

Do Academic Accountants Make It to the Top? Career Mobility at the Business School

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We all accept the premise that academic accounting is infinitely fascinating. However, career mobility above and beyond the discipline is not only possible, but also a viable objective. This paper attempts to provide exploratory evidence about the prospects of academic accountants moving into educational administration. Specifically, we need to quantify how the business dean market has received those with an accounting background. The results suggest that the reception has not been warm, since academic accountant trained deans are few in number, limited in reach and less likely to be specifically recruited for these posts. Implications about the direction of the leadership of business education are offered.

INTRODUCTION

Many have characterized being a full professor as the best job in the world. This observation is a commentary upon several very positive dimensions including the autonomy, the flexibility and the compensation of the position. Although the enjoyment of these attributes may vary with the employing university, the full professor enjoys job security, seniority over others and the opportunity to pursue a wide range of intellectual and applied pursuits. Those that work in the business school are even more blessed by favorable market conditions that elevate wages and often provide opportunities for ancillary remuneration. Notwithstanding this bounty, some are drawn away from the paradise and find themselves in higher administrative posts.

While many academics serve their departments as chairpersons, this office tends to only supplement their work as academics. In fact, at many schools, this position rotates across the tenured faculty and therefore does not amount to a career transition. Almost invariably, department chairperson continue to teach and do research to the extent that time permits. Contrariwise, the assumption of the deanship of a business school represents a major turn toward administration. Schools typically put considerable effort and resources into the selection of a dean. Therefore, accepting such a position represents a move that cannot be characterized as expedient.

The Dean position has understandable appeal, even from the perspective of full professors. In addition to higher levels of compensation, the position offers larger degrees of discretion and prerequisites. The deanship typically confers considerable authority over both faculty and staff, an attribute very lacking in the jobs of most academics. The position requires the transcendence of the

disciplinary silos within which academics build their careers. Thus, the job requires interaction and supervision of those that were trained in other traditions.

Academic accountants have made great strides within the business school in the last forty years. Before this time, those that taught accounting tended to be accounting practitioners. The emergence of doctoral qualifications as the norm, supported by scholarship in the area, has allowed accounting a seat at the table with more long established disciplines like marketing, economics, management and finance. However, whether or not those trained in accounting have reached the pinnacle of power within the business school is an untested empirical question.

This paper takes up the question of the career mobility of academic accountants in higher education. To what extent do business schools look to these people to assume the primary leadership position, the deanship? In other words, do those schooled in the accounting silo have an advantage or a disadvantage when aspiring beyond full professorhood?

This paper is organized into five subsequent sections. The first provides an appreciation for the demands of the dean's job in the current era. This necessitates a brief consideration of the current issues facing the business school. This review enables limited consideration of how well an accounting background should help or hinder deanship aspirants. The second section posits a set of hypothesis that collectively constructs an appreciation of the relative presence of academic accountants in dean positions. The next section offers all the usual information that relates to the methods used to test the hypotheses. The final section discusses the results, their implications and their limitations.

CONTEXT

The modern era is marked by the questioning of institutions. The business school is no exception. Critics of the business school can be found both within and outside of its boundaries. A dean of a business school can now be expected to negotiate the fault lines that this critique has opened.

With only a few examples to the contrary, the business school has failed to produce research that could be said to lead business practice. Most of what business faculty attempt to do is insufficiently grounded in practice since that messy reality cannot be scientifically controlled (O'Toole, 2005). To some extent, this importance can be attributed to the pursuit of research as an end in itself, as opposed to the means to solve real problems. As cited by Subotnik (1988), one professor puts it well with "We are not in the wisdom business; we are in the research business." This state of affairs has led to a call for entirely different approaches, usually less dependent upon theory (e.g., Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). An increasingly vocal critique pits the interests of the faculty against those of practice (see Skapinker, 2008). A successful dean must negotiate an increasingly barbed value proposition pertaining to the faculty's intellectual contribution.

The ability of the business school to appropriately train students for positions in the business world has also been problematized. Success in school fails to correlate with career outcomes (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). When the graduates of the best business schools in the country lack essential skills (O'Toole, 2005), a crisis of confidence is understandable. Faculty are blamed for being preoccupied with research and untrained in educational techniques. Curriculums are also accused of being antiquated and insufficiently interdisciplinary. A dean is hard-pressed to simultaneously allow faculty the time to further their careers and please corporate recruiters.

