods and services, whereas other stakeholders focus on reputation as an organisation’s external
prominence. The authors use these two perspectives to explain how reputation reduces stakeholder uncertainty.

Following on Rindova et al.’s (2005) study, Rindova et al. (2010, p. 611) suggest that the dimensions ‘quality’ and ‘prominence’ together determine reputation “as an intangible asset contributing to firm competitive advantage”. The authors emphasise that “the value of reputation as an asset depends not only on perceived quality (i.e., the extent to which an organisation is evaluated positively by stakeholders) but also on its level (i.e., the extent to which large number of stakeholders focus their attention on the focal firm rather than on competitors)” (p. 617).

Based on the two dimensions of reputation proposed by Rindova et al. (2005), subsequent sections of this review discuss reputation drivers that have gained scholars’ attention, in particular those in the HES. The discussion of reputation drivers is classified under each of the two dimensions: prominence and perceived quality.

### 2.4.1 Prominence

There are a range of pressures that impact institutions that effectively causes the institution to react and take action through its strategic choices. Such pressures include influence of external forces such as regulations and requirements of professional accreditation bodies (Julian and Ofori-Dankwa, 2006) and ranking bodies. Gaining professional accreditations and rankings may be construed as external influences that cause stakeholders to perceive an organisation to be prominent. Kay (1993) suggests that reputation needs to have a name attached to it, whether it is the name of an individual, a profession, or an organisation. Other
factors that may bring prominence to an institution include historical reputation of a parent institution; and industry and community connections.

2.4.1.1 Historical Reputation

Longstanding universities have historical recognition and, therefore, can be said to have historical reputation for quality and attain greater market share (Orsingher, 2006). The names Oxford and Cambridge do not need any other references. These universities have renowned graduates who are Nobel Prize winners in addition to graduates who have produced outstanding work in their field of study.12

In Australia, the Go8 universities are mostly longstanding universities with outstanding performance. They consist of research intensive universities receiving about 66% of all research funding from industry to universities, which is nearly twice that of the rest of the sector.13 Stakeholders are familiar with their names, in part because many famous or popular people attended the institutions or had family or friends who studied there and in part because they are familiar with the reputation of the universities. Such familiarity gives the institution an advantage. Moreover, existence in the educational sector for many years gives longstanding institutions the advantage of providing more refined educational programs, which is also made possible by the additional funds made available through their status.

2.4.1.2 International Accreditation

International accreditation bodies are recognised as institutional intermediaries and high-status actors, which have the superior ability to access or disseminate information by virtue of their institutional roles or structural positions in the

organisational field (Rindova et al., 2005; Rindova et al., 2010). Bell and Taylor (2005) state that accreditation is equated to joining an elite club in order to gain strategic advantage over competitors through association with more prestigious organisations. Their study suggests that “the ideology of quality relies on the concept of elitism to achieve differentiation” (p. 248), and the authors conclude that “business school quality accreditation relies on a small number of leading schools, that define an ideology of quality that other schools are required to follow” (p. 254).

The three largest and arguably most important accreditation bodies are the AACSB, EFMD, and the Association of MBAs (AMBA). These accreditations are said to “regulate the alleged quality of business school programs, especially the MBA programs, and regulate the wider practices of universities and business schools” (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011, p. 459). In the present study, the discussions on accredited and non-accredited business schools is concerned with the accreditations with either or both of AACSB and EQUIS as these two accreditations are more popular with business schools in Australia.

The AACSB was set up in 1916 with the first set of standards produced three years later.14 Since then the standards have been revised with the latest revision in 2013 (Goulet, Lopes and White, 2016). The changes in the standards in 2013 have increased the focus on the quality of inputs of a business school including the quality of academics and their capacity to generate scholarly output (Goulet et al., 2016). In 1980, the AACSB adopted additional standards for undergraduate and graduate degree programs in accountancy to address the special needs of the accounting profession.

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14 www.aacsb.edu (accessed 16 June 2012)
AACSB’s mission-based approach encourages “innovation and continuous improvements which results in a variety of quality programs”, and a major role of AACSB is “assisting schools in strategic management to facilitate long-term success” (Romero, 2008, p. 245). The popularity of this accreditation is evidenced by the number of institutions that are AACSB accredited – 777 business schools in 52 countries and territories are AACSB accredited, and 185 institutions hold an additional specialised AACSB Accreditation for their accounting programs.15

Business schools may apply for a business school accreditation or a specialised accreditation such as the accounting accreditation, or both. AACSB accreditations are given for a period of three or five years and are usually acquired by business schools asking for the assessment, which likely only occurs if a school believes it can achieve the standards set by the accreditation body. This means acquiring AACSB accreditation is a voluntary process requiring significant commitment, self-assessment, peer review and dedication from a school’s administration. As acquiring accreditation is a voluntary process, it cannot be said that schools without accreditation have failed. There may be various reasons why schools decide not to be accredited.

EQUIS was launched by the EFMD16 in 1997 and is the European international system of quality assessment, improvement, and accreditation of higher education institutions in management and business administration. EQUIS assesses institutions as a whole and, therefore, the effectiveness of the governance and decision-making processes is of paramount importance. It assesses not just degree programmes but all

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15 http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/accredited-members (accessed 10 December 2016)
16 www.efmd.org (accessed 16 June 2012)
the activities and sub-units of the institution, including research, e-learning units, executive education provision and community outreach.

EFMD is an international, not-for-profit, membership organisation of business schools and corporations, based in Brussels, Belgium, with offices in Asia and the Americas. EFMD is composed of representatives of high-profile organisations that are stakeholders in the quality improvement of management education. This group evaluates the Peer Review Reports on schools that are applying for EQUIS accreditation. The assessment is based on the recommendations made in the report, and EQUIS accreditation is conferred upon management education institutions that have demonstrated excellence at an international level. EFMD has nearly 900 member organisations from academia, business, public service and consultancy in 86 countries, with over 600 institutions across 83 countries from academia.17

The two main quality dimensions in EQUIS’s quality framework are internationalisation and corporate connections. Another dimension is executive education or personal development, although EQUIS does not require that a school be active in executive education. EFMD highly values “the well-balanced development of students and participants as future managers and entrepreneurs” (Urgel, 2007, p. 78). EFMD has its focus on top international schools, rejecting “those schools that are not international and those that do not have at least a well-developed domestic reputation” (Urgel, 2007, p. 80).

In achieving an international accreditation, business schools aim to communicate to the public, including students and employers, that the school’s degree programs “have passed a rigorous review and that students are learning all they need to know

about that area of study” (Romero, 2008, p. 247). Jantzen (2000, p. 738) emphasises that “the accreditation status of a business program is the *sine qua non* in determining how prospective business students judge the quality of a program”. Zammuto (2008, p. 256) explains that business schools benefit from accreditations because the accreditation processes require that “business schools gain clarity about the markets they serve and the services they offer, which is increasingly important as enrolment markets grow more competitive”, and the author emphasises that “the value of accreditation as a quality differentiator appears to be rising in the markets for part-time working students and international students”.

Business schools use external intermediaries, such as international accreditations, to send signals to stakeholders in order to gain international legitimacy (Rao, 1994; Hodge, 2010). Hodge (2010) carried out a multiple-case study of motivations for business schools to commit to gaining international accreditation. The findings from schools in New Zealand, the US and the UK highlight that business schools are seeking accreditation “in order to achieve legitimacy benefits rather than performance benefits, and the intangible benefits are seen as having more importance than the costs involved with achieving accreditation” (p. 6).

External verification of educational institutions and their programs has become important to governments in certain countries. Governments have made universities more accountable through deregulation and the linking of government funding to performance relying on evaluation by external bodies (Hodge, 2010). This has caused universities to seek professional accreditations including international accreditations. In Europe, “increased deregulation and, the emergence of new
providers of higher education services and the increasing internationalisation” has led to increased interest in accreditations (Stensaker, 2011, pp. 757-758).

In New Zealand, the government has moved out of funding based on an “Equivalent Full Time Student” model (EFTS-model) because of a lack of accountability, to a funding system based on a three-year investment plan where universities are expected to “focus capability building efforts on achieving increased quality and performance against international benchmarks” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2007, p. 6, cited in Hodge, 2010, p. 13). Higher education providers were held accountable for their education outcomes and funding decisions were “influenced by external evaluations of the quality of a tertiary education organisation” (Hodge, 2010, p. 14). This led to New Zealand universities seeking international accreditation as a form of external validation of their business schools, with nearly all the business schools in New Zealand universities being accredited with either one or both of AACSB and EQUIS (AACSB International, 2016; EFMD, 2016).

Rindova et al. (2005) suggest that prominence derived through accreditations act as an influential third party or high-status actor, contributing significantly to the price premium (financial performance) associated with having a favourable reputation. Furthermore, the community or a group of people unfamiliar with an organisation’s product or service may assess reputation based on information gathered through these intermediaries. For example, prospective students and the community may rely on the institution’s affiliations with internationally recognised organisations (Baden-Fuller et al., 2000).

Proponents of AACSB accreditation emphasise that the accredited schools are required to evaluate their own performance, measure their effectiveness and find
ways to make improvements in the development and delivery of business and accounting programs. With the focus on continuous improvement, changes are expected within schools. AACSB accreditations do have the effect of “influencing curriculum development and programmatic changes in business schools” (Stepanovich, Mueller and Benson, 2014, p. 104). In support of AACSB accreditations, Hedrick, Henson, Krieg and Wassell (2010) show that academics at AACSB accredited schools are paid more, publish more, and teach less than their peers at non-accredited schools. Their study compared academics of similar status but in different schools. The perception of quality may be conveyed by the AACSB seal or stamp of approval (Stepanovich et al., 2014).

EQUIS is a brand name that business schools benefit in terms of prominence in society, and the accreditation process results in improvements of business schools (Urgel, 2007). Lejeune and Vas’s (2009) survey of EQUIS accredited schools shows that EQUIS accreditation had strong positive impact on the ‘programs development’, ‘quality of the faculty’, ‘social openness and community interaction’ and ‘the ability to acquire resources’. Their investigation of international business schools that have got the EQUIS accreditation highlighted that cultural changes that were induced by EQUIS had a positive impact on performance.

Despite the benefits of accreditation outlined above, scholars have criticised AACSB accreditation and the shift to a mission-linked approach (Roberts, Johnson and Groesbeck, 2004; Lowrie and Willmott, 2009; Lightbody, 2010; Everard, Edmonds and Pierre, 2013). In criticising AACSB, Lowrie and Willmott (2009, p. 411) describe the accreditation as a “regime” and argue that AACSB is like a “group of foxes, guarding the MBA henhouses”, motivated primarily by expansionist, rather
than pedagogical considerations and “a mission-linked approach, underpinned by peer-review, has been good for AACSB growth but has been restrictive and unhealthy for business education that does not fit its ostensibly flexible and accommodating mould”.

Similarly, Everard et al. (2013) criticise AACSB’s mission-driven approach and question the credibility of the AACSB brand. The authors argue that “the AACSB has not achieved its own mission and may have damaged its credibility in the process” (p. 995). Bastin and Kalist’s (2013) findings support those of Everard et al., which question whether the AACSB provides the necessary information for third parties to differentiate between programs that satisfy AACSB standards and those that do not. Additionally, Bastin and Kalist (2013) show that there is no wage premium associated with graduating from an AACSB accredited business college upon entry to the work force compared to those graduating from a non-accredited business college.

Furthermore, gaining such an accreditation is expensive and time-consuming. For example, obtaining AACSB accreditation is a major undertaking over a long period of time, diverting administrative and academic time from other activities, and “is fraught with uncertainty, and takes money” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 111). The initial application fee is significant. This is followed by an accreditation maintenance fee. However, the most significant costs are the indirect costs of staff resources devoted to accreditation in business schools.

The AACSB standards require academics to be knowledgeable and involved in the accreditation process, which consumes significant resources in terms of time and money. This involves attending AACSB accreditation workshops, which can range
from $1,000, apart from the airfares and accommodation, meals and other incidental costs involved. The total cost of gaining accreditations, such as AACSB or EQUIS, is quite significant and may run into hundreds of thousands of dollars (Roberts et al., 2004; Hodge, 2010) which does not include staff time and effort in terms of workload (Lightbody, 2010).

Several studies report mixed findings regarding the benefits of accreditations with professional bodies (for example, Roberts et al., 2004; Rindova et al., 2005; Taylor and Stanton, 2009; Suchanek, Pietzonka, Kunzel, and Futterer, 2012). Roberts et al. (2004) had mixed findings, particularly from academics employed prior to accreditation. Their survey\(^\text{18}\) of 221 academics from 30 accredited business schools in the US found that AACSB accreditation helped business schools maintain quality programs and compete for finances, students and academics but classroom instruction was worse. They also found that graduation from an accredited program was significant to employers, but only where the employers were familiar with the AACSB.

In Roberts et al.’s study, the reaction, however, was different from academics employed prior to receiving accreditation. These academics did not perceive accreditation to be beneficial to them personally and accreditation did not have any beneficial impact on the working climate or the desirability of the job. The demotivation of these academics may explain the decline in classroom instruction standards. Also, the shift in focus from teaching to research had caused academics to be more stressed and they found their job to be less satisfying. With the negative effects on academics, it was not known how students benefitted from accreditation.

\(^{18}\) A longitudinal study from 1997 to 2001.
Suchanek et al. (2012) did not find accreditation to support teaching and learning. Their study of program accreditation, of the German Accreditation Council, found that although program accreditation causes the higher education institutions to comply with the criteria stated in the accreditation standards, it does not support continuous improvement of quality in teaching and learning. The reasons stipulated by the authors include “organisational differences between semantics and social structure” (p. 19). This could be an example of an institution theoretically doing everything required for accreditation but, in reality, business is conducted differently.

Accredited schools may argue that the different stakeholders can be assured that an independent agency has scrutinised the schools’ portfolio of activities and pronounced them to have passed its rigorous quality standards, and accreditation agencies argue that their role is to help segment the market between higher quality providers and lower quality providers in the business school sector (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011). Wilson and McKiernan, however, argue that these accreditations are a form of isomorphic pressures on business schools. Business schools are expected to follow the norms and standards set by the accrediting bodies, and accredited schools act to look similar (Julian and Ofori-Dankwa, 2006).

Masrani et al. (2011) use institutional theory to analyse the role of the British Academy of Management and the Association of Business Schools in gaining legitimacy for management education in the UK. Using archival and interview data, Masrani et al. explain the activities of these two groups, from inception to gaining legitimacy, relating them to the three constructs of institutional theory.

The authors explain that at the developmental stage mimetic activities were adopted by the two organisations. The British Academy of Management was established
using the Academy of Management as a mimetic model, and the Association of Business Schools was influenced by the requirements of the Council for National Academic Awards. Coercive forces came into play when the British Academy of Management engaged in political lobbying of funding bodies, and the Association of Business Schools had representatives in various subcommittees of the Quality Assurance Agency. When legitimacy was becoming established, the organisations turned to professionalising their activities with normative activities such as increasing the quality of research by promoting a culture of research through workshops and training activities (in the case of the British Academy of Management), and development of common standards that related to contents of degrees and to the level of qualifications and experience required for acceptance into programs (in the case of the Association of Business Schools).

Similarly, the influence that international accreditation bodies have on business schools around the world can be explained using the three elements of the institutional theory. The actions and activities of accredited schools become the norm which other schools tend to adopt in order to gain legitimacy, resulting in mimetic activities. Whether accreditations benefit an organisation or not depends on the organisation, its environment, its activities and available resources. Those with insufficient information may not see the benefits of accreditations, be it tangible or intangible. Lack of resources may be a deterrent to accreditations, which otherwise, may be seen as a mimetic activity of business schools to gain legitimacy and peer acceptance in the institutional environment.
2.4.1.3 Rankings

“The rise of international rankings in higher education forms a visible symptom of global educational expansion and global inter-connectedness in the field” (Enders, 2014, p. 174) and, similar to accreditations, higher rankings have been said to place institutions in an ‘elitist’ club. Institutions are differentiated by the rankings determined by a ranking body, and the general perception is that highly-ranked institutions are quality institutions. Hazelkorn’s (2008) study show that rankings are a critical factor underpinning and informing institutional reputation. Similarly, Safón (2009) finds the position occupied by the business school in media rankings the most important factor in predicting the reputation of business schools.

Rankings may be attractive because, for the user, they are simple, easy-to-understand and a fast way to ‘pre-sort’ a group of universities or schools prior to a more in-depth inquiry. Business school rankings provide prospective students with “an information resource that helps them choose the program that best satisfies their needs and wants” (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012, p. 368). Osterloh and Frey (2015, p. 103) stress that it is “efficient to rely on research rankings” where stakeholders do not have sufficient expertise in the area they are analysing.

Research has shown how an improvement in a school’s ranking can lead to dramatic increases in student applications in the following years (Peters, 2007) and it can attract the highest quality students and command the highest prices for the school’s services (Fombrun, 1996; Gioia and Corley, 2002; Peters, 2007), as well as securing a high level of research income, which boosts research performance (Gioia and Corley, 2002). Students graduating from high ranking schools also gain advantage by securing the highest paid jobs (Gioia and Corley, 2002). There is also a clear
relationship between school rankings and student performance (Elbeck, 2009), where highly-ranked schools produce high-performance students.

Scholars have argued that rankings based on research are healthy, especially with competition among scholars that would lead to more and better research that promotes an “entrepreneurial university” (Stensaker and Benner, 2013, p. 401; Osterloh and Frey, 2015). Hazelkorn’s (2008, p. 193) study of responses of US higher education institutions to league tables and rankings (LTRS), and the impact/influence of LTRS on higher education institutions provide evidence that there is a strong perception among university leaders that:

- rankings help maintain and build institutional position and reputation;
- good students use rankings to ‘shortlist’ university choice (especially at the postgraduate level); and
- key stakeholders use rankings to influence their decisions about funding, sponsorship and employee recruitment.

The study found high rankings, especially worldwide rankings, are associated with increased enrolment of international students who are influenced by status and prestige. Hazelkorn further adds that recruitment of high-quality academics gets easier because high-quality academics are more attracted to highly-ranked institutions – “success breeds success” (p. 198), and low ranking impacts negatively on the morale of staff and the institution is likely to lose good staff. Wilkins and Huisman (2012) show that certain highly-ranked institutions may be well-known for some specialised courses that may attract students due to the ranking of the institution.

Stakeholders such as governments, funding agencies, potential institutional partners and accreditation bodies are also more favourably disposed to highly-ranked institutions, showing their support through increased funding to promote teaching and research excellence and facilitate accreditation (Hazelkorn, 2008). Research
funding agencies use rankings to “distribute money to universities with better reputations as these agencies associate their own corporate image with the success of high standing institutions” (Hazelkorn, 2008, p. 196).

Institutional rankings are also vital to students seeking government sponsorship/scholarship to study abroad. Governments use rankings as an indicator of ‘value-for-money’ (Clarke, 2007, Salmi and Saroyan, 2007). According to Salmi and Saroyan (2007, p. 22) scholarships in Mongolia and Qatar are restricted to students admitted to highly-ranked international universities. The study also shows that rankings are vital to domestic students, especially above average students, and those who have the ability to pay full fees without relying on government or other grants but make choices based on non-financial factors such as reputation.

Past ranking of an organisation has been found to influence stakeholders’ subsequent assessment of the organisation. Bowman and Bastedo’s (2011) results show that initial *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)* world university rankings influenced peer-assessments of reputation in subsequent surveys. Similarly, Standifird (2005) reports that peer-assessors appeared to be heavily influenced by the prior ranking of a university.

Questions have been raised about the credibility of rankings because hundreds of measures now exist to rank organisations and, in particular, educational institutions, although reasonable similarities exist between some rankings (Aguillo, Bar-Ilan, Levene and Ortega, 2010). Many quantitative criteria, such as student scores (for example, GMAT prior to university entry, entrance examinations), research productivity and publications of academics (quality and quantity of publications), graduate starting salary and job offers are used in the ranking systems of educational
institutions. Therefore, comparison of universities or schools based on rankings may be challenging and may not be reliable. The methodology used in rankings is questionable and the ranking criteria has been criticised for placing greater weight on research activities and research publications, including publications in high-profile journals (Peters, 2007; Bowman and Bastedo, 2011).

Furthermore, the validity of current ranking systems and league tables (in the US) used as credible measures of reputation have been criticised by educators, scholars, accreditation agencies and business school consumers (Cornelissen and Thorpe, 2002; DeAngelo, DeAngelo, and Zimmerman, 2005, Devinney et al., 2006; AACSB, 2008). The majority of respondents in Hazelkorn’s (2008) study said that LTRS did not provide a full overview of an institution but tended to favour the strengths of well-established universities, with an emphasis on research and postgraduate activity.

Ranking of institutions, similar to gaining accreditation, has been criticised by non-accredited business schools as simply a marketing exercise. Accreditations and rankings are elitist, which exclude institutions that do not wish to conform to certain norms and practices laid down by the respective agencies (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011). Wilkins and Huisman (2012) utilise institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) to explain the reaction of organisations and stakeholders to rankings of an organisation. They explain that educational institutions such as universities and their business schools may be regarded as “belonging to a distinct organisational field where the institutions as a whole constitute a recognised area of institutional life which includes students, regulatory agencies and competitors that conduct similar programs” (p. 368). Rankings have been established in this field as part of the normative and regulative frames.
Wilkins and Huisman (2012) further emphasise that high rankings are “signposts of legitimacy and therefore important for organisational survival” (p. 379). Business schools compete for largely the same resources and legitimacy, and operate under the same institutional framework in terms of laws, regulations, normative rules and cognitive belief systems (Wedlin, 2006). In order to survive, institutions must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in the environment so that organisational legitimacy can be achieved (Scott, 2014).

Similarly, Scott (2014, pp. 59-60) identifies three elements as making up or supporting institutions: “regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements or pillars that together with the associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life”. Each pillar provides a basis by which organisations can achieve legitimacy, and as organisations follow the “rules of the game” (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012, p. 368), isomorphic behaviour and actions within the organisational fields result.

Sauder and Espeland (2009, p. 63) argue that organisations may develop symbolic responses to institutional pressures without disrupting core technical activities in order to “secure legitimacy and conform to general expectations”. The authors suggest that “formal organisational structures often look quite different from informal practices leading to work often being “loosely coupled” to or “decoupled” from the structures of an institutional environment” (p. 63).

In summary, the literature suggests that business schools placed higher in the ranking ladder are in a better position to attract the best students and staff, achieve high tuition fees and obtain increased funding. Increased funding allows the schools to invest back into improving facilities and programs to students and staff. These
advantages further enhance the schools’ reputation, and the schools can achieve sustained competitive advantage. However, there are still concerns regarding ranking criteria and the greater emphasis on research performance. Peters (2007, p. 49) argues that it is impossible to challenge the criteria set out by the various ranking organisations, and instead schools should consider “which criteria reflect areas needing improvement and to continue ‘playing the game’”. However, scholars argue that both accreditation and rankings are guilty of increasing the commercial identity of schools at the expense of both relevance to the field and rigour in academic pursuits (Zimmerman, 2001; DeAngelo et al., 2005; Khurana, 2007; Ryan, Neumann and Guthrie, 2008).

2.4.1.4 Industry and Community Engagements

Industry connection is vital to bringing relevance to the higher education curriculum and industry networking is crucial for creating job opportunities for graduates. O’Connell et al. (2015) identify a need for higher education curriculum to meet industry requirements. Engagement with industry can produce useful materials for curriculum including relevant case studies. The authors recommend having industry representatives on school or degree advisory committees “to advise on matters related to curriculum review and development as well as research” (p. 96).

Networking with industry not only brings relevance to the business curriculum, it creates job opportunities for graduates. James Kirkbride, of the London School of Business and Finance, encourages universities to network with industries to enhance job opportunities for graduates. He emphasises that universities should strengthen
their links with industries because of the difficulties UK graduates are facing in securing a job.19

Scholars identify a gap between academia and practice. The gap between business research and practice is a concern, with business research criticised for being too theoretical with not much relevance to practice (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bartunek, 2007; Cohen, 2007; Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie and O’Brien, 2012; Dostaler and Tomberlin, 2013). Dostaler and Tomberlin (2013) believe that the divide between business research and practice is widening. O’Connell et al. (2015, p. 97) suggest that academics should convey their research outcomes to “practitioners and the wider business community” through newspapers, business magazines, professional journals and other means of media. Feedback from various stakeholders will be useful to higher education knowledge.

Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ, formerly The Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia) has reflected concerns over accounting education, the graduates and the profession, in a 2010 report (Evans, Burritt and Guthrie, 2010). CAANZ has indicated that partnership with industry and the academic community is one of its key priorities to ensure the quality of accounting education and its graduates. One recommendation is for the accounting professional bodies to act as the link between academics and industry (that includes WPs or work experience programs).

Similarly, the AACSB recommends that business schools should work closely with practising managers in industry to enhance business research and for the production of knowledge in areas that are of current interest to industry (AACSB, 2008).

Overall, there is strong support for collaborations and engagements with industry in research and innovation. Universities Australia (2013, p. 3) summarises the need for higher education engagement with industry, suggesting a need for “collaborative improvements in skills development, labour market demand, and areas of mutual self-interest, such as research policy, the future of manufacturing and education policy”.

The need for great collaboration and engagements between business schools and industry is evident in a comment in an article in *The Conversation* published on 10 November 2015, which states “Australia produces great research but it ranks last in the OECD tables for collaboration between researchers and business”.20 In the article, the reason given by the Departments of Education and Industry for this poor performance was the low proportion of researchers working in business and academic–industry research publications. The fact that academic incentives, such as promotions and higher income are linked to academic research, has also been blamed for the divide.

Creating a partnership with the community is creating partnerships with the various stakeholders. Kanter (2011) highlight that the community is interested in an organisation’s contribution to society as much as they are in the organisation’s capabilities. The author further emphasises that collaborative engagement with the community, which may be seen as a self-motivated strategy, should not be a short-term engagement but a long-term relationship that benefits both the organisation and the society. “Great companies create frameworks that use societal value and human values as decision-making criteria” (Kanter, 2011, p. 3).

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2.4.1.5 Media Exposure

Media exposure of organisation-specific activities is said to be significantly related to changes in corporate reputation (Wartick, 1992). However, the impact of media exposure on corporate reputation has been given little attention in the literature. A small number of studies highlighted the significant impact of media exposure on organisational reputation, and these studies concentrated on firms and companies (Weinberger and Romeo, 1989; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Griffin, Babin and Attaway, 1991; Wartick, 1992). No known study has been identified investigating the relationship between media exposure and organisational reputation of educational institutions.

Most of the studies found a relationship existed between media exposure or coverage and corporate reputation. Weinberger and Romeo (1989) show that the magnitude of negative media exposure leads to a proportionate decline in corporate reputation. This finding is supported by Griffin, Babin, and Attaway (1991), who find that negative publicity negatively affects corporate reputation. However, certain situational factors, such as the source of information, credibility and firm responsibility, history and response tactic, moderate the impact of media exposure. Similarly, Wartick (1992) finds a significant relationship between intense media exposure and changes in corporate reputation. The author highlights that “the amount, tone and recency of ME (media exposure) appear to be associated with different dimensions of the changes in corporate reputation, and the relationships vary depending on the starting level of the CR (corporate reputation)” (p. 46).

Although Fombrun and Shanley (1990) show that there is a relationship between media exposure and corporate reputation, they do not find differing results for
positive, negative, neutral or mixed media exposure. Furthermore, their study highlights that more media exposure may negatively affect corporate reputation. In support of Fombrun and Shanley’s findings, Wartick (1992) concludes that the pervasiveness of media and its influence on societal issues are pertinent in understanding how perception of an organisation is influenced by media exposure. The studies suggest that a longer period of media exposure may have a negative effect on organisational reputation.

Kiousis, Popescu, and Mitrook (2007), however, do not observe a relationship between media exposure and corporate reputation. The authors, working on media coverage in the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, conclude that “the transfer of salience from media messages to perceptions of corporate reputation did not occur” (p. 161). This observation may be an outcome of how situational factors could influence the impact of media coverage on organisational reputation, as suggested by Griffin et al., (1991).

Overall, media exposure or media coverage has been identified to be an important factor influencing the reputation of an organisation. As expected, negative media coverage is likely to result in negative perception and thus a decline in perceived reputation. In addition, one study shows that too much media exposure, whether positive or negative, may have unexpected negative influence on reputation.

2.4.2 Perceived Quality

The perceived quality of an organisation stems from the perceptions of different stakeholders that have some interest in the organisation. The quality of an organisation may be viewed in terms of the financial performance of the organisation, quality of products and services of the organisation, prominence and
reputation of owners and employees in society. In the case of an educational institution, stakeholders may look for quality of students enrolled, staff employed, courses provided and facilities available to them. Rindova et al. (2005) state that perceived quality may be derived through perceptions of assets or resources internal to an organisation.

Students with high university entrance scores are usually perceived to be quality students, and institutions enrolling such students are likely to be perceived to be quality providers. Similarly, institutions engaging well-known academics may be perceived to be quality institutions based on the reputation of their academics. Programs delivered by high-profile academics are attractive to stakeholders, and the programs are perceived to be high-quality programs because these academics are presumed to be specialists in their field. Therefore, institutions tend to allocate resources to certain activities and programs in order to enhance the perceived quality of their products and services.

2.4.2.1 Teaching and Research

Teaching and research are the two key functions of a university. Performance in these two areas has been identified as enhancing organisational reputation (Armstrong and Sperry, 1994; Ito and Brotheridge, 2007). Armstrong and Sperry (1994) provide evidence that business school research is significantly correlated with prestige rankings. Parker, Guthrie and Linacre (2011), however, emphasise relevant research rather than just research as more important.

Ito and Brotheridge (2007) highlight that satisfying performance in both teaching and research is an essential criterion for hiring and tenure. The authors further add that knowing how these two key aspects of an educational institution affects or influences
the reputation of the institution is vital for sustained competitive advantage of the institution. In contrast, Safón (2007) found no direct, significant relationship between research performance and the assessment of business school reputation by firms. Research performances of business schools appear to be of high priority for professional associations and for international accreditation and ranking bodies, rather than firms.

Universities Australia (2013, p. 4) shows strong support for research as crucial for the future prosperity and wellbeing of Australians. The findings show support that:

- *research is an essential part of what a university does, and conducting research to advance knowledge is important.*
- *universities should focus much of their research on producing practical outcomes.*
- *research by Australian universities is important but it is a secondary function behind teaching and learning.*

Furthermore, the Australian government’s support of research is evident in the $416 million Australian Research Council (ARC) grants announced on 1 November 2016.21 These government grants may be a reason for universities to push for schools to produce high-profile research so that they can secure ARC grants.

Many scholars uphold that higher education is about research and that research is knowledge gained. However, another argument could be that if research is too theoretical and not relevant to current practice, the research may not contribute much to contemporary knowledge. The following sections discuss the review of the literature in relation to research and teaching and learning in business schools including business programs and student experiences.

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2.4.2.1.1 Relevance of Business Research to Teaching and Learning, and to Practice

Scholars suggest a symbiotic relationship exists between research and teaching (Visser-Wijnveen, Van Driel, Van der Rijst, Verloop and Visser, 2010; Hancock, Marriott and Duff, 2015). Some studies identify the mutuality of research and teaching, showing that active engagement in one will benefit the other (Colbeck, 1998; Zamorski, 2002; Marginson 2007, 2012; Taylor and Stanton, 2009; Sheil, 2010; Zimbardi and Myatt, 2012), while others suggest research and teaching have few synergies and vie for academic time and institutional resources (Hattie and Marsh, 1996; Coate, Barnett and Williams, 2001; Stappenbelt, 2013).

Visser-Wijnveen et al. (2010) show a strong symbiotic relationship between research and teaching. The authors suggest that academics may benefit from varying aspects of the nexus between research and teaching. Similarly, Hancock et al. (2015, p. 21) show that there is a “symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, and where a nexus between the two exists, the relationship was beneficial”. Their findings also provide evidence that teaching informs research with one of their participants saying “… actually the very first part of my PhD thesis is from my teaching. I got an idea, an absolute inspiration, from teaching … I think [for] 50% of my colleagues in either a direct or indirect way, their teaching informed their research” (p. 22).

Duff and Marriott (2016, p. 11), however, highlight that the nexus between teaching and research can have “negative effects including the lack of relevance of contemporary research to curriculum, and the technical content gaps that can be created by a curriculum that is too research focused”. Stappenbelt (2013) examines the student perspective of the research–teaching nexus. The study suggests that
while at the institutional and departmental levels the nexus between teaching and research is necessary and beneficial, “students do not appear to benefit greatly from individual teaching staff involved in research activities (p. 111).

The relevance of scientific business research to practice has been widely criticised in the business school literature, and is said to create a negative impact on business schools’ reputations (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Safón, 2007; Dostaler and Tomberlin, 2013). Other scholars have acknowledged the research–practice gap in management (for example, Rynes, 2007; Bartunek, 2007; Cohen, 2007; Jain, 2009; Bansal et al., 2012).

Pfeffer and Fong (2002) argue that the impact of business school research is small when compared with business research conducted by writers outside business schools. After more than a decade the gap between business school research and practitioners still appears to exist (Dostaler and Tomberlin, 2013). Dostaler and Tomberlin (2013, p. 116) believe that “the divide between business research and practice is widening and has negative impacts on business teaching at all levels”. In reference to the accounting discipline, Parker et al. (2011, p. 6) argue that “research has become too far removed from the interests of the profession and practitioners”.

Scholars suggest that business school tenure and promotion systems may be a key reason for the persistent gap between business research and business practice. O’Connell et al. (2015) highlight the many concerns of academics, including the pressure of publishing in academic journals, which widens the gap between research and teaching. O’Connell et al. stress that business schools’ focus is on “research published in top-tiered journals that is often theoretically focused rather than
They suggest that publishing in top-tiered journals is usually driven by universities’ expectations and academics’ expectation of promotion.

Furthermore, in several business schools, when a position becomes available, young PhD graduates working on their publications stand a good chance of securing the position despite having little or no work-life experience and soon after being hired these graduates’ priority will be to obtain grants and publish in scholarly journals (Dostaler and Tomberlin, 2013). Students are disadvantaged because young graduates with no real-life experience are not able to deliver, and teaching becomes too theoretical with no practical relevance. Professors’ lack of current practical experience may be another reason for such a divide. Promotion and tenure requirements drive professors to supervise research students who select research topics and methodologies that are publishable in high-quality academic journals thus ignoring practical relevance (Burke and Rau, 2010).

Business school research is accused of being not only too theoretical but inaccessible to practitioners and possibly irrelevant (Starkey and Madan, 2001; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Forster, 2007; Lubbe, 2015). Forster (2007) show that if CEOs read academic journals at all, they are either the lowest-ranked academic journals or not ranked at all. The reasons given for not reading academic journals were the language and the irrelevancy of the method. To increase the impact of business school research, a closer interaction between “academics and practicing managers in the production of knowledge in areas of greatest interest” is recommended (AACSB, 2008, p. 39).

Bansal et al. (2012), in investigating how the gap between management research and management practice can be closed, suggest the use of intermediary organisations
like the Network for Business Sustainability. Dostaler and Tomberlin (2013, p. 124) suggest “business professors could divide their time between teaching and practice, and should be encouraged to use sabbaticals as opportunities to assume roles in businesses – industrial sabbaticals could provide academics with an opportunity to improve their knowledge about business practice”. This practice might result in “professionalization” of the academic profession (Khurana, 2007, p. 21).

‘Professionalisation’ of academics is further supported by O’Connell et al. (2015), in their report *Shaping the Future of Accounting in Business Education in Australia*. The authors suggest academics be given study leave “to facilitate meaningful engagement with professional practice to develop current knowledge, improve understandings of phenomenon and to prepare enriched teaching resources” (p. 92). Academics are also encouraged to engage in professional sessions run by professional bodies.

Relevant research, that is, research which is relevant to practice and informs areas of interest in industry, should contribute significantly to teaching and student learning. Hancock *et al.* (2015) emphasise the importance of academic research in influencing ‘thought leadership’, and the authors state a teaching–research nexus will significantly benefit “the employability of graduates” (p. 19). Burke and Rau (2010) also strongly emphasise the need to tighten the link between research and teaching in order to enhance “student learning about the value of research and to giving them - our future managers – the skills they will need to be lifelong consumers of management research” (p. 132).

Taylor and Stanton (2009, p. 93) show that while academics “perceived teaching and research to be mutually supportive and believed that their research activities made
them better teachers”, the academics would spend less time in scholarly publications if it did not have a strong impact on their job security. The authors note that the academics acknowledged that “securing a publication is often more important than providing a contribution to the advancement of business knowledge” (p. 93). A reason for the emphasis on academic publications is stated to be the accreditation status of the schools studied, and the requirement to seek re-accreditation.

Several studies found a link between accreditation status of a school and high level of academic publications (for example, Ehie and Karanthanos, 1994; Udell, Parker and Pettijohn, 1995; Srinivasan, Kemelgor and Johnson, 2000). Ehie and Karanthanos (1994) found that accredited schools value intellectual contributions as more important and teaching contributions as less important than schools without accreditations. Similarly, Udell et al. (1995) showed that academics at AACSB accredited schools published significantly more journal articles than academics at non-accredited schools. The findings are supported by Srinivasan et al.’s (2000) evidence of a strong correlation between levels of research output and AACSB accreditation.

An AACSB publication states that although the “AACSB clearly believes that interdependency exists (between research output and teaching effectiveness)” and that it is a positive aspect of effective business education, the report goes on to state that there is “no definitive research linking research output with effective teaching” (AACSB, 2008, P. 17).

The AACSB has previously required accrediting institutions to have at least 50% of instructors at the bachelor’s and master’s levels be “academically qualified”, which normally means a PhD and regular publication in refereed journals (Dostaler and
Tomberlin, 2013, p. 124). The new standards since 2013 require a minimum of 40% of “academically qualified” instructors, now referred to as “scholarly academics” so long as 60% are either scholarly or “practice academics” (AACSB International, 2013).

Prior studies have highlighted the importance of the nexus between research and teaching, and the relevance of research to practice. Additionally, the strategic management of business courses and programs, and how and what knowledge is to be imparted to business students is becoming increasingly crucial for sustained competitive advantage.

2.4.2.1.2 Relevance of Business Courses to Industry

Business schools have been criticised for their business programs and failure to prepare graduates for the work place, including that subjects taught are not relevant for students entering into an organisation (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Mitroff et al., 2015). Studies call for an overhaul of business school curriculum (Jain, 2009; Spender, 2014), including the MBA programs (Schoemaker, 2008). Mitroff et al. (2015) criticise the intellectual content of business schools, in particular, highlighting how non-traditional business courses such as crisis and risk management, sustainability, stakeholder management and ethics, have been included as part of traditional business courses such as accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing but are taught independently of one another rather than interdependently.

