

ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND EXPECTATION OF ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

The significant role of the accounting profession is obvious to everyone, the feedback of efficiency of accounting education is very important for accounting educators and academicians. This kind of feedback enables, some topics add to curriculum that, are suitable for business. So the feedbacks from accounting professionals about the efficiency of the accounting courses, if they are orchestrate to practice and the courses that should be included in the curriculum are also important for the quality and future of the accounting education. The aim of this study is to present the opinions and expectations of certified public accountants and current situation of the accounting education in universities is described. This study survey the research done by AngayKutluk et al in 2012. Then, according to the findings of these research, we effort, the suggestions about how to improve education in the accounting profession in Iran. Overall, the results indicate that, accountants think students do not graduate with sufficient accounting knowledge. Accounting lessons aren't sufficient to meet the needs of companies and to understand the accounting procedures and financial structures of the companies and therefore, recommendations according to the results will be useful for the development of the accounting education. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the most important lessons that should be taught in undergraduate accounting in universities must include, "General Accounting", "Financial Statement Analysis" and "Corporate Accounting".

Keywords: *Accounting education, Accounting Profession, Expectation Profession, Promotion of Accounting Education, Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Accounting knowledge must adapt and update itself as an application of knowledge and effective in the economy and financial markets. Curriculum of universities and educational institutions must also be changed appropriate with these changes in order to educate the students proportionate with the society's needs. As a result, having a comprehensive curriculum is a basic requirement for educating students in a dynamic environment (BahramiNasab et al., 2012).

Fast development in science, technology, economics and business life also requires development in education. One of the factors to survive from global competition is to have well-educated and well-equipped employees (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Elik&Ecer (2009) stated that alteration and redefinition of the roles of accounting profession is necessary because of the changes in business world. Accounting function depends on the quality of accountants in companies and they face with more unexpected situations. Changing or renewing the accounting education is also necessary because of the change in the significance and qualifications of accounting information (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Albrecht and Sack (2001) indicate the accounting educators aren't in touch with the market expectations because they often isolate themselves from business professional community. Accounting practitioners and university educators must be in collaboration to develop accounting education and meet the profession's demands (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Today, the gap between the accounting profession and accounting education gradually becomes wider. Hence, the question is, how can we reduce the gap between the professions and universities, and to

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eliminate the gap. In line with the efforts of all sectors involved, including members of the accounting profession, educational institutions - universities and educators in this field, to prevent the spread of the gap and reduce the mentioned distance (Mashayekhi and Shafiepour, 2012). Elik and Ecer(2009) Zaif and Ayanoglu (2007) mentioned other important developments such as ‘‘Bedford Report’’ issued by American Accounting Association in 1986, the establishment and starting operation of Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) in 1990, the development of new accreditation standards by American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), ‘‘vision project’’ of AICPA, establishment of education committee in International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), adoption of regulation of continuous professional education by the Union of Chambers of Certified Public Accountants of Turkey (TURMOB), establishment of European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) by European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) based in Brussels, Belgium (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

On the other hand, according to the variety of practices of accounting, accountants do not reach an agreement about goals and methods of accounting education in undergraduate curriculums. The main objective of the present methods of accounting is to educate accountants that have the ability to flex the new circumstances and adopt appropriate solutions in the face of changes and current issues (Mashayekhi and Shafiepor, 2012).

There is an increase in the amount of accounting and financial regulations which students and members should learn them professional accounting bodies have become more concerned with accounting education like European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process (Montano et al., 2010).

Sugahara et al. (2010) state that accounting associations give importance to a generic skill development awareness program which has been driven by IFAC. ‘‘According to the IFAC, the world’s changing economic environment demands a new type of accounting professional who is equipped with generic skills such as communication, team playing, leadership, problem solving, analytical, and interpersonal skills (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Because of the role of accounting education is obvious for everyone to develop the better in economic, and for having high accounting quality is critical. Hence, providing guidelines for accounting education and expectations of professional accounting education is necessary. In this paper, we study various subjects, such as research which has been done by AngayKutluk et al. (2012) in Turkey and then we explain that doing such research is being essential to perform accounting in Iran because, accounting education has not changed much over the past fifty years in Iran.

The purpose of this paper is, to provide opinions and expectations of certified public accountants about the current situation of accounting education universities in Turkey (according to AngayKutluk et al. (2012)).So, according to the results of such research, we can provide doing such research in Iran. On the other hands, the results of the study (AngayKutluk et al, 2012) could be the basis for changing accounting education in Iran and accounting education will propel towards a better situation.