One of the primary objectives for any dean is to magnify the external recognition of the business school. In recent years, the national media has co-opted the successfulness of these efforts by formulating rankings that have become a fixation for many. The rankings provide deans with a "bottom line" albeit one that is highly arbitrary and somewhat removed from quality. Deans whose schools drop in these rankings tend to be dismissed (Fee et al., 2003) even though the chances of materials rankings improvement are quite remote (Morgesson and Nahrgang, 2008). A focus (if not obsession) on rankings can create considerable dysfunctional behavior in the dean's office (DeAngelo et al., 2005), much of which centers around the pursuit of the appearance of quality at the expense of real quality (see also Mangan, 2002). Thus, a dean is imprisoned by a perceptual system mostly imposed by powerful others.

Business school accreditation has become an increasingly important force in the design parameters of the business school. This process requires, in exchange for the right to use the “accredited” imprimatur, that business schools follow the same managerial tenets that had been taught to the students. For example, the use of mission statements to articulate priorities is excellent, until schools forget these ideas or chase new ones that have emerged. Business school faculty are surprisingly resistant to the critique that they themselves might launch if such a wobble might appear in a prominent corporation (Anders, 2007). Accreditation rules also constrain the ability of schools to displace a fully engaged faculty with those that might be less completely committed to the multi-dimensional faculty role. The masters of the accreditation status also increase the need for solid evidence that the school is achieving desired learning objectives. Whereas pressure along these lines could be seen as constructive incentives to practice good management techniques, they can also become impediments to the more customized approach that only those most familiar with the terrain can bring. Deans may also feel that the formalization brought by accreditation may sidetrack resources from more substantive accomplishments. Accreditation’s skeptical attitude toward institutional impact may also be extended to more realms (see Guess, 2008). This prevents Deans from being able to use their advantaged informational position to shape the perceptions of their constituents as effectively as they did prior to such an invasive accreditation process.

Some has argued that the core problem with the modern business school is inadequate professionalism. Business schools do not seem to be imbuing its graduates with the ethos of an occupational calling, as well as medical and law schools. A similar crisis may exist in the practice of management (Khurana, 2008). This logic therefore might lay the problems of the “real world” at the door step of the academy for the insufficient and misguided training it has provided (Khurana, 2007). Although such a reorientation may subsume many unrelated sources of disquiet under a rubric that few would dispute, a professionalism agenda would require reconfiguring the role of the business school faculty from scientist to entrepreneur, and alter the classroom so that it resembles an incubator for ventures (see O’Toole, 2005). Others would resist such a change, and perhaps operationalize as alternative professionalism as the reinvigoration of collective governance by faculty in opposition to the imperial CEO-type dean that has emerged to chase rankings (see DeAngelo et al., 2005). An unprecedented confluence of forces agitating for change appears to be brewing for the deans of the near-term future.

Those that lead business schools can also be conceived as nothing more glorious than mid-level managers. Deans serve at the pleasure of provosts and presidents for whom the travails of business education are neither so important nor so complex as other situations that they routinely handle. At many universities, the business school should act as a cash cow-docile and contented-to subsidize fields that have neither generous donors nor vocationally-driven critical mass. That this perspective runs so counter to that of the business school dean bodes badly for harmonious relations. Added to this historical struggle is a new one predicated by the prospect that the university, as a model for post-secondary education, is itself in crisis. Challenged by forces such as technology, corporatization and globalization, traditional universities will find it difficult to maintain their structure and their identity (see Minogue, 2006). The business school dean of the future must be nimble to survive what could be an unprecedented shakeout of higher education.

Very little work has been done on the actual work performed by deans. This may reflect the idiosyncratic nature of the job that is heavily shaped by institutional history and personal priorities. As in any organization, the work is very much proscribed by the structure that has been designed since that determines how much attention the dean needs to pay to operational detail. Some schools have adopted what could be called an “inside dean-outside dean” which frees the dean from most daily management functions in preference for external relations and development. Several first-hand testimonials about the job have been offered by sitting deans. These accounts illustrate high degrees of interpersonal variety, incompatible pressures and managerial challenge (e.g., Klimoski, 2007). These self-serving accounts are balanced by more external perceptions that focus on personal career objectives (O’Toole, 2005) and failures of communication (Bowhen, 1982). A bias toward proactive leadership exists, with those that could be called “do nothing” administrators (see Sidle, 2007) soundly critiqued, and those at the helm of heroic change management efforts generally praised (Moll, 2005).

