

Investigating Third-Year Accountancy Students' Career Goals and Skills Preparedness

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DOI: 10.47760/cognizance.2023.v03i12.001

Abstract— This qualitative study explores the multifaceted landscape of career development among third-year accountancy students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy program at PUP Santa Maria Bulacan Campus. Grounded in Savickas' Career Construction Theory (2002), the research delves into students' evolving career goals, perceived skills preparedness, and identified areas requiring more focus within their education. A comprehensive literature review integrates findings on the significance of aligning educational programs with career goals, the impact of skills preparedness on job satisfaction, and the importance of student feedback in enhancing accountancy education. The theoretical framework synthesizes these insights, emphasizing the adaptive and constructivist nature of career development. Five qualitative interview questions were formulated to capture the nuances of students' experiences and perceptions. The study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on accountancy education, aiming to inform curriculum development and educational strategies that align with both students' aspirations and industry demands. The findings hold implications for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in refining the effectiveness and relevance of accountancy education programs.

Keywords— Career Goals, Skill preparedness, Accountancy

I. INTRODUCTION

This Accountancy education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of aspiring professionals, influencing their career trajectories and shaping their preparedness for the demands of the industry. Recognizing the dynamic nature of the field, it becomes imperative to delve into the perspectives of third-year accountancy students to gain insights into their career aspirations, assess the skills they perceive as adequately honed, and identify areas within their education that may warrant enhanced focus. This research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding accountancy education by conducting a qualitative study among third-year accountancy students at PUP Santa Maria Bulacan Campus. By examining their career goals, perceived skills preparedness, and identified areas for improvement, this study aims to provide nuanced insights that can inform curriculum development and educational strategies in preparing accountancy students for their professional journeys.

Accountancy education is a multifaceted domain, demanding a strategic alignment between academic curricula and the evolving needs of the accounting profession. Past research emphasizes the importance of aligning educational goals with industry requirements to ensure graduates are well-equipped for the challenges of the accounting profession (Smith & Brown, 2019). Understanding students' career aspirations and their self-perceived preparedness for the skills demanded by the industry is integral to this alignment process. Moreover, previous studies have highlighted the significance of student perspectives in shaping effective educational interventions (Jones *et al.*, 2020). By exploring the viewpoints of third-year accountancy students, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge, offering valuable insights that can enhance the quality and relevance of accountancy education.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the career goals of third-year accountancy students, shedding light on their aspirations within the context of their academic journey. Additionally, the research aims to assess the skills these students feel adequately prepared for and identify specific areas within their education that they believe require more focused attention. By achieving these objectives, the study endeavors to offer a comprehensive understanding of the educational needs and expectations of third-year accountancy students, contributing valuable data for the enhancement of accountancy education programs.

This research holds significance on various fronts. Firstly, it addresses a critical gap in the current literature by focusing on the perspectives of third-year accountancy students, a juncture where individuals are likely to crystallize their career goals and reflect on their educational experiences. Secondly, the findings of this study can inform educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in tailoring accountancy education to better meet the expectations and needs of the students and the industry. Ultimately, the insights derived from this research have the potential to foster a more responsive and effective accountancy education system, ensuring that graduates are not only academically proficient but also well-aligned with the evolving dynamics of the professional landscape.

Career Goals in Accountancy Education

Several studies underscore the significance of aligning educational programs with students' career goals to enhance motivation and engagement. Anderson and Smith (2018) found that students with clear career goals in accounting were more likely to exhibit high levels of commitment to their studies. Similarly, research by Brown and Jones (2020) highlighted the positive impact of career-oriented education on students' overall academic performance. These findings emphasize the importance of investigating and understanding the career goals of accountancy students to optimize educational outcomes.

Perceived Skills Preparedness

Accountancy education aims to equip students with a diverse set of skills essential for success in the accounting profession. The literature suggests that students' perceptions of their skills preparedness significantly influence their confidence and performance in the workplace. Smith *et al.* (2019) conducted a longitudinal study, revealing that students who felt adequately prepared for key accounting skills reported higher job satisfaction and performance levels. Additionally, the work of Garcia and Lee (2021) emphasized the need to assess students' self-perceived preparedness to identify areas for improvement in curricular offerings. These studies highlight the importance of evaluating students' perceptions of their skills readiness to enhance the effectiveness of accountancy education.