Similarly, Rasche, Gilbert and Schedel (2013) show that although many disciplines, including accounting and finance, include CSR in the curriculum, in most cases, this is elective and detached from core disciplines. The non-integration of courses may
seriously impact graduates’ abilities to adapt to working life as well as their ability to be leaders in the work place (Mitroff et al., 2015). Pfeffer and Fong (2004), studying the effects of business schools on careers of students, find little evidence that the MBA credential, particularly from non-elite schools, is related to either salary or the attainment of higher level positions in organisations.

However, studies have shown that both universities and employers have a responsibility in educating graduates (Howieson, Hancock, Segal, Kavanagh and Tempone, 2014). Howieson et al.’s (2014, p. 270) study provides evidence that universities are responsible “for the development of both technical and non-technical skills in the period prior to entering employment”, and employers have a role in “socialising graduates into the culture of an organisation to promote teamwork and client relationship management”. Some of the employers who participated in the study indicated that “a great deal of ‘soft-skills’ training occurred on an as needed, short-term in-house basis” (p. 270). Such soft skills include communication skills which is often discussed in the literature as lacking in new graduates, and in particular accounting graduates. The support that universities and employers provide to the education of graduates may be related to the co-creation concept frequently used in marketing studies. If the providers and the end-users both have input to the learning outcomes expected of graduates this could potentially add value to graduates, such as, for example, professional accountants (Howieson et al., 2014).

In 2000, Albrecht and Sack predicted the demise of accounting education and the accounting profession if rapid and significant changes are not implemented. Albrecht and Sack (2000, p. 43) identify “six major categories of perceived problems” in accounting education:
• course content and curriculum being too narrow and outdated or irrelevant;
• pedagogy being rule-based;
• lack of skill development due to too much focus on content;
• lack of use of technology;
• faculty development and reward structures – accounting faculty being isolated from business-school peers and business professionals that they are becoming out of touch with market and competitive expectations; and
• strategic planning and direction of accounting programs and departments – changes have not been substantive and pervasive enough.

Over a decade later and with the increasing popularity of accounting education, especially among international students, French and Coppage’s (2004) findings support Albrecht and Sack’s (2000) argument that accounting students are not exposed to a sufficiently broad business education with real-world examples. The authors suggest that accounting and finance disciplines should incorporate the necessary technical and non-technical skills in the curriculum. The authors further recommend multi-disciplinary courses, for example, combining accounting and finance courses, which will strengthen the combined program and save resources. A multi-disciplinary course is suggested as having the potential to bring relevancy into the accounting and finance curricula, and will meet the requirements of professional financial certifications.

The CEDA (2015, p. 33) report Australia’s Future Workforce suggests that with the advancement in technology ‘routine jobs’ are likely to be “outsourced or replaced by technology”. In the case of the accounting profession, more non-routine work may become pertinent to hiring, and the report suggests that accounting coursework should include not only technical contents but also non-technical skills. French and Coppage (2004) suggest some examples of non-technical skills that can be included in business courses such as: communication, interpersonal and leadership skills; analytical and problem-solving skills; technological proficiencies; logic, ethical
reasoning and strategic thinking skills; and professional marketing, client relationships, and customer profitability.

Hancock et al. (2010) supplement the non-technical skills identified above to include critical analysis, self-management and teamwork as important and necessary skills for accounting graduates to secure a job in accounting. Hancock et al. (2010) show that various stakeholders, including employers, consider non-technical skills as vital in recruitment, training and daily work as an accountant. Their findings reveal the following skills in the order in which each was most frequently referred to (and, therefore, assumed to be important skills for accounting graduates):

- communication and presentation;
- teamwork and good interpersonal skills;
- self-management;
- initiative and enterprise;
- problem solving;
- technological competence; and
- planning and organising skills (p. 55).

In the above study, employers, particularly from large accounting firms, report that “many international students did not have the necessary communication skills to secure employment” (p. 61). This lack of communication skills may be attributed to poor English language competency as evidenced by Birrell (2006). Hancock et al.’s (2010) findings are consistent with Jackson, Watty, Yu and Lowe’s (2006) study. Their study showed that although employers were satisfied with the level of technical competence exhibited by accounting graduates, where general skills were concerned, English language and communication skills were recognised to be key areas of deficiency in accounting graduates.

In response to the many difficulties that higher education providers are facing in relation to their programs, in 2010 the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) implemented the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project. The
main aim of setting standards for each discipline was to “define minimum or threshold discipline-based learning outcomes, aligned to the AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework]” and these include “minimum discipline knowledge; discipline specific skills; and professional capabilities including attitudes and professional values that are expected of a graduate from a specific level of programme in a specified discipline area” (Freeman and Hancock, 2011, p. 268).22

The accounting discipline was chosen as the first discipline to develop the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement for business (ALTC, December 2010). The Threshold Learning Standards for Accounting were set in five interrelated areas, namely: judgement; knowledge; application skills; communication and teamwork, and self-management. The standards were developed with reference to the AQF and international frameworks and standards, and the advisory group comprised key stakeholders from academia, employers, professional bodies and students, and worked closely with members of the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) (ALTC, December 2010).

The outcomes of the implementation of the ALTC project are expected to benefit not only the HES but also the community at large. Freeman and Hancock (2011, p. 272) highlight that “the greater employer understanding and confidence in accounting degrees should provide expanded study and employment opportunities for graduates”. The authors further provide assurance that, overall, “this project encourages continuous improvement and can assist with assurance data for accreditation purposes, including those anticipated under the new quality regime in Australia”, and they highlight that there will be “potential benefits to graduates, academics, professional bodies and employers from these initiatives” (p. 272).

22 For details of the ALTC Project, refer to Freeman (2010) and Freeman and Hancock (2011)
In line with the emphasis on the importance of learning standards, O’Connell et al. (2015, p. 91) stress the importance of the relevance of curriculum (with specific reference to accounting education), and that the content and delivery of the curriculum should “serve the needs of business in changing times”. A key recommendation in the report by O’Connell et al. is the development of students’ professional skills, which involves recognition of learning strategies and assessments, and exposing students to the world of professional practice.

Furthermore, designing such programs and assessments can be tedious and time-consuming. O’Connell et al. emphasise that academic effort and time in developing and assessing students’ professional skills should be recognised especially in academic workloads. To achieve currency and relevance, academics should keep abreast of contemporary knowledge of professional practice and the latest technologies in education and practice (for details of the recommendations, refer to O’Connell et al.’s (2015) report, Shaping the Future of Accounting in Business Education in Australia).

2.4.2.1.3 Quality of Teaching and Learning

Parker et al. (2011) comment that in 2010 many universities in Australia over-enrolled students, particularly in business schools. Mass education became imperatively driven by the revenue-seeking objective of higher education institutions due to constrained government funding. The result of such large enrolments is large classes, shortage of staff and high student–staff ratios that potentially erode teaching quality (Parker, 2010; Ryan, 2010). Parker (2010) highlights that the quality of students enrolled in universities has suffered due to universities wanting to increase their revenue, especially through recruitment of high fee-paying international
students. The massification of education has resulted in high student/staff ratios and casualisation of academics to meet the demand for teaching staff to cut costs, which in turn, has affected the quality of teaching and learning (Ryan et al., 2008).

Further, universities are accused of adapting their programs and assessments to suit students, in particular international students, who may spend more of their time working than attending classes (James, Krause and Jennings, 2010; Foster, 2012). To cater to these students, continuous assessments are becoming more popular with a smaller component of examinations or even replacing examinations (Parker, 2010).

Similarly, the quality of students enrolled into business schools has affected the reputations of the schools. Safón’s (2007) study of recruiters’ perceptions of a business school found student characteristics as the most influential attribute of organisational reputation, out-performing program value-added components, media rankings and research performance. The “outcome of a business school’s achievements”, which is based on the results of students’ performance has been perceived as a signal of organisational reputation (Safón, 2012, p. 169).

Several scholars have highlighted the lack of English language proficiency of students enrolled in Australian schools as a barrier for academic performance. Birrell (2006) found one-third of former international students (of those who gained permanent residence visa in the period 2005–2006 after graduating from an Australian university) did not achieve the ‘competent’ band 6 English standards on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Poor English language competency is evidenced to impact student learning, and ultimately student performance in assessments and student grades (Watty, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006; Watty, 2007; Foster, 2012), which is a strong reflection of poor quality of students.
Watty’s (2006) survey of accounting academics in Australian universities (conducted in 2003) revealed that more than 50% of the respondents did not perceive that there has been an improvement in the quality of students entering the accounting subject. This has been perceived to have an impact on the quality of accounting education as Watty’s study found that most accounting academics thought the quality of accounting education had declined. Academics attribute the decline in the quality of accounting education to: “increasing student numbers (and thus class sizes); increasing international student enrolments; staff cuts (resulting in overuse of sessional staff); and reduced administrative support (due to ‘exhausted staff’)” (p. 297). Similarly, Cappelletto (2010) highlights the poor quality of students and increasing student numbers as some of the factors accounting academics state as a reason for the lack of appeal of accounting academia.

While Watty (2006) and Cappelletto (2010) show that the quality of accounting education and the quality of students is declining, Jackson et al. (2006) provide insights that the English language competency of accounting students or students undertaking accounting assessments had the most impact on student learning and student grades. The impact of poor English language proficiency on student performance is strongly supported by Foster (2012), who provides evidence that international students and students of non-English speaking backgrounds performed significantly worse than other students. The author suggests that English fluency problems could be one of various reasons for poor performance. All three studies made reference to the quality of students in Australian universities, and the resultant poor student performance. A major concern was the English language competency of the students, particularly that of international students studying in Australia.
One suggestion to overcome language barriers and for international students to improve their English language competencies is the interaction of international students and domestic students (Arkoudis et al., 2013). Arkoudis et al.’s study highlights that interaction among students from diverse backgrounds is likely to improve the language skills of students, especially the English language skills of international students. The study showed that additionally, both international and domestic students will have an increased awareness and better understanding of different perspectives and backgrounds. This exposure will create a greater feeling of belonging, particularly for international students.

Another area where quality of students is of great concern is in the TNE and offshore programs. TNE and setting up branch campuses have increased in the HES in the last two decades, and particularly in Australia. Such moves may be revenue-driven (Naidoo, 2015) or even to enhance international reputation. The quality of students enrolled in TNE and offshore programs has been of great concern due to their difficulty in coping with a student-centred educational approach (as is offered in most non-Asian institutions) and students being spoon-fed in secondary schools (in their home countries) (Gregory and Wohlmut, 2002; Castle and Kelly, 2004; Heffernan, Morrison, Basu, and Sweeney, 2010).

Language differences between the host and home countries may cause difficulty in learning (Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011; Dunworth, 2008) with English being either a second or third language in most of the host countries and host institutions adopting curricula offered in English by home country institutions (Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011). Other factors that contribute to poor student quality in TNE programs can be attributed to cultural difference (Chapman and Pyvis, 2006), which may explain why
these students are less likely to participate in classroom discussions because they perceive a risk of losing face (Wilson, 2002).

Similar issues arise when local teachers are engaged in delivering programs in English when English is not the first language of the teachers (Dobos, 2011). To overcome the language problem, Gregory and Wohlmut (2002) recommend establishing language centres for all offshore students to improve their English language. Requiring students to do a language course before enrolling in a business course, however, may be a deterrent to enrolling in higher education. Students may not be willing to pay the additional fees or spend more time achieving the degree. Overseas partners may not favour such an arrangement if they risk losing students, and of course, more revenue.

Differing entry requirements to courses (Lane, 2011), compared to requirements in the institutions in a foreign country where the courses originate, is one of the key reasons for poor student quality. Lower entry requirements at overseas campuses may cause significant differences in the outcomes of students in the host institution and the home institution. Dunworth’s (2008) findings show that host institutions give priority to admitting a high number of students in order to obtain higher income through tuition fees thus not complying with the strict entry criteria of home institutions. Lowering entry criteria is likely to result in students without the proper prerequisite knowledge being admitted into courses and eventually failing such courses (Dobos, 2011). Lane (2011) recommends a compulsory preparatory year to bridge the gap between the host country secondary education and the home institution’s entry criteria.
Additionally, Gregory and Wohlmuth (2002) and Dobos (2011) suggest that for certain programs or units there is a need to adapt educational materials to local context to bring relevance to the curriculum if a home country’s practices and national values differ from those of the host country. Similarly, assessment programs may have to be adapted by the host institution or home institution to cater to local context where necessary. Despite these differences, there is a real need to standardise grading and standard setting procedures in order to maintain comparability of assessment programs across institutions (Coleman, 2003), and to maintain the quality of students graduating and the programs being offered.

McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) recommend that teachers at offshore campuses should possess comparable content knowledge and didactic skills relevant to the delivery of the curriculum (Coleman, 2003). Smith (2009), Lim (2010), and Shams and Huisman (2012) recommend a discipline-specific induction program to minimise differences in didactic and content knowledge. Lack of commitment of offshore teachers is another factor that affects the quality of delivery of offshore programs (Smith, 2009; Dobos, 2011).

Poor student performance is usually perceived to be due to enrolling students who have not met the minimum course requirements, including lack of relevant language proficiency to undertake the course. However, other factors, such as poor facilities in offshore or branch campuses, may contribute to the poor performance of students. Poor facilities include lack of or limited availability of learning resources and student support systems such as libraries, online resources and student services in offshore campuses (Coleman, 2003; Castle and Kelly, 2004). Coleman (2003) recommends that details of services to be provided to students be included when partnership
contracts are drafted, and Gregory and Wohlmuth (2002) recommend use of e-learning techniques to provide better and superior learning facilities to offshore students. E-learning services may be provided by institutions offering the course to students in offshore campuses.

The popularity of business courses has attracted large numbers of students in many countries, including Australia. Business schools are also known to enrol the largest proportion of international students. The literature has highlighted the many issues surrounding business schools and business programs, particularly with the large demand from Asian countries for foreign education in English speaking countries. Massification of business education, lack of English language proficiency and lower entry requirements and, therefore, modification of business programs and assessments, are some of the criticisms directed at business schools.

2.5 Focus of Study

Amidst such criticisms, it is a challenge for business schools to survive a dynamic competitive higher education market. Business schools may aim to differentiate themselves to gain competitive advantage. Competitive advantage may be gained through positive organisational reputation. However, how will business schools differentiate or aim to differentiate? An investigation of how business schools in higher education institutions enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage is the main objective of this investigation. The study investigates the reputation drivers of business schools.

The present study aims to identify key reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools, improve their programs, research, and teaching and learning. Non-accredited business schools are selected for the study as
these schools are expected to face greater challenges in competing with internationally accredited and longstanding business schools.

Most prior studies concentrate on accredited business schools, mainly AACSB accredited schools, and are mostly based on quantitative data, such as surveys, or secondary data studying the benefits accruing from accreditation, publishing and teaching, motivation for accreditation, and elitism, brand and status (Ehie and Karanthanos, 1994; Udell et al., 1995; Srinivasan et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2004; Bell and Taylor, 2005; Urgel, 2007; Romero, 2008; Sciglimpaglia, Medlin, Toole and Whittenburg, 2005; Taylor and Stanton, 2009; Hodge, 2010; Marginson, 2012). Some discuss the accreditation standards (for example, Miles, Hazeldine and Munilla, 2004), while others criticise accreditation (for example, Lowrie and Willmott, 2009; Wilson and McKiernan, 2011). There are few studies of non-accredited business schools. Therefore, studying non-accredited schools will contribute significantly to the extant literature. Non-accredited schools may be perceived to be at a disadvantage compared to accredited schools, however, alternative programs and activities may be advantageous to them.

Qualitative research was chosen for this study, using semi-structured interview questions and involving mainly academic participants. A qualitative research study can provide rich information by eliciting various perspectives and reasons, and reactions of participants towards a school’s strategies. The data collected through interviews will be richer than data collected via a survey. While surveys are useful for eliciting responses from a larger number of participants, personal views are difficult to retrieve through a survey, which usually has a set of options or restricted open-ended questions.
Prior studies have concentrated on the views and perceptions of key management personnel, including deans of schools, however, few studies have utilised academics’ perceptions. Academics are, in most cases, in close contact with students who are one of the key stakeholders in any educational institution. Being in close contact with students, academics are more likely to understand students’ needs and expectations. Also, being part of the organisation, academics may act as the link between students and the institution. Furthermore, academics are, in most cases, involved in organisational activities, changes occurring within organisations, and likely to be affected, whether positively or negatively, by organisational decisions. Therefore, eliciting the views of academics is considered vital for the study in order to gain a broader perspective of business schools.

In addition, the study provides evidence from two other groups, the expert group of Associate Deans of L&T of business schools, and business school postgraduate students. The Associate Deans of L&T included in this study are considered experts in the area of L&T in business schools because of their vast experience in business education and their involvement in accreditation processes. The views of the Associate Deans are cross-referenced and either confirm the findings of the two non-accredited business schools or provide further insights into the research area. Postgraduate students are more likely than undergraduate students to be aware of the credentials of business schools and academics. These students’ contributions will provide a valuable perspective as consumers of business school products.
2.6 Summary

Australia, being geographically well positioned close to Asia where the demand for foreign education has escalated, has seen a tremendous growth in its HES. Of all the courses in higher education institutions business schools have seen the greatest demand with management and commerce courses being very popular with foreign students, especially those from Asia. The literature review shows that business schools need to build their reputation, strategising organisational choice of reputation drivers to improve their reputational status.

Based on the literature, the key reputation drivers for business schools are identified and include:

- gaining professional and international accreditations;
- improving rankings of the university and the business school;
- increasing research which has been linked to improved ranking;
- importance of research and teaching, and currency of knowledge; and
- improving student quality and the student experience.

The reputation of an organisation does not lie in the hands of the various stakeholders alone. ‘Relevant others’ do have a significant influence in how an organisation or institution is perceived by stakeholders, especially prospective stakeholders (Wilkins and Huisman, 2013). Wilkins and Huisman show that opinions of ‘relevant others’ had the strongest influence on prospective student evaluations of institutional images. This has been referred to as ‘interpersonal relationships’ and this dependence on opinions of family, friends and relatives could be due to the social norm in the culture of the students, and due to the absence of sufficient and reliable information provided by the institutions.
Chapter Three  RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research philosophy and framework for this study and explains the perspective from which the researcher has approached the topic. This discussion also includes the methodological assumptions associated with the research framework, which in turn leads to an explanation of the research design. Additionally, the theoretical perspective of the study is discussed by describing the two theories that are utilised to inform the study. The two theories are institutional theory and strategic choice theory.

Institutional theory explains the influence of external forces on institutions, including higher education institutions, competing in a highly dynamic market environment. Strategic choice theory is used to explain the actions of management whether in reaction to influences of external forces or otherwise. The present study explains the need to utilise the two theories to fully understand the impact of both external and internal forces on an organisation.

Most of the research on reputation drivers of business schools is quantitative research, concentrating on a particular reputation driver. These studies measure organisational reputation in terms of quality of students, quality of staff including academics, media rankings and professional affiliations, or salaries of graduates of business schools, and most are based on perceptions of MBA students and recruiters, and that of school deans (see Baden-Fuller et al., 2000; Baden-Fuller and Ang, 2001; Safon, 2007, 2009, 2012; Rindova et al., 2005). The aim of the present study is not to measure organisational reputation but to elicit which reputation drivers are
perceived to enhance the reputation of an educational institution such as business schools in the HES. In the study, a qualitative analysis of data from interviews was considered appropriate to elicit answers that will address the research questions and, therefore, provide evidence in relation to the research objective.

An in-depth analysis utilising qualitative data collection and analysis is considered valuable in providing evidence as to whether certain reputational drivers are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools, in particular that of non-accredited business schools. Furthermore, qualitative research using interviews to gather information is considered to provide additional and rich evidence of success stories of business schools, approaches adopted by these schools, and constraints faced by others.

This chapter begins with a discussion of research philosophies, philosophical assumptions and the association of these assumptions to interpretative frameworks of qualitative research. Based on the assumptions and frameworks in the literature, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study are outlined. The research philosophy is used to explain the reason for undertaking a qualitative study.

Subsequent sections of the chapter discuss the research objectives and research questions followed by the research methodology. The research methodology section discusses the groups used, the interviews, the data collection process, the data analysis process and the thematic analysis. Finally, the theoretical framework of the study is presented using the two theories: institutional and strategic choice theories. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the quality assurance and ethical considerations of the study. An outline of the chapter is presented in Figure 3.1,
which is adapted based on Myers’ (2009, p. 23) model of a qualitative research design.

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**Figure 3.1   Outline of Chapter Three**

Firstly, it is important to establish the research philosophy that will address the issue that the researcher aims to investigate. Secondly, the research philosophy guides the design of the research objective and research questions that are developed based on the relevant literature. The chosen research philosophy then informs the methodology to be adopted in the study.
3.2 Research Philosophy

Huff (2009) articulates the importance of philosophy in research. Philosophy shapes the way a researcher formulates the research problem and the research questions to study how information is derived to answer the research questions. Creswell (2013), states that researchers make certain assumptions when they undertake a qualitative study. These assumptions have been articulated over the years in Denzin and Lincoln’s *SAGE Handbooks of Qualitative Research* (1994, 2011). Guba and Lincoln (1998) express the assumptions as the guiding philosophy behind qualitative research. These beliefs have been called paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011); philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, and ontologies (Crotty, 1998); broadly conceived research methodologies (Neuman, 2000); and alternative knowledge claims (Creswell, 2009).

Different worldviews influence choices made by researchers. Creswell (2013) outlines five interpretive frameworks (or research philosophies) including: positivism; social constructivism; postmodernism; pragmatism; and critical framework. The author further shows the association between each of these frameworks and the four philosophical assumptions outlined in his book: ontology; epistemology; axiology; and methodology. These associations are presented in Table 3.1 below. The four philosophical assumptions, and the research philosophy and assumptions adopted in the study are discussed subsequent to the discussion of research philosophies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive Frameworks</th>
<th>Ontological Beliefs (the nature of reality)</th>
<th>Epistemological Beliefs (how reality is known)</th>
<th>Axiological Beliefs (role of values)</th>
<th>Methodological Beliefs (approach to inquiry)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post positivism</td>
<td>A single reality exists beyond ourselves, ‘out there’. Researchers may not be able to understand it or get to it because of lack of absolutes.</td>
<td>Reality can only be approximated. But it is constructed through research and statistics. Interaction with research subjects is kept to a minimum. Validity comes from peers, not participants.</td>
<td>Researcher’s biases need to be controlled and not expressed in a study.</td>
<td>Use of scientific method and writing. Object of research is to create new knowledge. Method is important. Deductive methods are important, such as testing of theories, specifying important variables, making comparisons among groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructivism</td>
<td>Multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others.</td>
<td>Reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences.</td>
<td>Individual values are honoured and are negotiated among individuals.</td>
<td>More of a literary style of writing used. Use of an inductive method of emergent ideas (through consensus) obtained through methods such as interviewing, observing and analysis of texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative/Postmodern</td>
<td>Participation between researcher and communities/individuals being studied. Often a subjective-objective reality emerges.</td>
<td>Co-created findings with multiple ways of knowing.</td>
<td>Respect for indigenous values; values need to be problematised and interrogated.</td>
<td>Use of collaborative processes of research; political participation encouraged; questioning of methods; highlighting issues and concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Reality is what is useful, is practical, and ‘works’.</td>
<td>Reality is known through using many tools of research that reflect both deductive (objective) evidence and inductive (subjective) evidence.</td>
<td>Values are discussed because of the way that knowledge reflects both the researchers’ and the participants’ views.</td>
<td>The research process involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical, Race, Feminist, Queer, Disabilities</td>
<td>Reality is based on power and identity struggles. Privilege or oppression based on race or ethnicity, class, gender, mental abilities, sexual preference.</td>
<td>Reality is known through the study of social structures, freedom and oppression, power, and control. Reality can be changed through research.</td>
<td>Diversity of values is emphasised within the standpoint of various communities.</td>
<td>Start with assumptions of power and identity struggles, document them, and call for action and change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Creswell (2013, pp. 36, 37, adapted from Lincoln et al., 2011)
3.2.1 Philosophical Perspectives or Paradigms

Five philosophical perspectives or paradigms based on Creswell’s (2013) interpretive frameworks are discussed in this section: the positivist/postpositivist; social constructivist/interpretivist; postmodern; pragmatic; and critical perspectives. Neuman (2014), however, defines three of these paradigms to be the major approaches to social research, including the positivist/postpositivist, social constructivist/interpretivist and critical paradigms.

The positivist paradigm is mostly adopted in quantitative studies, while the interpretivist paradigm is largely used by qualitative researchers. A critical theory paradigm is one that occupies the space between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Positivist and interpretive forms of research are fairly well known in most business and management disciplines compared to critical research (Myers, 2009). Although different worldviews influence the choice of research approach including the assumptions made and tools engaged in research, the present study adopts the social constructivist approach.

3.2.1.1 Positivist/Postpositivist Perspective

Positivism is the approach of the “natural sciences” (Neuman, 2014, p. 97). Positivist researchers generally assume that “reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties which are independent of the researcher and his or her instruments or participants” (Myers, 2009, p. 37). Positivists believe in empiricism: “the idea that observation and measurement are the essence of scientific endeavour, and the key approach of the scientific method is experiment” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 18).
Researchers utilising this perspective typically design their research questions in terms of independent variables and dependent variables, and the relationships between them (Myers, 2009). Myers explains that in positivism, “theory takes the form of hypothetico-deductive logic, and a good theory is one where the hypotheses are tested and found to be supported by the data … a positivist looks to develop law-like generalizations, ones that apply regardless of the context” (p. 40).

Creswell (2013, pp. 23-24) uses the term postpositivism rather than positivism, and explains that “postpositivists do not believe in strict cause and effect, but rather recognise that all cause and effect is a probability that may or may not occur”. Researchers following a postpositivist perspective tend to take a scientific approach to research on the premise that a single reality exists beyond ourselves, and that researchers may not be able to understand it or get to it because of lack of absolutes (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011). Creswell (2013) further elaborates that postpositivists view inquiry as a series of logically related steps. These researchers believe in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality.

3.2.1.2 Postmodernist Perspective

Creswell (2013) explains postmodernism as knowledge gained in relation to ‘present’ or ‘current’ context. The author highlights that “knowledge claims are set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations” (p. 27). The author explains that the world conditions include “the importance of different discourses, the importance of marginalized people and groups (the “others”), and the presence of “metanarratives” or universals that hold true regardless of the social conditions” (p. 27).
3.2.1.3 Pragmatic Perspective

Denscombe (2010) and Creswell (2013) explain that researchers taking the pragmatic approach are focused on practical outcomes by looking at the actions, situations and consequences of inquiry rather than antecedents, as in postpositivism.

Further, researchers adopting the pragmatic approach tend to use multiple methods and multiple sources of data collection (Creswell, 2013), and they tend to “gauge the value of any particular approach or method primarily in terms of how well the outcomes work in practice” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 128).

3.2.1.4 Critical Perspective

Critical realism agrees with positivists that there is an observable world independent of human consciousness, and also that knowledge about the world is socially constructed (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008), which is an interpretivist perspective. Similarly, Myers (2009, p. 42) explains that “interpretive research and critical research are similar in the sense that both kinds of research explicitly recognise the double hermeneutic in social research”. That is, a subject to subject relation in a field of study, and the epistemological assumptions of interpretive research largely apply to critical research. However, critical researchers assume that social reality is historically constituted and it is produced and reproduced by people (Myers, 2009).

Myers further explains that although people can consciously act to change their social and economic circumstances, critical researchers believe that people’s ability is constrained by various forms of social, cultural and political domination. Critical research is mainly seen as being one of social critique, whereby “restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo are brought to light” (Myers, 2009, p. 42). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 263) explain that critical research, following the
tradition of critical theory, in general acknowledges that the “structures and mechanisms exist beyond the constructivist idea as permanent elements”. That is, critical researchers do not fully follow the social constructivist approach.

3.2.1.5 Social Constructivist/Interpretivist Perspective

Social constructivism, also described as interpretivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), takes the perspective that multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others, and “reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). Scholars explicate that interpretive researchers assume that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings and instruments (Myers, 2009; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Neuman (2014, p. 104) explains that for interpretive researchers, “the goal of social research is to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings”. These researchers are interested in “how people, as individuals or as a group, interpret and understand social events and settings” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p.19).

For example, social constructivists believe that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences often through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in their lives. These researchers tend “to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas, therefore, relying as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 24-25).
Social constructive or interpretive researchers, unlike quantitative researchers undertaking a positivist view, do not pre-define dependent and independent variables, but focus instead on the complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The interpretive researcher explicitly recognises a subject to subject relation in the field of study which is referred to the “double hermeneutic” in social research (Myers, 2009, p. 42; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 19), and they tend to focus on the “meaning in context” (Myers, 2009, p. 39).

Myers (2009) explains that these researchers aim to understand the context of a phenomenon because the context defines the situation. The author emphasises that “without an understanding of the broader context, it is impossible to understand the correct meaning of a single piece of data, the meaning of a social phenomenon depends upon its context, the context being the socially constructed reality of the people being studied” (p. 39).

### 3.2.2 Philosophical Assumptions

Scholars outline that every research project is based on some philosophical assumptions – assumptions about “the nature of the world and how knowledge about the world can be obtained” (Myers, 2009, p. 23), and these philosophical assumptions provide the foundations for the research. Myers states that often these assumptions are implicit in a researcher’s mind, however, qualitative researchers must make these explicit.

Creswell (2013) summarises four philosophical assumptions that researchers make in undertaking a research project. These include: ontology (the nature of reality); epistemology (what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified);
axiology (the role of values in research); and methodology (the process of research) (p. 21). The author explains the practical implications of these philosophical assumptions, which are reproduced in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Philosophical Assumptions with Implications for Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Implications for Practice (Examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontological</strong></td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is multiple as seen through many views</td>
<td>Researcher reports different perspectives as themes develop in the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemological</strong></td>
<td>What counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?</td>
<td>Subjective evidence from participants; researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself or herself and that being researched</td>
<td>Researcher relies on quotes as evidence from the participant; collaborates, spends time in field with participants, and becomes an ‘insider’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiological</strong></td>
<td>What is the role of values?</td>
<td>Researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present</td>
<td>Researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his or her own interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodological</strong></td>
<td>What is the process of research? What is the language of research?</td>
<td>Researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design</td>
<td>Researcher works with particulars (details) before generalisations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experiences in the field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Creswell (2013, p. 21)

### 3.2.2.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology refers to the “nature of reality and its characteristics”, and researchers conducting qualitative research tend to “embrace the idea of multiple realities” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Researchers use multiple realities to understand the different perspectives of participants because ontological assumptions are particular to the individual and relate to the individual’s perception of reality. Creswell (2013) states that, when studying individuals, qualitative researchers conduct a study with the
intent of reporting multiple realities by using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) define ontology as the “idea about the existence of and relationship between people, society and the world in general” (p. 13). Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggest that ontological assumptions are either founded in reality, which exists independent of the researcher (realism), or reality is constructed by researchers by describing, naming and explaining the world to make sense of it (nominalism). Gaffikin (2008) uses the terms realist and social constructionist to describe the extremes of the ontological viewpoints. The author states that the fundamental question is whether or not reality is external to the researcher, or a product of the researcher’s ontological assumptions.

3.2.2.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology is defined as “how knowledge can be produced and argued” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 14). Epistemological assumptions decide what is to count as acceptable truth by specifying the criteria and process of assessing truth claims. For instance, an epistemological assumption might state that “a theory is to be considered true if it is repeatedly not falsified by empirical events” (Chua, 1986, p. 604).

Social constructionism denies that knowledge is a direct perception of reality rather it assumes that the interactions and beliefs of people create reality. That is, what people see and experience is socially constructed, it is a product of social processes. Creswell (2013, p. 20) summarises epistemological assumption as knowledge gained through “the subjective evidence based on individual participant’s view and therefore, it is necessary to conduct studies in the ‘field’, where the participants live.
and work”. In conducting a qualitative study, Creswell suggests that the researcher should try to lessen the distance between himself or herself and the participant, which Guba and Lincoln (1998) refer to as the ‘objective separateness’ between the researcher and the participants.

3.2.2.3 Axiological Assumptions

Creswell (2013, p. 20) explains that “all researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers make their values known in a study”, by positioning themselves in the study. They assume the axiological assumption by “admitting the value-laden nature of the study by reporting his or her values and biases in the value-laden information gathered from the field” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 116) refer to axiology as “the values, the branch of philosophy that deals with ethics, aesthetics, and religion”. Considering axiology as a part of the philosophical paradigm allows a researcher to see the embeddedness of ethics within, and not external to, paradigms. Denzin and Lincoln stress that including axiology in the paradigm is one way of “achieving greater confluence among the various interpretivist inquiry models” (p. 116).

3.2.2.4 Methodological Assumptions

Methodology is the process or procedures of research. Methodologies are concerned with “how one comes to know of the world, but they are more practical in nature than epistemologies” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 15). Eriksson and Kovalainen explain that epistemology and methodology are closely related. Epistemology involves “the philosophy of how one comes to know the world”, whereas methodology involves “the same from a practical point of view, providing
the procedure for the research process and research design” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 25).

Methodological assumptions indicate the research methods deemed appropriate for the gathering of valid evidence. “What is a ‘correct’ research method will depend on how truth is defined” (Chua, 1986, p. 604). The focal point of methodology is to describe how a given issue or problem can be studied (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008), and that includes “choices about appropriate models, cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc., in planning and executing a research study” (Silverman, 2013, p. 446).

In qualitative research, methodology is characterised as “inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analysing data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 22). Creswell explains that “qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the ‘bottom up’ by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information” (p. 45). Creswell emphasises that researchers also use “deductive reasoning to build themes that constantly appear in the data” (p. 45). In this process, researchers work back and forth between the themes and database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes.

### 3.2.3 Philosophical Paradigm and Assumptions of the Study

The study being of a qualitative nature required the researcher at the outset to identify the ontological assumptions as they lay “prior to and governs subsequent epistemological and methodological assumptions” (Chua, 1986, p. 604). The methods used for this research are defined by the methodology chosen, the methodology determined by the epistemology embraced, which in turn was determined by the ontological assumptions (Gaffikin, 2008). Denscombe’s (2010)
simplified model of basic social research philosophies (shown in Figure 3.2) allows the researcher to show simplistically how the research ontology led to the research epistemology.

**Figure 3.2**  
**A Simplified Model of Basic Social Research Philosophies**  
Source: Denscombe (2010, p. 118)

The present study is based on an ontological assumption that in reality, people or organisations want to gain popularity and to be recognised as having a good reputation in order to gain advantage in the relevant sector or market. Taking the social constructivist view, what comprises popularity and what is ‘highly reputed’ is a socially constructed knowledge. In order to understand the socially constructed concept, an interpretative stance is taken to design the methodology of the study.

Figure 3.3 shows a model of the direction of flow of the research philosophy and assumptions of the study. The model has been adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016, p. 164). Starting from the outermost section of the diagram, the direction of the study follows the interpretivist perspective and therefore an inductive investigation is undertaken. In order to do a cross-sectional study, the methodology adopted was the interpretation of different perspectives of four different groups of participants. Finally, data is collected through interviews of participants in the different groups, which allowed an intra- and inter-group analysis.
To answer the ‘how’ questions, the epistemological stance of the study is to adopt a qualitative method of data collection and analysis, based on themes that emerged from the data. The data is then related back to the literature to confirm findings of prior studies and/or to add to the contribution to the literature. In order to gain insights from different perspectives of differing groups of people, this study involves interviews of four different groups: academics (at two business schools); an expert group (comprising Associate Deans of L&T of business schools in Australia); and postgraduate students (comprising MPA, MBA, DBA and PhD).

The present study does not aim to measure organisational reputation but aims to provide empirical evidence of reputation drivers that are considered to enhance the reputation of business schools that will give the school a competitive advantage in a dynamic market. In addition, the study provides evidence of strategies adopted by the various business schools to enhance their reputation. The present study takes a holistic view of reputation building and is based on the fact that reputation building
is not directed towards any one stakeholder group, but is a combination of elements that influence the reputation of a school.

3.3 Research Objective and Research Questions

Denscombe (2010) emphasises that research questions should draw upon a review of the existing literature. The exact questions to be investigated will relate to what is already known about the topic and will address one or more of the issues arising from a review of the research results that already exist. For this reason, “the research questions tend to be presented in full after the literature review and before the methods section in a report” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 15). Therefore, the research questions for the present study were designed after conducting a review of the literature on organisational reputation and the HES, including a focus on business schools.

The literature has highlighted the challenges facing business schools and the ‘quality’ concerns in relation to the programs and students which directly or indirect may influence people’s perception of business schools resulting in negative or positive reputation perceptions. The present study questions how business schools can enhance their reputation. Do international accreditations legitimise and enhance the reputation of business schools? Or do business schools consider certain other drivers as important to enhance reputation. What other drivers are important to enhance the reputation of educational institutions? Does improving the quality of the internal resources such as the quality of programs, courses and subjects; the quality of services provided or the quality of teaching and research enhance reputation? These are questions that the study aims to investigate.
In particular, non-accredited business schools may find it a challenge to compete with accredited and/or highly reputed institutions. These schools and others, particularly those with resource constraints, may have to consider innovative ways to enhance their reputation to gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, the study investigates non-accredited business schools and their perceptions of reputation drivers that may assist them to successfully compete in a highly dynamic higher education milieu. Furthermore, the study investigates two similar non-accredited business schools to investigate whether there are differences in the perceptions of reputation drivers. In this investigation, the study provides insights as to any differences in the perceptions of the two groups of staff from the non-accredited business schools. It will be of interest to observe if there are any similarities in the perceptions of the two groups.

Most of the studies reviewed concentrated on highly reputed business schools and/or schools that have gained accreditations. The discussions were specific to the reputation drivers the researchers were investigating. Moreover, the majority of the studies were conducted outside Australia, mostly US or UK studies, and concentrating on issues relating to MBA programs. While there is research about accredited business schools there is no known research that specifically studies reputation drivers of non-accredited business schools in Australia. Therefore, the main objective of the present study is to investigate the reputation drivers of business schools with specific emphasis on non-accredited business schools, and is not restricted to any one or two reputation drivers that are discussed in the literature.