A worthwhile perspective on the deanship pertains to the obligation to reconcile the need to run the business school as a business, but yet honor the non-pecuniary values and traditions of the academic community. This tension perhaps can best be observed by the fact that non-academics are sometimes named to the position. More usually, however, the hope is that career academics can more readily learn fiscally sound strategies than can business people learn the academic values that often fly in the face of market logic. From the non-academic perspective, business schools seen unfocused, mismanaged and happily unaccountable (e.g., Carlin, 1999). The Dean's job might not be to make money but purposefully and strategically know when and how to choose to lose it.

Although we can assume that academics are intelligent people, we push that logic by extending to administration that which we expect from them without formal training. The fact that the vast majority of professors have never been taught to teach perhaps reflects that we are happy to live in a world that lacks much systematic knowledge about how people learn. These people occasionally become department chairpersons on the same unschooled basis. This promotion can be excused because department chairs have little power over their colleagues. As summarized well in the often-heard "herding cats" analogy, leading a department is often an exercise in wishful thinking. Department chairs also rarely command significant resources. Nonetheless, the needed skill set for department chairs has received some attention and remediation (e.g., Yen et al., 2004). Perhaps by the time that a person becomes a dean, they are beyond the search of conventional education. The on-the-job experiences of prior administrative positions substitute for the more abstracted lessons of formal training. AACSB workshops for new deans tend to be focused on networking and function as commercials for accreditation.

In sum, business school deans face a contentious environment. The job is a lightning rod for criticism from a diverse constituency. In many ways, success requires considerable good fortune. The low average number of years in the position should come as no surprise.

Academic Accountants as Deans

A strong *a priori* case can be made for the proposition that academic accountants have the necessary skills to be business school deans. Accounting is a strong and, for the most part, independent disciplinary pillar of the business school. Although somewhat of a case could be made for any of the business disciplines, the accounting case may be somewhat more credible.

If we accept the premise the accountants are "good with numbers," those trained in accounting may be more adept at running the business school on a solvent basis. The advantage may lie in a better conception of the real cost of various programs. Although profits may not be the objective, the existence of financial surpluses makes many worthwhile things possible.

Accounting professors should also have an edge over those in other disciplines with regards to accreditation. The AACSB has offered separate accounting accreditation for many years, inviting academic accountants to invest more seriously in the process. At many schools, accounting faculty find themselves leading these projects due to this deeper experience.

By virtue of their affiliation with accounting practice, accounting faculty also have a stronger grasp on professionalism. Many are licensed CPAs and therefore have first-hand experience in a recognized profession. In this manner, they may have superior grounding in a world not driven by theory but by practicality. This association many also prove valuable since a dean is expected to gracefully navigate within the local business community.

The accounting literature, like that of the other business disciplines, has effectively separated itself from the practice realm. However, this split is far less distinct and of a much more recent vintage than other academic areas. First, the discipline features many members who still write for a practitioner's audience. There are many publications read by both groups. Second, the first indications of the separation have occurred so recently that they are within the work lives of those still active today. By no means is this schism as deep and permanent as in other fields. Academic accountants are less likely to be perceived as out of touch intellectuals.

To complement these advantages, no reason exists to believe that accounting professors would have any less of the "intangibles" that should be possessed by an effective dean. The "green eyeshade"

stereotype that suggests that accountants have personality deficiencies, even if vaguely descriptive of practitioners, does not apply well to academics. We have to believe that those trained in accounting are just as likely as other business faculty to be charismatic and suffused with emotional intelligence.

The case that academic accountants are at a disadvantage when it comes to movement into the dean's office can also be made. Ironically, many of the elements of this argument are similar to the supposed advantages.

