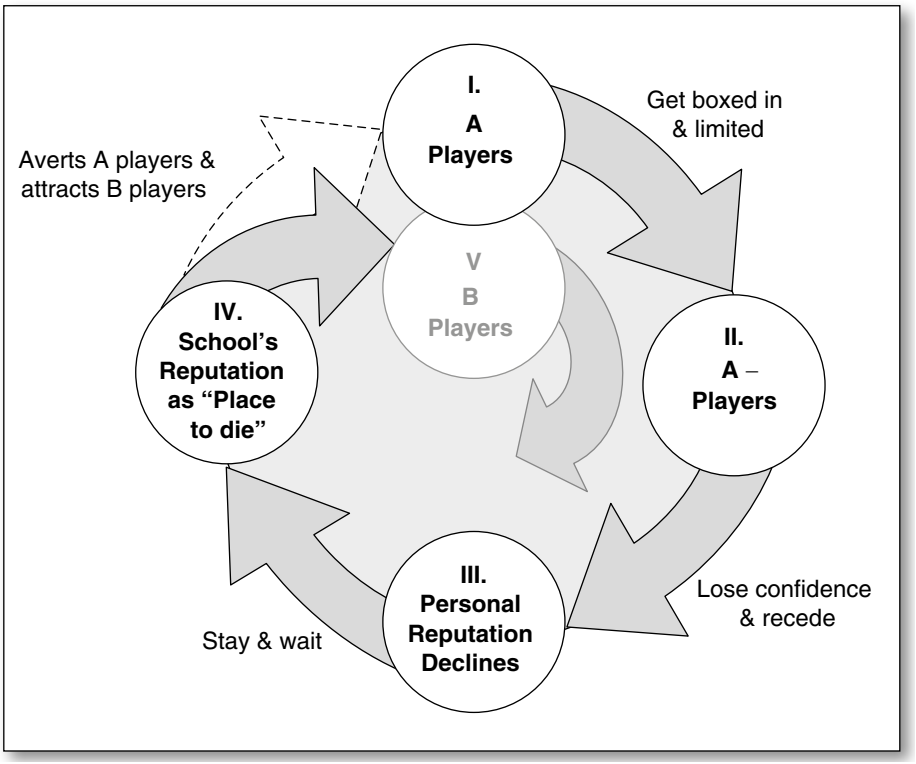A CYCLE OF DECLINE