Identifying Areas Requiring More Focus

To address the evolving demands of the accounting profession, it is crucial to identify specific areas within accountancy education that students perceive as requiring more focus. A study by Roberts and Turner (2017) explored students' perspectives on educational gaps and recommended targeted interventions to address deficiencies. Furthermore, the research conducted by Chang and Wang (2022) revealed that students' feedback on areas requiring improvement contributed significantly to curriculum enhancements. Understanding these identified areas allows educators and policymakers to implement strategic changes in educational programs.

Integration of Career Development Theories

Career development theories provide a theoretical framework for understanding students' career goals and aspirations. Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 2020) posits that career decisions are influenced by environmental factors and personal experiences. Applying this theory to accountancy education, it becomes essential to explore how students' interactions with their educational environment shape their career goals. Additionally, Super's Career Development Theory (Brown & Lent, 2019) emphasizes the importance of self-concept and the role of educational experiences in shaping career choices. Integrating these theories into accountancy education research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' career goals.

II. METHODOLOGY

An The research aimed to conduct a qualitative study to explore the career goals of third-year accountancy students at PUP Santa Maria Bulacan Campus. Additionally, the study aimed to understand the skills these students felt adequately prepared for and identify areas in their education that they believed required more focus.

Participants

The participants of the study were third-year accountancy students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy program at PUP Santa Maria Bulacan Campus. The selection criteria included students who were actively pursuing their degree during the academic year of the study.

Instrument and Data Gathering Procedures

The research utilized a qualitative instrument consisting of five open-ended questions designed to measure students' career goals, assess their perceived level of preparedness for specific skills, and identify areas they deemed in need of further educational focus. The questions were carefully crafted to elicit detailed and nuanced responses from the participants.

Data gathering procedures involved distributing the questionnaire to the identified participants after obtaining informed consent. The participants were encouraged to provide thorough and thoughtful responses, ensuring the richness of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to derive patterns, themes, and insights from the qualitative data gathered. The process involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This rigorous approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives on career goals, skills preparation, and educational focus areas..

Accountancy education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals pursuing careers in the dynamic field of accounting. Understanding the career goals, perceived skills preparedness, and areas that students believe require more focus in their education is crucial for tailoring educational programs to meet industry demands and student expectations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I
LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS IN ACCOUNTANCY

Theme	Sub-Theme	Respondents
Career Exploration and Uncertainty	- Exploring Different Paths	1, 10, 17, 22
	- Broad Field Considerations	
Excitement and Challenges	- Mix of Excitement and Challenges	2, 18, 21, 25
	- Acknowledgment of Course Difficulty	
Private Practice and Social Impact	- Working in Private Practice	3
	- Advancing to Executive Roles	
Focus on Certification	- Emphasis on CPA and CMA Certifications	4, 5, 8, 13, 14, 23, 24, 26, 28
Global Opportunities and Academic Contribution	- Aspiring for Global Recognition	6
	- Contribution to Academic Field	
Continuous Learning and Mastery	- Commitment to Continuous Learning	7, 15, 27
	- Comprehensive Understanding of Field	
Diverse Career Paths	- Considering Various Career Paths	11, 16, 29, 30

Strategic Planning and Persistence	- Acknowledging Challenges in Goal Setting	20, 24, 25, 30
	- Emphasizing Strategic Planning	
Entrepreneurial Aspirations	- Starting Own Business or Involvement in Firms	23, 29
Family and Personal Growth	- Connecting Goals with Personal and Family Growth	21
	- Addressing Challenges and Distractions	
Technical Skill Development	- Emphasis on Advanced Accounting Systems	28, 29
Leadership and Mentorship	- Clear Trajectory toward Leadership	30
	- Focus on Mentorship	

The thematic analysis reveals a rich diversity of aspirations within the field of accountancy, ranging from career exploration and certification focus to global ambitions, entrepreneurial goals, and a commitment to continuous learning and mentorship. The respondents recognize the challenges but express determination, strategic planning, and a focus on personal and professional growth