The research questions, which are based on the research objective, specify exactly what is to be investigated. They are not broad goals of research. Denscombe (2010,
p. 15) states that research questions need to specify things that are to be “observed, measured, and interrogated in order to shed light on the broader topic”. That is, the ideas and concepts that form the basis of the research need to be “operationalized” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 15). Creswell (2013, p. 139) states that the overarching central research question or the research objective should be “the broadest question that could possibly address the research problem”. Therefore, the research objective designed to guide the present study is:

To investigate how business schools aim to enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage in a dynamic educational market. What reputation drivers are perceived to be advantageous?

The following research questions were designed to provide empirical evidence to address the research objective.

1. What are the reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools in order to gain competitive advantage?

2. Do non-accredited business schools prioritise reputation drivers to gain a competitive advantage, and if so, how?

3. Do non-accredited business schools face constraints in competing in a dynamic market? If so, how are they strategising to overcome the problem?

The research questions were further simplified so that the researcher could elicit insightful responses from the research participants. The following guiding questions were developed in designing the interview questionnaire:

a. Do academics perceive certain reputation drivers to be advantageous to business schools to gain competitive advantage? If so, why? For example, are gaining international accreditations and rankings important drivers of reputation?

b. How are the participants’ schools strategising to enhance their reputation and compete in the highly competitive international higher education market? Do the participants perceive the school’s strategies (to enhance reputation) as viable?

c. How has the school’s strategic decisions in enhancing reputation, if any, affected the participants? Are the participants satisfied with their work life?

d. Do Associate Deans perceive certain reputation drivers to be advantageous to business schools to gain competitive advantage? If so, why?
e. What factors do university students assess when choosing a school to pursue their degree? How do postgraduate students perceive business schools can enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage?

The research questions were designed to provide evidence that would make the study useful to business schools and prospective students. Based on the research questions, two qualitative questionnaires were designed – one for academics and Associate Deans (see Appendix D), and the other for postgraduate students (see Appendix E). Stating propositions is important to guide researchers. As Yin (2014, p. 30) states “only if you are forced to state some propositions will you move in the right direction”. The propositions based on the research questions are:

1. The key reputation drivers for business schools are likely to be gaining international accreditations and higher rankings.

2. High quality of teaching and good student experience may be important criteria for non-accredited business schools to enhance their reputation.

3. Non-accredited business schools may have to differentiate themselves in order to compete in the higher education sector, and they are likely to face constraints in pursuing the reputation drivers that successful schools pursue.

The following section outlines the methodology adopted to carry out the research project. The methodology section describes the type of research and the methods used to collect data and to analyse the data. During the process, justifications for chosen methods are explained.

3.4 Research Methodology

Methodology and method are terms not often differentiated and frequently incorrectly used interchangeably (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Some use methodology as a “descriptor for both the theoretical approach as well as the method by which data is collected. Methodology is broader than methods and envelops methods” (Neuman, 2006, p. 2). Methodology refers to the manner in
which the research is conducted and provides the framework for gaining knowledge. Gaffikin (2008) explains that methodology relates to a group of tools or procedures that may be used to address different research problems by providing systems to interpret or solve a problem.

Methodology, therefore, cannot be viewed as a rigid principle or rule but rather as a broad set of practices, from which methods or principles are derived to interpret or solve problems. Methodological assumptions will, therefore, designate the methods that might be used to conduct the research. Methods, however, relate to “the specific tools and techniques used to accumulate, evaluate and describe the data” (Neuman, 2006, p. 2).

The methodological stance of the study follows that of qualitative research, encompassing the social constructivist perspective. The following sections describe the relevant methodological concepts used in the research project.

3.4.1 Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 8), qualitative researchers stress “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry and tend to seek answers to questions that stress ‘how social experience is created and given meaning’”.

Creswell’s (2013, p. 44) definition of qualitative research emphasises “the process of research as flowing from philosophical assumptions, to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems”, and subsequently, “a
framework is developed for the procedures depending on the approach to inquiry whether grounded theory, case study or others”.

The philosophical stance of the present study has been identified and described in the earlier sections of this chapter. Taking a social constructivist stand, a qualitative study involving interviews was considered appropriate. Social constructivism involves the interpretation of why and how certain factors or ideas are considered more important than others. Interviews allow participants to express their views in their own words. The researcher then interprets participants’ views and classifies the views into themes. A quantitative survey does not provide participants the opportunity to express their views in their own words. A survey usually provides statements for participants to choose an option which may not exactly represent the participant’s view. Even open-ended questions in a survey may not produce as rich a data set compared to interviews. Therefore, a qualitative study involving interviews was considered a more appropriate form of data collection for understanding concepts that are recognised as socially constructed concepts.

3.4.2 Study of Four Different Groups

A multisite study (Creswell, 2013) is conducted to elicit themes that allow identification of commonalities and differences between groups. A multisite analysis allows the researcher “to develop naturalistic generalizations from analysing the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 200). Theoretical sampling was used to select the four groups. The chosen groups will help reveal “features that are theoretically important about the topic” (Neuman, 2006, p. 220). The groups for the present study comprise: academics at two non-accredited (at the time of data collection) business schools in higher education institutions. In addition to the two academic groups, two other
groups were interviewed: an expert group of Associate Deans of L&T of business schools (schools that were either accredited with AACSB and/or EQUIS, or non-accredited at the time of data collection); and postgraduate students at one of the two non-accredited business schools.

Academics at the two Australian business schools – AUSONE and AUSTWO – form the core groups of the study because academics are in face-to-face contact with one of the key stakeholders of higher education institutions, the students. Academics’ actions and performances, whether positive or negative, can affect student experiences and how institutions are perceived by others (Alniacik et al., 2012). Furthermore, academics are directly affected by or are involved in school initiatives or changes. Therefore, academics are considered the mediating body between the organisation and students.

The third group is AUSEXPERT comprising Associate Deans of L&T of business schools, both accredited and non-accredited schools. Three of the Associated Deans are at accredited business schools, accredited with at least one of the two international accreditations AACSB and/or EQUIS. While the remaining one Associate Dean is at a non-accredited business school, at the time of data collection. This group is considered an ethnographic expert group because all the participants in this group have vast experience working in business schools, in areas of business education and accreditations. The fourth group, comprising postgraduate students, is referred to as AUSPGRAD. These students were pursuing either a Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Professional Accounting (MPA), Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) or PhD, at the time of data collection. Postgraduate students are considered to be more cognizant of the reputation of
educational institutions (Hazelkorn, 2008), and where they would like to pursue their higher degree than undergraduate students. A preliminary informal conversation with students confirmed this.

The findings from the interviews with the academics are compared against the views and perceptions of the Associate Deans. The views of the postgraduate students are an additional perspective recognised to provide evidence that enriches the evidence collected from the academics.

### 3.4.3 Data Collection Process

Data collection, in most cases, involves a number of phases, from selection of participants to type of data to be collected – whether survey, interview, or archival information – to format of data storage. Creswell (2013) describes a series of data collection activities, referred to as the “multiple phases”, involved in a data collection process (p. 146). The seven activities in the data collection process, described by Creswell, are reproduced in Figure 3.4, starting at locating a site or individual right through to storing the data collected.
Following Creswell’s (2013) seven phases of data collection activities, the data collection process of the present study is presented in three concise phases: selection of participants, data collection through interviews, and transcribing and storing interview data. The first three activities in Figure 3.4 are discussed in the first phase of selection of participants. The next three activities are described in data collection through interviews. The interview process is outlined in this section, including recording of interviews and issues encountered during this process. Finally, prior to discussing storage of data, a brief description of transcription of interviews is provided.
3.4.3.1 Phase One – Selection of Participants

Selecting groups of participants from different business schools was a challenging process. Two non-accredited business schools were selected to form the main groups of the study. Selecting similar business schools allowed comparisons, such as the commonalities and differences in the perspectives of academics at the two schools. This is referred to as purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013, p. 146). Purposeful sampling is intentionally sampling a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2013), and the group that “best fits particular criteria” (Neuman, 2006, p. 220).

In the first instance, the heads of a number of business schools in Australia were contacted to gain consent for the academics at the school to participate in the research. Details of the study were sent to the heads via email in the form of an information sheet (see Appendix F). Of the business schools contacted, two agreed to participate, both being non-accredited schools.

Subsequently, the emails of the academics in the two schools were obtained from the schools’ websites, and emails were sent to the academics together with the research information sheet and the consent form (see Appendix G) inviting academics to participate in the research project. The participants who were willing to participate had to return the signed consent forms to the researcher either by email or in person prior to the interview (the researcher was also the interviewer).

**Group One (AUSONE):** As noted above initial emails were sent to all academics in the business school, inviting them to participate in the qualitative study. Initial responses were received from 10 academics. A second round of emails was sent to
those academics who did not respond to the first email. Eventually, a total 16 academics agreed to participate in the research project, which is a response rate of about 32%. The 16 academics (comprising junior and senior academics, some also involved in management duties) were from the five disciplines – accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing – with at least two from each of the five disciplines, which was considered a good representation of the business school.

**Group Two (AUSTWO):** Five academics offered to participate following the initial email. Subsequent email reminders were sent and with snow-balling the number of participants increased to 12 academics, which is approximately 24% of academic staff at the school. These academics represented the five disciplines in the business school - accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing.

During the interview process, saturation of data was considered to have been reached when no new information is derived from the data or when additional data provides few, if any, new insights or themes (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). For AUSONE, saturation of data was deemed to have been reached after 14 interviews. This was confirmed in the subsequent two interviews of the group and so no further interviews were conducted at this school. In the case of AUSTWO, after interviewing the 12 academics, the researcher believed a point of data saturation had been reached. During the last two interviews, the researcher noticed that no new information was obtained from the participants. Data saturation was considered to have been reached and so the researcher did not contact more academics at this school.

**Group Three (AUSEXPERT):** This group comprised Associate Deans of L&T at different accredited and non-accredited business schools in Australia. This group of Associate Deans was considered an expert group in the area of business schools and
accreditations and, therefore, the views of this expert group were considered valuable to provide rich information to the study.

Initial contact with the Associate Deans was at the ABDC’s L&T Network meeting in Perth, Australia. A brief overview of the research was presented to the Associate Deans. Subsequently, emails, together with the research information letter, were sent to the Associate Deans. While the Associate Deans were very supportive of the research only four were available to be interviewed due to the heavy commitment associated with their roles.

**Group Four (AUSPGRAD):** Postgraduate students at one of the two non-accredited business schools were invited to participate in the research project. The reason for choosing this business school was for convenience of recruiting students in person. Due to privacy reasons, student emails were not readily available. Postgraduate students were chosen as the target group as they are most likely to study information about the schools before choosing a school for their postgraduate studies (Hazelkorn, 2008).

The researcher met with postgraduate students at the postgraduate monthly meeting and gave a brief review of the research project. Those who were interested provided their email addresses, and the researcher subsequently emailed the students with the research information letter and consent form. A total of ten postgraduate coursework and research students participated in the study.

As the interviews progressed, the researcher made an assessment of the interviews and determined that saturation was reached when no new ideas or concepts were emerging from the interviews. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006, p. 76) suggest that “if the aim is to arrive at perceptions among a relatively homogeneous group, then a
sample of 12 is likely to be sufficient”. This study had a total of 42 participants, ranging from four to 16 participants in each group.

3.4.3.2 Phase Two – Data Collection through Interviews

Taking the social constructivist perspective, the research is based on interviews in order to gain a broader perspective of the views of the participants. A broader perspective can be obtained using general open-ended questions that allow participants to construct the meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 28) emphasise that interviews often become the primary data source and are a highly efficient way to gather “rich, empirical data, especially when the phenomenon of interest is highly episodic and infrequent”.

Upon receiving emails from willing participants, a consent form was sent to each of them via email. They were informed in the email that the consent form would be collected before the interview session. In the same email appointments were made outlining the date, time and place where the interview was to take place. The convenience of the participants was the primary consideration at all times. Most of the interviews were conducted in a meeting room in the school and some in the participants’ offices.

The interviews were conducted individually and most were face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews have the advantage of longer contact time with participants, allowing the researcher to use probes where necessary, and for the observation of nonverbal communications (Neuman, 2014). Neuman highlights that interviewer bias is greatest in face-to-face interviews. The researcher, therefore, was conscious to minimise bias, especially in probing the participants. Probing questions were used only where a participant was silent for a period of time, however, the researcher took
extra care in ensuring that a probing question was a broad question and not specific. A small number of interviews were conducted by telephone where it was not possible, for various reasons, to meet with the participants. The interviews were held over the period March 2013 to September 2013, and the majority of the interviews lasted for 45 minutes to an hour. All interviews were recorded but confidentiality was maintained in transcribing and storing the data.

For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed based on the findings in the literature. “A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (Kvale, 2007, p. 10). Kvale explains that a semi-structured interview is “neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire but allows researchers to obtain descriptions of the interviewees’ lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 11).

A semi-structured questionnaire was used for interviews to allow for participant diversity as well as to direct participants towards the issues and concepts being discussed. The semi-structured questionnaire consisted mostly of open-ended questions. Personal interviews with “a high percentage of open-ended questions are usually more successful than those with all closed-ended questions” (Neuman, 2014, p. 348).

A pilot study involving five academics was carried out. Following the pilot study, the interview questions were then restructured in the order the questions were to be used in the study. In the first five interviews, participants were asked to discuss the reputation drivers that the school was pursuing. Subsequently, participants were asked what they believed would enhance a school’s reputation. The responses to the
latter questions were very similar to their earlier discussion about the school’s strategy. However, when the sequence of questions was changed, participants freely discussed their views addressing the pros and cons of the numerous reputation drivers. There was diversity in views, and participants shared their personal experiences in the present and past schools. Following this, the discussion of the school’s strategy became more vibrant, with participants agreeing or disagreeing to what the school was doing, giving reasons for accepting or disagreeing to the school’s strategy.

3.4.3.3 Phase Three – Transcribing Interview Data

Transcribing of audio-taped interviews was done by the researcher herself. After each interview, the interview was transcribed. After five interviews, the researcher revisited the interview questionnaire. Self-transcribing allowed the researcher to recognise whether the research questions needed to be altered, adjusted or put in different order in the flow of the interview. The researcher moved from initially asking about the participant’s view of the schools’ strategy to enhance its reputation to starting off the interview by asking the participant’s personal views of reputation building or drives to enhance reputations in business schools, in general. This allowed the participants to have a free flow of conversation rather than restricting their thoughts to the school’s strategy. Subsequently, the participants settled into more freely discussing the school’s actions and changes being carried out in the school.

In the process of transcribing, the complete interview of each participant was transcribed, that is, the transcripts are full records of the interviews. Direct quotes from the interviews provide evidence of reliability of data collected, and are provided
in the next chapter where it is considered important to produce the exact words of participants to draw on their perceptions. Direct quotes bring reality to the situation providing perspective of what interviewees were saying and help to place the reader in the interview process (Crabtree and Miller, 1992; Creswell, 2013).

Interviews were captured in a voice recorder. The voice recorder together with the transcribed documents were stored safely in a locked office in the researcher’s workplace. Only the researcher and the supervisors had access to the materials.

### 3.4.4 Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) suggests that researchers ‘position themselves’ in the research and their background and own experiences shape their interpretation of what they find. The researcher then interprets or makes sense of the meanings others have about the situation or discussion questions.

The main source of data, that is information from interviews, was analysed via close-reading and coded using NVivo software to categorise the information into themes that directly addressed the research questions. The coded data was analysed firstly using a within-group approach (discussed in Chapter Four) and then a cross-group analysis was performed (discussed in Chapter Five).

The data analysis process is discussed by firstly explaining how the transcribed data was coded and categorised into themes. Next, how the data was analysed by themes is discussed including emerging themes that emerged during the data analysis phase. Finally, a section is devoted to showing that the researcher considered the likelihood of bias developing during data analysis, and how the data was verified.
3.4.4.1 Coding Data

A code can be “a word that is used to describe or summarize a sentence, a paragraph, or even a whole piece of text such as an interview” (Myers, 2009, p. 167). Researchers develop a list of tentative codes that match text segments or develop codes based on the literature. Crabtree and Miller (1992, p. 151) discuss a continuum of coding strategies that range from “prefigured” categories to “emergent” categories. Creswell (2013), however, comments that if “prefigured” coding is used, researchers must be open to additional codes emerging during the analysis. Creswell (2013, p. 186) describes codes to represent:

1. information that researchers expect to find before the study;
2. surprising information that researchers did not expect to find; and
3. information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to researchers (and potentially participants and audience).

Following Creswell’s (2013) style of coding, that is ‘lean coding’ with five or six categories, the researcher developed a short list based on the literature and the transcribed data. During the coding process, new themes emerged and new codes were created. The NVivo software program allowed a systematic coding process. Previous studies found NVivo a useful tool for thematic analysis approaches, particularly in qualitative research (for example, Zamawe, 2015). Zamawe (2015) highlights that the use of NVivo is simple and allows a researcher to be more creative using the nodes, without the tedious process of manual analysis of creating themes.

In using the NVivo software, a list of codes was created as a starting point. Then the transcribed interview data was uploaded onto the NVivo program. Each interview data was read and relevant sentences or paragraphs were transferred to the code. The reading and coding process was a long, time-consuming, close-reading process,
which took weeks to develop. Re-reading of data was needed to ensure crucial information was not lost.

Subsequently, themes were created based on the codes. In qualitative research, “themes are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). Each of these themes eventually had sub-themes. For example, under the theme ‘Teaching and Research’, the following sub-themes were created: ‘Teaching and Research Nexus’; ‘Courses and Student Learning’; ‘Industry Experience of Academics’; and ‘Student Experience’.

The information under each theme was then summarised and tabulated. The researcher was mindful of possible bias in this process of categorising data. Precautions were taken to read the data carefully and key words were used to identify the themes for coding. The coding process was checked by two PhD colleagues of the researcher to ensure consistency in the coding process. The interactive session allowed the researcher to recognise possible biases in coding.

3.4.4.2 Analysis of Data

Analysis of data involves transforming the data into something that is meaningful to the researcher and the intended audience, to understand or explain the subject at hand (Myers, 2009). Myers (2009, p. 166) emphasises that qualitative data analysis approaches are useful to provide meaningful explanations by providing answers to questions such as:

1. What is the meaning of my data?
2. What are the main themes in my data?
3. How do my data contribute to knowledge in my field?

Embracing the interpretivist view to understand how knowledge is understood, Creswell (2013, p. 187) explains ‘interpretation’ in qualitative research involves
“abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data”. The researcher may link his or her interpretation to the larger research literature. Stake (2010, p. 55) emphasises that “qualitative research relies heavily on interpretive perceptions throughout the planning, data gathering, analysis, and write-up of the study”.

The researcher interpreted the data categorically hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge. Within each group (Chapter Four – Intra-group Analysis), the researcher then established patterns looking for correspondence between two or more categories (Creswell, 2013, p. 199). Subsequently, a cross-group analysis was carried out to study the commonalities and differences between groups. The researcher used Yin’s (2014) four guiding principles to achieve high-quality data analysis by ensuring that important data and data that will contribute to the study in some way is not missed out.

New themes were identified in the process and recorded as ‘emerging’ themes. Emergent themes are “a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the life-worlds of research participants through the process of coding” (Williams, 2008, p. 249). Some qualitative researchers believe that emergent themes are part of the process that leads to generalisable theories of human society, whereas others use emergent themes to provide rich and detailed insights into the micro and meso levels of inter-subjective experience (Williams, 2008). Two emerging themes were frequently referred to and discussed by a majority of the participants. These emerging themes were recognised during interviews and from close analysis of data, ethnographic and reflective memos, and interview transcripts. These emerging themes are believed to provide
rich insight into the operations of business schools in the current higher educational environment.

3.4.4.3 Documentary Analysis

A document analysis of the participating schools was carried out prior to the data collection phase. This information was obtained via the schools’ websites. To gain information about accreditations and rankings, the websites of accreditation bodies such as AACSB, EFMD and AMBA, and ranking bodies were visited. Although, the information gathered did not pertain to the two non-accredited schools, it helped in understanding the requirements and standards put in place by the associations.

Published journal articles were a vital source of information in relation to the research topic, particularly in reference to accreditations and rankings. University records and national and international ranking records revealed the various national and international rankings of all universities in Australia. In this study, two published university rankings were analysed. One is the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the other is the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) rankings.

3.5 Theoretical Perspective of Study

Scholars have identified various reputation drivers that have and would enhance the reputation of educational institutions, including business schools in the HES, and that the decision to adopt certain reputation drivers may be influenced by factors external and internal to the organisation. Rindova et al. (2005) created a model that shows the external and internal factors that influence the reputation of institutions. This model has been adapted to design the research questions that will provide evidence to address the research objective of this study.
The decision to adopt certain strategies in order to enhance institutional reputation may depend on sociological or psychological factors that provide ‘institutional’ explanations (Abrahamson 1991; Rikhardsson, Bennett, Bouma and Schaltegger, 2005). The second theory that is utilised to explain the findings of the study is strategic choice theory (Child, 1972; Oliver, 1991).

3.5.1 Institutional Theory

The number of business schools and the delivery of business education has increased dramatically, due mostly to the increase in the number of international students, perhaps the outcome of globalisation and westernisation. With massification of business education, business schools face greater competition and are under pressure to become stronger players in the national and global market. Such pressures force business schools to adapt their mission accordingly to meet the challenges. Business schools tend to make changes in a school’s structure and activities that are likely to be influenced by both external forces, those from the state or federal government, funding organisations, ranking institutions and professional associations such as accreditation bodies, and internal forces from within the university and school.

The effect of external forces on institutions and the behaviour of the institutions in response to these pressures can be explained by institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Institutional theory is based on the premise that organisations respond to external pressures by adopting certain practices that are socially accepted as being appropriate even though those practices might be inefficient (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Such pressures include governmental pressure on educational institutions.
Governmental pressure represents coercive pressure resulting in institutions ‘copying’ other institutions that are successful in attracting students and high-profile staff members. Such a mimetic action may not result in a positive outcome for those ‘copying’ institutions – it is a question of ‘if one hat fits all’.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) use isomorphic mechanisms to explain the processes behind obtaining such social legitimacy. They describe three isomorphic forces: coercive, mimetic and normative forces:

1. **coercive isomorphism** results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on institutions by other organisations upon which they are dependent, such as political influence and the need to gain legitimacy;

2. **mimetic isomorphism** is the force that drives an institution to mirror one that is deemed successful and worthy of copying. There is a desire to adopt what is deemed to be ‘normal’, in cases of uncertainty; and

3. **normative isomorphism** is associated with professionalisation, whereby members in a professional group are subjected to pressure to conform to a set of rules and norms developed within their group.

Coercive isomorphism occurs in the form of external pressure that higher educational institutions face to keep up to expectations of sponsoring bodies, including the government. A desire for legitimacy in the national and global market could indicate that coercive isomorphism is occurring. With the reduction of government funding, institutions should strategise to source additional funds to survive and compete. Moreover, governments coerce higher education institutions such as universities to not only source their own funds, but to also gain recognition in the global market.

Mimetic isomorphism drives the institution when there is uncertainty in the level of demand for its product or services. Demand becomes important to increase revenue. Institutions tend to imitate other institutions that are perceived as quality institutions providing quality products and services. A mimetic act is the reaction of business schools under the pressure of external forces to copy or conform to what others in the
market are doing, such as internationally accredited business schools, based on the presumption that accredited schools are ‘quality-controlled’ or ‘quality-assured’. Furthermore, professional bodies, including international accreditation bodies, have standards and regulations that need to be satisfied in order to be accredited with them. Such regulations are normative pressures that institutions face in order to gain legitimacy.

Wilson and McKiernan (2011) argue that accreditations impose isomorphic pressures on business schools. Business schools get into the practice of mimicking successful institutions within the same environment (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Drawing on Zucker (1987), McKiernan and Wilson (2014, p. 250) argue that business schools had been subjected to decades of two broad sets of normative pressure:

1. pressures that emanate from rule-like patterns of action and behaviour that are imposed upon organisations from external agencies, such as state requirements and the demands of professional certification; and

2. pressures embedded within formal organisational structures and processes. This embedding comes to characterise the whole organisation as it develops norms and standard operating procedures to enact patterns of action and behaviour from its constituent individuals.

McKiernan and Wilson (2014, p. 251) note that in a business school situation, accreditations with accreditation bodies such as the AACSB, EFMD, and AMBA, “act to assure prospective students and the wider society that an independent agency has scrutinized a school’s portfolio of activities and pronounced the school to have passed its rigorous quality standards”.

Another form of isomorphic pressure exerted on business schools is the ranking of business schools, MBA rankings and ranking of universities like AWRU and THES rankings. Most rankings of business schools are largely driven by research activities of institutions and those of academics within institutions. Wedlin (2007) notes that
rankings have become institutionalised and ‘playing’ the rankings game well has become the key pursuit of many business school deans. Rankings of schools and universities “mirror and create reputations” (Baden-Fuller et al., 2000, p. 621) and, therefore, institutions at the top end of a ranking scale may be perceived to be highly reputed and thus attract more local and international students. Rankings of institutions are mainly research-based and institutions are coerced to publish in high ranking journals. Articles appearing in ‘top’ journals are assumed to be high-quality scholarly articles (McKiernan and Wilson, 2014).

Isomorphic pressures create a tendency for institutions to move from diversification or differentiation to homogeneity of products and services. Homogeneity may lead to reduction in innovation and risk-taking, and “the market will find it difficult to differentiate between institutions” (Hodge, 2010, p. 19).

Tolbert and Zucker (1996, p. 181) adopt neo-institutional theory to explain the ideology that organisational structural designs occur through three processes: habitualisation; objectification; and sedimentation. Habitualisation is considered the process where no set rules and regulations exist and each member of the organisation acts as an individual contributing towards the design and structure of the organisation. If the organisation is successful, other organisations in a similar industry tend to follow or imitate the successful organisation, which Tolbert and Zucker refer to as the process of objectification. This may lead sponsoring bodies and other organisations, such as government organisations, to legitimise such a structure through active advocacy and, over time, with acceptance, the process reaches the sedimentation phase. Isomorphism is a process that drives institutions to
adopt a homogenous form and Tolbert and Zucker suggest that eventually, organisations in the industry become homogeneous with little internal innovation.

Referring to Tolbert and Zucker’s (1996) explanation, McKiernan and Wilson (2014, p. 254) define the process as ‘path dependence’. The authors explain that “path dependence examines the processes by which self-reinforcing dynamics trap an organisation into outcomes that are sub-optimal and which constrains future actions” (p. 254). Path dependence explains business schools’ reaction to pressure from university management to make changes in their internal processes. These pressures drive business schools to become corporatised organisations. McKiernan and Wilson (2014) highlight that such pressures cause business schools to lose their intellectual status, rigour and practical relevance to other economic sectors in society.

3.5.2 Strategic Choice Theory

Strategic choice is defined as the “process whereby power-holders within an organization decide upon courses of strategic actions” (Child, 1972, p. 2). Based on Child’s argument, business school structures and processes are not wholly determined by environmental factors beyond the control of the management of the school. Managers may have a degree of strategic choice on, for example, the choice of organisational size, business programs, staff recruitment and student enrolment (Spender, 2014).

In his 1997 paper, Child extends strategic choice to the “environment within which the organization is operating, to the standards of performance against which the pressure of economic constraints has to be evaluated, and to the design of the organization’s structure itself” (p. 45). The mission and vision of a business school may change in accordance with the university and the school managers’ strategic
choices (Spender, 2014). Such strategic choices may include a choice of whether the school should gain international accreditation or not, or whether it should concentrate on improving its ranking, or whether reputation should be built from a different dimension. Such decisions may lead to changes in governance, performance measures, decision making processes, course structure and research and teaching. Therefore, a business school’s desire to be well placed in its environment by legitimising quality assurance of its programs and attain elitism can be explained not only by institutional theory but also by strategic choice theory.

Miles and Snow (1978, p. 263), in their landmark study, identified three fundamental characteristics of the strategic choice perspective. The perspective:

1. views managerial or strategic choice as the primary link between organisation and environment;
2. focuses on management’s ability to create, learn about, and manage the organisation’s environment; and
3. encompasses the multiple ways that organisations respond to environmental conditions.

While the institutional perspective is considered as deterministic, the strategic choice perspective emphasises nondeterministic explanations of organisational processes and outcomes (Bourgeois, 1984).

### 3.5.3 Theoretical Framework Guiding the Study

A theoretical framework is the “philosophical stance that underpins a chosen research methodology as well as justifying why one does research in the first place, sets out the values related to such studies and provides a guide to ethical research behaviour” (Holloway, 2006, pp. 41-42). The term ‘theoretical framework’ refers to the overarching umbrella term that brings together the epistemological and
ontological assumptions that inform a particular school of thought and practice in social science research.

Two keys terms adopted from Rindova et al. (2005): ‘prominence’ (in the organisational environment) and high ‘perceived quality’ (which is based on the internal resources of an organisation), are used to demonstrate how organisations can enhance their reputation. These two terms form the basis of the theoretical framework of the study, incorporating the concepts of external and internal influences on educational institutions. Institutional theory has been utilised to explain the external influences of various stakeholders on institutions, and the possible reactions of institutions to these forces. Strategic choice theory has been used to explain that despite the influence of the external forces, managers do have control, to an extent, over their strategic choices for the organisation, depending on whether the institution or organisation is part of a larger organisation, which is referred to as internal influences. Internal decisions are nonetheless dependent on the availability of the internal resources of the organisation.

This study aims to incorporate both institutional and strategic choice theories to explain why and how institutions react to external pressures, on the one hand, or how some managers may decide to make their own strategic choices for the organisation despite the external forces. One theory alone may not be sufficient to explain the choices of business schools. The study further highlights that competitive advantage is obtained through ‘prominence’ and ‘perceived quality’. Institutions that are well recognised in the sector gain prominence, and an institution may be well recognised through their affiliations with reputed organisations. This is an example of business schools seeking international accreditations to gain recognition in the sector, thus
enhancing organisational reputation. Perceived quality of the internal resources of an organisation is also considered an important factor to gain recognition. How and how well internal resources are utilised by an organisation is dependent on the strategic choice of the managers. Therefore, the study aims to investigate how business schools may enhance their reputation through the perspectives of various stakeholders.

‘Prominence’ in the organisational environment is suggested to be derived through affiliations with prominent or well-known accreditation bodies, and through high ranking among peer institutions. Internal resources are then the ‘advocates’ of the institution’s quality as perceived by various stakeholders. Here, it must be emphasised that gaining prominence leads to an organisation being perceived as providing quality products and services. Similarly, an organisation that is perceived as providing quality products and services is more than likely to gain prominence in the market and wider society.

A theoretical framework is developed based on the discussion in the literature. The framework outlines the two key attributes of a business school that are likely to give the school a competitive advantage. The factors identified as contributing to the two attributes ‘prominence’ and ‘perceived quality’ are shown in Figure 3.5, which is the theoretical framework that guides the study.
Figure 3.5: Theoretical Framework Adopted in the Study

Source: Model adapted from Rindova et al. (2005, p. 1037)
Due to the complexities of the research and the ontological and epistemological assumptions, a multi-theoretical approach is utilised. Different theoretical perspectives enable a diverse interpretation that provides a deeper, richer understanding of the working world. Both institutional and strategic choice theories are considered helpful to explaining the findings of the research because of the relativity of the theories to each other and to the research.

3.6 Ensuring Quality

Creswell and Miller (2000) highlight that there is a need for qualitative researchers to demonstrate that their studies are credible. Credibility can be attained through validity and reliability of the data. Frequently, these two terms are associated with quantitative research, including quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. However, Creswell (2013, p. 249) highlights that “‘validation’ in qualitative research is an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings as described by the researcher and the participants”.

Hammersley (1992) states that ‘validity’ refers to the ‘truthfulness’ of the findings in the research, adding further that it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide sufficient evidence and narrative accounts that are plausible and credible. Kvale (2007) elaborates that validity (in the social sciences) pertains to the issue of whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate. Schwandt (1997) defines validity as how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena.

Based on the assumption that validity refers not to the data but to the inferences drawn from them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 124) suggest that the choice of validity procedures is governed by two perspectives:
1. *the lens researchers choose to validate their studies; and*

2. *researcher’s paradigm assumptions.*

The lens refers to a viewpoint that a researcher uses for establishing validity in a study. Qualitative researchers use the views of people who conduct, participate in, or read and review a study. One lens, described by Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 125), refers to “how long a researcher should remain in the field, whether the data are saturated to establish good themes or categories, and how the analysis of the data evolves into a persuasive narrative”. The second lens refers to “the use of the views of the participants in the study to establish the validity of their account” (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 125). A third lens may be the credibility of accounts by individuals, external to the study, such as, reviewers not affiliated with the project and readers for whom the account is written.

Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 126) state that the criteria for the validity procedure of the interpretivist view include “trustworthiness (that is, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and authenticity (that is, fairness, enlarges personal constructions, lead to improved understanding of constructions of others, stimulates action, and empowers action)”.

Creswell and Miller state that researchers first establish the preliminary themes or categories in a study and then search through the data for evidence that is either consistent or not with these themes. The authors explain that in this process, “researchers rely on their own lens, which represents a constructivist approach because it is less systematic than other procedures and relies on examining all the multiple perspectives on a theme or category” (p. 127).
Reliability, on the other hand, pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings (Kvale, 2007). Kvale highlights that reliability is “an issue of whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers” (p. 122). Silverman (2013, p. 299) emphasises that, in qualitative research, “detailed data presentations which make minimal inferences are always preferable to researchers’ presentation of their own (high-inference) summaries of their data”.

### 3.6.1 Strategies Adopted to Ensure Quality

The present study, as explained earlier in this chapter, has used a social constructivist view. Following Creswell and Miller’s (2000) two-dimensional framework, and based on the researcher’s paradigm and the lens of the researcher within the paradigm, the research was conducted to ensure ‘trustworthiness’ of the findings.

Firstly, the coded data was analysed within each group and discussed as intra-group analysis in Chapter Four. The within-group analysis is a single-group perspective that provides insights of participants of a particular group. This is a rich form of participants’ data that was produced thematically. Quotes were produced from interviews to add credibility to data collected.

Subsequently, a cross-group analysis was conducted, referred to as inter-group analysis, and discussed in Chapter Five. During the inter-group analysis phase, the researcher searched for patterns relating to similarities and differences among the groups, and in particular that of the two groups of academics from the two business schools (AUSONE and AUSTWO). The findings of the third group, the expert group (AUSEXPERT), then either supported, or otherwise, the findings of the first two groups. The findings from the postgraduate students (AUSPGRAD) added another angle or view to the findings of the first two groups.
Creswell (2013, p. 253) emphasises that the reliability of a research can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes including the use of a “good-quality tape for recording”, and transcribing the tape. To enhance the reliability of the data, the researcher tape-recorded all interviews including telephone interviews, to ensure no data was missed during the interview. Reliability of the thesis was maintained by presenting extracts of participants’ responses to a large extent, as suggested by Silverman (2013), in the findings chapter. In this way, readers are able to interpret the findings as per their understanding. To maintain reliability, the transcripts of the interviews were detailed including the ‘hmm’s’, ‘ooh’s’ and pauses. Repeat sentences were also transcribed, which highlights emphasis on a particular issue or idea.

Following the first two interviews, the researcher listened to the interviews to gauge the interaction between the researcher and the participant. This was to identify whether the researcher was leading the participant with too many prompts. The result was satisfactory because the researcher was conscious during interviews of allowing participants to engage freely in the conversations.

The present study adopted a triangulation process of data collection. Triangulation is a “form of confirmation and validation” (Stake, 2010, p. 123). In social science, researchers use triangulation to “learn more by observing from multiple perspectives than by looking from a single perspective” (Neuman, 2014, p. 166). Data collection from different groups or categories of participants is a form of triangulation that adds richness to the data. Interview transcripts were sent to those participants who requested to review their interview data. Review of interview data provided
verification of the data and is considered a form of triangulation of the data (Neuman, 2011).

The findings of the study were eventually tabulated to provide readers with an indication of the proportion of participants who favoured or otherwise certain concepts and ideas. The tabulation process was very carefully conducted over a long period of time. The researcher established codes for themes and followed these carefully to guide the tabulation process.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Social science research commonly involves using human beings as participants in the research. Various issues were identified by social science scholars in relation to ethical considerations in the research methodology (Patton, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

The research adhered to the principles and requirements of the university’s Human Resource Ethics Committee. The research was conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and code of ethics established by the ethics committee to ensure that all ethical issues were addressed with honesty and integrity.

To access the participants, an initial contact was made with the Deans of the business schools. This approval was submitted to the ethics committee. Subsequently, information letters and consent forms that were approved by the ethics committee were sent to participants.

Data obtained via interviews were tape recorded and stored safely together with the transcribed materials, in accordance with the university’s policy. These materials are
stored in a locked cabinet and will be stored for a minimum of five years after the publications of the findings. For confidentiality purposes, the participants’ responses were accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors.

3.8 Summary

This study investigates the perceptions of reputation drivers of different groups of participants within business schools. In the process, the study aims to provide insights to strategies adopted by non-accredited business schools to enhance their reputation to gain a competitive advantage. To investigate ‘how’ business schools enhance their reputation, and ‘why’ certain reputation drivers are perceived as better reputation drivers, a qualitative research and methodology involving a social constructivist approach was selected. Data collected through in-depth interviews provides rich and useful evidence to address the research objective. Analysis of data using two theoretical lenses allowed the researcher to classify data into themes that enrich the information gathered. The findings, implications and recommendations for business schools and university management are described in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four discusses the findings of the individual groups, namely AUSONE, AUSTWO, AUSEXPERT and AUSPGRAD. Under each theme, the findings of each of the groups are discussed. This allows easier and better comparison across groups to be discussed in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four  INTRA-GROUP FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the intra-group analysis of the data collected from interviewees at business schools in Australia. The interview data was identified into categories, themes and concepts that emerged from the meanings, intentions, concerns and views expressed by the interviewees. The data, which included expressions of words, phrases, and sentences of interviewees, was analysed using the NVivo software package. The design of Chapter Four is presented in Figure 4.1.

The first section of this chapter provides the profiles of the four groups:

AUSONE (academics at the first non-accredited business school);

AUSTWO (academics at the second non-accredited business school);

AUSEXPRESS (Associate Deans of L&T of business schools); and

AUSPGRAD (postgraduate students at AUSONE).

The subsequent sections detail the findings of each group (intra-group analysis) under each of the themes. The findings are organised into three main themes, namely: prominence; perceived quality; and emerging themes, with the inclusion of sub-themes. The perceptions of the participants and the strategies adopted by each business school to enhance its organisational reputation are reported under each theme. The participants provided diverse perspectives about organisational reputation as well as their views about the strategies adopted by the business school. Their views included a wide range of negative through to positive observations. In this study, a business school is identified as including the following key disciplines: accounting, finance, management, economics and marketing. The research focused
on academics from these five disciplines, thus, participants were invited to represent these disciplines.