In order to acquire the dean position, a person must obtain the approval of search committees, typically dominated by business school academics. A candidate bears the full weight of one's disciplinary affiliation such that a vote for a candidate is implicit approval of their discipline. Thus, the likely response to accounting needs to be estimated. Reiter and Williams (2002) show that citations pattern suggest that the business fields exist within a stratification system. For these purposes, accounting occupies a position on the lowest ring. Other disciplines such as finance or economics do not tend to find accounting research useful in the construction of their scholarship. This might suggest that accounting is not seen by others as an equal discipline by some. To the extent that this is true, an inferior disciplinary pedigree may work to the disadvantage of accounting candidates for the deanship. For a theoretical explanation of how academic disciplines emerge and seek legitimacy, see Hambrick and Chen (2008).

As the disciples of accreditation, accounting academics deliver news that most of the business school's faculty would prefer not to hear. Not only does faculty not want to put work into the accreditation process, they also do not care for the erosion of their authority and autonomy. Particularly through its insistence upon systems of coordinated assessment, accreditation threatens faculty judgment prerogatives. Those that see the value of such programs, even if they are just the messengers, cannot be cherished by those that resist change, even if only on a passive basis.

Accounting as a discipline continues to do well by the students that concentrate in it. However, the field has also endured its share of embarrassment. After considerable attempts to "reform," accounting education has essentially retreated from the venture (Van Wyke, 2007). On the research front, the discipline has essentially painted itself into a corner of irrelevancy and exclusivity that has harmed the careers of its members (Granof and Zeff, 2008; Swanson et al., 2007). The accounting discipline has not therefore led the business school by example. A person from this area must have learned something that the discipline itself could not teach.

In sum, an empirical question has been formed. Whether or not academic accountants have achieved career mobility to business school deanship is difficult to discern without resort to the evidence.

HYPOTHESES

The most basic question that this research addresses is the relative proportion of accounting academics currently occupying dean-level positions in higher education. For these purposes, people with varying academic backgrounds could be thought of as being in competition for these positions. A market can be conceived, in which interested parties make choices based in part on their perceptions of how well disciplinary backgrounds contribute to the deanship competences.

The *a priori* expectations suggest that there are good reasons that accounting faculty would be advantaged in their quest for deanships. Most of these are dependent upon an appreciation for the business-like elements of the position. Those that are less appreciative of these dimensions of the reality may consider accounting to be an inferior background. The latter may outweigh the former, since search committees tend to be comprised of people that have never served as dean. Therefore:

H₁: Academics with an accounting background are less likely than those with other backgrounds to currently serve as business school deans in the USA.

The context of higher education depicted in the previous section illustrated the dynamic nature of the dean's position. The turbulence induced by the position's constituents suggests that the performance expectations change over time. We also have observed that the accounting discipline is in flux. We should

not expect that how people view disciplinary backgrounds over time would resist change. The low average tenure for deans suggests that there is ample opportunity to re-evaluate the suitability of a person from one of the “tribes” for the job at many schools. Therefore, a more longitudinal approach is needed. This perspective overcomes the tendency to confuse a “snapshot” at a particular moment in time with an enduring state of nature.

H₂: Academics with accounting backgrounds are less likely to currently serve as business school deans in the USA than they were in the past.

The business education sector is increasingly an international one. Although the USA has historically led the sector, schools outside this country are sufficiently similar so that viable comparisons are possible. Views on the importance of the disciplines that contribute to a manager’s education are socially constructed, and altered over time by events that may not be perceived in the same way over different nations. Accordingly, a cross-cultural inquiry is needed to see if the relative degrees of mobility are robust on an international basis. The view of accountants and accounting as a viable intellectual platform may be systematically skewed in the US.

H₃: Academics with accounting backgrounds are less likely to currently serve as business school deans in the USA than in the other nations of the world.

The USA has departed from the more classical approach that has made attendance at a university a mark of distinction. Unlike European nations, the USA has eschewed rigid selectivity and systematic vocational profiling as a means of filling a guarded number of seats. In the USA, everyone can go to college. The system works because of a system of stratification that elevates some colleges over others. In this way, not all colleges are perceived to be equal by the students that attend them or the faculty that might be employed by them.