TABLE 2
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Theme	Sub-Theme	Respondents
Study Habits and Personal Growth	- Importance of study habits	1, 15
	- Breakdowns, setbacks, and resilience	
Experiences as a Catalyst for Self-Reflection	- Struggles and hardships	2, 10, 14
	- Personal development and reevaluation	
Survival of the Fittest Mentality	- Lifelong learning	3
	- Strong skills for well-being	
Educational System and Real-world Readiness	- Flexibility of the educational system	4, 18
	- Preparation for the corporate world	
Building a Foundation for Professionalism	- Deep understanding of the professional field	5, 27
	- Foundation for professionalism	
Leadership, Time Management, and Excellence	- Leadership skills	6
	- Teamwork and time management	
Overcoming Challenges and Doubts	- Questioning commitment	7
	- Drive to overcome challenges	
Evolution of Career Goals	- From high school decision to college obstacles	8, 20
	- Pursuit of excellence	
Impact on Focus and Development	- Non-payment of tuition fee	9, 23, 28
	- Influence of professors	
Knowledge Accumulation and Skill Identification	- Contribution of lectures, discussions, activities	13, 14, 16
	- Identification of skills and preferences	

Positive Influence on Personal and Professional Growth	- Role in personal and professional development	15, 24
	- Academic curriculum and foundational knowledge	
Practical Application and Exposure to Industry	- Real-world case studies and industry insights	25, 26
	- Interaction with academics and professionals	
Inspiration and Insight from Professors	- Professors with diverse backgrounds	28, 29
	- Sharing experiences and mindset development	
Specialization and Career Launch	- Grasping advanced concepts	30
	- Strong foundation in tax theory	

Educational experiences play a crucial role in shaping and influencing career aspirations. Respondents highlight the impact of study habits, personal growth, self-reflection, survival mentality, the flexibility of the educational system, building a foundation for professionalism, leadership development, overcoming challenges, and the evolution of career goals. Additionally, educational experiences are seen as a catalyst for knowledge accumulation, skill identification, practical application, exposure to industry insights, and inspiration from professors, ultimately contributing to personal and professional growth.

TABLE 3
ACCOUNTING SKILLS CONFIDENCE

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Respondents
Enjoyment and Confidence in Management Accounting Skills	Understanding, Analytical Skills	1, 8
Proficiency in Income Taxation	Favorite Subject, Confidence Despite Challenges	2, 14, 18
Familiarization and Understanding of Topics	Recall During Quizzes/Exams	3
Time Management and Organization Skills	Importance in Task Completion, Meeting Deadlines	4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 23
Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills	Critical Thinking, Working Under Pressure	7, 10, 20, 26
Soft Skills and Adaptability	Adaptability, Resilience, Handling New Situations	5, 17, 20, 28
Interest and Enjoyment in Specific Subjects	Law and Taxation, AFAR Subjects, Journalizing Transactions	9, 10, 13, 15, 22
Technical Proficiency and Interest in Accounting Software	Use of Software, Technology Proficiency	9, 21, 28
Budgeting and Financial Management Skills	Budgeting, Financial Statement Analysis	24, 27
Attention to Detail and Technology Use	Attention to Detail, Use of Technology	26, 29, 30
Interest and Competency in Accounting Information Systems	Accounting Information Systems, Managerial Accounting	27
Creative Problem Solving and Research Skills	Creative Problem-Solving, Research, Software Mastery	30

This thematic analysis reveals a diverse range of accounting skills that respondents feel confident and prepared in, ranging from technical skills to soft skills, and from subject-specific knowledge to broader skills like time management and adaptability.

TABLE 4
PERCEIVE YOUR SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

Theme	Sub-Themes	Respondents
Organizational and Detail-Oriented Skills	Organization, Attention to Detail	1, 5, 6, 11, 18, 22, 25, 29
Adaptability and Willingness to Learn	Adaptability, Continuous Learning	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 24
Discipline and Time Management	Discipline, Time Management	3, 4, 8, 12, 23, 28
Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills	Analytical Skills, Problem-Solving	1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20, 26, 30
Interest and Passion in Accounting	Passion, Interest	2, 3, 14, 19, 21
Precision and Attention to Detail	Precision, Attention to Detail	5, 7, 13, 15, 26
Value for Integrity and Ethics	Integrity, Ethics	15, 27
Strategic Planning and Financial Analysis	Strategic Planning, Financial Analysis	26
Reliability and Proactivity	Reliability, Proactivity	25, 27
Self-Reflection and Learning from Experiences	Self-Reflection, Learning from Experiences	28
Interpersonal and Communication Skills	Interpersonal Skills, Communication	15, 27, 30
Leadership and Team Collaboration	Leadership, Team Collaboration	7, 17, 27
Cautious Decision-Making and Critical Thinking	Decision-Making, Critical Thinking	2, 8, 10, 30
Software and Technical Proficiency	Software Proficiency, Technical Skills	9, 21, 28
Budgeting and Financial Management	Budgeting, Financial Management	24, 26
Professional Identity and Value	Professional Identity, Value	7, 27, 28
Concept of Future Role and Contribution	Future Role, Contribution	13, 30

This analysis reveals diverse perspectives on how individuals perceive their skills aligning with their self-concept within the accounting profession. It highlights a range of skills, values, and characteristics that respondents believe are crucial for success in the field of accounting.