METHODOLOGY

Previous Research

Curuk and Dogan (2002) surveyed large sized enterprise to explore their opinions about the collaboration of practitioners and educators in determining the accounting lessons and their contents and demands about the required level of accounting lessons and contents that the student took. According to the results, majority of the firm managers want to be in collaboration with the educators in determining accounting lessons. They think that the students that will be employed in these firms should learn general accounting, corporate accounting, cost accounting, computerized accounting, financial statement analysis and tax law and accounting in detail (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Zaif and Ayanoglu (2007) examined the accounting lessons in the Business Administration Faculty curriculum of the universities in Turkey. They suggest that Financial Accounting, Auditing, Risk

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Management and Internal Control and Professional Ethics should be in the curriculum because they are necessity of the accounting profession. According to the results, most of the suggested lessons are included, but the rate of accounting lessons in the Business Administration curriculum is 14 % and isn't enough to meet the necessity of practice (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Celik and Ecer (2009) examined 45 universities in Turkey by using Data Envelopment analysis to measure the efficiency in accounting education. According to the results, accounting education in the undergraduate programs in Turkey is generally effective, but universities are using resources excessively to get the output (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Unal and Dogany (2009) surveyed auditors of Turkish Court of Accounts to determine the efficiency and up-to-dateness of undergraduate accounting education. According to the results, the number of accounting lessons in the curriculum is sufficient but they can't meet the needs of the establishments Up-to-dateness should be considered and practitioners should participate to the lessons to increase the efficiency. General accounting, financial statement analysis and auditing were the most rated lessons to be important (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Sugahara et al. (2010) surveyed undergraduate business students to explore accounting and non-accounting undergraduates' self-efficacy of generic skills and found that accounting programs produce a limited impact on improving students' self-efficacy in relation to what is required in today's accounting profession and an improvement was found in self-efficacy of analytical skills only (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Yildiz and Durak (2011) surveyed the accountants of small and medium sized enterprises to determine efficiency of accounting and finance education. Results show that accounting education doesn't meet demands of the enterprises. Accounting knowledge levels of the graduates are as follows: 52% general, 36% poor and 12% complete and sufficient.

Stivers et al. (2011) surveyed business faculty members at three colleges/universities for the opinions about the essential accounting knowledge needed by business majors to provide necessary information for developing curricula for principals of accounting education. According to the results there was an agreement on a common body of knowledge for the introductory accounting courses. "Introduction Accounting and Business" had the highest score. Courses should be taught that students would be able to recall or have awareness and a general knowledge of the basics of the topic (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

Crawford (2011) surveyed accounting practitioners and educators in an eleven state Midwest region of the United States. According to the findings, majorities from both groups prefer two years of work experience prior to licensure for entry-level accountants and there are differences between practitioners and educators about appropriate subject/course offerings. The highest mean scores were for Intermediate Financial Accounting, Introductory Taxation, Auditing, Accounting Systems and Accounting Ethics. When compared practitioners and educators, of the five courses with significant findings, practitioner mean scores were higher for Accounting Theory and Advanced Information Systems than were educators, while educators rated Cost Accounting, Governmental Accounting and Auditing higher than the practicing accountants. Although the differences were significant, Auditing was statistically significant but was also rated highly by both groups (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

AngayKutluk et al. (2012) did a research expected by the management accounting profession, accounting education in Turkey, from 800 CPAs practicing in Antalya, A survey was prepared and sent to the accountants by e-mail. Some of the accountants have been metted face to face. The survey was organized by the authors of this paper and by the authors of the previous study Unal and Doganay (2009) which examined the efficiency of undergraduate accounting education. The results showed that the accountants think students do not graduate with sufficient accounting knowledge. Accounting courses didn't meet the needs of companies and to understand the accounting procedures and financial structures the companies. Recommendations according to the results will be useful for the development of the accounting education.

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BahramiNasab et al (2012) examined accounting education in different countries and accounting education curriculum in important countries. They were studied differences and resemblance in terms of the time period at the undergraduate education, masters and PhD, the number of defined units for the field, education at the levels of secondary and higher, teaching methods, and the role of professional bodies in education. Data were surveyed through the study of the library and study resources, and exiting articles about 7 the education system. These countries include Australia, Japan, Russia, America, France, China, Ukraine and Iran. The results showed that education system at each country proportionate with economic situation was somewhat different from other countries different. The results also showed that most specialized courses are considered in Australia and Educational system the accounting's Australia is based on the theory and practice that seems to be the most complete and best educational system.

Mashayekhi and Shafiepour (2012) evaluated the effectiveness of accounting education at the university level in Iran using data envelopment analysis began. Therefore, in this study the performance of 20 public universities were examined in Iran using data envelopment analysis. Results of this study indicated that, these universities have been successful the educating of input-output models.