In such an environment, the mere head counts of deans with accounting backgrounds may under-specify the distinctions that need to be made. We would also like to know whether accounting-type deans have obtained their share of positions at the better schools. This inquiry prevents indifference to relative degrees of social esteem that serves as the “oxygen” of the academy (Burke, 1989).

H₄: Academics with accounting backgrounds serving as business school deans in the USA tend to be located at lower prestige institutions.

Two basic markets operate for the purpose of selecting a dean. The external market involves the recruiting of candidates from the other universities. This market follows conventional search logics where a job description is written and advertised and candidates from other schools are sought, perhaps with the assistance of search consultants. The internal market is predicated upon the possibility that someone from within the organization might be suitable to step up to the dean position. This usually would attract people within the business school that had served in lesser administrative capacity. Both markets bring different advantages. The external market promises to infuse new ideas and approaches while the internal market offers a more gentle transition premised on an extant superior knowledge of the environment. Accounting-based dean candidates might require the greater intimacy of the internal market to be successful. Put another way, the inferiority complex of the discipline might be more problematic in the external setting.

H₅: Academics with accounting backgrounds serving as business school deans are more likely to have previously served on that school’s accounting faculty.

Taken together, the hypotheses construct an exploratory feeling for the extent of career mobility in higher education for academic accountants. These questions ask first about global representation, and then

look at various market segments and the market at different times. The objective is to ferret out areas of advantage and disadvantage, as well as trends over time.

METHOD

Almost all data used in this paper came from the various editions of the Accounting Faculty Directory (Hasselback, 1988, 1998, 2008). Most importantly, the population of business school deans with accounting backgrounds was developed from this source through their listed academic area code. Any person listed with the rank of Dean that also had any of the 26 codes associated with the academic accounting discipline was considered part of this group. Those that were identified by codes such as ECON or FIN were not considered. They were considered part of all the schools not managed by Deans with accounting backgrounds, as suggested by the first hypothesis.

For purposes of Hypothesis 2, two previous time periods were selected. Since the mean data came from 2008, decade intervals were used. This meant that the same dean origin inquiry was made in 1998 and 1988. Although nothing special separate the ten year cycle from nine or eleven years, it is a good enough choice to meet the objective of observing longitudinal change. Previous editions of the Accounting Faculty Directory were used to evaluate the change over time contemplated by Hypothesis 2.

Hasselback (2008) contains a listing of 180 colleges and universities outside the USA. This certainly is a less complete compilation than has been achieved for the USA. Nonetheless the Canadian collection appears to be quite complete. For present purposes, this source provides ample comparison data for the test of the third hypothesis.

Prestige is a complex and summarative social judgment that defies precise measurement. Accordingly, its approach will always be both imperfect and controversial. Nonetheless, the reality of its operation as a salient feature of academic decision-making seems long-standing and omnipresent (see Caplow and McGee, 1958; Burke, 1988). Therefore, the scale used for this purpose by Fogarty and Markarian (2007) will be used. This scale combined new and old elements, research-based and reputational-based factors, and has the advantage of being meta-analytic in nature. Because Fogarty and Markarian (2007) only provides prestige schools for doctoral programs, a second study, Fogarty and Hogan (2008) was also considered. That study ranks non-doctoral programs according to their attractiveness to accounting faculty in the labor market.

RESULTS

The search for a complete listing of Deans with an accounting background was conducted. The fact that this listing only has 66 names is a considerable absolute statement given that 870 schools were surveyed as reported by the Hasselback (2008) listing of US programs. In other words, approximately 7.6% of US business schools have accounting leaderships. The low representation of accounting academics in dean positions is consistent with the expectations of Hypothesis 1.

To guard against the possibility that the entire Hasselback listing is an excessively broad slice of US schools (in other words containing too many small programs) the denominator can be reconsidered. The most apparent distinction that can be made is between doctoral degree granting schools and others. Hasselback (2008) lists 101 doctoral degree granting programs when such is defined to include schools that have apparently allowed their programs to become somewhat dormant. Of these schools, only 13 are lead by deans with accounting Ph.D.s. Whereas this represents a slightly higher percentage (13%) than found in the population of schools overall, it is far from a groundswell in favor of the accounting discipline.