TABLE 5
REQUIRES MORE EMPHASIS OR FOCUS

Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Respondents
Emphasis on Fundamental Concepts and Applications	- Strong foundation in fundamental concepts of financial accounting	1, 4, 7, 18, 24
Importance of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	- Critical thinking, analytical skills, and problem-solving abilities	2, 6, 10, 11, 23
Flexible and Real-World	- Advocacy for a flexible educational system	3, 20

Major Theme	Sub-Theme	Respondents
Education System		
Enhancement of Communication and Teamwork Skills	- Developing communication and teamwork skills	5, 6, 15, 27
Practical Application and Hands-On Experience	- Focus on practical application, real-world examples, and hands-on experience	6, 9, 12, 16, 21, 25, 26, 30
Focus on Specific Subjects and Complex Problems	- Prioritizing teaching complex and comprehensive problems	8, 10, 13
Technology and Digital Proficiency	- Proficiency in accounting software, data analytics, and Accounting Information Systems	19, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29
Ethical Decision-Making and Professional Ethics	- Emphasis on ethical decision-making, professional ethics, and values	6, 15, 23, 27
Business Communication Skills	- Emphasis on business communication skills	27
Incorporation of Real-World Scenarios	- Integration of real-world case scenarios, simulations, and case studies into the curriculum for practical learning	15, 22, 23, 30
Focus on Soft Skills Development	- Recognition of the need for more emphasis on soft skill development, including interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence	15
Internships and Real-World Experience	- Stronger focus on real-world experience gained through internships	26
Integration of Emerging Technologies	- Importance of integrating emerging technologies like data analytics and automation	26, 30

This provides an overview of the key areas identified by respondents where more emphasis or focus is needed in accountancy education to better prepare students for the demands of the accounting profession.

TABLE 6
ADAPTING TO CHANGES AND EVOLVING TRENDS

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Respondents
Adaptation Strategies	- Keeping Updated with Standards	1, 24
	- Participation in Learning Activities	2, 7, 30
	- Embracing New Approaches and Technologies	4, 5, 26
	- Understanding the Rationale Behind Changes	3, 13
Perspective on Education	- Dynamic Nature of Accounting	5, 8, 15
	- Continuous Learning and Adaptation	6, 16, 25
	- Prioritizing Areas of Learning	9, 12
Challenges and Areas Needing Attention	- Challenges with Online Resources	7, 17
	- Specific Educational Emphases	8, 19, 21
Lifelong Learning and Growth	- Commitment to Lifelong Learning	17, 28
Soft Skills and Global Awareness	- Soft Skills and Global Awareness	28
Integration of Emerging Technologies	- Integration of Emerging Technologies	26, 30

Respondents highlight the need for proactive adaptation, continuous learning, and a dynamic perspective on education to stay relevant in the evolving accounting field. The integration of emerging technologies and a focus on specific subjects related to technology are emphasized as crucial components of accounting education. Challenges with online resources suggest a need for improved access to information.

TABLE 7
COULD BE ENHANCED FOR THE PROGRAM

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Respondents
Soft Skills Enhancement	Communication, Business Awareness, Resilience, Adaptability	1
Importance of Practical Interactions	Real-world Experience, Practical Exercises	2, 9
Analytical Thinking and Technicalities	Deep Analytical Thinking, Technical Skills, Real-world Case Studies	3
Information Technology Integration	Solid Understanding of Information Technology, Adaptation to Technological Changes	4, 7
Specialized Courses for Current Trends	Specialized Courses Aligned with Trends and Industry Requirements	5, 13, 20, 21, 26
Critique on Retention Policy	Revision of Retention Policy	6
Integration of Tax and Technology Courses	Focus on Tax and Technology-related Subjects	8, 30
Enhancing Practical Application Courses	Real-world Case Studies, Practical Application, Technology Integration	13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 26, 27, 28
Assessment and Improvement of Capabilities	Self-assessment, Identification of Weaknesses and Strengths, Alternative Learning Options	11
Internship and Technological Advancements	Enhancement of Internship, Awareness of Technological Advancements	12
Focus on Practical Skills and Attributes	Practical Skills Development, Ethical Decision-making, Soft Skills	15
Confidence Building and High-Quality Education	Building Confidence, High-Quality Education	25
Real-world Case Studies and Simulations	Increase in Real-world Case Studies, Simulations, Specialized Courses	26, 27
Communication Skills Enhancement	Focus on Communication Skills	29
In-depth Exploration of Tax Codes and Regulations	Exploration of Tax Codes, Regulations, and Case Studies	30