DehghanDehnavi et al. (2012) identified the knowledge and skills required for educating according to the changing business environment in order to accommodate the needs of the accounting profession and the teachings of the university. The results has been shown that due to the lack of harmonization of the needs of professional accounting community with what is taught in universities, it is necessary to review the accounting curriculum. Therefore, the authors of the article suggested to education officials that the identified priorities in the areas of accounting knowledge and skills training should receive special attention.

Review Study by (AngayKutluk et al, 2012)

There are approximately 800 certified public accountants who have their own office and operate in Antalya and registered in chamber of public accountants of Antalya. Data collection method is non-random sampling. A survey is prepared and sent to the accountants by e-mail. Some of the accountants have been metted face to face. 103 surveys were returned. (Rate of return is 13%). The survey was organized by the authors of this paper and by a previous study Unal and Dogany(2009) which examined the efficiency of undergraduate accounting education.

Survey includes 3 sections: The first section consists of 5 demographic questions. The second section of the survey includes 19 Likert type statements about the expectancy from accounting education with the scale interval of *1:Strongly Disagree* to *5: Strongly Agree*. The third section of the survey is about the importance of the 9 accounting lessons of undergraduate classes with the Likert type scale interval of *1: Very Unimportant* to *5: Very Important*. The Cronbach Alpha level of reliability analysis for the second section is 60.3% and for the third section is 77.3%. Frequencies of demographic questions and means and standard deviations for statements about expectancies of accounting education and importance of accounting lessons are discussed.

Findings of AngayKutluk et al.(2012)

AngayKutluk et al. (2012) used the descriptive statistics for demographic questions, means and standard deviations for statements about the expectancy from the accounting education and importance of the 9 accounting courses of undergraduate classes, t tests and One Way Anova analysis. They stated that, the most of accountants are male, and have Bachelor's degree. Most of them have been working for 6-10 years. Most of them don't want to participate in lessons as speaker. The mostly used accounting packages are LUCA (34.0%), ETA (23.3%) and MICRO (21.4%) respectively. Over all, they stated that accountants are mostly agree with "there should lessons that contain tax practice within the accounting lessons", "Students should be directed to go on training by practitioners to learn the accounting subjects better", "There must be collaboration with practitioners while determining the contents of accounting lessons of the faculty", and the accountants are mostly disagree with these statements : " Students

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graduate with sufficient accounting knowledge”, “ Undergraduate accounting lessons meet the needs of the companies considerably”, “Undergraduate accounting lessons are sufficient to understand the accounting procedures and financial structures of the customer companies”. AngayKutluk et al. (2012) declared that the most important lessons for accountants are “General Accounting”, “Financial Statement Analysis”, “Corporate Accounting”.

THE MOST IMPORTANT BARRIERS ACCOUNTING EDUCATION IN IRAN

The role of accounting in economic development is not secret to everyone. Our country should pay better attention to the training of accounting university to achieve economic development. One of the major concerns of today's managers is, educating qualified accountants that eliminate the need of organizations, and the role of universities as the center of education of capable and skilled human (manpower) has great importance(RezaiePitenoee and Ghorbani, 2012). Therefore, we state that, the most important reasons to be more attention to accounting education in Iran and in other words, the most important problems in this major that are discussed as a barrier to improving the accounting education in Iran, are gathered and summarized in Tables 1 that Tables 1 is prepared in next page.

Table 1: Summary of Accounting Education Problems in Iran

Different areas of the educational system	Related problem
Educational materials	The lack of accounting books in Persian, dated content of accounting courses, expensive foreign books, noncompliance courses with national accounting standards
Educational curriculum	Not up to date accounting education, imitated educational systems, false teaching methods, lack of educational curriculum cur, lack of attention to research methodology course
University faculties	Shortage of qualified teachers, low academic level of teachers, low salaries of teachers
Students	The lack of student proficiency in English, the lack of a deep familiarity with information technology students
Management of the different levels of higher education	Not accepting students with high standards, the lack of adequate funding for research, the lack of flexibility in universities, Rigor for published articles, the lack of orientation, especially in graduate level, the lack of educational equipment such as projectors and laboratory, the lack of a favorable field for training and continuing education internal faculty, the gap between profession and accounting education, accounting for Non-teaching certain disciplines such as accounting, the lack of educating certain fields such as teaching of banking operations accounting

Reference: Baghoumian and RahimiBaghi(2010)

One Suggestion to Improve Accounting Education in Iran

It seems that, according to research has been done by (KutlukAngay et al., 2012) in Turkey and the items that have been expressed by the authors in this article, because the lack of the following items in the