Figure 4.1 shows that business schools can gain prominence through historical reputation, international accreditations and rankings, and industry and community engagement. Good quality of teaching and research, and the quality of students enrolled in a school are perceived to represent good quality of products and services provided by a school. However, the quality of students in business programs, particularly international students and students in overseas programs, has been a concern. The quality of students has been extensively discussed in relation to WP and TNE programs. These two themes – WP and TNE – are identified as emerging themes in the study.

Chapter 5 then presents the inter-group analysis outlining the commonalities and differences in the findings across the four groups. The intra- and inter-group analyses underpin the foundations for an organisational model for business schools to enhance their reputation.
Figure 4.1  Design of Chapter Four
4.2 Profiles of the Four Groups

*AUSONE* and *AUSTWO* are the two non-accredited business schools in higher education institutions located in one of the six states in Australia. The *AUSEXPERT* group of Associate Deans L&T are from business schools from prominent universities in Australia. The participants from the *AUSPGRAD* group are postgraduate students at *AUSONE*.

4.2.1 *AUSONE*

This business school has been in existence for less than 50 years. There are approximately 50 academics in the five business disciplines. Of the 50 academics, 16 academics (32%) participated in the research project. Participants from this school represented all five disciplines. The school had recently had a new Dean appointed and since then there has been a greater emphasis on research, following the university’s objective to become a research-intensive university.

The main reputation drivers of this school identified by the participants were to gain international accreditation and to improve the school’s Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) ranking. Research and publications were prioritised as key criteria to drive an escalation in the reputation of the business school. Additionally, the participants asserted that the student experience is vital in contributing towards a positive perception of the school.

4.2.2 *AUSTWO*

Twelve of approximately 50 academics in the five disciplines were interviewed (24%). Teaching has been the principal activity of this business school over the decades, however, in recent years the school has set up two research centres to
increase the research and publications profile of the school. All the participants from this school are PhD qualified and most of them had been actively researching and publishing. One concern that several academics expressed was the state of the school management. They stressed that the school would not be able to survive in the current dynamic educational environment if the school continues under the same management team.

4.2.3 AUSEXPERT

Four Associate Deans of L&T of business schools in Australia participated in the study. They are prominent members of the Learning and Teaching Network, which is a sub-committee of the ABDC. These business schools have one or more of the following characteristics:

- a member of the Go8 universities;
- a faculty of a university that has the benefit of a historical reputation as an internationally recognised university;
- a research-intensive school;
- reputed to have a high enrolment of international students, and relatively high student numbers.

The views and perceptions of this multi-sited ethnographic group consisting of Associate Deans were considered a vital contribution to this study because data from this expert group either confirmed the findings of the other groups or provided alternative views. Two of the Associate Deans are from business schools of the Go8 universities in Australia. These business schools have obtained international accreditations with AACSB and/or EFMD. Both the Associate Deans have been an Associate Dean of L&T for more than ten years. The other two Associate Deans are from non Go8 business schools and one of the Associate Deans had been an Associate Deans of L&T for slightly less than ten years and the other for nearly five
years. One of the schools has obtained a number of international accreditations while the other has not gained international accreditations (at the time of data collection) but they are on the school’s agenda. The business schools of this group are located in different states across Australia. The Associate Deans were not interviewed in the order discussed above.

4.2.4 AUSPGRAD

The ten postgraduate students who participated in the research project were from the five business disciplines and were enrolled in a Master of Professional Accounting (MPA), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) or Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) degrees. Domestic and international students were represented in the postgraduate group. Fifty per cent of the postgraduate participants were sponsored by either the employer of the participant, the government of the student’s country of origin or the Australian government. The remaining were full-fee paying domestic or international students. These students were enrolled in the business school during the span of the data collection process in 2013.

For easy reference, a table has been produced to show the number of participants in each of the groups, and is shown in Table 4.1. The postgraduate students are grouped according to whether they are pursuing a research degree, including PhD and DBA, or a coursework degree, including MPA and MBA. Inviting students from both research and coursework degrees was important to elicit views regarding research and teaching.
Table 4.1  Number of Participants in Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Academics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Deans more than 10 years in position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Deans less than 10 years in position</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Students:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Students:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.1, the academics were identified as senior or junior academics based on their position in the school. Senior academics include academics who have more than ten years of experience as an academic in higher education and hold a management position. The others, including those with less than ten years’ experience in higher education, are classified as junior academics. This classification was arrived at after informal consultation with various academics in the two non-accredited business schools.

4.3  Intra-group Analysis

This section presents the findings of responses of participants to semi-structured interviews. The findings are categorised into clusters, which emerged as themes. The perceptions of the four groups of participants provided evidence for the themes. Thus, the data underpin the themes, which emerged from the interview findings. The
intra-group data analysis is presented according to the findings of the four groups under each of the themes.

Data collected provided evidence of five main themes that drive or enhance the reputation of business schools. These include:

1. historical reputation of the institution or the parent institution;
2. international accreditations and rankings;
3. industry and community engagements;
4. teaching and research; and
5. quality of students.

These themes were classified into two categories of organisational reputation: prominence and perceived quality. Prominence is argued to be an outcome of the historical reputation of the organisation, certification from external institutional intermediaries such as accreditation bodies and ranking bodies, and recognition by the industry and community. Perceived quality of an organisation such as an educational institution may be a derivative of the perceptions of the quality of teaching and research publications of the academics and the quality of students enrolled.

The findings of the study suggest that two of the five main themes are vital for business schools, particularly non-accredited business schools, to differentiate themselves from competing schools and to provide competitive advantage. These were identified as industry and community engagement, and teaching and research. Industry engagement includes involvement of key industry persons in the school board, and participation in course development and delivery of courses. Engagement of practitioners with current knowledge of the industry in the classrooms would enhance student learning. Examples of community engagements include delivery of
courses to high school students at the business school and organising workshops for
high school teachers. The relevance of teaching and research to industry and the
student experience were considered important for enhancing a school’s reputation.

Two unexpected themes emerged from the data: WP and TNE. These two themes
were discussed at length by most of the participants and the key point of discussion is
the ‘quality of students’. WP is a key attraction for students, especially for
international students wanting to gain Australian work experience. A significant
number of participants had a positive reaction to WPs for students, although one
Associate Dean expressed caution in the choice of students for the WP programs.
Placing students in organisations may result in a negative reputation for business
schools if the students are not ready for work or not up to the expectations of
employers. The concern with TNE was the quality of students enrolled by offshore
partners and the delivery of the programs by local teachers.

Direct quotes from interviews are used in this chapter to enrich the analysis and to
connect the reader to the data. As the identity of the participants is anonymous, at
the end of each quote a de-identifier is used to represent a participant. Four two-
letter representations are used for each of the groups: AN for AUSONE; AT for
AUSTWO; AE for AUSEXPERT; and AG for AUSPGRAD. Following the two-letter
representations are two numerals indicating a participant within the group. For
example, the fifth participant in AUSONE is represented as AN05, and the tenth
participant in AUSTWO represented as AT10.

The next section presents the findings of the interviews of the participants in the four
groups, beginning with the key theme followed by the sub-themes. Under each of
the sub-themes, the findings of each group is presented. Presenting the findings of
the four groups under each theme makes it easier to discuss and present the inter-group analysis, as presented in Chapter Five. This systematic approach is also convenient for the readers to follow through from Chapter Four to Chapter Five.

### 4.4 Prominence

In an educational context, a prominent business school may be construed as a ‘leading’ school in one or all of the disciplines, or one that is ‘well-known’. The general perception is that potential students tend to be attracted to a highly reputable university, and thus its business school. This popularity further leads to prominence in that particular market. Therefore, one can associate positive prominence with ‘competitive advantage’. The following sub-sections discuss the sub-themes that emerged from the data that can be argued to lead to prominence.

Table 4.2 tabulates the number of responses and the respective percentages for each of the sub-themes under the theme ‘prominence’. The number of responses was based on the responses of participants that supported each of the sub-themes. The percentages were calculated by dividing the number of responses by the total number of participants in that group, and converting the result to a percentage. For example, ten participants in AUSONE supported that the historical reputation of a business school enhances the prominence of the school. To arrive at the percentage of responses the number of responses (ten) was divided by total participants in AUSONE (16) and multiplied by 100. However, it should be noted that as participants responded to more than one theme, as expected, the total number of responses for each school exceeded the number of participants at that school. Consequently, the total in the percentage column exceeds 100.
Table 4.2  Frequency of Responses to Research Questions in Relation to the Theme ‘Prominence’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History brings prominence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger schools can gain competitive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advantage over schools with historical</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Accreditation (IA)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA is a brand name that creates prominence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA is a form of external quality assurance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that leads to prominence</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IA enhances ranking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rankings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher ranking is a status symbol that</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creates greater prominence</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher ranking is attractive to employers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and other stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranking is too research focused</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging with industry leads to</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prominence and networking opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging industry in curriculum</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development makes courses more relevant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging key industry players in delivery</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of units enhances student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUSONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUSTWO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUSEXPERT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumni Engagement</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong alumni lead to prominence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong alumni enhance the student experience and student learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student interaction with alumni creates networking opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school involvement creates prominence in the local community</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school involvement sends a positive message to the community</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student in-take improves with engagement with high schools</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure enhances prominence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements are good media exposure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence at trade fairs, local and international, increases prominence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.1 Historical Reputation

Historical reputation refers to the reputation of an organisation built up over the years through the organisation’s achievements. For example, the longer a university or business school has been operating the greater its historical reputation. Historical reputation is based on the assumption that the longer an institute is in existence, it is likely to have gained positive reputation through its continuous improved performance. The majority of participants agreed that historical reputation brings prominence, but a salient outcome of the discussions with the academics at the non-accredited business schools was the challenge of competing for quality students when most of these students are likely to apply to gain entry into one of the schools that has greater historical reputation.

4.4.1.1 AUSONE

More than 50% of the participants agreed that business schools with a significant historical reputation are prominent in the sector (62.5%, see Table 4.2). Most of these participants have had some experience either studying or working at a business school that has been in existence for a long time and has a historical reputation. Several argued that younger business schools, including this school, cannot outbid schools with a historical advantage. However, a smaller number of participants (37.5%) believed that younger schools need to differentiate themselves to compete against the historically advantaged schools.

Several of the participants argued that historical reputation is a commonly recognised quality. Grandparents, parents and friends who have attended the older universities are likely to influence the younger generations in choosing the university they attended.
Historical reputation is one that’s built over generations and is the one reputation driver that is a far reach for newer universities and which put universities with historical reputation at an edge above newer universities.

The general consensus is that historical reputation provides competitive advantage, competing with long established highly reputed institutions would be a big challenge.

**4.4.1.2 AUSTWO**

A majority of the participants (75%) at this school perceived historical reputation brings prominence in society. Historical reputation of a business school is perceived to be derived from the historical reputation of the parent institution or university.

One of the participants explained that:

> It has also to do with the university that the business school is tied up to. University reputation is also important to build up the business school reputation because if I say business school in Princeton University – Princeton University is a world-ranked university so we think that their business school should be highly ranked. So university reputation is also very important, not only because they are very complimentary to each other.

On the positive side, most of the participants at this school (83.3%) believed that with the resources they have, especially their teaching recognition and research centres, they will be able to compete with business schools that have the benefit of historical reputation. Several of the participants highlighted the school’s efforts in producing differentiated programs such as WP programs and their relatively smaller class sizes that allow a variety of delivery modes of their programs, giving them a competitive advantage.

**4.4.1.3 AUSEXPERT**

Two of the Associate Deans’ business schools have a long history, having been in existence for a long time, and these schools do have a historical reputation well established over the years. The two other schools, comparatively, have been in existence for a shorter period of time but are prominent schools in Australia and have
also gained international recognition. All the participants (100%) agreed that historical reputation is a significant advantage for older universities that creates prominence. The advantage then flows through to the individual schools within the university. An example of one of the Associate Deans’ view:

*I think it is history – a university has been around for 150 years, they’ve an in-built advantage because of history and reputation of quality because it just has been around. It’s long history of built-up reputation and they have often got fantastic campus as well and they’re well placed close to the destination cities. So, I think the destination plays a lot – what country it’s in, what city it’s in.* AE04

Another Associate Dean emphasised the availability of funds to established schools, which is an advantage by itself.

*The older universities would gain because of lots of lead-time to establish the reputations in research, whereas the younger universities don’t have that advantage, and hadn’t been part of getting big research budget. I think they’re expected to be delivering just teaching experiences rather than research experiences.* AE03

On the question of whether younger (newer) schools or non-accredited schools can compete with well-established schools, only two of the Associate Deans believed these schools could gain a competitive advantage over well-established and well-reputed schools. However, in order to achieve an advantage, they suggested that younger schools need to differentiate themselves significantly, which will be a big challenge.

4.4.1.4 **AUSPGRAD**

The majority of the postgraduate participants (80%) agreed that older universities do have the advantage of historical reputation, which creates prominence. Only 50% of the participants believed younger schools may have a competitive chance over schools with historical reputation. These students believed the younger schools may have to use the latest technologies to attract students.
Several participants argued that their choice of a business school was not dependent on the historical reputation of the university or the business school. In the case of international students, the choice of their sponsoring organisation was a key factor influencing their choice of school. Others also mentioned the cost of the course as a significant factor that influenced their choice of school. They argued that well-established business schools charged relatively higher fees than other business schools. Higher fees charged for a relatively similar course of study was a deterrent to applying to a school with a historical reputation. Stringent entry requirements at schools with a historical reputation was another factor that deterred some of the students from applying to study in such a school.

4.4.2 International Accreditations and Rankings

International accreditations and rankings of educational institutions are terms that were interchangeably used by participants. The majority of the academics were familiar with the two terms but only a few of the postgraduate students were familiar with the terms. The academics were of the opinion that obtaining international accreditation enhances an institution’s ranking even though rankings are mainly research-based.

Participants were asked about their views of international accreditations in relation to business schools, followed by the school’s intentions or strategies in pursuing international accreditations. Frequently, participants discussed rankings in relation to accreditations, so, the discussions overlapped between the two.

4.4.2.1 International Accreditations

International accreditations refer to the professional accreditations obtained from accreditation bodies outside Australia. In this study, accreditations by AACSB
International (AACSB) and EFMD (EQUIS) are considered as the two main international accreditations that business schools aim to attain because of the worldwide popularity of these two accreditations.

The general consensus amongst participants was that international accreditation is a brand name attached to a business school that brings prominence. However, there is a great concern that gaining international accreditation is a time-consuming and costly process. Furthermore, these accrediting bodies have very stringent requirements that need to be satisfied to become accredited (Julian and Ofori-Dankwa, 2006). A business school may gain one of these accreditations only if the school has satisfied all the requirements and the peer review process was successful. Among the many requirements are types of courses offered, delivery of courses, and international offerings of the business programs.

4.4.2.1  **AUSONE**

This business school had an intention to obtain one of the international accreditations. The majority of the participants (87.5%, see Table 4.2) agreed that international accreditation will enhance the reputation of a business school because it is a brand name. Furthermore, most of these participants (62.5%) believed that international accreditation is perceived by stakeholders as an external quality assurance providing independent verification of the courses and services provided by the school.

An advantage of international accreditation is stated to be that it forces schools to look internally at the courses offered, the quality of staff and students. Another advantage is it improves the ranking of a business school. One of the academics argued strongly that:
If you get international accreditation it means you’re there but it doesn’t tell you where you are. A lot of people are getting accredited, what’s the next step is where you are in the ranking. So, these things are complimentary. Clearly, you’ve trouble being ranked if you haven’t passed the first benchmark. I would imagine, step one would be accreditation, then the other one is to see where you’re actually positioned in the schools that are accredited. AN02

Even though there was agreement that international accreditation was an attractive pursuit, several academics were not keen for the school to pursue international accreditation because Australian universities are regulated by TEQSA\(^\text{23}\) (The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) and that was considered to be independent quality assurance. One of the academics emphasised that:

*They get the benefit of EQUIS – it is like a quality assurance. To get the accreditation, they had to do a review of what they’re doing. Now, my understanding is that we’re already having reviews with TEQSA, so my feeling is that we probably have enough review. We need to get on and do it.* AN01

Another concern was that pursuing international accreditations was a mimetic act regardless of whether the school has the financial resources and the expertise to pursue it or not. A criticism was that an attempt to differentiate with a brand name eventually may result in similarity across business schools, as expressed by one of the academics:

*International accreditation, I guess, I see it more as a game because if everybody becomes internationally accredited, then you’re back to the beginning where you’re trying to make sure there’s a specific reputation. I understand international accreditation is important particularly for particular degrees, but I know things are getting more competitive and some countries are specially looking for that. So, I guess I see it as something that we might have to try and pursue but I’m not convinced that will improve the educational qualities of what we’re offering.* AN05

International accreditation was considered a beneficial pursuit but acquired at a high cost, in terms of money and time. The majority of the participants were not certain of the extent of commitment required of academics and the lack of information was the reason given by the academics. The participants with a relatively heavier

\(^{23}\) The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent national regulator of the higher education sector.
teaching workload were not too enthusiastic in getting involved in the accreditation process when the school starts it.

### 4.4.2.1.2 AUSTWO

Although this business school does not have international accreditation on the school agenda, the majority of the participants (83.3%) believed gaining international accreditation is a brand name that is recognised internationally, which will be attractive to the various stakeholders including students, academics and employers.

The views of most of the participants were exemplified by one of the academics:

> It’s an extremely competitive market. Without accreditation, without a big brand attached to you, you’re just going to be scrambling – you get to the bottom of the barrel (referring to student enrolments). Obviously, the cream of students will go where in the end your degree has a brand on it. And the brand is the university. Your employers will look at it and gauge the quality based on the notion of the perception. So it’s extremely important in business schools.

AT09

However, only 50% of the interviewees viewed international accreditation as an independent quality assurance and slightly more than 50% (58.3%) believed that it enhances ranking. An unanticipated view was expressed by one of the academics that schools tend to pursue international accreditations from institutions in a more developed country as a form of external quality assurance.

> As far as the employers are concerned, I don’t think the international accreditation matters, unless you are in an Asian country, you want accreditation from a professional body from a more developed country you know. So that will be like a signal of quality.

AT05

In relation to the discussion of stakeholders’ awareness of accreditations, most of the participants argued that postgraduate students are more likely to look into accreditations of business schools than undergraduate students. The reason outlined was related to research work, which is mostly undertaken by postgraduate students. Undergraduate students, in most cases, are influenced by family and friends in choosing a school or they may be concerned about the availability of the course they
want to pursue and the costs rather than affiliations of an institution.

Speaking about undergraduates I don’t know really whether they look for the quality. Practically you know they’ll look for costs and whether it’s convenient for them to go to the relevant campus. And strategically yes – but you know, practically I really don’t know whether students will really look at these quality ratings and stuff. For postgraduate students ‘yes’ but for undergraduates ‘no.’

The cost of pursuing international accreditation and time expended in the process were considered a deterrent to schools that have financial and resource constraints. This may be the case for many non-accredited schools, including this school.

4.4.2.1.3 **AUS expert**

Three of the four business schools of the Associate Deans were accredited with one or both of the international accreditations discussed in this study – AACSB and EQUIS. All the participants (100%) were in support of business schools gaining international accreditation because of the benefits that accrue with it, such as brand name and an external quality assurance.

Brand name was stated to be attractive to prospective staff and students. International accreditation is a brand name that will entice high-profile staff and high-quality students. One Associate Dean noted that:

*Universities also use international reputation drivers such as accreditations to attract staff and students. We certainly have had that experience when admitting, and knowing that we’re an internationally accredited AACSB business school has been the difference between PhD students considering coming to our business school because they know that that branding being international accreditation, is a credible standing, a good stamp on their CV when they try to get a job elsewhere – like America or UK or wherever.* AE04

International accreditations were perceived as an independent external assurance of quality where stakeholders do not have such information, and most of the participants (75%) believed international accreditation enhances rankings. However, one of the Associate Deans noted that:
AACSB is a good accreditation because it’s pretty rigorous. It’s held up against the university’s mission and what you’re trying to do, it judges you against that. The perception from outside is you’ve got higher quality. But it doesn’t say because you’ve got AACSB accreditation you’re clearly ranked above another university. AE03

On the question of whether students considered the accreditation status of schools before choosing a business school, most of the Associate Deans emphasised that postgraduate students are more likely to consider the affiliations of schools than undergraduate students. Several expressed the view that domestic students, especially undergraduates, may not be aware of accreditations at all, as stated by one Associate Dean:

My perception is – in the domestic market not very much but in the international market – yes. And I think it’s becoming more and more important because our staff who go to the trade fairs in South East Asia have told me – if you’re not part of the accredited institutions, students more or less walk past you. So, it’s important in the international student market. But I think relatively less important in the domestic market. I would say for the domestic, undergraduate – it is almost not important, but for postgrads probably is. MBA students probably take notice of it because in the end MBA students are a bit more discerning in terms of spending. They’re investing a lot of money so they do a lot of research. It’s probably they who would take more notice of accreditation than undergrads. Domestically, I don’t think it is very important.

AE03

The majority of the Associate Deans believed that eventually when most schools are internationally accredited, there is no advantage in it. Gaining international accreditation may be viewed as a mimetic act of business schools in order to be recognised by and to gain acceptance of peers and stakeholders. One Associate Dean argued that:

Accreditation, obviously, is also a game you really have to play as well. XXX is one of the first accredited business schools in Australia that acquired AACSB and EQUIS. The first in gets the advantage but once most schools are in there, well there’s no advantage. You can’t say – look at me, I’m different. So accreditation is another one you’ll have to be part of. AE03

The expert group strongly maintained the advantages of being internationally accredited despite the costs involved. International accreditation is a brand name that
differentiates schools. As mentioned earlier, differentiation eventually creates similarity as everyone wants to achieve what others are attempting to achieve or have achieved. On the other hand, if most of the business schools eventually gain one or more international accreditation, a school without any international accreditation may struggle to survive in the dynamic market.

4.4.2.1.4 AUSPGRAD

The majority of the participants were more familiar with world rankings of universities than with international accreditations. Those who were familiar with international accreditations credited their sponsoring organisation with drawing their attention to international accreditations. They maintained that international accreditation is a form of quality assurance (50%), and the brand name will appeal to future employers. Prospective employees research the requirements of employers and subsequently pursue courses at institutions that are recognised by employers in their field of interest. One of the postgraduate students observed that:

Both international accreditation and ranking will improve reputation. I'm familiar with AACSB and ranking but did not really look at ranking or international accreditation in choosing a school. I chose a university my home country recognises. AG09

Several participants believed many other factors contribute to a student’s choice of a school. In the case of international students, factors such as distance from home country, course fees, sponsor’s preference, and family and friends’ familiarity with an institution influenced their choice of a school. The domestic students were more interested in the courses offered and their eligibility, course fees and travel time or proximity of campus to their home.
4.4.2.2 Rankings

Rankings of universities are more popular than rankings of business schools because rankings of universities are more widely advertised, easily available and allow comparison of universities around the globe. Although the participants were prompted to discuss rankings of business schools, most of the participants frequently reverted to discussing rankings of universities. Several participants argued that it was more appropriate to consider rankings of universities instead of rankings of business schools because the general perception is that the quality of a business school is reflected by the ranking of the university. In most instances, participants used the terms ‘rankings of universities’ and ‘rankings of business schools’ interchangeably.

4.4.2.2.1 AUSONE

The university excelled in the rankings for universities under 50 years old in the last two years. Most participants observed the achievement to be a success for not only the university but also for the business school because they stressed the significant contribution of the business school towards the university. For business schools in Australia, the ERA ranking was considered more important, as stated by a senior academic:

*ERA ranking is quite significant for the school’s reputation. AN03*

Similar to gaining international accreditation, a higher ranking was associated with status but only 56.3% (see Table 4.2) of the participants believed it would lead to prominence. Several participants asserted that industry and society perceive high-ranked institutions as providing quality education, therefore making them attractive to students, staff and prospective employers. However, one academic highlighted her experience, in which some employers or recruiters tend to select graduates from
schools they themselves attended. Rankings were perceived to be more for academics than other stakeholders. Only 62.5% of the participants perceived that rankings would be attractive to employers and other stakeholders such as students.

A common criticism amongst the participants was that rankings are strongly driven by the research (87.5%) and publication profile of a school. One academic commented that universities and schools are playing the rankings game, aiming for the highest rankings. Schools were said to be prioritising research and publications in order to satisfy ranking criteria. One participant expressed his concern:

*I’m a bit more reluctant in terms of looking at the ranking versus what we have to do to get the ranking. Are we just playing the game to try and tick the various boxes versus what we really try and do in terms of developing students’ thinking of furthering education, contributing to society.* AN13

Several participants argued that the majority of students, especially undergraduates, are not aware of rankings, nor are they interested in research rankings. Moreover, international students are more likely to use the rankings of universities as a tool to select a school than domestic students. One example is noted below:

*Local students are not necessarily going to look for ranking. They’re going to say – is it offering what I want for my employment at the end. In fact, a lot of the postgraduates are about what they’re already doing. So, ranking and accreditation, which are two slightly different things, still play a role but they’re not a deciding factor, at least not in my experience.* AN05

The general consensus is that domestic students’ choice of a school is more likely to be based on proximity to their home and easy access to the university, and the availability of the course in which they are interested. International students consider closeness to home country and experience of friends and family in a particular school or university in addition to the costs of the study including living expenses.
The general view of many of the participants was that ranking is a form of status symbol and several participants (66.7\%) agreed that schools that are highly ranked gain prominence in the global educational market. Higher ranked schools not only attract prospective students but also high-profile academics. One academic exemplified an advantage to be highly ranked:

*Ranking, it’s quite important and in terms of reputation, that is another ladder that universities are measured on. I know overseas markets look at us and see where we are ranked and all that. That’s very important particularly in attracting overseas students. It impacts the calibre of research professors that we can attract too.* AT03

Several participants, however, argued that the ranking system is not a reliable tool to compare schools because the criteria of rankings differ across the ranking systems and over time. The majority of participants (nearly 92\%) criticised the ranking system as being too research focused. They argued that even though the school has set up research centres they were not in favour of the ranking systems because teaching and student learning was considered more important. One academic argued:

*I don’t really believe in rankings because I think it depends on what goes into the ranking scale. There are lots of problems – you can look at the academics, staff–student ratio, and the number of publications. There is an assumption that journals are ranked correctly. Ultimately, I think it’s what our students know when they go out, what employers say about the student and whether they get the job, that is the main thing.* AT05

Another argument by several participants is that key stakeholders such as employers and students may not rely on rankings to employ a graduate or choose a school. Only, 58.3\% of the participants believed ranking was attractive to employers and other stakeholders. The participants argued that students are more likely to consider other factors, namely, availability of courses, whether the course prepares them for
work or if they can secure a job by taking up a course at a particular school. One academic provided examples of factors that students look for:

*I participate in the open day and students would like to know what’s in the course, what are the potential career paths, how long it takes, you know those sorts of things and whether TAFE qualifications and diploma would exempt them from certain units. So, the duration of the course is quite important to them because it affects the pocket. That’s very understandable.* AT06

Although the school and the university is not highly ranked, especially in the worldwide university ranking systems, the majority of the participants did not consider that a setback. Several participants argued that the school has strong industry connections that benefit their students and there are other avenues for schools like theirs to gain prominence. One such avenue is media exposure of excellence in teaching and student learning, and research publications relevant to industry and the community.

4.4.2.2.3 **AUSEXPERT**

All the Associate Deans (100%) perceived rankings as a status symbol, and believed ranking of schools was one of the key drivers of reputation that leads to prominence in the sector. Higher ranking attracts high-quality students and high-profile staff, which further enhances the schools’ performance. However, there was concern that universities were imposing on individual schools to meet the ranking criteria. One Associate Dean expressed his concern:

*It’s (referring to rankings) a university strategy which obviously has filtered down to all the faculties. Rankings are important. Rankings depend on what goes in making them up. I’m not a fan of rankings, I don’t think many people are, but it’s the game you’ve got to play.* AE03

Several participants expressed concern that the concentration on meeting ranking criteria may be at the expense of other critical factors that would enhance student learning and, therefore, may have a negative effect on school performance. Playing the ranking game was considered a vicious cycle. A smaller number of institutions
lead the ranking tables, and occupancy at the top end of the ranking table is usually by this small group. This group attracts quality students and academics. Seventy-five per cent of the participants believed rankings are attractive to employers and other stakeholders, as highlighted by one of the Associate Deans:

If your ranking is higher, employers want to hire your students and when they do, you get ranked higher. So, it just cycles up. There got to be a starting point. And I think, maybe the starting point is to be selective in who you take in and the way to do that, the antecedent to that, is to have some designed program, marketing program to try and widen the catchment net. AE01

The general consensus is that ranking has its advantages, however, higher education is a holistic concept that aims to enhance student learning. The Associate Deans observed that ranking criteria are more research-focused and with some rankings there was no reflection on teaching and student learning.

4.4.2.2.4 AUSPGRAD

Several postgraduate students observed that students may assess the rankings of universities rather than the rankings of business schools. Although many of the participants (60%) believed higher rankings create prominence, the majority said that ranking was not a key criterion contributing to the selection of a business school at which to pursue their postgraduate studies. Acceptance into a particular course, availability of supervisors and the cost of the course were crucial deciding factors for students. An example of a student’s preferences is:

I did not look at rankings of business schools. I chose Australia because my home country was part of the British colony and so people have the attitude that postgrad studies should be from an English-speaking country. And of course, I looked at research orientation of the school for my research project. AG10

On the question of whether the students were familiar with ranking criteria, only 40% of the participants responded that rankings are more research-focused. The other participants were not familiar with rankings processes. The majority of the participants (70%) believed that sponsoring bodies, such as the employers or the
international students’ government, may consider the ranking of the institution the student is sponsored to study. However, the cost may be the major contributing factor to the sponsoring body’s decision of a school for the student.

4.4.3 Industry and Community Engagements

Engagement with industry and the community was strongly supported by the majority of the participants across the groups (see Table 4.2). On the question of whether non-accredited business schools can gain prominence in society whilst competing with highly reputed business schools, many of the participants gave examples of industry and community engagements that create recognition for schools. Examples of industry involvement were highlighted as engaging key industry people in curriculum development and presenting to students. Community engagements included a range of activities such as alumni involvement in business school activities, high school engagement and media exposure of business schools.

Although a number of business schools were already involved in some of the programs, participants suggested maintaining a sustained relationship with industry and the community is very important. The general perception is that such engagements create awareness of the school’s activities. People in industry and the community will be more familiar with the school and accept the school as a socially responsible unit. Recognition over a long period and across a wider community is said to create prominence in society.

4.4.3.1 Industry Engagement

The overall perception of participants is that the design of the curriculum must incorporate topics and skills relevant to practice in order to prepare students for the work place. In the same light, the majority of participants emphasised that business
school research needs to be relevant to practice or carried out in conjunction with industry. Engaging key industry personnel to present to students and staff, and inviting them to be board members of the school was suggested as having the potential to create a closer link between business schools and other organisations and the government.

4.4.3.1.1 **AUSONE**

The majority of the participants (87.5%, see Table 4.2) stressed the importance of business schools’ engagement with industry to gain prominence. Consultation with key industry personnel in designing the school’s curriculum was emphasised to improve student knowledge and student learning. However, only slightly more than 50% of the participants (56.3%) were in favour of industry people in curriculum development even though many of them believed engaging industry personnel would benefit students and create networking opportunities for them.

One of the academics explained that apart from getting industry people involved in business schools, business research needs to be relevant to industry, which then can be applied to teaching and student learning.

> You have to show long term relationships with the key industry bodies and the key players in the industry and government. They (business schools) have to make their research relevant to policy and practice. The university’s ‘one size fits all’ model is more geared towards the sciences and to some extent to the social sciences. So, we’re having a model which is not good for business at all, imposed on us. AN04

Several participants confirmed that there was little evidence of industry involvement in the business school. The academics at the higher-level management claimed that the school has plans to invite key industry people to the school board, as stated below:
We’re going to try to start recruiting a board of advisors based on people in the industry and government here. And then that’ll raise our reputation, and I think it’ll also help by having executive education as part of the school. AN03

Conducting programs in collaboration with industry including profit and not-for-profit organisations, and government offices, was observed as a key element to gain recognition in society.

4.4.3.1.2 AUSTWO

The majority of the participants (83.3%) at this school strongly advocated industry involvement with business schools in curriculum development to make courses relevant to the work place and to improve student learning. Industry engagement was strongly recommended to gain prominence (100%). Researchers at this school work closely with industry and produce research that is essential to industry. Research for industry was observed to create a long-term relationship with industry.

Several participants delineated the difference between research relevant to industry and theoretical academic research. The emphasis was to close the gap between the two research areas. One of the participants who is a key staff member of the school research centre maintained the importance of research relevant to industry over theoretical research and the funding that comes with it:

The papers that we write are industry focused so that we meet our target audience. Of course we have our high level academic journals. But there is a tension there, because a lot of publishing is in the high star journals and no one in industry ever reads them. In order for us to do research, we need funding. And most of our research is industry focused. So unless you actually get your stuff out to those people, in a format that they can understand – unless you can actually reach your audience, what’s the point of doing your research in the first place because sure you want to change, that’s what business research is all about, to change practice and to influence policy. But you can’t can you, unless you actually get to your people. So each time you publish in an unranked or a ‘C’ ranked journal or publish a conference paper, you bring down your ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) ranking and that affects your whole score. AT02
The school has strong connections with industry, and the importance of industry connectedness is further emphasised by another academic who is part of the senior management team:

*One way to look at a business school is its contact with business, its actual engagement and its strength within the community. You just have to be in the business world and not be just teaching the theory and not have any of the applications. I bring people from either treasury or bank, they give a speech or seminar. They talk on how they work, how they make decisions about interest rates. Students then can see the relationship between theory and practice. Students give good feedback. And if they want a job in a particular institution, they know the path open to them. So, it gives them more interest. We have got a very strong connection – all of our courses have industry affiliations. We develop business plans– we have just done work for an online magazine, we do whatever comes our way and we often have a lot of good connections with business here.* AT03

The participants were proud of the school’s strong link with industry, which is attractive to students and other stakeholders. The strong links with employers make it easier for the school to get WPs for their students. The majority of the participants shared the school’s success in terms of industry engagement – producing industry-relevant research that is useful to teaching and learning, producing research for industry and securing industry funding.

Although the school is publishing with industry and for industry, there is still concern amongst participants that there may be a link between publishing in academic journals and academic promotion. Several participants argued that publication in high-profile academic journals is aimed at improving the rankings of the schools and increase funding.

**4.4.3.1.3 AUSEXPERT**

Industry involvement in business schools is strongly advocated by all the participants and they believed such engagements would lead to prominence in the community. Industry engagement has been described as engaging key
industry players to be part of the school board, consulting key industry personnel in curriculum development, and producing research relevant to industry.

Engaging industry players was said to have great advantages including potential job security for the students. One of the Associate Deans shared his school’s involvement with industry:

*If you engage them (people in industry) in advisory board levels and part of the curricula level, they feel a sense of ownership and that may stimulate them to request graduates for work placements and then ultimately employment. In fact, often our work placement students get employed by the same organisation – they identify them and pull them in. I think if you’re going to be a strategist that’s engaging the relevant stakeholders in the right way and not letting the marketing-arm to say this is what we’re going to offer you as a student and we’re not going to deliver or we’re not engaging in the right places. So, all these elements have to come, it’s not one dimension. All of these components contribute to that. The ability to link to the work force, work place integrated learning, and the ability to respond to change such as technology, different forms of technology can drive reputation. And that applies I think both nationally, locally and internationally. AE01*

Although the majority of the participants (75%) believed engaging industry people in curriculum development would make the courses more relevant, and delivery by industry people would enhance student learning, one Associate Dean suggested that industry engagement for all courses, especially at undergraduate level, might be a challenge with mass education. The Associate Dean expressed his concern, particularly if schools want to offer internships to undergraduate students:

*Industry engagement is extremely important but in a typically mass education market it’s not going to be nearly as likely to occur. It’s going to happen in the boutique degrees, like your MBAs with 20 students in it or your EMBA or your specialist cooperative programs with 30 students. It’s not going to happen in your Bachelor of Business with 1500 students in it. That’s not going to happen because we simply can’t get enough industry internships or placements to do it. AE04*

The strong support for industry engagement was evident in schools that have strong industry involvement either in the school board or in teaching and learning.
4.4.3.1.4  *AUSPGRAD*

The majority of postgraduate participants strongly supported industry involvement with business schools, and all of them (see Table 4.1) believed industry involvement creates prominence. Most of the participants either had previous work experience or were still in the workplace, and appreciated the relevance of theory to industry. These postgraduate students placed great emphasis on course relevance to the workplace, and strongly supported (90%) engaging industry people in curriculum development.

The participants were uncertain whether the school was engaging with industry. All the participants (Table 4.2) supported the idea of key industry personnel being invited to deliver some of the units in business schools so that the students can understand the practical implications of the unit. Engagement with industry was also attractive because of the networking opportunities with industry, and for future employment.

4.4.3.2  Alumni Engagement

Alumni of business schools comprise former students of that school. A strong alumni association is likely to comprise students who had a positive experience at the school, while students who had negative experiences at a school are highly unlikely to become a part of the school alumni association – therefore, the student experience is important to building a strong alumni network. Involving alumni in school activities was suggested as a great advertisement for the school, particularly if the alumni are popular and well-known in society, for example, an alumni association of CFOs and CEOs, creates prominence for the institution.
4.4.3.2.1 **AUSONE**

Alumni involvement in business schools was supported by the participants and the majority of them (75%, see Table 4.2) believed a strong alumni association creates prominence for the school. Engaging alumni in the classroom was suggested by the majority of the participants (75%), to enhance the student experience and enrich student learning. Alumni could share their work place experiences with students, which gives students an insight into what is expected in the work place and helps to connect theory to practice. Students would also have an opportunity to develop a network through their interaction with alumni.

Positive student experience was argued to be vital for a strong alumni network. Several participants emphasised that business schools must actively conduct alumni programs that allow present students to connect with past students. Students are more comfortable getting feedback from their peers. Also, alumni connections would be advantageous to students for future employment. Several participants observed that they were not aware of an alumni association in the business school although they confirmed that there is an alumni association university-wide.