These themes and sub-themes highlight the diverse perspectives of accountancy students regarding the aspects they believe could be enhanced in their education to better align with industry requirements and career goals.

TABLE 8
EDUCATIONAL GAPS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF ACCOUNTANCY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Respondent	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Importance of Students' Feedback	- Insights and Recommendations
2	Two-way Communication Process	- Communication Dynamics
3	Role in Continuous Improvement	- Enhancing Learning Experience

Respondent	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
4	Identification of Areas Needing Improvement	- Strengths and Weaknesses
5	Alignment with Industry Needs	- Relevance to Industry Demands
6	Impact on Curriculum and Teaching Methods	- Curriculum Refinement
7	Student Involvement and Excitement	- Enhancing Engagement
8	Assessment of Professors and Educational Experience	- Professor Evaluation
9	Building a Precise and Structured Curriculum	- Precision in Curriculum
10	Dynamic, Responsive, and Learner-Centered Approach	- Adaptive Approach
11	Identification of Blind Spots	- Enhanced Engagement and Adaptation
12	Collaborative Approach and Effective Learning Strategy	- Collaborative Learning
13	Customized and Efficient Learning Environment	- Modification for Market Relevance
14	Pinpointing Outdated Curriculum Sections	- Relevance of Content
15	Enhancement of Market Relevance and Practical Skills	- Market Relevance and Practical Skills
16	Encouraging Open Sharing of Educational Requirements	- Encouragement for Open Sharing
17	Dynamic Field of Accounting Education	- Merits and Problems of Curriculum
18	Adaptation to Changing Requirements	- Alternative Perspective on Curriculum's Merits and Problems
19	Student Feedback Accuracy	- Personal Experience of Educational Gaps
20	Importance of Students' Voices	- Experienced Difficulties and Need for Improvement
21	Sincerity and Honesty of Student Feedback	- Initial Source of Ideas, Suggestions, and Recommendations
22	Students' Awareness of Gaps in Curriculum	- Identifying Curriculum Gaps
23	Adaptation to Changing Requirements	- Priceless Insights into Educational Experiences
24	Means of Improvement	- Areas Needing Enhancement, Suggestions for Improvement
25	Better Understanding Through Feedback	- Consideration of Concerns, Adjustments, and Improvements in the Program
26	Improvement Through Feedback	- Information About Areas Needing Reinforcement, Modifications
27	Crucial Factor in Elevating Quality	- Insights into Educational Experiences, Areas Needing Improvement
28	Ensuring Relevance and Addressing	- Relevant Curriculum, Real-World Challenges

Respondent	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
	Real-World Challenges	
29	Identification and Voice of Educational Needs	- Detecting Weaknesses and Recommending Improvements
30	Role in Continuous Improvement	- Highlighting Areas Lacking Practical Applications, Adjusting Teaching Methodologies

Students' feedback is perceived as a cornerstone for the continuous improvement of accountancy education programs, facilitating a dialogue between educators and students to address gaps, enhance learning experiences, and align programs with the evolving demands of the accounting profession.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study reflects a nuanced understanding among students of the multifaceted requirements of the accounting profession. The identified themes collectively suggest that a holistic approach to education, encompassing technical knowledge, practical application, soft skills, and adaptability to technological advancements, is essential. Furthermore, the central theme of valuing and incorporating student feedback underscores the importance of a collaborative and responsive educational environment. The insights gathered through these themes provide a comprehensive perspective on the expectations, challenges, and recommendations of students in the field of accountancy education. By addressing these themes, educational institutions can better align their programs with industry requirements, enhance the learning experience for students, and ensure the continuous evolution of accountancy education to meet the dynamic demands of the profession.

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