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A Co-Plot Study of IS/IT Concentrations in Top-Ranked MBA Programs in the U.S. (2020-2021)

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Master of Business Administration (MBA) education has evolved for more than one hundred years since the first MBA program was established at Harvard University in 1908. Today, there are more than one hundred MBA programs offered by different universities in the U.S. to fulfill the demand of business professionals who are usually seeking advanced positions in organizations. As information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) continue to penetrate more areas in the business world, IS/IT concentrations and IS/IT-related courses that appear in MBA curriculums reflect how the programs adapt to the changes of the digital era. In contrast to students in traditional MBA concentrations, such as finance and marketing, MBA students in IS/IT concentrations are usually advised to take not only managerial courses but also technical ones. Unlike many undergraduate students who are trained through a "chalk-and-talk" lecture format, MBA students have often gained work experience in various industries that they can apply and build on during their graduate studies. In IS/IT MBA education, the varied backgrounds of the students can make it challenging to provide hands-on teaching modules and technical components that match individual students' needs. Nevertheless, the demand for a format that focuses on building solid skills to solve real-world IS/IT-related business problems is increasing (Navarro, 2008). In light of the ongoing evolution of IS/IT MBA education, the current study seeks to answer the following two research questions: (1) What are recent developments of IS/IT MBA education? (2) How have universities evolved the IS/IT concentrations in their MBA programs?

We use the Co-plot method to map MBA programs based on 2020-2021 data, including core courses, concentrations/specializations, format of instruction, and location of the program. Co-plot is a two-dimensional graphical display technique, which allows for simultaneous analysis of observations (e.g., MBA programs) and criteria (e.g., core courses) (Raveh, 2000). By applying the method, we plan to obtain three findings: (1) similarity among IS/IT concentrations in MBA programs based on the composite of IS/IT core courses involved; (2) the structure of correlations among the IS/IT core courses; (3) similarity among MBA programs by the composite of all criteria (e.g., core course, format of instruction, location of the program) involved.

This study provides stakeholders with a broad view of IS/IT concentration development in U.S. MBA programs. We also identify potential problems and trends in the form of clusters of IS/IT concentrations and MBA programs, importance of the criteria, and potentially conflicting correlations among the criteria.

References

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