4.4.3.2.2 **AUSTWO**

The majority of the participants suggested that past students can act as mentors to current students to enhance student commitment to the course of study. The majority of the participants (83.3%) emphasised that good student experience creates a strong alumni network, which then creates prominence for the school. The participants also believed that engagement of alumni members in school activities and with current students would enhance the student experience and create good networking opportunities for the students.
Although there was strong support for engagement with alumni, several participants expressed disappointment at the level of alumni engagement at the school and university. One academic argued that:

*I think another thing which is not developed in our institution is the alumni. I feel that somehow that a university needs to build up a kind of its own culture where the students are happy to come back as alumni. They are happy to contribute; they are happy to mentor future students. Student experience is imperative to build alumni.* AT05

Several of the participants believed that with a strong teaching team and a relatively smaller class size, the students do have a very good experience studying at the school and, therefore, the school should be able to build a strong alumni network. The participants were eager for the school and the university to put in more effort in building strong alumni connections.

4.4.3.2.3 **AUSEXPERT**

Having alumni with high-profile names from industry, government or the not-for-profit sector represents a positive brand name, and was suggested by the majority of participants (75%) as creating prominence for the school. Advertising past students’ achievements was considered vital to gain recognition from the general community. Student enrolments are also likely to increase with high-profile names attached to a school.

*Alumni in high-profile positions create reputation. You can say well – the current Prime Minister was a XXX University graduate from our school. And the PM John Howard was previously from our school. I think we’re happy that more Prime Ministers come from our institutions. I’m not saying that we have, but I’m saying these are the types of things that are increasingly going to matter because you can point to, change and impact. And those reputation changes are important in some context, such as the rankings, the big rankings that are going to come out just like research outcomes.* AE03

Connection between past and present students was reflected as a vital link between present students and the workforce. Alumni would be able to exemplify what the
school has offered and how students can take advantage of what the school has to offer. One of the Associate Deans suggested that:

*We need to focus on alumni, recent alumni two to five years out there – what are their views because they’ve experienced both sides of the equation in a short space of time. And often they may say that we were taught this, this and this at university but we didn’t really pay any attention. Then we go into industry we actually require those and we wish we had followed that. So, I think maybe a key link is to actually pull in alumni and ask their views of that link. That boundary spanning role between what we offer as a curricula and industry itself.* AE01

The Associate Deans emphasised that a close connection between alumni and the school is highly dependent on the student experience in that school. Good and positive experience was argued to be a key ingredient for strong alumni connections. All the participants emphasised networking opportunities for students when alumni members are engaged in business school activities.

4.4.3.2.4 \textit{AUSPGRAD}

The majority of the postgraduate participants were in favour of business schools engaging alumni members to address current students. Alumni association is said to enhance student learning and the student experience (70%), and lead to prominence in society. They maintained that past students who had completed similar courses would be able to discuss their experience at the business school and relate that to their work experience. These discussions would be useful, especially to students who have little or no work experience in Australia and are not familiar with the requirements of the industry specific to their area of study. Several participants shared the idea of a mentoring scheme with alumni mentoring current students. A postgraduate student expressed her desire for student–alumni contact:

*\textit{I have not had contact with alumni in this school. Maybe the university has one. Alumni will give us an opportunity to network with people at the work place.}*

AG05
Most of the participants were not aware if the business school engaged alumni to participate in school activities but they strongly welcomed the opportunity to meet alumni with similar interests. All the participants emphasised the importance of networking opportunities with alumni members that may result in job opportunities.

4.4.3.3 High School Engagement

The majority of participants across the groups agreed that business schools would get greater recognition if they conducted activities with high schools (secondary schools). Prominence was considered likely to be achieved if the business schools undertook high school engagement activities that were successful and well received. Examples of such activities were highlighted, including high school students attending cost-free classes at the business school to experience university life, and engaging with high school teachers by running workshops for them. Several business schools are known to be conducting activities with Australian high schools and overseas colleges.

4.4.3.3.1 AUSONE

The majority of the participants (87.5%, see Table 4.2) maintained that business school engagement with high schools would be positively viewed by the community thus creating prominence. Several participants observed that business schools should build a rapport with high school teachers because high school students are more likely to consult their teachers regarding university courses and higher education institutions. One academic expressed this:

*What’s that our teachers in our schools are telling us? Are the teachers in our school system telling us this is a good university for this particular pathway or course?* AN11
Although several of the participants (50%) observed that connection with high schools might improve student enrolment numbers, they believed it did not apply to all schools, including their school.

Several participants stated that they were not certain if the business school was engaging with high schools and had concerns about whether high-achieving high school students would choose their school over other schools that have a good reputation. They also had concerns as to whether they would have the time to get involved in activities with high schools because of their heavy work schedules. One senior academic confirmed that the school does intend to engage with high schools.

4.4.3.3.2 AUSTWO

The majority of the participants (83.3%) stressed the significance of high school engagement as a form of exposure to the community to gain recognition. They regarded high school students as ambassadors in the community. One of the academics shared how the school she previously worked for engaged with high schools:

XXX institution has a connection with high schools. They provide some units to high school students. They (the students) can do one or two units at the university. So high school students get to see what a university is like – that is a very new thing for the high school students. So you give a lot of information, so you encourage them to study in that school or university. AT04

Several participants emphasised that academics’ presence at high schools is a form of advertisement and students may consider business courses over other university courses as a result, as noted by one academic:

I think it is important to get involved with potential students at the high school level. It’s a form of advertising definitely, creates that profile. Word of mouth is very important. For the international market presence in colleges is important. AT09
As restructuring at the school was underway at the time of data collection, many believed the school would not be embarking on activities with high schools in the near future. Several participants also mentioned that conducting activities for high school would not necessarily increase student numbers in the school. Students may have already decided on a school or university of their choice, particularly high performing students.

4.4.3.3 AUSEXPERT

The Associate Deans strongly supported (100%) the view that engaging with high schools will create prominence. The majority of them stressed the importance of involvement with high schools to draw on high-quality students. All four schools of this group of Associate Deans have programs that involve high schools. These programs include providing cost-free courses at the business school to high school students and workshops for teachers. One of the Associate Deans shared the school’s experience:

*We’ve a program called XXX Business. We’re connected with more than 30 local schools. It’s a really good program. They come to the school to do some classes. That helps with the transition. The teachers get special seminars and training aligned with their curriculum so that it’s not disjointed. So, if they’re studying Economics in high school then part of it will be to do a couple of classes at the university. Quite a comprehensive program, not just coming in for a free seat, they’re quite solid. AE02*

Another Associate Dean emphasised one specific stakeholder group with which business schools must connect. These are the counsellors at high schools, including teachers. Business schools should advertise business studies to the counsellors so that the students are aware of business studies as an option. The Associate Dean shared some of the school’s programs with high schools:
We ran a full-time residential summer school for business studies students in Year Eleven and Year Twelve. The aim of that was primarily trying to attract students not to science but to business and then hopefully do it at XXX (the business school). And going to school visits where someone might want to hear about accounting. One of the really important stakeholders is the counsellors in high schools. These people advise students – you really need to get to them. So, we used to run a day for counsellors – bring them down, give them lunch and talk about the university and what we’re doing because they have important influence on students and their selections. AE03

The consensus was that business schools should connect with high schools and overseas colleges to gain both local and international recognition. One of the schools invited students from an overseas college to spend a week at the business school. The emphasis was on prospective students that would enhance the reputation of the school and increase funding.

Programs involving high school students were equated to community service because students are provided with an environment in which to explore and learn. Such programs help in the transition from a formal school environment to a higher education environment.

4.4.3.3.4  **AUSPGRAD**

Most of the participants (80%) strongly supported high school involvement with business schools and believed that form of engagement would be beneficial for the school and university. Familiarity with business schools might encourage high school students to pursue a business degree, and contact with high school teachers was considered important because several participants mentioned that they consulted their teachers regarding courses to pursue at university.

The majority of the participants expressed that they wished they had the opportunity to experience life at a university while they were in high school. Higher education
was a culturally different environment for many, which took time to adapt to the differences.

4.4.3.4 Media Exposure

Media exposure of business schools was extensively discussed by several participants, particularly participants in AUSTWO, which was an unanticipated response. In the initial interviews, participants expressed concern that the university was using the university-wide marketing team to market various courses. The participants suggested that any form of advertising should be designed by the course creators and those teaching the courses. In that way, the required information would reach the target audience.

When this concern was highlighted in subsequent interviews, the other participants agreed with the initial interviewees. However, several participants in AUSTWO suggested media exposure as a better and more effective form of gaining recognition than advertisements. The emphasis on media exposure was concentrated on presenting academic research and research relevant to industry to media such as newspapers, television and radio.

4.4.3.4.1 AUSONE

The majority of participants (75%, see Table 4.2) believed media exposure creates prominence but most of them discussed media exposure in the context of billboard and television advertisements. A senior academic, who is in the school management committee, emphasised the importance of media exposure for reputation.

If you want to actually move up reputation then you need to have a bit of media about what research is being done, that sort of thing. So, that in fact – so and so from so and so Business School commented on this or you know you sort of get people recognising the name because they’ve heard it in broader contexts. AN05
Although advertising generally and presence at trade fairs were considered important to drive reputation (slightly more than 50% supported), several participants emphasised the location and effective targeting of advertisements were vital factors that need to be considered.

A major concern was that the marketing division at the university was responsible for advertisements with no consultation with individual schools. The university’s choice of billboard advertisements was not considered an effective form of marketing. The participants argued that individual schools should be involved or consulted to improve advertisements to convey the right message to the right people.

4.4.3.4.2 AUSTWO

Nearly all the participants (91.7%) emphasised the importance of media exposure and presence at trade fairs for a school to gain recognition and prominence in society. Without proper exposure, the school would not be able to reach the right stakeholders. Several participants strongly advocated that schools should advertise the achievements of students and staff.

Student achievement was considered a strong representation of a school’s achievement and reputation. Media exposure of such achievements was considered important to advertise the quality of the school’s teaching and programs. One of the academics highlighted that:

_We don’t really sell what we are doing well. I think there’ve been some incredible examples of student achievements. If you go to the internet, you know there are students who have won awards. There should be real life examples of what students have done. Well you go past the XXX School, there’s a big billboard showing three students each won awards for something quite significant and then underneath it says you know at XXX we educated a Rhodes scholar or a Prime Minister._ AT01
One of the participants, who is research-focused and passionate about connecting with the community through media, highlighted that achievements by academics must also be publicised in order gain recognition by the public and industry. This participant presents to industry and releases her research findings to the media via radio interviews and journalists; she strongly recommended schools and academics advertise their achievements.

So, you got to have a presence and the only way to get a presence is to be in the media. Well, if XXX or any university is in the news on a regular basis or they’re written up (in a particular newspaper) in Australia, then they’re seen on a regular basis. Our centre for Innovative practices keep putting XXX in the parents’ head and they think – oh, you know these guys, they really do look at stuff that is important. Surely that will help in their decision making or at least their discussion with their children as to where they should go. That’s when you need Linkedin, research gate and you need all this other social or academic-social kind of platforms to work in so you get a presence. Otherwise, you just sit in your office and do your little research and you write an ‘A’ Star paper and no one even knows who you are. AT02

Although the general consensus was that media exposure was important to gain recognition, several participants said that they were too shy to communicate with the media or the public. Several participants supported television advertisements (66.7%) but were not keen about billboard advertisements unless such advertisements were located in prominent places.

4.4.3.4.3  AUSEXPERT

Although the majority of the Associate Dean participants (75%) believed media exposure enhances prominence in society, they strongly supported trade fairs both locally and overseas (100% support) and open days.

Open days are very important where students come along for your open days. You get heaps of them and there’s all sorts of opportunities when parents ask those questions and you can again try and explain well one is not practical and one’s not theoretical. It’s not that black and white. So you’ve got to try and do all the strategies becoming that. AE03
The participants emphasised that academics at trade fairs and open days have greater impact on prospective stakeholders because academics are able to provide information relevant to particular courses and this is confidence inspiring for prospective students and parents who are considering the business school. There were, however, mixed views about advertisements on billboards and television as good media exposure.

4.4.3.4.4 **AUSPGRAD**

The majority of the postgraduate participants (80%) believed media exposure would enhance the school’s prominence and trade fairs were popular with these students (90%). The majority of these students, especially international students, liked attending trade fairs where they could get first-hand information of entry requirements and details of the course they were interested in.

The international students were glad they had the opportunity to meet with staff and academics from Australian universities at trade fairs. Their recommendation was for academics of different disciplines to be present at trade fairs to assist prospective students.

Several international students highlighted that advertisements on television in their home country were popular. The locals were familiar with one or two Australian universities through these advertisements but only those intending to study abroad, because they could afford it or were being sponsored, attended the trade fairs.
4.5 Perceived Quality

In this study, perceived quality is defined as how an organisation’s internal resources are perceived by stakeholders. In a higher education context, internal resources include staff members, students, learning and teaching facilities, and campus facilities. The general perception of participants was that the longer an institution has been in existence and the more established it is, the greater the possibility that the institution is able to provide very good facilities for their staff and students. A difference that all higher education institutions can make, as suggested by the majority of the participants across the groups, is in their teaching and learning, including the quality of research, teaching and student learning, and the quality of students enrolled.

The participants highlighted terms such as “the nexus between teaching and research”; “relevance of research to teaching and student learning, and to practice”; “industry experience of academics”; and “the student experience”. The other term that was frequently emphasised by the participants was “the quality of students”. A high entry requirement to a degree program has been stated as an indicator of the quality of students enrolled in a school. The presumption was that these students would perform well, which further enhances the reputation of the school.

Table 4.3 presents the number of responses and the respective percentages for each of the sub-themes under the theme ‘perceived quality’. The number of responses was based on the responses of participants that supported each of the sub-themes and the percentages were calculated as explained in the earlier section (for Table 4.2).
### Table 4.3  Frequency of Responses to Research Questions in Relation to the Theme ‘Perceived Quality’

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<th>AUSONE</th>
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<td>Number of responses</td>
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<td>The nexus between teaching and research benefits the quality of</td>
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<td>Business programs, teaching and research, and student learning</td>
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<td>must be relevant to practice</td>
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<td>Industry experience of academics enhances student knowledge and</td>
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<td>A good student experience is vital to enhance the reputation of</td>
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<td><strong>Quality of Students</strong></td>
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<td>The quality of students is an indicator of the quality of school</td>
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<td>93.8</td>
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<td>Course entry requirements indicate the quality of students</td>
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<td>75.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
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4.5.1 Teaching and Research

The teaching and research elements of a business school are referred to as the productive assets or resources (Rindavo et al., 2005) of a school. The quality of the productive resources may be perceived on the basis of the teaching and research profile of academics, programs offered and the student experience. Teaching and student learning has been an integral part of the two non-accredited business schools. However, the schools are now placing more emphasis on research and publications, and they are incorporating research components into the course programs.

The following sections discuss: the nexus between teaching and research; business courses and student learning; industry experience of academics; and the student experience. The nexus between teaching and research delineates how research is necessary and vital to teaching and student learning. Higher education institutions should provide students with the necessary knowledge to prepare them for many things like lifelong learning and the work place, therefore, the relevance of higher education to practice was emphasised by many of the participants. Industry experience of academics was considered important for the academics to connect theory to practice. However, there were mixed views on the past experience of academics. The student experience studying at an institution was observed, by the majority of the participants, to be a significant contributor to a school’s reputation.

4.5.1.1 Teaching and Research Nexus

All the academics across the groups strongly attested to the necessity for the link between business school research and teaching business programs. During the interviews, the participants frequently mentioned that academics were expected to publish in top-academic journals, which are more likely to be read by academics and
research students than practitioners. That led to the question of the nexus between research and teaching in higher education, and the majority of the participants emphasised that research should be carried out to inform teaching which then enhances student learning. The emphasis was on the need for both teaching and research to be relevant to business practice.

4.5.1.1 **AUSONE**

All the participants observed that the nexus between teaching and research is crucial (100%, see Table 4.3) and that research must be antecedent to teaching in order for teaching to be relevant to the current socio-economic environment. To achieve relevance, business research needs to move from theory towards theory and practice. One academic argued that research should inform teaching, which then enhances student learning.

*Without research the academic cannot provide better information and updated knowledge to the students.* AN06

The majority of the participants emphasised that research enhances the reputation of a school. Through research publications academics get recognition. Stakeholders such as research students looking for a supervisor will search for the research profiles of academics in their area of interest. When published names are reflected in a school’s staff list, the school’s reputation is enhanced. Stakeholders perceive the academics as experts in their field. However, several participants argued that academics are more likely to read the research publications of other academics than other people, as explained by one of the academics:
For me, I looked at the courses, the quality of the courses if it will give me the skills when I go out to the workplace. As opposed to was I going to a university where the academics have a long list of publications. But in saying that, now I am an academic I’ve turned that around and I’ve sent my children to the university which has the academics with a long list of publications because that university has reputation from an academic point of view. So, I don’t know, maybe there’s a difference there between what the public sees as reputation and what academics see as reputation. Maybe that’s my academic slant. AN12

The school’s research culture was supported by regular seminars and conferences in Australia and overseas, and in conjunction with other business schools. Similarly, the school was also developing the structure for teaching academics, as noted by one of the senior academics:

We’re highly committed to allowing our colleagues to travel to overseas forums and national forums on TPR (teaching performance related) activities. So we don’t just pay to go to research conferences, we pay to go on teaching related conferences as well. The idea is to bring that back into faculty and share those learnings with others. So, we have blogs and meetings and paper bag sessions, we do all of that. AN01

Although the general consensus is that research should relate closely to industry, recognition of academics was based on their publications in scholarly journals. The impetus to publish in top academic journals was linked to the ranking of business schools and international accreditations. A concern was that the main focus of the school has moved towards research and publications, in particular publications in ‘A-star’, ‘A’ and ‘B’ journals, and therefore, to enhance the research profile of the school, high-profile researchers were engaged.

Hiring high-profile researchers was described as a buy-in reputation strategy that did not impress existing academics because the teaching sector was said to be subsidising the cost of hiring the high-profile researchers. A senior academic provided an example in relation to hiring new high-profile researchers:

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24 As per journal rankings by ABDC (Association of Business Deans Council)
Clearly, marquee appointments for research are to buy in reputation. It’s kind of like a second division soccer club that’s buying six or seven really top players so that they get good results for the season. But then they can’t afford them in the next season and they get relegated. That’s the risk. That’s being a little bit flippant and it may well be that they’re being funded from other sources. The concern of a lot of staff here is that they’re going to be working a lot harder to subsidise that.

The academic further highlighted the concerns of the academics at the school:

*They’re hiring people who bring funding with them. They’ve got established connections. It will be more work for the same people and instead of hiring people who’ll be teaching-oriented and student-oriented they’ll be hiring people who’ll be more selfishly concerned with their own research careers. To me, it’s showing complete lack of imagination just following what other universities are doing. We should be trying to differentiate ourselves in the market.*

“Research and publish or perish” is a phrase used by several of the participants, who expressed concern that they were expected to research and publish with an overload of teaching. The concern among the academics with a heavy teaching load was their low chance of promotion because promotions at the school were linked to research performance, at least at the time of the interviews. Hiring new high-profile researchers was not reducing the teaching load of existing academics.

Another senior academic expressed concern that the existing academics were demoralised and demotivated because of the school management’s emphasis on the newly engaged high-profile researchers. The existing academics were still burdened with heavy teaching workload and were expected to produce research publications while the new hires had little or no teaching commitment.

*I believe that the biggest challenge is making sure that the current shareholders (referring to existing staff members) attract the benefits of this restructuring – allowed to pursue the research or pursue their academic career. And we don’t end up with external or new shareholders (referring to new hires) getting benefits at the exclusion of the old. If you think about it, in a firm your current shareholders are what you’re trying to reward. You don’t reward external people that you don’t really know.* AN02

The general consensus of the participants is that academics in higher education should research, publish and teach. One academic expressed that “teaching is the
bread and butter of the school” (AN01), and if resources are not put into teaching then no one can do research. There has to be a balance between research and teaching in order to maintain relevance. Several of the participants recommended that collegiality among academics would improve the research profile of all academics and enhance the reputation of the school as a whole. This could be achieved by senior academics across the disciplines mentoring others in teaching and research.

4.5.1.2 AUSTWO

The majority of the participants emphasised that research leads to the enhancement of teaching provided the research is current and relevant to industry, and is related to teaching. All the participants (100%) believed the nexus between teaching and research is important to enhance the quality of the programs. Furthermore, it was emphasised that research relevant to practice contributes significantly to student learning. One participant shared her experience:

*In the smaller universities, we need some quality research. They seem to be just focusing on teaching, teaching, teaching without thinking that we need the research that underpins it. So, you need to have a good research culture. I find that my publications inform teaching. But I also have found that by doing research, it actually opens up avenues to create new teaching courses and responding to industry’s needs in terms of teaching. So that’s kind of a high level influence. So that’s where I’m coming in. I’m not actually standing there that I have done in the past. But teaching what I’ve been researching, I think that’s really important.* AT02

Teaching has been the main focus at this business school and the school has gained a high recognition for teaching. In the last decade, however, the focus has moved to include research and publications. Research was viewed by participants to be an integral part of an academic’s career. All the participants have completed their doctoral studies and were producing journal papers despite their teaching
commitments, however, with the restructuring process at the school, researching and publishing has become a challenge, as expressed by one academic:

*I think fundamentally for this university, teaching is the principal activity. But enhancing more opportunities of research to enhance their teaching reputation is something we should be doing more of. Having said that, if you got a heavy teaching load, you don’t get a lot of time to research and you know collecting primary data is very time consuming. So, it’s an expectation, you publish or you perish. But publishing in an academic journal is a very long and arduous process and submitting a journal article to an academic journal doesn’t necessarily result in it being published. Also, research is not about you doing your own research but collaborating with colleagues and with other academics in other universities here or overseas. So research is not just an end in itself, it does have value.*  

AT01

To support the research profile of the school, two research centres have been developed to assist academics and doctoral students. The majority of the participants emphasised the nexus between teaching and research, and the relevance of research to practice to inform teaching. Despite the retrenchment of some academics, the participants were positive the school would perform well in both teaching and research.

### 4.5.1.3 AUSEXPERT

The Associate Deans strongly advocated (100%) the nexus between teaching and research to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. They emphasised the importance of research to higher education, and stated that research and publication should be an integral part of all academics’ profile in the university sector. It was suggested that research and teaching must be integrated so that academics move out of the mindset that they are doing two jobs to “I’m doing one job, its two components of one job” (AE01).

The participants provided a stream of reasons as to why the research profile of academics is important and these included: research is vital to update knowledge for teaching; research gains respect; research brings in revenue; and research improves
ranking of a school thus enhancing reputation. Research was a fundamental issue discussed to gain competitive advantage. For example, one Associate Dean noted:

*The rich get richer in this profession. If you’re a good researcher and good publisher you get more grant money. So, one way to do that is you must have home-grown talent, maybe we can look to hiring. Look at other organisations like sporting organisations that have home grown talent coming through in their apprenticeships, like your PhD students, and hiring in off the bench high-flying players or high-flying professors just to give that boost. I think that’s critical.* AE01

Furthermore, the participants highlighted that research and publication is what schools look at in performance evaluation. Although there were some reservations that research and publications dictate promotions, several participants emphasised that is the way business schools are going. Two of the Associate Deans, both of them from the Go8 schools, shared their schools’ direction. For example, one of them said:

*If you’re doing no research, well, your chance of getting promoted is virtually zero. So, you’ve to have some research output. We don’t have teaching only positions at the moment.* AE03

The other Associate Dean provided insights into how the school integrates research and teaching with practice:

*What we’re trying to do is use our research to maintain the reputation of the school within the university and, therefore, in the world rankings. That is one motive – which means we can attract good staff and continue to attract the best students. Secondly, we want staff to be producing the research as an indicator of their own ability to be a thought leader. And increasingly for that research to have an applied focus not just academic, theoretical research. But it has an impact on industry and that’s how industry engagement is happening – not just with students but we’re seeking to increase our reputation by industry research contracts, and consultancies and applications. We’re trying to say we’re engaged, we’re trying to have an impact. The research projects that we pick have an applied focus and we do them collaboratively with industry, and then we publish the results in the top journals. Or we take research that has been published in top journals and we show how it applies in an industry context.* AE04

The school is well known for its extensive research work with and for industry and the community. The Associate Dean highlighted the collaborative work of a large
number of academics in the school that can be credited for the success of their work. Overall, the Associate Deans in this group perceived research as an integral part of higher education but they also emphasised the importance of research being relevant to practice and, therefore, contributing significantly to teaching and learning.

4.5.1.4 **AUSPGRAD**

The majority of the participants (80%) observed the need for business research to be relevant to practice in order to enhance student learning. The postgraduate research students emphasised that research provides updated and advanced knowledge for students to prepare them for the work place. Many of the participants examined the profile of academics in their disciplines before deciding on a supervisor. Those pursuing coursework studies did not consider the research profile of academics in deciding a school to pursue their Master degree.

4.5.1.2 **Business Courses and Student Learning**

The general consensus was that business schools should differentiate themselves to gain a competitive advantage. One differentiation strategy suggested by several participants was to differentiate the business programs and the delivery mode of the programs. Examples of differentiated programs included programs incorporating interdisciplinary units that are unique and relevant to the work place. Delivery of programs could be made flexible for student learning such as online and blended learning or any other innovative method of learning.

4.5.1.2.1 **AUSONE**

The majority of the participants (87.5%, see Table 4.3) emphasised that business courses must include elements that are relevant to practice. Several participants observed that business school stakeholders, including students and employers, would
be concerned about the units included in a particular course – both the relevance of the units and the assessment of the units. The importance of interdisciplinary units in courses was stressed. For example, prospective employers might be interested in hiring accounting graduates who have completed management and leadership courses in their degree programs. One academic stated that:

*It’s the product out there and the service that we’re providing – a combination of best teachers with good practice, and also whether the courses that we offer are meeting employability requirements. It’s what the students need as well so that there’s a balance between the academic and the profession. AN01*

To enhance delivery of programs it was suggested that schools have to keep abreast of newer technologies to enhance student learning. In the last few years, the school had made changes to the student learning system, introducing new technology for interaction between students and academics. Several participants stated that student learning has also been improved with the new interactive systems such as MOODLE. For example, one academic shared that:

*We’ve shifted to a new LMS software. That makes the interface with students better. There’s also curriculum renewal happening – to make sure we’re delivering what people need in the current year and not content from 1995. They’re also including research components in the undergraduate degrees. AN05*

Although the emphasis is on offering differentiated programs, several participants argued that if a differentiated program could be imitated, then over time, most business schools would be offering similar business programs. That is, differentiation is not sustainable if it can be imitated.

4.5.1.2.2 **AUSTWO**

All the participants (100%) stressed that business coursework should be made relevant to practice. The participants also linked business research to coursework emphasising the need for business research to be relevant to practice so that the research can be incorporated in coursework. Research enhances the student learning
process and it was highlighted that some of the courses in the school have incorporated research components in the curriculum. The participants argued that without research, students will be learning by the book, which restricts knowledge development. One academic shared student learning in the unit:

*My students got a new starter company and their assignment is to research, assess, and maybe assist it in its launch. They’re thrown into the sea. They’ve got all the capacity – the tools to make sense of something, to make sense of some phenomenon and report it and assess it. And they’ve their unique perspective. You’ll have to look at it from somebody else’s lens to tell your story. And that’s marketing research at its basics.*  

AT10

Updating the syllabus and keeping abreast with current industry practice was considered crucial for preparing students for the real world. A workplace preparation course was also recommended for inclusion in coursework, including presenting to management and at meetings, as stated by one academic:

*I would like a grooming course, for the final year students – how to prepare themselves for interviews. I mean, it’s actually quite essential. Especially if you go to a public accounting firm you have to be dressed in a suit and be properly attired. Because when you meet clients it’s the firm image that is so important.*  

AT05

Several participants suggested that courses offered should include interdisciplinary units to widen the learning scope of students. That would also be an efficient use of available resources, particularly with the lesser number of academics available to teach due to restructuring at the school.

4.5.1.2.3  *AUSEXPERT*

The Associate Deans emphasised that improving and updating business courses should be a continuous process because of the current dynamic business environment. All the participants (100%) added that there must be an integration of coursework, teaching and student learning, and these must have relevance to practice. One Associate Dean gave an example of such integration:
Digital technology units are converging across all the disciplines – so the ability to use new technologies, analyse aggregated data in the market research based unit, digital research unit and digital commerce are vital. For example, public relations, advertising and marketing – there’s a commonality of some of these things. So, maybe the program should be structured to have commonality. AE01

Several of the participants recommended providing flexibility in student learning to accommodate different learning structures. Flexibility in choosing units across disciplines and online units were recommended to reduce mass education, especially in undergraduate courses and in some schools’ postgraduate courses. Flexibility in learning was recommended by one of the Associate Deans, instead of students undertaking the prescribed course route, as stated below:

Now we’ve our own online courses. But it’s more about providing flexibility to the students because we know that they just study differently these days. They come and go and do what they please, so there is a need for a lot of flexibility. AE02

Overall, the recommendation was that organisational reputation is derived from the dynamic combination of a number of factors and that no one factor should be considered in isolation. For example, one Associate Dean stated that:

Constantly engaging those three stakeholders (students, the profession and employers) to make sure the curriculum is offering what the market wants from a teaching point of view, and then you couple that with accreditation and research, and then you’ve got yourself some key drivers. To me that’s going to drive excellence of the university. If you get that wrong, then you’re in trouble, and your reputation will suffer from that. AE01

The Associate Deans were very focused on student learning and, therefore, believed that schools should create programs that maximise knowledge gained and enhance students’ learning experiences.

4.5.1.2.4 AUSPGRAD

The postgraduate students strongly supported (100%) incorporating current industry requirements and practices into business courses. Several students expressed the need for interdisciplinary units within a course because it would broaden students’
knowledge and make them work-ready. Employers would be attracted to prospective employees with a greater breadth of knowledge. One of the Masters students noted that:

*I’m doing an Accounting course. I would like to do a management or human resource unit so that it helps me at the work place, and I may have a better chance of securing a job.* AG07

Although, many of the participants favoured interdisciplinary subjects, one concern for most of them was the number of days they had to attend classes. Due to work commitments, a number of participants suggested that business schools should offer a flexible program of face-to-face and online modes of study, allowing for more personal study time.

The research students observed that both undergraduate and postgraduate studies should incorporate research components in the business program because prior research experience prepares students for doctoral studies in terms of choosing a topic and research methodology. Several of the participants mentioned that they did not have any research experience prior to pursuing their postgraduate research program.

### 4.5.1.3 Industry Experience of Academics

There were mixed views in relation to the need for industry experience of academics. The majority of participants observed that industry experience is an advantage in delivering a unit. Academics with industry experience are able to relate theory to practice, which captures the attention of students. At the other end of the spectrum, some argued that an academic’s industry experience might not coincide with the subject being taught, and that prior industry standards and practices might differ from current practices.
Several participants with extensive industry experience strongly emphasised that all teaching academics should have industry experience in the area in which they teach and research. The majority of the participants (75%, see Table 4.3) perceived industry experience of academics as vital to providing useful insights for student learning. A senior academic shared how his industry experience enhances his teaching:

*I teach investment and I’ve got industry experience. I give a lot of my personal experience to my students. Students come to us for that – they want to know something which is not in the book, everybody can read the book.* AN06

The participants who were from industry maintained the significance of the correlation between practice and theory. In higher education, theory and practice need to be incorporated to develop a relevant and useful curriculum. Several participants expressed disappointment that business schools place more emphasis on PhD completion than on industry experience when hiring academics.

Similarly, there were concerns that there are teaching academics in universities who have little or no industry experience, having entered academia immediately after completion of their Masters or PhD candidature.

More than half the participants (66.7%) observed that industry experience was vital to connecting theory to practice. Several participants emphasised that academics should have industry experience in order to confidently deliver the subject matter to students. Moreover, students have more respect for teachers who are able to share their work experience. One participant noted that:
When you work in industry you have got the experience, you are more professional in everything you do, including in your teaching. You demand that of your students. Well I tell final year students about presenting themselves to their bosses – we make sure we conduct ourselves, we make sure we are prepared, we are on time – these are things that matter in the work place. But I don’t know how, if you have somebody who is a high flyer, someone very good at academics – honours student straight into PhD is able to relate theory to practice. I tell my postgraduate students if they’re interested in academia please work for at least 3 to 4 years – they’ll be a much better academic and they would have a taste of the real world. AT05

Several of the participants conceded industry experience of academics contributes extensively to student learning. However, there were reservations that there were academics in the school with no industry experience but who were excellent teachers.

4.5.1.3.3  **AUSEXPERT**

Although the majority of the Associate Deans noted that teaching and research must be relevant to industry, they did not emphasise industry experience of academics (only 25% support) as important. In order for teaching and student learning to be current, the participants believed that both academics and students should keep abreast of the dynamic changes that take place in industry. They highlighted that past work experience, to a certain extent, might not be relevant to current standards and practices.

Engaging with key industry players was highlighted as key to currency of knowledge on both a national and global platform. Another suggestion put forward by one of the Associate Deans was professional development of academics. Academics could be given the option to use sabbatical leave to undertake professional development in industry.

4.5.1.3.4  **AUSPGRAD**

The majority of participants (90%) strongly emphasised that academics should have industry experience or be currently in industry. Teaching coupled with industry
experience would provide better insights into the subject matter. One of the participants, with extensive industry experience, expressed concern that one of the teachers was inexperienced and was not able to follow through his presentation.

*I had a young person teaching a postgraduate unit, I was not sure if she understood my presentation. She was not able to comment on my contents.*

AG09

Industry experience of academics and engaging key industry personnel in delivering subject matter was expressed as important to enhancing student learning and the student experience at the school. Several participants commented that they were not certain whether their postgraduate lecturers had work experience, considering that some were too theoretical. They expressed concern for students going into the work place with no prior practical knowledge.

### 4.5.1.4 The Student Experience

The student experience at a business school was observed to be one of the key elements influencing the reputation of the school. When students have a good experience at a school they are more likely to be in contact with the school and further their studies at the same school or become a member of an alumni association. The student experience was expressed by participants as the whole experience of the student, including the experience with coursework, the support received from academics and professional staff, and the contribution of the school towards student wellbeing.

Negative student experiences were argued to over-shadow positive experiences thus negatively affecting the reputation of the school. The student experience was particularly highlighted by the non-management level academics and the
postgraduate students as more important in enhancing the reputation of a school than gaining international accreditation or being higher in the ranking scale.

4.5.1.4.1 **AUSONE**

The majority of the participants (87.5%, see Table 4.3) emphasised that good student experience would enhance the reputation of a school because stakeholders are likely to perceive the school to be a provider of quality products and services. Students, generally, expect a certain level of commitment from staff at the school including academics and professional staff members. The rapport between academics and students was considered crucial for a positive student experience.

The majority of the participants observed that prospective students tend to rely on references from families and friends. The experiences of families and friends, and what other people are saying about a university or a school can build or destroy its reputation.

* I tend to think with social media, word of mouth and experiences are going to be greater drivers. Students have a choice, and when they see someone had a bad experience it will influence more than EQUIS has given you a star rating. I don’t think that (accreditation) matters to the students. When I talk to students or people who are prospective students, it’s very much about their friend’s experience. AN09

With the advancement of technology and social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, information is transferred rapidly and reaches a wide audience both locally and overseas. Students who have had a bad experience are more likely to share their experience online than those who had a good experience, which damages the reputation of an institution.

Several participants emphasised that a good student experience is a product of teaching excellence. One of the academics highlights that excellence in teaching contributes towards a positive student learning experience:
We should be focusing more on teaching with the research element included, recognising that we would want excellence in teaching in addition to good research and I think we should be looking at our students – our students’ experiences and getting good quality teaching staff. AN08

The participants further added that a higher percentage of university degrees are based on coursework and, therefore, excellence in teaching and a good student support system are more important than the school’s ranking or professional accreditation.

4.5.1.4.2 AUSTWO

Nearly all the participants (91.7%) strongly emphasised the importance of a good student experience as a key criterion of reputation. They highlighted that the school had been recognised for teaching excellence and, therefore, believed that their students have a good experience at the school. Small class sizes have been said to contribute to good student experience because the students are able to have a closer interaction with academics.

The participants emphasised that the student experience could be enhanced with innovative teaching techniques and providing students with practical experience such as WPs or participation in a simulated work environment. One academic emphasised that the student experience can be enhanced through improved learning that links theory and practice:

Quality is obviously based on both theoretical knowledge and at the same time whether they can apply that knowledge to the real-life situation. Whether a student can get understood or not will reflect whether they can apply it in the real-life situation. That will enhance their experience in learning. AT04

The student experience was considered a key contributor to reputation because students are the main stakeholders of an educational institution. The general consensus is that, at this school, the students do have good experiences through close contact with and guidance from academics.
4.5.1.4.3 **AUSEXPERT**

The student experience was observed to influence the community’s perception of a school and thus its reputation. All the Associate Deans placed high importance on the student experience. The Associate Deans suggested several ways business schools can create innovative programs and good learning experiences through simulations and blended learning. They also highlighted that schools should design programs that suit particular groups of students – maybe by disciplines – which provide greater learning exposure for students and result in student satisfaction. An Associate Dean shared his school’s innovative program that has attracted a lot of attention from students:

> Some of the universities do have some proxy simulation like the trading room. In our business school students get access to the trading room at the school, and they deal with all the stocks and shares and the like, and it’s quite an attractive point for students particularly to those wanting to come into the programs. Maybe companies can actually come and set up a relationship or setup an office in a simulating way. Look let’s pretend to be a bank, or let’s pretend to be research company or let’s pretend to be some other service industry – run your students through there. Simulations by industries, real world simulations, will be very attractive to students. They have good experience. AE01

Blended learning was strongly recommended by one of the Associate Deans. Blended learning was suggested to enhance student learning experience with reduced lecture time resulting in more time spent working in teams and communicating ideas, and increasing more interactive and creative learning processes.

> Research evidence about student learning clearly shows smaller groups are more effective in many ways than having a very large lecture and someone stands down at the front. So, we can do things like blended learning offered in classrooms, which we’re starting here a bit. So instead of having students coming to big lecture theatre and sit there and absorb or not absorb as the case may be, record all lectures. They can use that time to do different things – work in teams with problems applying the concepts.
So, it’s for us to think about how we add value with the time we’ve got them and standing down in front and lecturing to a mass audience is not the most effective way to achieve student learning. You’re a facilitator more than a lecturer in the front. Your reputation is influenced a lot by the experience of the graduates because if you have a lot of graduates not very happy with their experience that’s not going to do your reputation any good. AE03

Student learning and the student experience were considered vital for the success of business programs. The Associate Deans recommend that business schools design their programs in innovative ways that will not only enhance student learning but also result in positive student experience at the school.