These numbers may overstate the poor representation of accounting in the dean's office. The non-accounting deans are not exclusively populated by faculty from the other business disciplines. For example, some deans come from industry and have no meaningful disciplinary origins. The deans that hail from Economics may or may not be from a business school department. Nonetheless, these caveats

are not so consequential as to shake the conclusion that business school deans tend not to be academic accountants.

If accounting were fairly represented, how many accounting deans should there be? An answer to this question depends upon how one estimates the total number of disciplinary backgrounds. No definite answer to the question exists since different schools slice the domain different ways. The AACSB recognizes seven fields. Trieschmann et al. (2000), generally regarded as one of the more comprehensive ranking studies with coverage of the individual fields, uses eight disciplines. USNWR provided its first ranking of undergraduate business fields listing five divisions of the academy. Even adding Economics and a none-of-the-above, one has to conclude that accounting is either underrepresented or barely representative in terms of US deanships held. There would have to be at least 14 distinct backgrounds for deans if accounting were to be considered fairly represented.

The second hypothesis envisions a comparison over time. As a first step in this direction, a raw count of accounting deans was made for 1988 and 1998. For these purposes, 60 and 71 people were identified as being in that category, respectively. Since the accounting faculty directory contained 575 schools in 1988 and 778 schools in 1998, the ratio of accounting deans varies from a high of 11.7% in 1988 to a low of 7.6% in 2008, with 1998 serving as a middle position with 9.1%.

Mirroring the winnowing of the data done with regards to Hypothesis 1, the relative presence of deans with accounting backgrounds at doctoral programs was also considered as another means to approach Hypothesis 2. In 1998, such individuals were present at 7 of the 93 doctoral programs. In 1988, accounting-background deans held 12 of such spots. Thus from 1988 to 1998 to 2008, the percentage of accounting deans at doctoral school has gone from 14.6% to 7.5% to 12.7%

The evidence does not support in conclusive that the incidence of accounting deans is declining. Thus, the expectation embedded in Hypothesis 2 cannot be said to have been borne out by the facts. The opposite trend is also not true, for the relative likelihood that deans possess training in accounting has not increased over time. The data support both trends, with increasing representation between the 1988 and 1998 observations, and decreasing representation between 1998 and 2008. In other words, ideas of decline are sensitive to the span of years examined.

Comparison between the USA and the rest of the world were called for by the third hypothesis. Here, the test of the relative frequency of accounting deans required a count of deans with an accounting background outside the USA in 2008. For these purposes, 18 deans at 180 schools were identified. At 10% a higher frequency is noted outside the USA. A Chi-square test of the difference between the US rate and the foreign rate resulted in a significant ($p < .05$) difference. This suggests the existence of higher acceptability or preference for accounting as a proper background for educational leaders outside the US.

The next hypothesis pertained to the relative prestige of programs. The expectation maintained by Hypothesis 4 is that deans with accounting backgrounds will lead less prestigious schools. For these purposes, doctoral schools are first examined. The Fogarty and Markarian (2007) scale ranges from the higher prestige doctoral program (score=1) to the least prestigious program (score=83), and therefore has a midpoint of 42. The prestige scores of schools with accounting deans in 2008 were collected and averaged. The average was 46.1, only slightly higher than the scale midpoint.

A second approach involved the non-doctoral schools. Fogarty and Hogan (2008) identify non-doctoral programs that have been differentially able to recruit an accounting faculty with superior doctoral credentials. The argument here is that those schools able to win the favor of faculty that have more ability to choose where they work must themselves possess a portfolio of high value attributes. Of the 53 accounting trained deans, three preside over what could be called high-prestige non-doctoral programs. This appears below that which we could have expected if accounting deans were randomly distributed across the prestige lines drawn by Fogarty and Hogan (2008). A Chi-square test of this difference is proves significant at $p < .05$.

The third attempt at this hypothesis used both doctoral and non-doctoral schools. For these purposes the overall prestige of a school was operationalized with the rankings found in Gorman (2007). These measures pertain to the entire institutions, and do not attempt to capture the specific reputation of the business school. The value of such a measure depends upon the strength of the overall perception of

external parties, perhaps due to a strong “halo” effect. Schools with accounting deans ranged from a high prestige score of 4.37 to a low score of 2.53. This compares to the overall range of this metric from 4.90 to 2.00. The average of the institutions from the accounting dean group was 2.98, compared to a global Gorman mean of 3.20. To statistically analyze these differences, samples of schools without accounting deans were constructed by randomly selecting an equal number of schools without accounting deans. The Chi-square statistic for the comparison proved not significant ($p < .05$).