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curriculum and method of accounting education in Iran, it is essential that, these issues be considered And due to the lack of coordination of needs of professional accounting community with what is taught in universities, it is necessary to review the accounting curriculum. Therefore, we suggest to the authorities to be more attention the priorities and issues identified research has been done by (AngayKutluk et al, 2012) in the field of accounting knowledge and to Iran. These priorities can be expressed as follows:

- ❖ Educating tax in accounting curriculum be considered more and to provide the opportunity for students to learn the tax law practically and functionally.
- ❖ The professional accountant with experience invited to guide and monitor students to learn practical accounting issues and lessons.
- ❖ Opinions of professional accountants with experience used to determine the content of accounting courses.
- ❖ Accounting courses that is taught in universities considerably doesn't meet the needs of corporates and it is necessary to apply considerations at curriculum so that, the accounting curriculum must be set based on the needs of users of accounting information (Pourali, 2004).
- ❖ Undergraduate accounting's lessons is not enough to understand the accounting procedures and financial structures of customer's companies.
- ❖ Undergraduate accounting lessons with computer should be more important for accounting students and efforts to teach more lessons with computer. (Pourali,2004) stated that there is a three-unit course for educating computer, due to the lack of harmonization with other specialized courses, is not necessary and enough.
- ❖ Accounting education should be a combination of professional knowledge of students and skills with ethics values. Teaching ethics in accounting courses should have a prominent place. Salehi(2010) declared that, students should be familiar with the code of ethics and professional conduct emphasis seriously at all levels of academic.
- ❖ The content of undergraduate accounting courses are not aligned and parallel with practice, students must train practical and functional for employment after graduation. Students should introduce as a trainee and work with audit firms and business enterprise to cope with shortages of human resources theoretically and practically (Pourali, 2004).
- ❖ Financial Reporting Standards must be included in the curriculum separately from other accounting courses as an undergraduate accounting lesson. Students should be familiar with standards' details fully and more specific before entering practice.
- ❖ Kazempour et al.(2012) stated that, since many of the articles and research are written at the master's degrees and Ph.d's degree, therefore we recommended that, the undergraduate students must be familiar with the research methods and papers writing and encourage them to do research. Also, Salehi(2004) believes that students should be familiar with accounting research methods and should encourage them to do research at graduate.

Towards Improving the Status of the Accounting Profession in Iran

According to KutlukAngay et al.(2012), certified public accountants stated that, the most important lessons that should be taught in undergraduate accounting in the universities must include, "General Accounting", "Financial Statement Analysis" and "Corporate Accounting". Because this study was based on accountant's ideas with experience, it seems that the emphasis on this subject in Iran also appears to be necessary and so it is recommended that, such research must be carried out in Iran, in order to obtain similar results, these take a more important role in accounting undergraduate curriculum and then we'll be able to train more qualified accountants.

RESULTS

This study stated the opinions and expectations of certified public accountants and is described the current state of accounting education in universities. Accountants think that, students do not graduate with

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sufficient accounting knowledge. Undergraduate accounting lessons are sufficient to understand the accounting procedures and financial structures of the customer companies and recommendations with respect to obtained results are useful for the development of accounting education. Accountants also believe that, *there should be lessons that contain tax practice within the accounting lessons*. Students should be directed to go on training by practitioners to learn the accounting subjects better. There must be collaboration with practitioners while determining the contents of accounting lessons of the faculty. There should be collaboration between practitioners and educators and educators, practitioners should be invited to participate to the lessons. There is a need to teach classes that are relevant to today's business world such as technology, globalization and ethics; practitioners should impress the need upon educators (Albrecht and Sack, 2001).

The connection between universities and the business world must be stronger and a more strategic relationship must be developed to coordinate the needs (Pan and Perera, 2011). Market expectations should be considered in designing university accounting programs.

Accounting students should learn detail about IFRS (James, 2011). Business students should understand the information presented in financial statements of the companies and be aware of expected changes in financial accounting and reporting rules.

Communication skills of the students should be developed and ethics should be in the curriculum to develop the ethical awareness and problem solving skills of the students to make correct decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we study various subjects, such as research which has been done by AngayKutluk et al.(2012), in Turkey and then, we provide opinions and expectations of certified public accountants about the current situation of accounting education universities in Turkey (according to AngayKutluk et al.(2012). we explain that, doing such research is being essential for performing accounting in Iran, because, accounting education has not changed much over the past fifty years in Iran. On the other hand, the results of the study (AngayKutluk et al, 2012) could be the basis for changing accounting education in Iran and accounting education will propel towards a better situation. Also in this study, we declare some suggestions on how to improve the situation of accounting education in Iran. Also we suggest that, main accounting courses that should be taught in undergraduate accounting lessons.

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