4.5.1.44 AUSPGRAD

The majority of the postgraduate participants (90%) argued that the student experience was a vital factor in enhancing a school’s reputation. Students share their experience with other students and their friends. They influence other students in regard to the lecturers they favour. The participants believed good teaching would create a good student experience. They emphasised that a bad student experience might have a long-term negative effect on the school’s reputation. Below are some examples from the participants:

Lecturers must understand student needs. We need more contact time. AG02

Lecturers are too busy we can’t ask too many questions. Some of them are not approachable. AG04

Too many units in one year, there’s no time to understand the subjects. I would have preferred to prepare my second-year research proposal during one of my first-year research units. But it was not allowed. I had to work on one of the topics given by the lecturer, it was stressful. AG07

Several students were concerned that they were not receiving the required support from academics, including their research supervisors. The students pursing coursework degrees emphasised contact time with lecturers and tutors was important for student learning, which was lacking in their case. Some of the participants expressed disappointment that they did not have a good experience in some of the
classes for several reasons, including lack of content knowledge of the academic, restricted teaching where the student is not allowed to be innovative in their assignments or research projects, and lack of rapport between the academics and the students.

4.5.2 Quality of Students

The quality of students was based on the entry requirements into particular courses relative to the entry requirement of other institutions (Dunworth, 2008; Safón, 2009; Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011). Another criterion perceived to be an indicator of the quality of students was student performance in university examinations and achievement of awards, as suggested by several participants in the study.

The overall view of the participants was that the quality of students is usually perceived to represent the quality of the school, thus enhancing the reputation of the school. High-quality students are likely to produce outstanding academic performance, which creates a good reputation for the school. One concern that surfaced in the discussion of quality of students was offshore students in TNE programs. TNE is one of the emerging themes identified in this study, and is discussed in a subsequent section.

4.5.2.1 AUSONE

The majority of the participants (93.8%, see Table 4.3) agreed that the quality of students reflects the quality of the school. The entry requirement of programs at a business school is one of the key criteria used to perceive the quality of students at a school (75%) and thus the quality of the school. The higher the entry requirements the better the quality of students enrolled. These students are likely to perform
better, which is indicative of the quality of the students (87.5%) and further enhances the reputation of the school.

Several participants expressed concern that high-performing students are more likely to enrol in well-recognised schools than in comparatively younger schools. The participants confirmed that the entry requirements to their business courses were lower than many of the other business schools in the state. However, several other participants were of the view that younger schools can elevate the quality of their students by introducing research components into the curriculum. One academic stressed that:

Students got to be involved in or partake in research whether published research or not. They’ve got to be active participants so that they’ll be able to take the knowledge they’re given, apply it, live it, experience it, understand what it can do, what can’t be done, limitations, and then they’ll be able to integrate research with what’s being taught. If that doesn’t happen, what will happen is that the lecturer will integrate his or her own research experience into the subject matter and it’ll stop there. The students will not engage with the subject matter and explore further the research implications and the conclusions that are drawn. That’ll take the students to another level. AN15

The quality of students was extensively discussed by the participants, particularly those students enrolled in TNE programs. Furthermore, several participants expressed concern over the standard of English language of the students enrolled in both onshore and offshore programs. They believed the entry requirement may have been compromised to enrol a larger number of students.

4.5.2.2 AUSTWO

The majority of the participants (91.7%) believed the quality of students drives the reputation of a school, which is derived from the perception of the quality of the school. However, only 66.7% of the participants believed the entry requirement to courses is a proxy of the quality of students enrolled in a school. These participants
believed that the various stakeholders also recognise the quality of students as indicative of the quality of the school.

Although the entry requirements to most of the business courses at this school were not as high as those of more well recognised business schools, several participants highlighted that with proper support the students would be able to perform better than expected. For example, one participant stated:

If you’re going to take in someone who has got a high propensity for success and then you nurture that person well, that person is going to turn out to be better. AT10

The general consensus was that most of their students were average to above average students but they do have some outstanding students including mature-age students who perform very well.

4.5.2.3 AUSEXPERT

The entry requirements to the Go8 schools are quite stringent compared to other business schools, and the Associate Deans were proud of that fact and that they have the advantage of an established reputation. All the participants (100%) argued that quality of students enrolled influences the quality of the school, and is vital to maintain the sustained reputation of a business school. They believed quality of students is evidenced in their performance at high school and university.

One of the Associate Deans explained that the entry requirements at the school were very stringent and they had turned down students with average scores including, international students who did not make the equivalent of the required ATAR (Australian Tertiary Academic Rank) score. The Associate Dean emphasised that:

If you’re an international student trying to come in our undergraduate degree, you have to have the equivalent ATAR of being in the top 5% in your country or if one wants to get to our other degrees, they got to be in the top 2% in their country. We make no distinction. You’ve to be at the top in your country. AE04
Several of the participants emphasised that business schools should not compromise on the entry requirements if they want to maintain their reputation. They emphasised that institutions with lower entry requirements may be perceived to be of a lower quality offering poor quality of education (75%).

4.5.2.4 AUSPGRAD

The majority of the participants (80%) agreed that the quality of students may be perceived as representative of the quality of a school, and higher entry requirement to courses may be perceived to enhance the reputation of a business school (70%). However, several participants argued that they did not enrol in the present school because of the lower entry requirement. Some of the reasons given by the participants for choosing the school were lower course fees, availability of the course of their choice, and the availability of a supervisor for their research.

Several participants suggested that higher entry requirements may be indicative of a better quality of students enrolled but lower entry requirements do not necessarily indicate poor quality of students enrolled. Students may perform well in high school and tertiary entrance examinations through rote learning or through continuous support from teachers but may not be able to perform well in university. However, postgraduate and mature-aged students, for example, might be able to perform better at university because of their work experience and mature thinking. Although the entry requirements to most of the courses are lower in the school compared to other business schools, most of the postgraduate participants (80%) believed that their friends in the school were performing well in the course, including themselves, which indicates quality students in the program.
4.6 Emerging Themes

Two sub-themes were identified as emerging themes during the data analysis stage of the research project. These include WPs (work placements) and TNE (transnational education). WPs and TNE are identified as emerging themes in this study because these two themes had unanticipated significant attention from the participants across the groups. Both WP and TNE have one common issue that business schools need to address – the quality of students enrolled in these programs.

Several participants recommended that schools should be careful in selecting students for the WP programs because if the students in WP programs are not able to perform or not perform to the expectation of the employers then the reputation of the school may be damaged. Similarly, schools have been cautioned about the quality of students enrolled in TNE programs. TNE is conducted in partnership with overseas organisations and, in most cases, the partners take on the responsibility of student enrolments. Being private educational organisations, the offshore partners may be more concerned about the student numbers than the quality of students being enrolled.

Table 4.4 presents the number of responses and the respective percentages for each of the emerging themes. The number of responses was based on the responses of participants that supported each of the sub-themes, and the percentages calculated as explained previously (for Table 4.2).
Table 4.4  Frequency of Responses to Research Questions in Relation to the Themes ‘WP’ and ‘TNE’

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>AUSONE</th>
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<th>AUSTWO</th>
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<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
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<td><strong>WP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>WP enhances the reputation of a school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>WP enhances student learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>WP is attractive to students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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<td><strong>TNE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TNE enhances the international reputation of a school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNE is revenue-driven</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of students is a concern</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of delivery is a concern</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.1 Work Placements (WP)

Work placement (WP) of students is becoming a popular trend across business schools. Business schools in Australia are offering WP programs to students as part of the degree program. However, it may be a challenge to offer WP programs to undergraduate students because of the large number of students enrolled in undergraduate courses. WP programs may be attractive to students wanting to attain Australian work experience. However, several participants have highlighted the negative effect WPs may have on the schools’ reputations, especially in the case of students not performing well at the work place.

4.6.1.1 AUSONE

Although the majority of the participants believed WP programs are attractive to students (81.3%, see Table 4.4) and enhance student learning (75%), there were concerns about the effect of WP on the reputations of the schools. Less than 50% of the participants believed WPs would enhance the reputation of the school.

The general perception was that if students perform well at WPs then employers will perceive the school as a quality provider of education. On the other hand, if students do not perform well during WPs or do not meet the expectation of the employers then the schools run the risk of damaging their reputation.

One of the senior academics observed that the school intended to introduce WP programs in the business programs with the aim of improving student learning and connecting theory to practice. A subsequent visit to the school confirmed that WP units were offered in the postgraduate programs.
4.6.1.2 AUSTWO

WPs were considered an important feature of preparing students for the work place because students would be able to connect theory to practice. Nearly all the participants (91.7%) supported the WP program because it enhances student learning, and most of them (75%) believed such programs would enhance the reputation of the school. The school had WP programs incorporated into some of the coursework programs. Several participants confirmed students’ satisfaction with the program and that WP was attractive to prospective students (83.3%).

We have a good reputation for providing work placements for our students. Students are attracted to it. I believe it helps in the student understanding the theory better. AN09

The participants were proud of the school’s strong connection with a number of organisations in the industry, which allows greater student participation in WP programs. They emphasised that it was an advantage the school has built over the years, which attracted more students to the school.

4.6.1.3 AUSEXPERT

All the Associate Deans believed WP programs enhances student learning. They believed the program is attractive to students (75%) but were cautious of the effect on reputation (only 50% supported that WP enhances reputation). The Associate Deans emphasised that student experience both in and outside the university is important for student development. It was suggested that to produce globally-oriented students, business schools should create opportunities for their students. One Associate Dean shared the school’s programs:
We’ve been working on our elite program, our elite students – to engage them in industry experiences, locally, regionally and internationally. And that includes developing programs which are partnered and delivered around the world. So, if they’ve global MBA, the students study in four different continents. And we do it with top brand universities (not exchange programs). Students go and do join years of study over at XXX, and then go out and apply it in industry while they’re over there.

We also do unit partnership where we give our best students a placement, internship, industry placement opportunities – locally, regionally and internationally. So, the undergraduates can go and do 2-week study tour in a city in US and they then work with some top diplomat and politicians, and with students from other universities, top universities, in application of problem-solving while they’re there. This is an elective, the students do as part of their Bachelor’s degree. AE04

However, the emphasis was on the selection of students who will enhance the school’s reputation. A few participants argued that it was important for the reputation of the school that only elite students do WPs, otherwise, such attachments may have a negative effect. Generally, students, especially undergraduate students, do not have work experience and, therefore, there are certain risks associated with sending them out into industry. Poor performance at the work place may damage the school’s reputation because the student may be seen as a representative of the school cohort, as stated by one Associate Dean:

You run the risk of damaging your reputation as well if you are sending students (on WP programs) unprepared or don’t have competency. There should be some selection procedure built into the unit and that could be emulated similar to when you apply for a job you have to go through selection process. AE01

An alternative to WP is conducting simulated programs in the school. One of the schools has a simulated program because of the challenge of WPs for the large number of undergraduate students. One constraint that an Associate Dean highlighted was the availability of resources in running the simulation programs. One of the Associate Deans was exasperated that although business schools are the ‘cash cow’ of universities, they lack the resources to create such a work simulated environment. Private business schools were said to have the finances to provide
students with work experiences and simulated experiences because these schools do
not have to cross subsidise other schools in the institution.

4.6.1.4 AUSPGRAD

Several participants discussed WP programs offered by other business schools but
not offered at the business school they were studying. The majority of the
participants (90%) believed WP programs would enhance student learning and
prepare students for the work place. They also believed that students would be
attracted to business schools that offer WP programs (90%), which enhances the
school’s reputation (80%).

WP programs were particularly attractive to international students. Several
international students maintained that they had difficulty getting part-time jobs in
Australia because of a lack of Australian work experience. Therefore, WP programs
would be a great opportunity for these students to gain some Australian work
experience in their field of study, which would also be useful in their application for
a permanent residency visa in Australia.

4.6.2 Transnational Education (TNE)

The two non-accredited business schools provide TNE programs at various locations
in Asia. The five business disciplines are represented in the offshore programs.
Most of the programs are delivered by local lecturers whilst academics at the main
campus coordinate the programs. The main concerns discussed by the participants
are the quality of students enrolled in the offshore programs including the English
language proficiency of students, and the quality of delivery by local lecturers.
4.6.2.1 AUSONE

Most of the participants at this school were involved in coordinating TNE programs for offshore campuses. All the participants referred to TNE as revenue-driven (100%, see Table 4.4) and a massification of education. The participants discussed in length the issues surrounding TNE programs. The pertinent issues were the poor quality of students enrolled (93.8%) and the poor quality of delivery by the local lecturers (75%). Several participants blamed the reduced government funding of higher education for the continued pursuit of the TNE programs despite the quality issues that surround the programs.

The poor quality of students may be the result of students not meeting the minimum entry requirement into a course and poor English language proficiency of these students. The quality of students enrolled in offshore programs was questioned based on the quality of work produced during supervised assessments, and the level of plagiarism in unsupervised assessments. Several participants observed that some of the students were not sufficiently proficient in English to pursue a degree course conducted in English, as noted by one of the academics:

*I’ve marked some of the offshore papers and I’ve been surprised at the poor quality of the written answers. Multi-choice they’re fine, but when it comes to the written answers – that’s what worries me about the Transnational degrees. They take in very low level students which is really hard for the students because they fail and fail. They perhaps shouldn’t be taken in in the first place. It’s stressful for them, it’s stressful for us.* AN11

On the question of whether the main campus has control over the way programs are conducted overseas, a senior academic confirmed that the school had set up an office in one of the countries where most of the offshore programs are being taught. The intention of setting up an office offshore was to gain control over the TNE programs and to manage the quality issue, but many of the participants commented that it was a challenging pursuit.
If your traditional avenue of funding has been reduced, you’ve got to have alternatives. And the industry was becoming much more commercialised. I certainly agree that the quality is not there and I think one of the biggest problems we’ve got is we don’t have full control of the program (referring to TNE). What the university is now trying to do is to get some more quality into the TNE program, and the school has set up an office in XXX. The initial requirement was to get into something that generated early revenue and now the approach is to get some quality into the program rather than just the quantity. So, that’s the next challenge. AN08

Several participants highlighted their preference for offshore students to have direct contact with lecturers from the main business school. For example, one participant expressed that:

*We’re trying to limit direct teaching time by (the school) staff overseas. But when I talk to the overseas students, they actually prefer to have teachers from the main campus, to be honest. It gives a niche than having a local teaching them.* AN09

On the question of whether offshore partnerships would enhance international reputation, several academics emphasised that although the aim of offering TNE courses was to make these programs available to students who are not able to study overseas, the program may be damaging to the school’s reputation (only 50% of the participants believed TNE enhances reputation). One reason was that the local lecturers were too lenient in assessing students probably because the local lecturers were concerned about getting their contracts renewed. One of the participants was distressed by the quality of TNE programs and passionate about improving the program:

*It has to be the staff here who have direct control over what’s being delivered offshore. So, either you hire more staff, base them here and fly them offshore or you hire affiliates who are answerable only to this institution and base them offshore. The key question is going to be – how do you get such people, how do you compensate them, how do you bring them up to speed with the knowledge of the units that are taught here.* AN15

The concerns expressed were that these local lecturers are hired on short-term contracts and they teach at other institutions resulting in a lack of dedication to one institution. They are driven by income rather than being concerned about the
reputation of the foreign school they represent and, therefore, have no commitment to meeting the teaching standards of a particular school.

4.6.2.2 AUSTWO

TNE partnerships with reputed overseas organisations were considered critical for international reputation building. Most of the participants emphasised the importance of selecting offshore partners because of the risk of damaging the reputation of the school if the school undertakes alliances with partners that are highly commercialised. Only slightly more than half of the participants (58.3%) believed TNE might enhance a school’s reputation internationally.

Although the majority of the participants (91.7%) believed that the TNE programs are aimed at increasing the revenue of the school, several participants commented on the high quality of some of the TNE students. A smaller number of participants (25%) mentioned that the quality of the students might be a concern depending on the location at which the program was being offered. However, there was concern with the quality of delivery at offshore campuses.

On the question of how this issue could be addressed, several participants recommended that offshore delivery be closely monitored to maintain quality. The participants commented that instead of having a centralised approach, which the school was practising at that time, each school should manage its offshore courses in order to maintain control over the delivery of units and student learning. One recommendation was for academics from the business school to build a rapport with offshore teachers and students by meeting them at least once each trimester or semester, as explained by one of the participants:
As soon as you delegate a licence to an offshore institution to teach your courses and local people are teaching it, you can have moderation and you can do all sorts of things but unless you are prepared to fly there and train them (which we don’t) the quality is an issue. I don’t care what anyone says, it is an issue, has been an issue. It may be expensive in the short term, but it will pay off in quality if three times a year or once a trimester or semester a couple of academics fly to the locations, train the staff, conduct workshops for students. Really hammer home that – hey, we are here, we are looking at your work. It would pay off. AT01

Overall, the majority of the participants were happy with the performance of the students in the TNE programs at some of the offshore locations. The main concern was the delivery of the programs. Several of the participants criticised the offshore partners at some of the offshore locations for being more concerned with increasing the number of enrolments regardless of students’ entrance qualification or English language proficiency. They concluded that inappropriate partnerships may be damaging to a school’s reputation.

4.6.2.3 AUSEXPERT

The majority of the Associate Deans expressed concern over the quality of TNE programs, including the quality of students (100%) and the quality of delivery (50%). The participants explained that poor quality of offshore programs was likely to affect applications for international accreditations. For this reason, a number of business schools including one of the schools in this group had removed TNE from the school’s programs. The majority of the participants (75%) believed TNE is revenue-driven and some did not believe TNE enhances the international reputation of a school (50%). In fact, several participants were concerned that TNE could possibly damage a school’s reputation.

To maintain the quality of TNE programs, the recommendation was for the offshore programs to be consistent with the onshore programs. However, with locals teaching
at offshore campuses it would be a challenge to achieve consistency as argued by one of the Associate Deans:

So, if you’re running anything offshore, then AACSB expects the same there as they do domestically. If you’re not marking the assessments, then you actually at least moderate a sample and make sure the standards are what you would expect. If you’re running 24 units up there and you’ve got four taught by local lecturers, then that’s less of a problem than if you’re running 24 and 20 taught by local lecturers. So, there’re different models and you might have local lecturers who’re very good as long as again you go through and appoint them and so on. So, when we were doing a joint program in XXX, we did have some of them taught by local professors. I worked with the professors and they used my book and so it was very well monitored. So it’s not that you can’t use locals but you need to make sure that quality is there if you’re using local staff. AE03

The Associate Dean explained that schools may conduct TNE programs because of the requirements of international accreditation bodies. For example, EQUIS requires schools to internationalise their programs, and one way to partially meet the criterion is to offer the schools’ program overseas.

4.6.2.4 AUSPGRAD

The majority of the international students were familiar with offshore campuses but preferred to pursue their overseas degree at the main campus than at an offshore campus in their home country. The general perception was that pursuing a degree at the main campus provides better recognition in the home country. Several participants explained that employers and the community are said to perceive the quality of education obtained at the main campus to be better than that offered at offshore campuses of the same institution.

Several of the participants (60%) believed that the offshore communities would be more familiar with a business school if the school offered TNE programs in that country. This familiarity may enhance the reputation of the school. The participants, however, were not able to comment on the quality of the students in TNE programs or the delivery of the TNE programs by locals as these were outside their experience.
Several participants estimated that studying in TNE programs may be cheaper than studying at an overseas university but they preferred the experience of studying overseas and being in contact with the unit coordinators.

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented the intra-group analysis of each of the four groups. The analysis provides evidence of perceptions of reputation drivers of business schools as perceived by different stakeholder groups, namely academics, Associate Deans of L&T and postgraduate students. The study provides empirical evidence obtained in Australia, which contributes to the literature on organisational reputation and higher education.

Conducting interviews and the use of direct quotes highlight participants’ feelings and emotions about the topics discussed. The findings highlight key themes that emerged from the qualitative data. Across the groups, similar themes were identified as vital for business schools to enhance their reputation. Industry and community engagement was identified as the most significant theme in relation to business education and student learning. These engagements bring relevancy and currency to the business programs. The student experience was another important factor considered a priority. Good student experience adds value to an educational institution. However, a bad student experience is more likely to undo the reputation of an institution.

Two sub-themes were identified as emerging themes that have been given little attention in the literature but were discussed extensively by the participants. These are WP and TNE programs. Both WP and TNE are attractive to students but there are quality concerns with the teaching and of the students enrolled in the program.
Overall, several participants expressed experiencing pressure in their workplace. The responses of the participants suggest that higher education academia has moved from providing education, to becoming corporatised with the massification of higher education. The disparity in the distribution of workload between academics involved in teaching and researching, and those researching only has caused considerable stress among academics. Collegiality amongst academics so that all academics benefit from the combined efforts in teaching and research would alleviate this pressure to some extent.

Chapter Five, Inter-group Analysis, presents the commonalities and differences in perceptions of participants across the groups. The chapter presents the analysis in the same thematic order, addressing reputation drivers that are associated with the theme ‘prominence’ followed by the reputation drivers associated with ‘perceived quality’ to allow a sequential flow from this chapter to the next.
Chapter Five  INTER-GROUP ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the data from the four groups and discusses the themes in light of the extant literature. In doing so, a cross-group analysis is conducted. The views of academics in AUSONE and AUSTWO are compared, and differences and commonalities analysed. This analysis is also discussed in the light of the views of the expert group, AUSEXPERT. The views of the expert group of Associate Deans of L&T are invaluable in contributing towards the cross-analysis of the two non-accredited business schools. The postgraduate students’ views provide the perspective of a different stakeholder group, namely a consumer of higher education products. This perspective provides insights into students’ preferences and expectations, which allows a comparison with the views of the academics.

The overarching view of participants in this study is that to gain a competitive advantage, a school must be prominent in the industry and be perceived to produce quality programs and services. Prominence is perceived to be derived from historical reputation, international accreditations and rankings, and industry and community engagements. The quality of a business school may be perceived based on the quality of its internal resources, including elements of teaching and research, the programs, and the quality of students at the institution.

Two key themes, ‘industry and community engagements’, and ‘teaching and research’ were recognised as crucial features in business education, and ‘industry and community engagements’ was identified as the dominant theme. Additionally, the quality of students and the student experience are two aspects of reputation that
management should acknowledge in their strategic planning. The quality of students enrolled in WP and TNE programs (the two emerging themes) was of particular concern because of the negative effect that poor quality students can have on the reputation of business schools. There was limited discussion of these two themes in the literature but greater than expected interest shown by participants across the four groups.

In the sections that follow, the themes that were discussed in Chapter Four have been grouped to show the overall perceptions of the elements of prominence and perceived quality of internal resources. The reason for grouping the themes is to show firstly how business schools are situated in their environment and how institutional pressures cause business schools to seek legitimacy and recognition. Secondly, the study highlights that the quality of internal resources of a business school is important for the school to be perceived as a quality provider of higher education.

5.2 Reputation through Prominence

Institutions are constantly affected by the changes that take place in the organisational environment. The challenge in the educational market causes institutions to compete for a greater share of the market. For example, some of the Australian universities, such as the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Melbourne, offer scholarships to high-quality students (based on their ATAR scores). They compete to get the best students to choose their institution, and such scholarships allow them to recruit the best students thus bringing prominence to the university.

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25 Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank
Business schools may seek prominence in the institutional environment through associations with high-status actors, such as parent organisations with longstanding historical reputation, and/or through affiliations with accreditation and ranking bodies, as suggested in the literature. The findings of the present study confirm that these reputation drivers enhance the reputation of institutions, and the institutions thus gain a competitive advantage. However, engagement with industry and the community achieved the highest ranking across all four groups for gaining prominence, particularly for institutions with resource constraints.

In the following subsections, the various reputation drivers leading to prominence are discussed. Table 5.1 provides the responses of participants in percentages as used in Chapter 4, calculated by dividing the number of responses that supported each sub-theme by the total respondents in each group. Discussion in this section makes reference to the comparative figures (in percentages) of the responses of four groups of participants.
Table 5.1  Comparison of Responses of the Four Groups in Relation to the Theme ‘Prominence’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical Reputation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History brings prominence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger schools can gain competitive advantage over schools with historical reputation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Accreditation (IA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA is a brand name that creates prominence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA is a form of external quality assurance that leads to prominence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA enhances ranking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rankings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher ranking is a status symbol that creates greater prominence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher ranking is attractive to employers and other stakeholders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking is too research focused</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with industry leads to prominence and networking opportunities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging industry in curriculum development makes courses more relevant</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging key industry players in delivery of units enhances student learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUSONE</td>
<td></td>
<td>AUSTWO</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumni Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong alumni lead to prominence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong alumni enhance the student experience and student learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student interaction with alumni creates networking opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school involvement creates prominence in the local community</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school involvement sends a positive message to the community</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student in-take improves with engagement with high schools</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure enhances prominence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements are good media exposure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence at trade fairs, local and international, increases prominence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5.2.1 Prominence through Affiliations

As discussed in Chapter 4, affiliations with longstanding parent organisations and with professional organisations have been recognised to create a positive reputation (Orsingher, 2006). Overall, participants across the groups believed affiliations are beneficial in terms of attracting higher enrolments. An analysis of the findings showed that historical reputation of a business school was assumed to be derived from the association of a school with a university or a parent institution.

Well-established institutions also do have the financial resources to provide a high level of learning facilities and programs. The participants frequently mentioned the phrase ‘the rich get richer’ in relation to historical reputation. The longer an institution has been in existence the more likely it will also have a strong alumni network. A strong alumni network itself is a status symbol for an institution.

The participants in both the non-accredited business schools, AUSONE and AUSTWO, expressed the view that it is a big challenge for younger institutions to compete with schools with a historical reputation. The participants in AUSTWO, however, were more confident than AUSONE participants that younger business schools can gain competitive advantage over schools with a historical reputation (see Table 5.1) by providing differentiated programs and services.

The confidence of AUSTWO participants was unexpected given the intensity of restructuring at the school at the time of data collection. The academics’ confidence may be related to the fact that most of the participants at this school were more engaged with the school’s strategies. The participants at AUSONE, on the other hand, apart from those holding management positions, were uncertain of the school’s
strategies. One reason may be the closed culture of the school, as indicated by some of the participants. The implication of this finding is that it is important that there is communication across the different levels of management so that staff will be aware of the school’s strategic activities, plans and decisions, and can express their views. However, it may be a difficult task for management when staff members have varying views and inputs. Several participants at the higher management level argued that it may not be feasible to incorporate all the different views in the decision-making process, and if some views are considered but not others, there may be dissatisfaction amongst staff members. The implications of the findings are further discussed in the next chapter.

The findings of the two schools were supported by the Associate Deans in the expert group, AUSEXPERT, and the postgraduate participants, that historical reputation brings prominence to an institution. However, only two of the four Associate Deans were confident that relatively younger schools could gain competitive advantage over schools with historical reputation, which supports the views of the respondents of AUSONE and AUSTWO. Consistent with the views of the academics, the postgraduate students expressed that younger business schools have a greater challenge competing with schools with historical reputation because most believed historical reputation creates competitive advantage. Most of the postgraduate students also believed that schools with historical reputation, generally, are likely to attract more students but there are also other factors that influence students’ choices (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

Affiliations with international accreditation bodies such as AACSB and EFMD have gained popularity among business schools in Australia. The consensus across the
four groups was that the affiliation with international accreditation bodies is a brand name that creates prominence. The similarity between AUSONE and AUSTWO was that not many of the participants within each group thought international accreditation was a form of external assurance of quality; instead they considered pursuing international accreditation as a mimetic act, to gain recognition from peers and stakeholders. Additionally, these participants also believed international accreditations are a form of strategy to enhance the rankings of the institutions.

AUSTWO participants believed other factors, such as industry and community engagements, are more important criteria in enhancing a school’s reputation than gaining international accreditation. The participants argued that industry and community engagement will significantly contribute to teaching and student learning, which are the main foci of the school. The importance placed on factors such as industry and community engagements to improve teaching and student learning may be a reason as to why AUSTWO does not have international accreditation on its school agenda, at least not at the time of data collection, and why the participants suggested that international accreditation is a mimetic act. AUSONE, however, was in the process of preparing for the application of an international accreditation, although many of the participants were not aware of the level of commitment expected of academics.

The majority of the participants at both the schools expressed concern at the costs involved in attaining and maintaining an accreditation status and the time and effort that goes into the process. They were not convinced that the benefits accruing from such affiliations outweigh the costs and time involved. However, a smaller number of participants who were at a higher management level within the school, particularly
AUSONE, emphasised that there are long-term benefits of affiliations with AACSB and EFMD.

In contrast to the academics, the expert group (AUSEXPERT) viewed international accreditation as a form of external quality assurance that gives stakeholders reassurance of the quality of a school. The Associate Deans strongly affirmed the advantages of gaining international accreditations. Furthermore, the Associate Deans were more convinced than the academics at the two schools that the benefits accruing from associations with accreditation bodies outweigh the cost. They shared their experiences that the process of applying for international accreditation does have internal benefits for the school, regardless of whether the school is successful in securing an affiliation. For example, AACSB forces a business school to look inwards at the school’s quality processes regarding the courses offered, teaching and research, staff employed and students enrolled. Furthermore, it promotes continuous quality improvement which is a positive outcome.

The Associate Deans also emphasised that acquiring international accreditations was more targeted at students from overseas where accreditation is more important than it is to domestic students. Nearly half of the postgraduate students were not familiar with international accreditations. However, several of the postgraduate students, who have heard of at least one of the two accreditations, maintained that their sponsoring bodies do consider the accreditation status of the university or business school in offering scholarships to students to study abroad.

The difference in the opinions of the academics at the different levels of management may be due to information asymmetry, as mentioned above. An implication of this finding is that the availability of relevant and sufficient information may be vital for
the successful implementation of a school’s strategy. Those at the higher level of management may have the relevant information about the accreditation process and the expected outcomes. Those at the lower levels of management may not have the necessary information to understand the process and outcomes. Furthermore, the two business schools, AUSONE and AUSTWO, are non-accredited schools (not accredited by AACSB or EFMD) and, therefore, have not gone through the accreditation process nor experienced the benefits that may flow from the accreditations. The majority of the participants in the expert group are at business schools that are accredited with at least one of the two accreditation bodies, and that may explain their strong support for international accreditations.

The findings relating to international accreditations confirm Bell and Taylor’s (2005) findings suggesting that attaining international accreditations is equivalent to joining an elite club. The findings that international accreditation is a form of external quality assurance requiring business schools to review the quality of their programs confirms the findings of prior studies by Jantzen (2000), Romero (2008), and Stepanovich et al. (2014). These studies suggest that having the AACSB stamp conveys the message that the programs offered by the accredited schools have gone through rigorous reviews, which assures quality to prospective stakeholders. The finding, however, does not support Suchanek et al.’s (2012) result.

Suchanek et al. (2012) did not find program accreditation to support the continuous improvement of quality in teaching and learning. One reason given was because some of the quality criteria cannot be assessed by program accreditation. A possible reason the higher education institutions did not see the benefits of the program accreditation may be the three-tier structure that is involved in the design of the
quality criteria. The rules and regulations are set by the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, followed by the Accreditation Council and, finally, the accreditation procedures are carried out by licenced accreditation agencies. These agencies compete amongst each other for clients, which may lead to inconsistencies in the interpretation of the guidelines and criteria. Most of the studies listed above refer to AACSB and EQUIS accreditations where the accreditation bodies function differently from the German accreditation council. The rules and regulations implemented by AACSB and EFMD are conducted by the accreditation bodies themselves. Researching the criteria of the different accreditations may offer valuable insights and, therefore, business schools should carefully assess the usefulness of each accreditation.

Many scholars have recognised that pursuing international accreditations such as AACSB is an expensive undertaking consuming large amount of resources (Roberts et al., 2004), and this is confirmed by the majority of the participants. The findings also confirm results of prior studies that business schools aim to gain international legitimacy through international accreditations (Rao, 1994; Hodge, 2010).

To the question of the interrelatedness of accreditations and rankings of institutions, the consensus amongst participants in the four groups was that international accreditation would enhance the ranking of a business school. There was a consistent result across the two non-accredited schools in relation to rankings of institutions. There was weak to moderate support that ranking creates prominence although it is attractive to employers and other stakeholders. Several academics at the two schools, AUSONE and AUSTWO, highlighted that their key stakeholder group, the students, in most cases, were not familiar with rankings and did not
consider rankings of schools in selecting a school. This result is consistent with the findings of the postgraduate students. Many of the postgraduate participants were not familiar with rankings of business schools and they were not concerned with the extent of research carried out by the academics at a school, except that of their supervisors.

In contrast, there was a greater support from the AUSEXPERT group for ranking as a status symbol that creates prominence, consistent with Hazelkorn’s (2008) results. The Associate Deans’ views were, however, consistent with the finding of the academic and postgraduate participants that higher rankings are attractive to employers and other stakeholders, which confirms the results of Clarke (2007) and Salmi and Saroyan (2007). The various stakeholders rely on rankings where they do not have sufficient information about institutions to make an informed decision (Fombrun, 1996; Gioia and Corley, 2002; Peters, 2007; Wilkins and Huisman, 2012; Osterloh and Frey, 2015). The government or sponsoring organisation may use rankings in choosing an institution for students in the belief that their money is well spent (Salmi and Saroyan, 2007).

Consistent with prior studies (Peters, 2007; Bowman and Bastedo, 2011) the findings highlight the criticism of the ranking criteria as being too research-focused. The participants across all four groups were critical of rankings because of the focus on research. A few of the Associate Deans mentioned that business schools’ focus on rankings may have a negative effect on other areas of education such as L&T.
5.2.2 Prominence in Industry and Society

Business schools are situated in an environment where they have to meet the many expectations of industry and the community. As discussed in Chapter Four, industry expectations act as a coercive force on business schools to prepare students for the work place. Additionally, employers prefer to hire graduates with affiliations with the respective professional bodies, for example, CPA Australia or CAANZ for accounting graduates in Australia. There are also requirements by the professional associations, such as CPA or CAANZ that business schools offer certain compulsory subjects if the school has an affiliation with these professional associations. These associations act as a form of normative pressure that forces institutions to offer subjects in their business programs that are a requirement for graduates to gain affiliation with a professional body.

The resultant coercive and normative pressures force business schools to conform to the requirements of industry and professional associations. Such associations are likely to create prominence in industry. There was strong support for business schools to engage with industry. Nearly all the participants across the groups believed business schools’ involvement with industry would create prominence, with 100% support from all participants in AUSTWO, AUSEXPERT and AUSPGRAD, and 87% support by AUSONE participants (see Table 5.1).

In contrast to AUSONE participants, who claimed they were not aware of the school’s involvement with industry, the AUSTWO participants highlighted that industry personnel were engaged in curriculum development and delivery of some of their units. Several AUSTWO participants were also actively involved in collaborative research with industry because industry-collaborative research is more
applied and brings research funds. The participants in this group maintained that such research would inform teaching, ensuring knowledge acquired in student learning is more useful in preparing students for the work place. This view was strongly supported by the postgraduate participants who would like to see more business schools engaging with industry, in order to enrich student learning and the student experience.

The findings of the academic group were strongly supported by the AUSEXPERT group. The Associate Deans advocated industry engagement to maintain relevance to teaching and research, which is consistent with Pearce and Huang’s (2012) suggestion that without the interaction and communication with practitioners, academics may not be able to understand what is relevant to practice. The Associate Deans further confirmed industry engagement would create better networking opportunities for students with industry, which was strongly supported by participants at AUSTWO. The results of the study are consistent with O’Connell et al.’s (2015) findings that industry involvement is useful in curriculum development. Furthermore, the results support O’Connell et al.’s recommendation that industry personnel be engaged in school board committees.

The general perception of participants across the groups is that there is a gap between academia and practice, and there is need to close the gap to enhance business education. This finding is consistent with prior studies by Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bartunek, 2007; Cohen, 2007; Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie and O’Brien, 2012; Dostaler and Tomberlin, 2013). Consistent with O’Connell et al.’s (2015) recommendation, several academics in AUSTWO and the Associate Deans suggest that academics should convey their research outcomes and school activities to
practitioners and the community through various media including industry conferences and social media. Guthrie and Parker (2014) further add that academics (with specific reference to accounting academics) need to engage with the profession and society to create an impact in their teaching and research.

Community engagement, such as engagement with alumni and high schools, is suggested to create recognition in society. Alumni involvement with business school activities was supported by the participants in all four groups. As discussed in Chapter Four, an alumni network comprising members prominent in society was considered influential in enhancing the school’s prominence in society and thus its reputation.

Academics at AUSONE, who were mostly teaching-based, had similar views as the academics at AUSTWO where teaching and student learning is the focus. The participants across the two schools believed a good student experience leads to a strong alumni network, which creates good networking opportunities for the students. All the Associate Dean participants and the postgraduate participants supported the academics’ views. Furthermore, Alumni can act as mentors to students, enlightening them of expectations in the work place, and the opportunities that are available to students. The findings support Argenti’s (2000) conclusion that a strong alumni association strengthens the reputation of an institution.

All four groups strongly supported high school engagements because local communities would be more familiar with the business school as a result, which creates prominence in society, thus enhancing the reputation of the school. Although the participants at both AUSONE and AUSTWO welcomed inviting high school
students and teachers to their school, there were concerns about the additional workload.

The Associate Deans strongly attested to the need for high school engagements for various reasons. Some business schools may engage with high schools with the intention of wanting to increase student enrolments. However, business schools with a good reputation may aim to attract high-quality students and to offer scholarships to these students. Academics at AUSONE and AUSTWO were not as confident as the AUSEXPERT group that high school engagement would increase student numbers, particularly to comparatively younger schools including their schools. The academics shared the view that, in the first instance, prospective students are likely to apply to one of the top business schools in the state or country, and if not accepted, students would then consider one of the other schools. AUSTWO participants, however, were more confident than AUSONE participants that their good teaching record might impress high school students if the business school has engaged with high schools.

The findings suggest that engagement with high schools is important to attract more students to business courses, especially high-performing students. The view of the participants that business schools should engage with high school teachers and counsellors who would be able to encourage students to do business studies and to study at a particular school supports the findings by Whannell and Allen (2011). The present study shows that high school students are likely to seek advice from their teachers and counsellors, which Whannell and Allen highlight as the important role high school (secondary school) teachers have in relation to students in their care.
The findings of the present study further suggest that business schools with a good reputation are more likely to see an increase in student enrolments and attract high-quality students through involvement with high schools compared to other business schools. The competition is amongst the top business schools in a state where most of the top performing students are likely to go. For younger schools to attract high-performing students, the schools need to show that the quality of their internal resources, including their teaching and research programs, is exceptional. With exceptional resources, younger business schools may be able to attract high-quality students. High-performing students may seek to attend younger business schools for reasons such as proximity to their home or work place.