The results summarized above may have been affected by the relative composition of doctoral and non-doctoral programs. On average, doctoral level universities tend to be of higher prestige and therefore might be skewing the distribution. Therefore, an alternative sampling technique for the comparison group was utilized. A stratified sample of the same number of doctoral and non-doctoral schools was drawn and then combined for these purposes. Again, the Chi-square statistic is not significant at $p < .05$.

In sum, the balance of the evidence does not support the expectation that institutional prestige at schools using business school deans with accounting backgrounds is lower than institutional prestige elsewhere. This relationship is in the predicted direction, but not so large as to be statistically significant.

The final hypothesis compares mobility across the principal divide of the labor market. The expectation embedded in the hypothesis is that accounting deans will be more likely successful in the internal market, rising from the faculty ranks at the same school. Using the yearly editions of the *Accounting Faculty Directory*, this was determined by company the first year of employment at the current school and the first year the person was listed as Dean. Of the 66 accounting Deans in the US, x appears to have been hired as deans and x rose from faculty positions at their current schools. Using the same two comparison groups drawn for the test of the previous hypothesis, a parallel two-Panel array of the results for Hypothesis 5 was organized. In both, a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level is indicated. The result is stronger when accounting deans are contrasted against the unstratified sample of non-accounting deans. This constitutes evidence in support of Hypothesis 5.

In sum, the evidence aligns with the meta-proposition that people with accounting backgrounds are less likely to become business school deans. From Hypothesis 1 we see they are underrepresented. This underrepresentation however is not unique to the USA, nor is it a recently developed phenomenon. The disadvantage shows up most prominently when the individual tests their abilities in the external component of the labor market. The only positive news for accounting faculty with deanship aspirations is that they are no less successful in higher prestige schools.

DISCUSSION

At this stage in the development of higher education, being a business school dean is a complex job in which few succeed. This paper might be thought of as taking the first step toward understanding the characteristics of a successful dean. This first step has to be the development of information about the people that are selected for these positions. Academia background must be considered a large part of the description of these people.

Despite a strong a priori case that the skills associated with accounting would be helpful to the successful acquisition of Dean positions, the results of this research suggest that this is not the case. Academic accountants tend not to be in the Dean’s chair, and must be considered poorly represented in that population. Most of the evidence assembled in this paper suggests that career mobility in higher education for those trained in accounting is limited. People of this persuasion tend to be limited to the least desirable sectors of the market.

Any study that uses the Accounting Faculty Directory at multiple periods of time has to recognize that the data is not equally complete through time. Since the accumulation of the information is done by a single person, and depends upon the cooperation of countless others, this could present an interpretation issue. In this case however missing data would work toward a conservative direction. Because the directory has become more complete over time, the relative number of Deans with accounting backgrounds in the current time period is likely to be helped by this differential completeness.

Nonetheless, less than comprehensive coverage continues to exist for schools outside North America, and therefore a limitation should be recognized.

The reception received by academic accountants for positions in higher education may have been adversely affected by the poor state of academic accounting. Although any particular profession of accounting cannot be held responsible, the individual might be subject to a cloud because of disciplinary conditions.

The total number of accounting deans follows the same pattern noted by Fogarty and Markarian (2007) regarding full-time accounting academic positions in the USA. The decline of accounting doctoral student production has been documented by several scholars (Baldwin and Brown, 2008; Fogarty and Holder, 2012) and been studied by commissions (Plumlee et al., 2006). The fact that this decline has occurred at the same time as a boom in other business disciplines (Swanson et al., 2007; Fogarty and Markarian, 2007) makes it a potentially relevant item to the leadership handicap that this paper documents for academic accountants.

This paper took the extant record of the deans that were in their positions at any moment in time as reported by Hasselback editions as unproblematic. In fact, the selection of a leader of this sort is quite difficult in most cases. In a perfect world, one would like to have information about how deans were selected, and how the Dean's disciplinary background might have entered into the selection process.

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