Media exposure was also considered an important factor that influences a community’s perception of educational institutions (Briggs, 2013). Briggs (2013, p. 41) suggest that “communication materials (everything from the website to online ads to social media posts) should point to the calibre of students that prospects would be studying alongside, perhaps using current students and/or recent alumni to talk about the new business partners they met in the MBA program”. There were differing views between academics at AUSONE and AUSTWO about media exposure. There was strong support from AUSTWO participants for the need for media exposure to gain prominence in society and among stakeholders. Media exposure may be interpreted to include continuous exposure in the media, intense media exposure, or single episodes of intense media exposure (Wartick, 1992). Participants at AUSTWO emphasised continuous media exposure including presenting views on television and radio, and engaging with educational journalists. They also believed presence at trade fairs is crucial to gain prominence.
Media exposure was not discussed much by participants at AUSONE although a small number of them mentioned advertisements and presence at trade fairs as different forms of media exposure. Overall, participants in academia were not convinced that advertising is an effective form of media exposure. This differed from the views of the postgraduate participants, where international postgraduate students believed advertisements on television and the internet attract prospective students, particularly international students.

The AUSEXPERT participants emphasised good representations at local and international trade fairs and supported the views of the academics that good media exposure enhances prominence in the community. The findings confirm Wartick’s (1992) suggestion that positive media exposure is likely to increase corporate reputation. As suggested by the participants, poor student experience is likely to damage the reputation of the school when students take to social media to express their experience. This finding confirms prior findings by Griffin et al. (1991) and Wartick (1992) that negative media exposure will damage reputation.

A summary of the level of ‘supportiveness’ of a theme by the four groups in relation to reputation drivers leading to prominence is provided in Table 5.2. The level of ‘supportiveness’ of a theme was based on one or more of the statements under the theme (in Table 5.1) that had the key word ‘prominence’. The level of supportiveness of the theme was based on a band as follows:

- 80% and above in a theme represents the theme is ‘strongly supported’;
- 65 to 79% is ‘moderately supported’; and
- 50 to 64% is ‘weakly supported’.

Where there is more than one descriptor with prominence in the sentence, then the average of the two percentages is used. For example, for ‘International
accreditation’, the average of the first two sentences is used. That is, the average of 87.5 and 62.5% is obtained for AUSONE. This average of 75% represents a moderate support for international accreditation.

Table 5.2  Summary of Supportiveness of the Reputation Drivers of ‘Prominence’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation Drivers</th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical reputation</td>
<td>Weakly supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International accreditation</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Weakly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings</td>
<td>Weakly supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Weakly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and community engagement</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supportive</td>
<td>Strongly supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni engagement</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school engagement</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Moderately supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the findings show a strong support for business schools’ engagement with industry and high schools. Media exposure gained moderate to strong support as an avenue to gain prominence amongst stakeholders. In conclusion, the findings of the interviews, in particular those of the academics in the two non-accredited schools, indicate that industry and community engagement, including high school engagement and media exposure, has a greater impact on the reputation of business schools than historical reputation or international accreditation and higher rankings of institutions.
5.3 Recognition of Perceived Quality

Due to institutional pressures, discussed above, managers of educational institutions are expected to make choices they believe will enhance the competitive position of the institution in the market. Business schools, for example, increase their research activities to improve their ranking. In order to increase research publications, one strategy is to hire high-profile research professors. Deans and managers are likely to allocate resources to activities they believe will increase the school’s competitive advantage. These activities may involve increasing the internal resources or improving the quality of the resources. The quality of the resources may be perceived positively or negatively in comparison to other similar institutions.

In this study, the quality of a business school is constructed based on the perceptions of the quality of teaching and research, and the students enrolled. The quality of teaching and research is examined through the prism of the nexus between teaching and research, business programs and the relevance of these programs to practice, and the student experience. Table 5.3 provides the comparative figures of the responses of the four groups of participants – AUSONE; AUSTWO; AUSEXPERT; and AUSPGRAD – to research questions relevant to ‘perceived quality’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of responses</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of responses (%)</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching and Research**

- The nexus between teaching and research benefits the quality of delivery and student learning, and enhances the quality of the school.
- Business programs, teaching and research, and student learning must be relevant to practice.
- Industry experience of academics enhances student knowledge and learning.
- A good student experience is vital to enhance the reputation of a school.

**Quality of Students**

- The quality of students is an indicator of the quality of school.
- Course entry requirements indicate the quality of students.
- Student performances indicate the quality of students.

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5.3.1 Perceived Quality of Teaching and Research

Teaching and research are the two main functions of a university and while a symbiotic relationship between these two aspects is identified in the literature (Visser-Wijnveen et al., 2010), the nexus between both is widely debated (Simons and Elen, 2007). Some literature identifies the mutuality of research and teaching, arguing that active engagement in one will benefit the other (Colbeck, 1998; Zamorski, 2002; Zimbardi and Myatt, 2012), while others suggest research and teaching have few synergies and vie for academic time and institutional resources (Coate et al., 2001; Hattie and Marsh, 1996; Stappenbelt, 2013).

Table 5.3 shows strong support across the groups for the teaching and research nexus. The relevance of research to teaching and practice was highly endorsed by most of the participants. The two groups of academics agreed that teaching academics must be actively researching so that teaching materials are current and relevant to practice, thus enhancing student learning. Most of the participants at AUSONE, except for a few who were involved in voluntary programs with not-for-profit organisations, did not have research and publications that were industry-related and only a small number of the academics were researching in areas related to their teaching. In contrast, most of the academics in AUSTWO were actively researching in areas relating to the subjects they teach and several of the participants actively engage with industry and research for industry.

Although participants in AUSONE did agree that the teaching and research nexus is important, they felt there was insufficient time to research and produce publications with a heavy teaching workload. Consistent with prior studies, the pressure to publish in top-tier academic journals and to teach was causing stress in academics
(Roberts et al., 2004; Hancock et al., 2015). Hancock et al. (2015) show that for academics who have to do both teaching and research, time is the constraining factor. The authors use the term “conflicting job roles” to describe “the strain on academics having to be good in the two roles: a teacher and a researcher” (p. 25).

Academics at AUSTWO seemed less stressed about publishing even though these academics had a heavy teaching workload as a result of restructuring at the school. The pronounced support for research and publishing can be explained by the fact that all the participants in this school were PhDs and had research papers that were ready for publication. Another reason may be related to the existence of a research centre within the school that supports academics in research areas where needed, and the research centre staff members themselves are actively involved in industry-based research.

The expert group, AUSEXPERT, supported the findings of the two schools that a nexus between teaching and research is vital for teaching and learning. The expert view was that some research should be conducted in line with teaching or at least incorporated into the teaching. The Associate Deans emphasised the need for a collective effort by academics to produce relevant research involving industry and the community at large for the benefit of society. The postgraduate students strongly supported the views of the academics in relation to the importance of subjects taught at university having practical relevance.

There was concern, however, particularly for the academics, that schools are pushing for research and publications in top-tiered academic journals that are more theoretical than practical. The participants agreed that publishing in top journals is elitist, but they questioned the relevance of theoretical research without practical flavour. The
results confirm findings in the literature (Armstrong and Sperry, 1994; Egie and Karanthanos, 1994; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Rynes, 2007; Bartunek, 2007; Cohen, 2007; Bansal et al., 2012; Hancock et al., 2015). Armstrong and Sperry (1994) show that business school research is significantly correlated with prestige rankings by different stakeholders, but Pfeffer and Fong (2002) find business school research to have a lesser impact compared with business research conducted by writers not in business schools.

The findings that academic journals are too theoretical and more likely to be read by academics and research students than practitioners confirm Lubbe’s (2015) findings. This may be due to the inaccessibility of academic research to practitioners in terms of language and publications (Starkey and Madan, 2001; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Forster, 2007). Lubbe (2015) provides evidence that professional accountants were unaware of academic journals and have never read any academic journal articles. Bartunek and Rynes (2010) suggest ways to mitigate the gap between academia and practice, including the language in which academic journal articles are written.

Overall, there is a consensus across the participants that business research must be relevant to teaching and practice. Academics at the two schools viewed business school research to be more important to teaching and student learning than the benefits accruing from such research in the form of a higher ranking and prestige derived from the research. The finding of a positive relationship between teaching and research and that it will enhance student learning where research is relevant to teaching and practice confirms findings of prior studies (Neumann, 1994; Taylor and Stanton, 2009; Visser-Wijnveen et al., 2010; Zimbardi and Myatt, 2012; Hancock et
Hancock et al. (2015) show that where there is a nexus between teaching and research, both teaching and research benefit from the relationship. The academics, identified by students in Neumann’s (1994) study as good teachers were all, with one exception, “active researchers” (p. 336). Duff and Marriott (2016) show that a curriculum that is too research-focused may have a negative impact on the teaching–research nexus.

Nearly all the participants in the four groups strongly viewed the importance of practical relevance of business programs. AUSTWO participants were more supportive than AUSONE in relation to courses offered, and whether student learning must be relevant to practice to prepare students for the work place. AUSTWO has the advantage of close connections with some organisations in industry, which provides greater opportunities for bringing relevance to business programs, including availability of student WPs.

AUSTWO participants were also very supportive of inviting key industry players to deliver in classrooms because having industry people deliver courses is believed to enhance student learning and experience. Most of the AUSONE participants, on the other hand, were apprehensive that it might be too expensive to invite key industry personnel to classrooms although they were supportive of industry engagement.

The findings of the Associate Deans and the postgraduate students supported the views of the academics in the two schools. The Associate Deans strongly supported industry personnel involvement in curriculum development and delivery of courses at business schools, and to have key industry players be part of the school board. The postgraduate students indicated they would like to see more industry personnel deliver units, especially at the postgraduate levels.
Overall, practical relevance was considered a key element to teaching and student learning and, therefore, industry relevant subjects were recommended to be included in the business curriculum in higher education. Participants expressed concern that not many business schools in Australia involve industry in curriculum development and teaching. Consistent with the literature, participants called for more industry-relevant courses to be delivered. Albrecht and Sack (2000) and French and Coppage (2004) argue that accounting students are not being exposed to a sufficiently broad business education with real-world examples. Jordaan (2009) shows that high-quality education, together with industry involvement, is important for students to realise their career path.

Participants at the two business schools, AUSONE and AUSTWO, further suggest that industry experience of academics would contribute to student learning because the academics can relate industry experience to theory. However, this finding was not supported by the expert group. Although the Associate Deans strongly supported close connections with industry and industry involvement in business schools, there was little discussion of the need for academics’ industry experience. One of the Associate Deans explained the importance of current industry practices over past work experience. A suggestion put forward by the Associate Dean was professional development for academics and sabbatical leave for academics to work in industry for a short period. This finding resonates with O’Connell et al.’s (2015) recommendations for industry engagement and professional development opportunities and support for academics to keep abreast of modern communications and related technologies that would assist in improved teaching and learning outcomes.
Interdisciplinary courses were also suggested by participants across the groups to broaden students’ knowledge and not limit learning to specific concepts and ideas around one course. Further, the findings also show that study abroad units will enhance student experience, which is consistent with a prior study by Meier and Smith (2016). Meier and Smith suggest an inter-cultural experience through international studies that enhances student experience during higher education.

The student experience was considered vital for a school’s reputation as a provider of quality programs and services. The student experience may be enhanced or undermined by a myriad of factors, including satisfaction with the courses, quality of delivery, facilities available to students, and support received from academics and professional staff at the school. Academics at the two schools agreed that a good student experience enhances a school’s reputation. This can be achieved through good rapport between academics and students, and teaching excellence. Conversely, a bad experience is more likely to be shared and spread faster than a good experience, which damages reputation. AUSTWO participants were more positive than AUSONE participants that their students have a good experience in the school. The conclusion was based on student feedback directly to academics and through school surveys.

The findings of the academics at the two schools were strongly supported by the Associate Deans who affirmed that the student experience is a key ingredient of a quality higher education. A good relationship between all staff members and the students, and the support that students receive from the school and the university were also considered vital for a positive reputation. Supporting this view, the postgraduate participants emphasised that the student experience either breaks or
builds the reputation of an institution. The group verified that the experience of friends and family members at an institution influenced their choice of a place to study.

The finding that the interrelationship between staff members and students is important confirms observations by several studies (Oldfield and Baron, 2000; Sohail and Shaikh, 2004; Douglas and McClelland, 2008; McCulloch, 2009). Prior studies show that there must be communication among staff members, and between staff and students (Oldfield and Baron, 2000), and a ‘co-production’ relationship between the student and the university is vital (McCulloch, 2009) to enhance the student experience.

The literature highlights various other factors that enhance the student experience at a university, including social factors such as friendships and collegiality amongst students. Apart from the sociological effects, the findings of the study contribute to the view that teaching excellence is an important criterion for the student experience. Teaching excellence not only includes knowledge imparted but includes the ability to communicate that knowledge to students and whether the students understand their teacher, and staff supportiveness and responsiveness to feedback (Calvo, Markauskaite and Trigwell, 2010). Students tend to retreat when they do not understand the topic being taught or what is being taught. Therefore, teaching excellence is significant in the assessment of the quality of L&T.

5.3.2 Perceived Quality of Students

The participants at AUSONE and AUSTWO had similar views that higher quality of students is indicative of higher quality of the school, and student performance reflects the quality of the school (see Table 5.3). Two key criteria were frequently
mentioned by most of the participants about the quality of students – entry requirement to a course and academic performance of students. Safón (2012, p. 169) suggests that “the outcome of a business school’s achievements which is based on the results of students’ performance may be perceived as signals of organisational reputation”.

The participants suggested that although statistics of students’ performances are not readily available to the public, other forms of recognition in the media are considered to reflect the performance of the cohort of students at the school. For example, media coverage of outstanding students in competitions and examinations, or outstanding high school students securing scholarships to study at certain universities may be reflective of the quality of education at the university, and if they are business students, at the business school.

A moderate number of the participants maintained that higher entry requirements to a course may be indicative of a better quality of students at a school, thus enhancing the reputation of the school. A greater proportion of the AUSONE participants, compared to the AUSTWO participants, believed higher entry requirements to a course are indicative of the quality of students enrolled. The participants at AUSTWO emphasised that they do have outstanding students who have produced excellent results even though the school’s course entry requirement is lower than that of the well-known business schools in the state.

The views of the academics were supported by the Associate Deans. The Associate Deans strongly believed that the quality of a school is reflected by the quality of students and the academic performance of the students. They also proposed that a
higher entry requirement is a selection process to enrol higher ability students, who are important to maintain the quality and reputation of a school.

The postgraduate students agreed that student performance is reflective of the quality of the students, which enhances the school’s reputation. However, several of these participants had reservations in relation to whether higher entry requirement into courses signifies the quality of students enrolled. The participants stated other factors that may influence students in enrolling at a school (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) where the entry requirements may be lower, including cost of the business programs, proximity to home, smaller class sizes and good experiences during earlier studies or family and friends’ experiences at a school.

The finding that the entry requirement is reflective of the quality of students is consistent with studies by Lane (2011) and Dobos (2011). Both these studies show that lower entry criteria to courses are likely to result in lower quality of students who do not have the competency to study the course. The poor performance of these students may be the result of lack of pre-requisite knowledge in the discipline area.

The concerns of the academics at the non-accredited schools in relation to poor English language competency of business students, and particularly international students, confirms prior studies by Watty (2006), Jackson et al. (2006), Hancock et al. (2010), Cappelleto (2010) and Foster (2012).

Overall, teaching and student learning was highlighted as vital to competing with peer institutions. Business school research appears to be the overarching element that enhances teaching and student learning, but relevant research is necessary to achieve success in these areas. A summary of the overall ‘supportiveness’ of the
participants in the four groups in relation to the reputation drivers leading to perceived quality is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4  Summary of Supportiveness of the Reputation Drivers of ‘Perceived Quality’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation Drivers</th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quality of teaching and research, including the student experience, enhances the perceived quality of the school</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of students is indicative of the quality of the school</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
<td>Strongly supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every element in relation to teaching and research and the quality of students was strongly supported by the participants across all four groups. Industry and practical inclusiveness were highly regarded as key components in higher education. Overall, the importance of the quality of the internal resources of business schools was strongly supported. This outcome provides business schools, particularly non-accredited business schools and schools that have limited resources, with insights into different strategies that could help to enhance organisation reputation.

5.4 Emerging Themes: Partnerships with Industry and Overseas Partnerships

Somewhat unexpectedly WP and TNE programs were discussed extensively by the participants and, therefore, identified as the emerging themes in the study. Two issues surfaced in the discussion of WP and TNE programs: the quality of students and the quality of delivery of the TNE programs. WP programs are attractive to students, particularly to international students wanting to gain Australian work experience that will be advantageous in applying for work positions and permanent residency in Australia.
TNE has been recognised as an important element of the revenue equation (Naidoo, 2015) of many business schools, particularly in Australia. Quality concerns may have caused several business schools in Australia, for example, the University of New South Wales, to choose to close their TNE programs in Singapore. This may be attributed to the challenges such TNE programs present when schools are attempting to achieve AACSB accreditation. Applying for the accreditation is a stringent process and courses and programs offered by business schools are scrutinised to ensure quality programs are offered, staffing is appropriate and the graduates meet the program learning goals.

Table 5.5 provides the comparative figures of responses of participants in the four groups in relation to WP and TNE. Discussions in this section are based on the comparative figures (in percentages) in this table.
Table 5.5  Comparison of Responses of the Four Groups in Relation to the Themes ‘WP’ and ‘TNE'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>AUSONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSTWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSEXPERT</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSPGRAD</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>Percentage of responses (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP enhances the reputation of a school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP enhances student learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP is attractive to students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNE enhances the international reputation of a school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNE is revenue-driven</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of students is a concern</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of delivery is a concern</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were mixed findings between the two groups of academics about WP programs offered to students. The AUSTWO participants were more supportive than AUSONE participants that WP will enhance the reputation of a school and enhance student learning. However, the participants from both schools strongly believed that WP programs would be attractive to prospective students.

Participants from AUSEXPERT and AUSPGRAD supported WP programs as enhancing student learning. However, the Associate Deans were as sceptical as AUSONE about whether incorporating WP into the curriculum would enhance the reputation of a school. The Associate Deans cautioned that schools need to make sure competent and prepared students are involved in WP programs otherwise, employers may have a negative opinion of a school if the students are not able to perform well during an internship. The findings suggest that high-performing students are likely to perform well in the workplace, but poor-performing students may cause damage to a school’s reputation if they are not prepared for the workplace. The postgraduate participants, however, strongly believed WP programs would attract students to the business program.

Academics at the two non-accredited business schools believed TNE enhances a school’s reputation only where the quality of students enrolled is high. Both these schools have overseas partnerships for TNE programs. The quality of students was a greater concern to academics at AUSONE than AUSTWO. The main concern expressed by academics at AUSONE was that offshore partners were largely commercialised organisations and mainly concerned with increasing revenue through greater student enrolments. Consequently, pre-requisites for course entry may have been compromised to increase enrolment numbers.
In contrast, *AUSTWO* academics had high regard for offshore students in certain locations, commenting on the English language proficiency of these students and the professional standard of presentation of assessed work. The differing views of the two schools is likely explained by the different overseas partnerships of these programs. Compared to *AUSTWO*, *AUSONE* participants, however, were relatively not satisfied with their offshore partnerships because they had to deal with poor quality of students and local teachers who were largely not committed to the programs.

The Associate Deans sounded the same concerns as the *AUSONE* participants in relation to the quality of students and local teachers. Only one of the Associate Deans’ schools offered offshore courses. A couple of the schools discontinued their TNE programs because of the numerous issues surrounding TNE. Several of the international postgraduate students have heard of TNE programs, but they believed employers in their home country prefer to engage students with foreign degrees obtained overseas. The postgraduate participants commented that people in their home country, including employers and sponsoring organisations, consider the quality of delivery at a foreign institution to be better than the delivery of foreign programs at a local institution, which confirms the concerns of many of the participants. A reason provided by the participants for the poor performance of the local teachers at offshore campuses is the lack of commitment of the teachers, which is consistent with prior studies (Smith, 2009; Dobos, 2011).

The consensus was that while both WP and TNE programs may be advantageous to business schools, they must be cautious about the negative effect that both programs may have on the reputations of the schools. The findings of the study, especially the
concerns of *AUSONE* and the expert group, are consistent with prior studies (Coleman, 2003; McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007; Dunworth, 2008; Smith, 2009; Dobos, 2011; Lane, 2011). The prior studies highlight issues around the poor quality of students and teachers in offshore campuses that need to be addressed if schools wish to continue with TNE programs.

### 5.4.1 Auto-ethnographic Observation

The researcher teaches business subjects at an Australian business school, and had been responsible for TNE programs including teaching at offshore campuses. During the initial years of teaching at the business school, the researcher travelled to an offshore campus and delivered a number of subjects while coordinating the subjects. Students at these offshore campuses expressed their preference to be taught by an academic from the main business school because they were of the opinion they would receive better information and have a clearer idea of the expectations of the unit and the school. Direct communication was considered more effective than being taught by a local teacher who may not have sufficient information to clarify students’ queries.

In recent years, the researcher has been coordinating offshore units taught by local teachers. The experience working with the local teachers can be challenging at times even after the researcher has had discussions with the teachers at the offshore campuses. Some of the local teachers have various commitments, including teaching at a number of institutions. Several of them had difficulty meeting timelines for marking and submission of results. Moderation of offshore tests and assignments was a challenge despite giving clear marking guidelines to the teachers. Local teachers tend to be lenient to their students, and one reason for such generosity might
be to increase their chance of being re-employed by the partners. Therefore, achieving consistency across onshore and offshore teaching was a challenging task.

The researcher’s recommendation to business schools offering TNE programs is to have continuous control over the quality and number of students being enrolled, and the quality of the teachers engaged. A more attractive package could be offered to the local teachers so that they may concentrate on one or two subject(s) and working only for one or two institutions.

5.5 Summary of Research Findings and Recommended Theoretical Model for Business Schools

This section recaps the research questions and addresses the outcomes of the research in relation to the research questions. Following the summary of the research findings, a theoretical model of reputation drivers for business schools is recommended.

The main aim of the study is to investigate whether certain reputation drivers are perceived to be more advantageous to business schools in higher education institutions, particularly to non-accredited business schools. Furthermore, the study provides additional evidence of challenges that business schools face amidst criticisms of their programs and outcomes, and resource constraints.
5.5.1 Research Objective and Research Questions

The overarching research objective that is addressed in this study is:

*To investigate how business schools aim to enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage in a dynamic educational market. What reputation drivers are perceived to be advantageous?*

The following research questions were designed to provide empirical evidence to address the research objective.

1. *What are the reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools in order to gain competitive advantage?*

2. *Do non-accredited business schools prioritise reputation drivers to gain competitive advantage and, if so, how?*

3. *Do non-accredited business schools face constraints in competing in a dynamic market? If so, how are they strategising to overcome the problem?*

5.5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The study provides evidence that reputation is derived from both prominence and perceived quality. Although there were some similarities in the perceptions of participants, the level of support for each theme classified under the categories prominence and perceived quality differed to a varying degree across the groups. Some of the findings were more significant to some of the participants than others. Overall, the research findings either confirmed prior findings or provided new contributions to the extant literature.

This section firstly provides a summary of the reputation drivers that were perceived to give business schools a competitive advantage. Next, the individual school’s strategies to enhance organisational reputation are discussed. Finally, some constraints that non-accredited business schools face are highlighted, and suggestions discussed. The consensus is that it may be a big challenge for non-accredited schools
to compete with accredited business schools and schools that have a longstanding reputation.

1. i. Both ‘prominence’ and ‘perceived quality’ are important to enhance organisational reputation. Prominence in society can be gained through affiliations with high-status actors such as a highly-reputed parent institution or through certifications of international accreditation and ranking bodies. Additionally, the perceived quality of internal resources such as business programs, academic and professional staff, students and facilities is indicative of the quality of a school. A prominent school will be perceived to be providing quality programs and services. Similarly, a school perceived to be providing good quality programs and services will gain prominence in society. Prominence and perceived quality can be considered as ‘inter-locking’ terms having a synergistic effect.

ii. Industry and community engagement is identified as the dominant theme in the study because of its significant impact in business education bringing relevance and currency to business research, teaching and learning, and enhancing the student experience. Industry and community engagement is found to be more important than international accreditations and rankings for the participants in the non-accredited schools in enhancing a school’s reputation.

iii. The quality of students enrolled in a business school is perceived to be an important indicator of the quality of the school. Schools with high performing students are perceived to be quality providers of education. Poor quality students including those in the WP and TNE programs, may be a cause
for concern because of the potential to damage the reputation of the school. WP and TNE are identified as emerging themes in the study because these two sub-themes have relatively less attention in the literature but formed a significant part of the interviews.

The findings suggest that individual business schools should adopt a strategy leveraging the resources and skill sets available to the school. While acceptance by peer institutions is important for business schools, imitating strategies adopted by other schools may not be feasible or viable to business schools facing various constraints. The findings further suggest that business schools should look at reputation from a multi-dimensional perspective to enhance their reputation to gain a competitive advantage.

2. Strategies adopted by the two non-accredited business schools are as follows.

i. One of the business schools intended to follow the path of accredited schools. The school was at the planning stage of preparing to apply for at least one international accreditation. However, a major concern is that the process is time-consuming and diverts attention from academics’ job of teaching and research, which was causing stress among academics.

To enhance the school’s internal resources, the school had hired high-profile researchers to enhance the school’s research profile and possibly to bring in research funds. There was dissatisfaction among academics because of the emphasis on the new hires, and the lack of collegiality between the new hires and existing academics. Existing academics had to continue with heavy teaching workloads, which deprived them of time to research and was a disadvantage in terms of tenure and promotions. Several disgruntled
academics viewed the school’s actions as a mimetic act that was not properly utilising the school’s resources.

ii. The second school did not have international accreditation on the school’s agenda (at least at the time of data collection). The participants believed that their reputation in research, and teaching and learning gave them a competitive advantage. The school has gained recognition for its teaching performance, which can be credited to smaller class sizes and the personal contacts between academics and students. The school’s strong industry connection was cited to have contributed to its achievements.

The school’s achievement in research may be credited to the collegial culture among staff at the research centres and the teaching academics. They believed their engagements with industry brought practical relevance to their research, teaching and learning. The practical relevance of the school’s business programs is attractive to stakeholders, thus enhancing its reputation.

3. The main challenge faced by the two non-accredited schools was the availability of financial resources. The concern was not that the business schools were not producing sufficient funds but that the funds were being diverted to cross-subsidise other schools and research within the university.

The other challenge was the lack of time to teach, and research and publish due to the heavy teaching workload. At the first school, the time constraint was a result of existing academics having to take on a greater share of the teaching workload compared to the newly hired research academics. The second school had resource constraints due to the restructuring that took place at the school. The academics were hopeful that more academics will be
available to teach in the future, which would allow the academics to continue publishing their research.

The recommendation is for business schools to enhance the quality of their available internal resources. In order to do that, firstly, a better funding deal needs to be negotiated with the university. This, of course, is a challenging task but is supported by the Australian accounting bodies in their submission on international education where they recommend that “future legislation implementing higher education reforms include a clause requiring that the majority of fees paid within a field of education be retained and reinvested back into that field” (CPA and CAANZ, 2015, p. 8). Secondly, school deans and managers need to carefully strategise their reputation drivers that are unique and attractive to stakeholders, including prospective students. Teaching and student learning was a priority for the academics in the non-accredited business schools. Good teaching and learning processes will enhance the student experience, which was considered a key reputation driver for schools.

5.5.3 Recommended Theoretical Model for Business Schools

Based on the research findings, which contribute significantly to the extant literature on organisational reputation and higher education, a theoretical model has been developed for business schools. This model is presented in Figure 5.1. The model highlights external and internal factors that have been perceived to have an impact on business schools. Following the development of the model, recommendations are made for business schools to strategically enhance their reputation to gain a competitive advantage.
The model shows the various reputation drivers that lead to ‘prominence’, and ‘perceived quality’. It is suggested that prominent business schools are perceived as providers of quality programs and services, and schools that are perceived to be providing quality programs and services gain prominence in society. There is a synergistic relationship between the themes ‘prominence’ and ‘perceived quality’. 
Figure 5.1  Recommended Theoretical Model for Business Schools

Source: Model adapted from Rindova et al. (2005, p. 1037)
While industry engagement is discussed in the literature, in this study industry and community engagements received extensive support in relation to all the other themes. Industry and community engagement has been recognised as a key dimension that could drive business schools to prominence and to be perceived as a quality provider of education and, therefore, identified as the ‘dominant theme’ in the study. School managers should explore innovative ways to engagement with industry and the community. Some recommendations that may have a positive impact on higher education are provided in the following chapter.

The ‘quality’ factor of the two emerging themes WP and TNE are a concern to business schools. The quality of students enrolled in these programs, together with the quality of delivery at offshore campuses, needs to be addressed to improve the quality of these programs. Business schools offering WP and TNE programs need to carefully consider the consequences of poor management of the programs. Poor quality of students in these programs is likely to damage the reputation of the school. A good offshore partnership is recognised to be important to provide good TNE programs in order to enhance the school’s reputation.

### 5.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the inter-group analysis, firstly comparing the views of the academics in the two non-accredited business schools, *AUSONE* and *AUSTWO*. The views of the Associate Deans in the expert group, *AUSEXPERT*, were then integrated into the initial comparison. The views of the Associate Deans were useful in explaining some of the uncertainties and unhappiness experienced by the academics in the two non-accredited business schools. As an external stakeholder, the postgraduate student participants, *AUSPGRAD*, provided a different perspective
to the study. Some of the academics’ views of students’ expectations were compared with findings from the postgraduate students. The comparisons provided interesting evidence of the different perspectives.

To achieve positive outcomes of a school’s strategies, collegiality among staff members is important. Collegiality creates confidence and trust, and all members should benefit in the interaction. Similarly, communication across all levels of the organisation is vital for all members to have relevant information of the school’s strategies.

To address the criticisms of business schools – business programs and business school graduates, business schools should concentrate on areas that need improving including the school’s internal resources. Although business schools aim to gain legitimacy through affiliations with external intermediaries such as accreditation and to be listed by ranking bodies, the internal resources and differentiation strategies are expected by the participants in this study to give a school sustained competitive advantage. Industry engagement is considered to be one of the most important reputation drivers for business schools to enhance reputation and gain competitive advantage. Industry and community engagements are found to enhance the internal resources of business schools, including the quality of L&T, bringing relevance and currency in the delivery of programs. Such engagements will also lead to prominence in society.

Finally, the availability of resources is crucial for a business school to achieve its mission. Business schools generate high levels of revenue at low cost compared to most of the other schools within a university. This is achieved in most instances through high student enrolments which results in high student-staff ratio (Watty,
2006). Business schools, however, do not enjoy the benefit of the revenue generated because much of the revenue from business schools is used to cross-subsidise other parts of the university. The findings provide evidence that relatively smaller class sizes have various benefits including programs being offered in a variety of delivery modes, and students generally have a good learning experience in smaller classes.

The next chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the implications of the findings – implications for theory, universities and business schools, together with recommendations.
Chapter Six  IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter includes a discussion of the implications of the findings of the study based on the intra-group and inter-group analyses. Based on the implications, the study makes a number of recommendations. The implications are presented in terms of: the implications for theory, followed by the implications for universities and business schools. The implications for business schools reflect the concerns of the participants of the study, and are discussed as follows:

1. Engagement with industry and the community;
2. Communication across the organisation;
3. Collaborative decision making;
4. Collegiality and collaborative work;
5. Quality; and

6.2 Implications for Theory

Studies have highlighted the institutional pressures that universities and business schools face, including uncertainties and constraints in funding (De Lange and Watty, 2011; Vidovich and Currie, 2011). Business schools are criticised for the irrelevance of business programs and the quality of graduates (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Podolny, 2009; Fragueiro and Thomas, 2011; Wilson and Thomas, 2012), and in the face of financial constraints, business schools may not be able to stand up to institutional pressures to provide high-quality education (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).
Reduction of government funding to universities, particularly in Australia, has caused universities to seek private funding through increased enrolments and student fees, especially through international students (Ryan et al., 2008; Marginson and Sawir, 2011; DET, 2016). The increasing need for funding does have an impact on the way universities and business schools conduct their activities. This pressure may also lead institutions to seek legitimacy through external affiliations such as international accreditations (Roberts et al., 2004; Masrani et al., 2011).

International accreditations such as AACSB and EQUIS are the two most popular international accreditations sought by business schools in Australia to enhance reputation and differentiate the school. The stringent requirements of accreditations result in schools redesigning their activities to meet the accreditation requirements, such as discontinuing some of their poor-quality or poor-performing programs, or hiring high-profile researchers. Schools aim to enhance their reputation through the prominence of these high-profile researchers and the accreditation status.

The general perception is that prominence in society is vital to gain a competitive advantage. The research findings show that the community or a group of people who are not familiar with an organisation’s product or service may apply the reputation from a related dimension (Baden-Fuller et al., 2000). For example, prospective students and parents who do not have sufficient knowledge of the courses and services offered by an institution may rely on the institution’s affiliations with internationally recognised organisations or institutional rankings by recognised ranking bodies (Hazelkorn, 2008). Hazelkorn (2008) has shown that good students use rankings to ‘shortlist’ university choices, especially at the postgraduate level.
Although non-accredited business schools may be thought to be competitively disadvantaged, the study suggests that academics at non-accredited business schools believe that they are able to compete with accredited business schools by improving the quality and amount of their internal resources. Where there are constraints in resources creating barriers to achieving international accreditations, management could possibly manage available resources to enhance the school’s internal resources as an alternative strategy to enhance the school’s reputation.

Business schools face further pressures from employers to produce work-ready graduates with theoretical as well as practical knowledge. Participants believe that there are expectations for the school to produce knowledgeable and competent graduates. The findings suggest that incorporating activities involving industry and the community creates opportunities to enhance the quality of programs and graduates. Engagement with industry is believed to improve the impact of research, and teaching and student learning experience because of relevancy and currency from this interaction. Connecting with the community leads to familiarity and hence more awareness of the accomplishments of the business school, and in the longer term, the society will recognise the school as a reputable organisation.

6.3 Implications for Universities

Although the literature has shown that revenue may be a driving force for many of the business schools (Wilson and Thomas, 2012) resulting in massification of business education, it may be the case that business schools do not have much control over student numbers. In Australia, the interests of the university and its business school are closely intertwined (Ryan et al., 2008). Business schools have been lamenting the lack of funds to enhance their programs and facilities because
funds are being diverted away from business schools to other areas of the university, including research (Norton and Cherastidtham, 2015). Business schools are often seen as a ‘cash cow’ that subsidises other schools within the university (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007; Masrani et al., 2011) or other non-academic public relations activities (Zimmerman, 2001).

David Willetts, the UK Minister for Universities and Science, comments that “universities were extracting money from students, both domestic and international, at business schools without giving a high enough quality teaching experience”. He further highlights that business schools have requested to be independent of the universities “so they could keep more of their money” because business schools were being “used as a cash cow for the rest of the university”. It is evident that the dilemma business schools are experiencing is ubiquitous and not localised to a region or country. Mr Willetts, however, adds that some resolution had been found with the government’s changes to fees and student number controls, which allowed students to push for higher teaching quality. Mr Willetts argued that “unleashing the forces of consumerism is the best single way we’ve got of restoring high academic standards”.

Marginson and Corsidine (2000) comment that business schools are pressured by universities to increase student enrolments in order to assist with the revenue-driven mission of universities. Several participants in the present study believe that the push for higher student enrolments is driven by university management. Large enrolments cause class sizes to be relatively larger (high student-staff ratios), which negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning, and insufficient resources to support the large number of students (Ryan et al., 2008). The findings of one of the

non-accredited business schools provide evidence that relatively smaller class sizes enhance teaching and student learning, and allow programs to be offered in a variety of delivery modes, thus enhancing the student experience. Universities should be mindful of the risks of increasing student numbers to generate revenue and at the same time expect business schools to maintain the quality of their programs and graduates.

If universities drive up student numbers to increase revenue then, in the long term, offering low quality programs and services could potentially damage the reputation of the school. The CPA Australia and CAANZ Report (2015) describes management and commerce programs broadly and accounting in particular as “the most popular subjects demanded by internationally mobile students.” However, the report goes on to say that there is “the necessity of investing in the quality and reputation of management and commerce programs broadly and accounting in particular, in order for Australian institutions to remain competitive in this field where we have traditionally thrived” (p. 4).

The present study presents evidence that with increased funds, there are opportunities for business schools to reduce student–staff ratios by hiring more teaching focused academics, invite professionals from national and international organisations, and key industry personnel to provide advice on strategies and/or to run programs for students and academics. Investing more funds into business schools and reducing class sizes creates more opportunities to provide high quality programs and facilities (O’Connell et al., 2015). Furthermore, the students are more likely to have a good experience in the institution, thus enhancing the reputation of the school, as indicated by several post-graduate participants in the study. The post-graduate students placed
high importance on the student experience and considered past experience of family and friends in selecting a school to pursue their studies.

Finally, it is recommended that universities re-assess their research focus to include recognition of research relevant to practice. The inclusion of an impact factor in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Assessment will make this more likely. In the UK, an impact factor of 20% has been implemented in the Research Excellence Framework (previously known as Research Assessment Exercise) alongside the output and environmental elements of a research (Pettigrew, 2011). Pettigrew highlight that the impact agenda can create greater legitimacy for a portfolio approach than scholarship just in terms of publication in A-rated scholarly journals.

In Australia, the ARC announced on 21 November 2016 that the Government will carry out a pilot study in 2017 to measure the impact of university research and engagement with business and industry. The Minister for Education and Training, Senator Birmingham explained that the ‘Engagement and Impact Assessment’ is aimed at “incentivising the smart and talented people working in our labs and universities to better focus on research that has wider economic and social benefits”.27 The Minister further emphasised that creating an impact factor in research was “to measure the value of research against things that mean something, rather than only allocating funding to researchers who spend their time trying to get published in journals”. If the pilot study is successfully implemented across all disciplines in universities, business schools may be able to produce more applied

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research relevant to practice, which is likely to improve business programs, and teaching and learning.

The implementation of the impact factor in research may cause universities to re-assess their research policies. Over the decades, universities have used institutional processes such as tenure, promotion and recruitment criteria that value research over other scholarly contributions (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Harmon, 2006) and, therefore, research publication regardless of relevance becomes the goal (Ryan et al., 2008). Many of the participants in the present study highlighted that business schools are pressured by their university’s research policy to increase publications in top-tiered academic journals in order to increase funding through research. The study suggests that by producing research relevant to practice and for industry, business schools may secure funding from industry. The benefits will flow through to business programs, and teaching and student learning with knowledge that connects theory to practice. However, some scholars warn of the risk of research with industry due to the possibility of commodifying or limiting the research (Grey, 2001) and the loss of intellectual property (Starkey and Madan, 2001).

6.4 Implications for Business Schools

The study provides evidence that business school academics are facing stress at the work place due to heavy workloads and uncertainty of what is expected of them. Lack of information has caused uncertainties. The expectation to research and publish with heavy teaching workloads, and in some instances, the pressure to research and publish even though some academics have a strong preference to excel at teaching, has caused the attractiveness of academia to decline (Cappelletto, 2010).
A survey conducted by the Guardian\textsuperscript{28} cited heavy workloads and pressure to publish caused stress in academics, consistent with Roberts \textit{et al.}’s (2004) findings, and in some cases led to mental health problems.

The following sub-sections discuss the many concerns of academics that business school managers could possibly address, including “government research performance measurement systems, journal ranking lists, lack of funding for quality teaching and research, life as a “cash cow” for universities, the impact of the virtual university and its impact on professional practice, the profession and society in general” (Guthrie and Parker, 2014, p. 2). The sub-sections outline the implications of the research findings for business schools and recommends possible ways to enhance their reputation. The findings suggest engagement with industry and the community is important to enhance the quality of business education and to be perceived as a quality provider of education. High quality and sustainable differentiation of programs and services are key to long-term competitive advantage, including the delivery of high-quality programs and recruitment of high quality students. The findings also identified that information has to be shared across all levels of the organisation, a collaborative decision-making process be encouraged where possible, and a culture of collegiality and collaborative work amongst academics can be developed for a productive and harmonious work environment.

\textbf{6.4.1 Engagement with Industry and the Community}

Collaborative work with practitioners is important to design programs that are beneficial for employers, teaching and student learning, and the school, and for relevant research. Academics’ engagement with practitioners creates opportunities

\textsuperscript{28} https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/may/08/work-pressure-fuels-academic-mental-illness-guardian-study-health (accessed 21 November 2016)
to understand the practices and problems that exist in the industry. Without the interaction and communication with practitioners, academics may not be able to understand what is relevant to practice (Pearce and Huang, 2012). Furthermore, to improve the quality of teaching and learning, it is suggested that all academics, those with prior work experience or otherwise, be actively engaged with practitioners to keep abreast of what is happening in practice (O’Connell et al., 2015). This measure potentially reduces the gap between theory and practice.

Similarly, these engagements could lead to collaborative research that attempts to resolve or mitigate the problems that have been identified. However, to encourage such collaborative research may be challenging given the workloads of academics. Although the ARC’s Linkage Grants “do offer a potential avenue for more research partnerships between academics and practitioners”, it has been highlighted that “such grants have proven difficult to win” (O’Connell et al. 2015, p. 72).

One recommendation is ‘industrial sabbaticals’ for academics. Schools could make allowance for academics to go back into practice on sabbatical leave to engage in activities with people in the industry. Another recommendation is to incorporate staff exchange programs between people in industry and academics in higher education. In this exchange program, practitioners may become part of the teaching team involved in program designs and may be teach postgraduate programs. Schools may also invite current practitioners to present part of a unit to students on a voluntary basis, where possible. Involving practitioners in schools could be considered a variation of the work placement program. There is evidence of some business schools conducting these activities to encourage collaborative work, particularly in the Go8 universities in Australia, however, a wider participation
across business schools could potentially bring more currency and relevance to business programs and courses.

Additionally, schools could create a work-place simulation centre within the school, particularly for undergraduate students where, in most instances, the enrolments are large. This allows more students to participate and gain experience in work situations. For example, Curtin University Business School has devoted a section of the school as a simulation centre for trading activities. Curtin Business School Trading Room simulates a real-life business environment to prepare students with practical skills.\textsuperscript{29} Students, staff and industry professionals have access to real-world technology and historical financial data. The Business School would have the advantage of inviting community leaders and high school students to experience the simulation centre. Other universities like Monash and Bond universities have also established similar type trading rooms.

Furthermore, students should be made aware that the course structure of business programs are designed in collaboration with practitioners, and that would give prospective students the confidence to pursue the course at a particular school even if they have to pay a premium fee. For example, The University of Western Australia (UWA) Business School has designed a MBA program that can be tailored to students’ needs. The school website highlights that the MBA students will be guided by “experts in the field, including fellows of international associations, editors of top-ranked academic journals, and consultants to global organisations – from major resource companies and wealth management groups, to the World Bank,

international armed forces and government departments”\textsuperscript{30} With such a strong assurance, students may be willing to pay the premium fee to pursue the MBA course at the UWA Business School.

To encourage greater participation in higher education, programs could be designed to encourage community engagement. For example, students may be encouraged to volunteer at not-for-profit organisations as part of service learning. Student voluntary programs can create more opportunities for students to gain work experience where work placement programs are limited. Schools are likely to gain recognition through their students’ voluntary programs, thus enhancing their reputation.

Similarly, school staff could engage with the community through voluntary programs that benefit society in general and may have indirect benefit for the school. A number of business schools in Australia are conducting activities for high school students and engaging with high school staff. High school engagement, particularly engaging with high school counsellors is recommended by one of the participants. Furthermore, schools need to ensure the community is aware of the school’s activities. Media exposure of a school’s activities is important to share the school’s achievements with the society. However, collaborative engagement with the community, which may be seen as a self-motivated strategy, should not be a short-term engagement but a long-term relationship that benefits both the organisation and the society (Kanter, 2011).

6.4.2 Communication Across the Organisation

Strategic decision making is usually the focus of higher-level management within an organisation. As such, employees at other levels may not have the necessary or sufficient information to understand the strategic plans of the organisation. Due to insufficient information, staff members tend to be indifferent or resist changes made by management. Lack of information symmetry promotes insecurity. The study suggests that communication of organisational strategies and engagement with staff across different levels of management is important for staff members to react positively to actions taken by senior management. Communication is an essential ingredient in corporate success (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

For example, senior managers may have sufficient reason and information to make an informed decision as to whether the business school should apply for an international accreditation. However, those academics not in a senior management position may not have that information to assess whether gaining international accreditation is beneficial or not. The study illustrates that the lack of information may be a cause for job dissatisfaction and resistance to changes that need to be made to meet accreditation requirements. Therefore, the availability of sufficient and relevant information to staff across the organisation is vital for a more positive outcome from business school strategy.

One recommendation to lessen heavy teaching workloads of academics is to reduce or eliminate, where possible, repetitive teaching of common units or topics. Lateral communication within and across disciplines is very important for efficient resource allocation. Units taught within a discipline or across disciplines may have common topics. Academics could design the topics, especially those in core subjects, so that
topics are not repeated in other subjects. If it is necessary for a topic to be taught in more than one core subject, then the repeat topic could become an online component. Lateral communication should be aimed at efficient allocation of resources without compromising the quality of the programs. Producing high quality programs and having time to produce high quality research are important for business schools to enhance reputation.

6.4.3 Collaborative Decision Making

The decision-making process is complex and involves decisions about resource allocations to enable positive outcomes of strategic goals. Many inputs influence, and at times disrupt, the outcomes of the decision-making process. The study recommends that, despite the complexity of the process, collaborative decision making be part of an effective strategic management process (Hunting, Mah and Tilbury, 2006; Bower and Gilbert, 2007). Collaborative decision making could potentially result in more positive outcomes for organisational performance thus possibly increasing competitive advantage. The participants believe academics should be involved in decision making processes, especially those relating to school strategies and learning environments (Hunting et al., 2006). In management accounting, it is referred to as ‘participative’ decision making.

Participative decision making is likely to encourage staff members to strive to achieve organisational goals because they are empowered as the decision is not made directly from the top down (Bower and Gilbert, 2007). Staff members are more likely to feel that they are part of the decision-making process and that they own the decision and, therefore, work towards achieving the goal. The study illustrates that collaborative decision making as a strategic management tool will also provide
senior management with insights into the challenges faced by other levels of management and possible consequences of changes being made in the organisation. However, a ‘pseudo-participative’ process will hurt staff morale and strategic outcomes.

Several participants mentioned that academics were asked to voice their concerns and to provide suggestions to issues that they face in relation to their work. However, the problems were still not resolved. The reason given was that senior management disregards academics’ concerns or suggestions. This is an example of a ‘pseudo-participative’ process, where academics are supposedly involved, or at least their views will be considered, in the school’s decision-making process but eventually the decision is that of the dean and/or manager of the school and/or that of the university management.

Although a collaborative decision-making process is welcomed by the participants, there were concerns that not all staff members are usually invited to participate. Some schools have a large number of staff members and, therefore, it may not be possible for all staff members to be involved in the decision-making process. However, information could be shared across the school at a once a month meeting, for example, where the various school committees can discuss new or current projects that are being undertaken, with suggestions from the committees. In this way, everyone will be aware of what is happening at the school and have an opportunity to voice their views whether in support of the suggestions or otherwise.
6.4.4 Collegiality and Collaborative Work

The study suggests that collegiality and cooperation across disciplines, and between researchers and academics, is crucial not only to achieve breadth and currency in student knowledge and learning but also to create a harmonious working environment and collegial culture in the organisation. Collegiality and collaborative work amongst staff members could result in an improved performance of the school across teaching and research. This potentially would result in a better performance of the school, and allow more time available for staff members to engage with industry and the community which enhances the reputation of the school.

To encourage collegiality, schools could introduce interdisciplinary activities, such as capstones in business that can combine accounting, marketing, management and other subjects. The depth and breadth of these programs could potentially benefit students in applying knowledge at the workplace. The study sheds light that although some business schools may be practising such activities, in many business schools, individual disciplines operate in silos.

The use of differential workload models where high-output researchers do less teaching and the use of digitalised teaching resources to support face-to-face teaching are some suggestions to provide more research time for high-quality research academics. Academics can then concentrate on improving the quality of research and, teaching and student learning. However, given the extra work associated with dealing with student enquiries and ensuring digitalised teaching resources are current it is not clear that using more digital teaching resources will allow more research time.
Another recommendation to create a collegial environment for researchers and teaching academics is to form formal mentoring groups, within and across disciplines. For example, academics with strong research portfolios can act as mentors to early career researchers, guiding them to research areas that will bring relevance to higher education. This arrangement may lead to research teams within the school, which can then engage in collaborative work with colleagues across the university and elsewhere. The participants highlighted that some business schools do have research teams. However, the make-up of the research teams is a concern because the research teams are likely to comprise senior academics who are already researching and publishing. The academics with heavy teaching workloads are more than likely to be left out of the research teams, which is a disadvantage in terms of research portfolio and promotions. A suggestion is for business schools to form, in this instance, research teams with high teaching workload staff who focus on scholarship of teaching so that they combine L&T.

Collaborative work and research with other academics within the school and university, in other universities across the country and globally, and with and for industry is recommended to enhance the international competitiveness of higher education in Australia. Although there is evidence in the literature of international collaborative work by scholars, including Australian scholars, business schools should encourage a wider academic participation in global collaborative work. This may be achieved by firstly creating an all-inclusive culture within the business school. Managers may encourage academics across different levels of management and disciplines to engage in collaborative work and research, particularly between research-intensive and teaching-intensive academics.
It may seem an unrealistic suggestion to expect research-intensive academics to engage in collaborative research work with teaching-intensive academics. Research-intensive academics may not see any benefit accruing from such collaborative work. However, business schools could possibly incentivise the research-intensive academics to engage in collaborative work with non-research intensive academics. One suggestion may be to offer rewards for research teams with both senior and early career academics and/or teaching-intensive academics. For example, the research-intensive academics, participating in collaborative research work with early career and/or teaching-intensive academics, or the research team, could be rewarded with a percentage of the research funding that the university or business school receives from the government or the funding body (Macleod, 2010). A successful collaborative engagement between research-intensive and teaching academics may create greater opportunities for a wider academic participation in collaborative work because research-intensive academics are likely to have strong networking connections with other academics, nationally and globally.

While research has been established as important to higher education, the participants emphasised the need for recognition of teaching performance that will improve the morale of teaching academics. The student experience is enhanced with excellent teaching, supportive teachers, and responsive feedback (Calvo et al., 2010). Teaching has become challenging over the decades with increasing numbers of students and students from various backgrounds (Benocci and Gatti, 2008). Despite the many challenges, teaching is said to bring more funds into business schools, and in some instances, subsidise the costs of researchers (Norton and Cherastidtham, 2015). Norton and Cherastidtham (2015, p. 6) suggest that “university funding reform will need mechanisms to ensure that any additional funds are used for their
intended purpose”. While collaborative research work between academics who are mostly research-focused and those who are mainly teaching-focused may be difficult, business schools should, as a minimum, recognise and celebrate the successes of both research and teaching.

6.4.5 Quality

The issue of quality in business schools has been a continuous discourse in the business school literature. Although there are many business schools in Australia and in other countries with a strong reputation for their business programs, there are still criticisms of business schools and business programs. Scholars have highlighted the lack of competency of business school students, which may be the result of poor quality students, and some criticise the quality of business programs (Birrell, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006; Hancock et al., 2010; Foster, 2012).

The study highlights that the quality of students in TNE programs has been an issue of concern. It is suggested that schools that are still offering TNE programs need to take control of the administration of the programs, including enrolment of students. TNE partnerships are also vital to maintain the quality of these programs, including the quality of students and delivery of programs. Similarly, WP programs are useful and attractive to students but schools should consider introducing a selection process, where it is not already in place, to ensure the students selected match the requirements of the WP programs.

Based on the research findings, it is suggested that there should be a focus on quality as the key criterion in business programs – quality in terms of breadth and depth of knowledge, and relevance and practical applicability of knowledge. It may be a challenge for many business schools to attract high performing students. Schools
should consider designing unique programs to attract high-quality students and academics, and to also excel in their teaching and learning programs that will benefit all students.

### 6.4.6 Sustainable Differentiation

When introducing a new strategy or new courses business schools must be focused on how they will maintain a competitive advantage in the market. If the new strategy or course can be easily replicated by competing institutions, then the school will not enjoy significant benefits in the longer term. Differentiation is a challenging process. Differentiation of a product or service is not sustainable if the differentiation can be easily imitated.

The study suggests that business schools may achieve differentiation through strategic utilisation of their internal resources. Business schools that have limited financial resources, particularly non-accredited business schools, should concentrate on improving within the constraint of limited finances, their internal resources, such as the quality of the students, research, teaching and learning, and the facilities available to students and staff. The differentiation strategy could possibly incorporate multiple products that can earn premium fees and competitive advantage. Designing business curricula to include a holistic experiential curriculum increases student satisfaction, and improves student attitude and confidence (Caza, Brower and Wayne, 2015).

A differentiated product can be one that is specifically designed for a group of stakeholders, for example, for students of the MBA program. Deakin University in Australia, for example, offers a ‘Deakin’s Start Anytime’ program\(^\text{31}\) for business

postgraduate programs including the MBA. Such a flexible program is unique and likely to be attractive to prospective students, especially those in the workforce. In this program, students can begin a unit at any time of the year, and complete it online at their own pace – as fast as they want to or over a longer period. It will be a challenge for other business schools, especially schools with limited resources, to introduce such a program.

Other examples include the Griffith University fully online MBA program. “Our online MBA lets you study in your own time and space, while engaging with a network of like-minded professionals in an interactive and supportive digital learning environment. Plus, with six intakes a year, you can virtually start whenever you’re ready.”

The University of Melbourne proudly offers Executive and Senior Executive EMBA programs “Melbourne Business School’s Senior Executive MBA (SEamba) program specifically addresses the challenges of studying for experienced executives. It comprises 10 x 9-day residential modules over an 18-month period, but requires only five weeks away from work in each of two calendar years.” The SEMBA program provides students with a global experience with seven modules delivered in Melbourne and three overseas in Asia, Europe and North America. These initiatives show how schools can differentiate their programs but not without investing adequate resources.

In relation to a recent workshop by the Chartered Association of Business Schools, held on 5 October 2016 in London, titled “Creating Differentiation”, Justin Shaw

34 https://charteredabs.org/events/creating-differentiation/ (accessed 9 October 2016)
(Managing Director, Communications Management), in his article “What makes a
business school stand out from the crowd”, emphasised that:

We all need to work much harder to seek out differentiation. In any situation
where people make choices – they need help to be steered in why they should
select one (provider) above another and, with competition between business
schools now so fierce, we need to work harder on the signals we give off to steer
those making these choices.35

As mentioned above, the UWA Business School website provides clear signals to
stakeholders that their MBA program is of high quality supported by high-profile
professionals. Such advertisements are supported by the participants in this study.
The participants highlighted that the various stakeholders need to know the school’s
activities and achievements and, therefore, schools need to put the message out to
stakeholders.

Sustainable differentiation may potentially result in sustainable competitive
advantage. For example, business programs can include a Certificate in Ethics and
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or a similar program, as a pathway towards a
business degree or a stand-alone qualification. This qualification can be undertaken
by prospective students intending to pursue a degree in business or commerce, or
people in the work place. Designing and maintaining a sustainable program that is a
differentiated program is a challenge in a dynamic market.

6.5 Summary

This chapter addressed the implications of the study based on the findings that are discussed in the intra-group analysis (Chapter Four) and inter-group analysis (Chapter Five). Some recommendations for higher education institutions were suggested that could potentially enhance reputation and lead to a competitive advantage. As discussed in the findings chapters, engagement with industry and the community, and the perceived quality of the internal resources of an organisation are important for non-accredited business schools to enhance their reputation.

The findings highlight that availability of sufficient funds provides opportunities for business schools to produce good quality learning and teaching experience in addition to producing good research. Such activities enhance the reputation of business schools and allow them to compete successfully in the sector. Furthermore, communication, collaborative decision making, and collegiality and collaborative work should be encouraged in an organisation to enhance the successful implementation of strategies. The recommendations suggested in this chapter create opportunities for business schools that may have funding constraints to compete successfully in the sector.
Chapter Seven CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research project, presenting the key research findings and contributions, and addresses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research. This study is presented in seven chapters including this concluding chapter. Chapter One introduced the research topic together with the research objective and research questions, and outlined areas pertinent to the research objective. Chapter Two analysed the literature on organisational reputation and the HES. Based on the review of prior studies, the gap in the literature was identified for the present study. Chapter Three presented the research approach. A qualitative approach was undertaken, which allows a richer and deeper analysis. Chapters Four and Five discussed the findings of the research, presenting the intra-group and inter-group analyses, respectively. Following the inter-group analysis, a theoretical model for business schools was outlined. Chapter Six discussed the implications of the findings of the study, and based on these implications, the study makes recommendations that may assist business schools to enhance their reputation to gain a competitive advantage.

This concluding chapter addresses four questions that are frequently highlighted at seminars and workshops for PhD students and researchers in general. Subsequent sections of this chapter are presented in the sequence of answering these four questions. The first question is: what the researcher did? This question is addressed by briefly explaining the research project, for example, a qualitative type research was conducted to answer the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. The second question is: what the researcher has found? The key findings of the study are
presented in relation to the research questions developed in the study. The third question is: what the findings mean? This question is addressed in Chapter Six by discussing the implications of the findings, and the contributions of the study is outlined in this concluding chapter. The final question addressed is: what researchers should do next? In answering this question, the section addresses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary.

7.2 Overview of Research Project

Most of the prior studies addressing reputation drivers of business schools were quantitative studies, using surveys or secondary data for analysis. The present study embarked on a qualitative journey, interviewing four groups of participants and analysing the data by close-reading and using the NVivo software for a thematic approach. The reason for adopting a qualitative approach is to provide greater insights into the different perceptions of participants, which enrich the study with a variety of responses and explanations rather than eliciting responses to a set of factors produced by the researcher.

The reason for investigating non-accredited business schools is the challenges these schools may encounter in competing in a dynamic and increasingly competitive higher education market. The outcome of the study, however, may be useful to business schools that face similar constraints and pressures. A major contribution of this study is the investigation of a real problem – issues that most business schools are facing, nationally and internationally.
7.3 Key Research Findings

The first research question asked what reputation drivers are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools. The findings show that external verifications, such as international accreditations and rankings, are likely to enhance a business school’s prominence amongst peers and with industry thus enhancing the reputation of the institution. Highly reputed business schools are perceived to be at an advantageous position to compete against other institutions. In addition, the quality of the internal resources of business schools are considered important to provide a sustainable competitive advantage.

Industry and community engagement was identified as the ‘dominant theme’ in the study because of its impact on higher education. Industry and community engagement was considered by academics at the non-accredited business schools to be more important than international accreditations and rankings in enhancing a school’s reputation to gain competitive advantage. Collaborative work with industry was found to significantly contribute to research, teaching and learning, and the student experience. This finding provides evidence about the second research question that non-accredited business schools perceive certain reputation drives to be more advantageous. This evidence provides insights to business schools that may not have sufficient resources to pursue international accreditations.

The study provides further evidence that non-accredited schools do face constraints in competing with highly reputed business schools and those with historical reputation. In providing evidence about the third research question, the study suggests that non-accredited schools can compete successfully in a dynamic educational sector through high quality of internal resources, including the quality of
the business programs, research and teaching and learning, academic and professional staff and the quality of students.

The funding of business education in Australia poses a significant challenge to business schools and their capacity to provide high-quality L&T. The funding of business education presumes a continuation of the same teaching model that has existed for many years. The teaching model in business schools normally involves very large lectures with hundreds of students and large number of tutorials with 20 to 25 students in each tutorial, which makes innovations and changes to the teaching model very difficult and challenging. Currency of knowledge and relevance of programs to practice were found to be important for business education to be perceived to be of a high quality.

7.4 Key Research Contributions

The outcome of the study has contributed to the literature on higher education with a specific contribution to the reputation of business schools in higher education. Developing a research framework based on two theories – institutional and strategic choice theories – is an important theoretical contribution as the study has shown that both theories act to assist in decision making in business schools. Furthermore, eliciting the views of the Associate Deans of L&T of business schools was an invaluable contribution because of the vast experience of the Associate Deans and the knowledge they bring to the sector.
7.4.1 Contributions to Knowledge

There are many studies on organisational reputation and the HES, including research on business schools in higher education institutions. Most of these are quantitative studies and have significantly contributed to the knowledge in these two areas. However, most of these studies investigated one or two reputation drivers and concentrated on accredited business schools as discussed in the literature review chapter.

The present study has identified a gap and aimed to provide empirical evidence to address the relevant areas. There was no known study that investigated the different reputation drivers that are perceived to be advantageous for business schools. Providing empirical evidence obtained through interviews provides a wider perspective of reputation drivers that are perceived to enhance the reputation of business schools to gain competitive advantage, especially that of non-accredited business schools. The study provides empirical evidence of how non-accredited business schools may successfully compete in a dynamic higher education milieu, with emphasis on improving the internal resources of the school.

A second contribution of the study is the empirical evidence from the Associate Deans of L&T. Prior studies have included school deans, managers, employers, recruiters and so on, but the evidence of the expert group of Associate Deans of L&T is a valuable contribution because of their vast knowledge of business schools and business education. Furthermore, the Associate Deans from accredited business schools provided vital information in relation to accreditations.

Finally, the theoretical contribution of the study is the composite perspective of two theories – institutional and strategic choice theories – which contributed to the design
of the theoretical framework of the study. Both theories were utilised to understand the complex concept of ‘organisational reputation’ of business schools. That is, the choice of reputation drivers that will produce the best advantage for a school depends on the institutional environment in which the school is situated and the strategic choice of the management, which is usually based on the resources available to the school.

7.5 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The present study was conducted using a qualitative research approach that provided rich and insightful data. Personal views were elicited and participants were prompted to give reasons or explanations for their views or opinions. In interviews, where prompting is by a researcher, there is a risk that the researcher may have unknowingly influenced the direction of the interview and the focus in relation to some of the issues. Although a qualitative study may have a limitation in terms of the generalisability of the findings, the selection of participants from different groups of stakeholders may make the sample representative (Howieson et al., 2014).

The number of participants, although considered sufficient for a qualitative study, was considered a limitation of the study. The number of participants in each of the groups ranged from four to 16, resulting in 42 participants interviewed in total. A larger number of responses, however, would have normalised the data obtained, particularly in identifying the reputation drivers that participants believed would give non-accredited business schools a competitive advantage. A larger response may be achieved via a quantitative study using a survey instrument. A survey following the interviews may confirm the interview findings, and whether confirmed or otherwise,
the results of the study would have provided a wider perspective of the research objective.

Another limitation of the study, which may be identified as a concern for the generalisability of findings, is that the study was of only non-accredited business schools. Initially, the researcher aimed to study both accredited and non-accredited business schools. Due to the difficulty in getting schools to participate in the study, the research was restricted to those schools that agreed to participate. Both the schools were non-accredited business schools and, therefore, the research questions had to be re-designed for this purpose. A comparison of accredited and non-accredited business schools may provide further insights into the similarities and differences between the two groups of schools. However, to overcome this limitation, the researcher invited a group of experts of business schools and business education.

The expert group, comprising Associate Deans of L&T of business schools, provided greater insights into the study area. As three of the four expert group participants were from accredited business schools, the researcher was able to get a wider perspective of how business schools, both accredited and non-accredited, can aim to compete successfully in the higher education market. The Associate Deans in this expert group were generous in sharing their schools’ strategic activities and how business schools, in general, can benefit from varying strategies.

A mixed method longitudinal study is recommended as an extension of the present research. A qualitative study followed by a quantitative study is recommended. An online survey is advantageous because of the large number of responses that the researcher is likely to get, which may or may not confirm the qualitative findings.
An extension of the study would be to revisit the interview participants, as the third phase of data collection, to discuss the results of the quantitative study. A longitudinal study is recommended in this case, where time and resources permit.

The participants for the study were limited to academics and a small group of postgraduate students. However, an investigation of the perceptions of different stakeholders, who are either directly or indirectly associated with business schools, would be useful. The views of employers from various industries would be useful to an understanding of the expectations of the different industries. Of particular interest would be employers’ experiences with international students at workplaces with the increasing number of overseas students studying in Australia. Many of these international students aim to continue to live in Australia on a permanent basis and are likely to seek employment in the industry related to their study. Therefore, a comparative study of the perspectives of academics as carried out in the present study, and that of employers, may provide interesting data that can be used in narrowing the gap between business higher education and practice. Such a comparative study, with an emphasis on the internationalisation of higher education, would be an important contribution to the Australian HES. Internationalisation has strong benefits for research and knowledge production, and is beneficial for students and teaching in terms of enhanced internationalisation of the curriculum (Seeber et al., 2016).


7.6 Summary

The study has presented a qualitative research investigating the reputation drivers of business schools that are perceived to enhance reputation and lead to a competitive advantage. The views of academics from two non-accredited business schools were vital to this investigation because of the emphasis on how non-accredited business schools compete with internationally accredited business schools and business schools that have the advantage of historical reputation.

In utilising institutional and strategic choice theories, the study provides empirical evidence that the strategic choices of management should address institutional expectations. Although prominence in the HES and the wider community, nationally and globally, is evidenced to enhance organisational reputation, it is how business schools strategise to improve the quality of their internal resources that is vital for sustained competitive advantage. Availability of sufficient resources and resource allocation are identified as key components in the strategic planning process.

The participants interviewed believe that business schools can gain recognition through differentiation, which can be achieved by improving internal strengths and resources, particularly for schools that have funding constraints. International accreditations and rankings of universities and business schools received much attention in the literature of higher education. However, perceived quality factors were considered, by the majority of the academics at the non-accredited schools, to be more important than international affiliations such as international accreditations and rankings.

Finally, this study confirmed the many difficulties that business schools face to gain a competitive advantage in the higher education market. Financial constraint is the
main factor impeding business schools in providing more efficient and high-quality programs and services. Longstanding prominent business schools and accredited schools appear to have the advantage over younger and non-accredited business schools because of the increased funding through high student fees and research funding. This study, however, has shown that younger and non-accredited business schools can enhance their reputation to gain competitive advantage by enhancing the quality of their internal resources and engaging with industry. Engaging with industry enhances the quality of business programs through currency and relevance to teaching, research and student learning. Furthermore, students and academics benefit through networking opportunities with people in industry. Similarly, creating a partnership with the community is creating partnerships with the various stakeholders. The community is interested in an organisation’s contribution to society as much as they are in the organisation’s capabilities (Kanter, 2011).
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Appendix A: Number of International Students in Tertiary Education by Countries

Figure 1: Distribution of international students in tertiary education by country of destination, 2013

Worldwide over four million students

- United States, 19.4%
- United Kingdom, 10.3%
- Australia, 6.2%
- France, 5.7%
- Germany, 4.9%
- Canada, 3.4%
- Non-OECD Countries, 27.1%
- Other OECD Countries, 23.0%

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2015

Figure 2: International education market shares, between 2000 and 2013

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2015

## Appendix B: Onshore Higher Education International Students in Australia in 2015

### Onshore higher education international students as a proportion of all onshore students, by university, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Onshore International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>International proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
<td>5,678</td>
<td>37,547</td>
<td>43,225</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>3,345</td>
<td>31,560</td>
<td>34,905</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
<td>1,531</td>
<td>12,421</td>
<td>13,952</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of New England</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>21,010</td>
<td>21,998</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of New South Wales</td>
<td>14,057</td>
<td>39,040</td>
<td>53,097</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
<td>3,355</td>
<td>30,150</td>
<td>33,505</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td>15,763</td>
<td>42,670</td>
<td>58,433</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Technology Sydney</td>
<td>10,448</td>
<td>20,213</td>
<td>30,651</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Sydney University</td>
<td>4,507</td>
<td>40,257</td>
<td>44,764</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Wollongong</td>
<td>5,757</td>
<td>18,582</td>
<td>24,339</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>8,847</td>
<td>43,275</td>
<td>52,122</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federation University Australia</td>
<td>5,874</td>
<td>7,940</td>
<td>13,814</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>6,711</td>
<td>27,798</td>
<td>34,516</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>15,719</td>
<td>43,070</td>
<td>58,789</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RMIT University</td>
<td>11,155</td>
<td>33,153</td>
<td>44,308</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>5,109</td>
<td>28,406</td>
<td>33,515</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Melbourne</td>
<td>18,384</td>
<td>40,496</td>
<td>58,880</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Daintree</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria University</td>
<td>4,482</td>
<td>17,514</td>
<td>21,996</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bond University</td>
<td>2,328</td>
<td>3,302</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
<td>4,577</td>
<td>15,533</td>
<td>20,110</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>7,011</td>
<td>37,239</td>
<td>44,250</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>3,328</td>
<td>15,172</td>
<td>18,494</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queensland University of Technology</td>
<td>8,157</td>
<td>40,250</td>
<td>48,407</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Queensland</td>
<td>12,664</td>
<td>38,166</td>
<td>50,830</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Southern Queensland</td>
<td>4,405</td>
<td>23,330</td>
<td>27,735</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of the Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>1,573</td>
<td>10,952</td>
<td>12,525</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Curtin University of Technology</td>
<td>8,011</td>
<td>35,151</td>
<td>43,162</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>2,718</td>
<td>22,032</td>
<td>24,750</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>13,430</td>
<td>14,934</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Notre Dame Australia</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>11,518</td>
<td>11,765</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
<td>3,741</td>
<td>20,390</td>
<td>24,131</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Flinders University</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>10,883</td>
<td>13,695</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Adelaide</td>
<td>6,401</td>
<td>10,884</td>
<td>17,285</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Torrens University University Limited</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of South Australia</td>
<td>4,931</td>
<td>25,764</td>
<td>30,695</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
<td>3,868</td>
<td>25,788</td>
<td>30,656</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>2,471</td>
<td>9,444</td>
<td>11,915</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>6,204</td>
<td>10,161</td>
<td>16,365</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
<td>3,304</td>
<td>12,920</td>
<td>16,224</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi State</td>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>3,211</td>
<td>28,398</td>
<td>31,609</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2015 Universities</td>
<td>243,013</td>
<td>968,816</td>
<td>1,211,829</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

Appendix C: Higher Education International Students in Australia by Country of Origin
(Year to Date Enrolments for August 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>110 352</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>41 441</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>14 507</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>13 892</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>13 380</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>9 666</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>8 384</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>8 315</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>7 011</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>5 697</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>62 682</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295 327</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Student Enrolment Data 2016, Department of Education and Training, Australian Government (September 2016)
Appendix D: Qualitative Interview Questions for Academics and Associate Deans

Thesis Title: Perceptions of Reputation Drivers in Business Schools: A Study of Two Australian Non-accredited Business Schools

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intro</strong></td>
<td>Good Morning and thank you for participating in my PhD research project. The central aim of my study is to explore the reputation drivers in business schools. In doing so, I aim to examine the reputation drivers that you perceive to be advantages to business schools, in particular to non-accredited business schools. Also, the study investigates the strategies adopted by business schools in enhancing the school’s reputation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Personal views/ perceptions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>In your experience in higher education institute/s, what would you say are key criteria or factors that enhance the reputation of a business school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Would you consider gaining international accreditation or improving the ranking of a school enhances the reputation of the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. School’s strategies and actions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>What strategies would be say your school is employing to enhance its reputation (competitive strategies to position themselves in the market)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Is your school aiming for local, national or international reputation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Where would you say the directives are coming from – is it from university-top or the head of the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>What would you say is your involvement/contribution in the decision-making process to enhance the reputation of your school (and in any other decisions, for example, whether to gain or not to gain international accreditation)? (prompt: participants to discuss their role, and if it was voluntary or forced onto them, and their reaction to it).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>What would you say is the school’s resource allocation strategy? (prompt: cost and operational efficiencies, if participant discusses cost efficiency then prompt with - in your opinion would cost efficiency strategy have effect on the quality of teaching, delivery and student learning, or lead to mass education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Are the strategies adopted by your school mitigating or eliminating the challenges faced by your school? (prompt: to discuss challenges faced by the school in terms of time spent on research and teaching; and accountability and autonomy of academics?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Mass Education and TNE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>What would you say about the pros and cons of TNE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Would you say your school is going down the path of mass education, for example, going down the path of transnational education (TNE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Acađemics’ Work-life

a) What would you say has changed most about your work-life in this period of changes being made to enhance the reputation of your school? (prompt participants to discuss changes due to gaining/wanting to gain international accreditation, improving ranking or other strategic changes involving research and publication, and teaching).

b) Have there been changes in your time spent in research and publication and in teaching due to changes made in the school?

c) Are you satisfied with the changes if there has been any change at all (has work-life improved or is it more stressful)? If so, why and how?
Appendix E: Qualitative Interview Questions for Postgraduate Students

Thesis Title: Perceptions of Reputation Drivers in Business Schools: A Study of Two Australian Non-accredited Business School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th><strong>Student’s choice of higher education institute</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>What factors did you consider in choosing a business school to pursue your studies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Did anyone else influence your choice of school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>What other important factors/criteria to be considered in choosing a business school (especially if you’re considering further studies)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th><strong>Student’s perception of reputation building (by business school)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>What would you say are key criteria or factors that enhance the reputation of a business school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Are you familiar with any international accreditations of business schools? (for e.g., AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Would you consider gaining international accreditation or improving ranking of a school enhances the reputation of the school? (prompt: if they consider any benefits may accrue from these two ventures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Which would you say is a more important criterion in choosing a business school – the school’s international accreditation status or the ranking of the school/university, or other reasons? (prompt: to discuss reasons for their choice; which of the two enhances the reputation of a business school?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th><strong>Student’s experience in the school (and course)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>How would you describe your experience at the school? (prompt: is there any area in your present school that needs improvement, if so why and how would you say the situation may be improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Do you think the units within your course are relevant to work place situation, why/why not? Do you believe other units/subjects should be included in the course to prepare you for the work place, and how would the units be useful?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Information Letter of the Study

Perceptions of Reputation Drivers in Business Schools: A Study of Two Australian Non-accredited Business Schools

Dear Sir/Madam,

I invite you to participate in a research studying the effect of international accreditation on business schools. This study is part of my PhD Degree in Management Accounting, supervised by Prof. Manzurul Alam and Assoc. Prof. David Holloway of Murdoch University.

Nature and Purpose of the Study
It is common practice that business schools gain accreditation to be recognised as providers of quality programs. However, many researchers have questioned whether or not this is worthwhile, because studies have found that the information may not be as accurate as once thought. The study aims to provide insights into whether gaining accreditation enhances the reputation of business schools through higher ranking.

The analysis of the study begins with an investigation of changes business schools make to be accredited and to study the perceptions of business school staff and students about accreditation as a vehicle for enhancing the reputation of the school.

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study. Before the interview, you will be requested to complete a consent form to be interviewed. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

What the Study will Involve
The survey involves staff and students within a business school; however, for analysis purpose it asks you to enter the discipline you are in.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the following tasks:

- Participation in the interview session which is voluntary.
  It is estimated that the interview should take around 15 to 20 minutes.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without discrimination or prejudice. All information is treated as confidential and no names or other details that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.
Privacy
All data collected will be highly confidential and will maintain your privacy. You may request a review of your interview outcomes subsequent to the interview, and to proof read your interview transcript.

Benefits of the Study
It is possible that there may be no direct benefit to you from participation in this study, but schools that are planning to gain international accreditations are likely to benefit from the outcome of this research. However, this is an opportunity for participants to voice their opinions about the accreditation process. The outcome of the study will provide insights into staff’s perceptions of the ways schools use international accreditation as a technique to improve the reputation of their school. Also, participants who are new to the industry will become aware of the extent of the commitment expected of staff members in gaining and maintaining accreditation.

Possible Risks
There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, if you do have any concerns or questions about this project please feel free to contact either me, Thanesvary Subraamanniam, on mobile no. 0402 99 1608 or my supervisors: Prof. Manzurul Alam at 9360 6580 and Assoc. Prof. David Holloway at 9360 2704. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

Once I have analysed the information from this study I will email a summary of my findings to you if you wish to receive feedback. You can expect to receive this feedback the year following the data collection.

If you are willing to participate in the interview, please email me and a consent form will be sent to you via email and the signed consent form needs to be returned to me via email before I make an appointment for the interview.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Sincerely
Thanesvary Subraamanniam
PhD Student
Murdoch University
Tel: 9360 6069
Mob: 0402 99 1608
Email: T.Subraamanniam@murdoch.edu.au

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2012/125). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix G: Consent Form for Interview

Perceptions of Reputation Drivers in Business Schools: A Study of Two Australian Non-accredited Business Schools

The information about this study has been given to me. I have received satisfactory answers to all questions I have asked. I agree to be interviewed for this study. I know that I can choose not to answer any question, or stop at any time. I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

☐ I am happy for this interview to be audio taped.

☐ I am happy for my responses to be used in any publications arising out of this study (all responses will be confidential and participants will not be identified).

☐ I would like to receive a copy of any comments attributed to me for verification / or amendment

☐ I am happy for my comments to be used without being contacted again.

☐ I would like to receive a copy of the feedback from the study. Please contact me at _______________________

Participant: ___________________________ Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Investigator ___________________________ Date: _____ / _____ / _____