Recent Development in Accounting Education and Accounting Practice

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Abstract:
The objective of the study is to review the recent development in Accounting education and Accounting practice. The qualitative and library research was employed for the study. The study found that it has been found that the current accounting courses offered by several Nigerian universities are insufficient in meeting the labor market needs. Also found further that there is a significant disparity exists between employers and educators regarding the importance of graduate skills. It is therefore concluded that there should be a stronger relationship and collaboration among accounting practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers are vital for shaping the future of accounting work and determining the type of accounting that will be practiced and studied. The study recommended that it is the responsibility of universities to establish a robust educational foundation for professional accounting training and it is imperative to reintroduce compulsory internship programs before graduation, similar to the practices in other professions like law and medicine.

Keywords: Accounting, Education, Accounting Practice.
1.0 Introduction

The importance of accounting education in advancing economic and social growth has significantly increased. The provision of vital information for the purposes of planning, regulating, and decision-making processes is of utmost importance (Kamala & Esther, 2014). The field of accounting education encompasses the acquisition of information pertaining to the keeping and maintenance of financial records, with a focus on aligning this knowledge with the needs of long-term career trajectories. According to Raef et al. (2014), it is crucial for educational goals to be in line with the ways in which accountants may provide value to businesses. According to Al-Kilani (2000), accounting education in Nigeria has a significant role in promoting both economic and social development. The significance of accounting experts is undeniable; nonetheless, a notable discrepancy exists between the services they actually provide and the expectations that are put upon them. Furthermore, there exists a discrepancy between the educational curriculum in accounting and the demands of the job market, as highlighted by Mohammed (1991). Accordingly, Nassar (2013) suggests that it is incumbent upon higher education institutions to assume the obligation of incorporating contemporary teaching methodologies in order to cultivate proficient accountants who possess the requisite professional competencies.

The economy and the financial markets are where accountants put their expertise to use, so keeping up with changes in the field is crucial. Universities and other educational institutions must adapt their curriculum to guarantee that students are prepared to fulfill society's changing requirements. According to Bahrami-Nasab et al. (2012), in a dynamic setting, the
implementation of a comprehensive curriculum is essential for the efficient education of pupils. A commensurate evolution in education is required given the quick changes in business, economics, science, and technology. To excel in the context of international competition, it is essential for firms to possess a workforce that includes individuals who possess a high level of education and competence (AngayKutluk et al., 2012). Elik and Ecer (2009) emphasized the necessity of reconsidering and adjusting the responsibilities of the accounting profession to conform to the changing dynamics of the corporate world. The success of the accounting role in a company depends heavily on the skills of accountants, who often have to deal with things they didn't expect. It is necessary to offer improvements or updates to accounting education given the increasing relevance and needs of accounting information (AngayKutluk et al., 2012). Albrecht and Sack (2001) say that accounting teachers often don't stay in touch with business professionals, which makes it hard for them to meet market standards. In order to address this disparity and guarantee that accounting education aligns with the requirements of the industry, Collaboration between accounting practitioners and university academics is crucial (AngayKutluk et al., 2012). By cultivating a robust collaboration, both entities may collaborate to cultivate accounting education that is in accordance with practical requirements and industry standards.

There is a rising gap between the accounting industry and accounting schooling right now. This shows that we need to find ways to close this gap and eventually get rid of it. It is imperative for all stakeholders, including accounting professionals, universities, and educators, to collaborate in order to avoid the exacerbation of this disparity and bridge the gap between them (Mashayekhi &
Several significant developments have been highlighted in this context. These include the issuance of the 'Bedford Report' by the American Accounting Association in 1986, the establishment and initiation of operations of the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) in 1990, the formulation of new guidelines for accreditation by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the 'vision project' undertaken by the AICPA, the creation of the education committee within the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), the implementation of continuous professional education requirements by the Association of Chambers of Certified Public Accountants of Turkey (TURMOB), and the development of the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) located in Brussels, Belgium (AngayKutluk et al., 2012). These developments also contribute to addressing the gap between the accounting profession and education.

In contrast, owing to the wide variety of accounting practices, there is no agreement among accountants on how best to teach accounting to undergraduates. According to Mashayekhi and Shafiepor (2012), the main goal of modern accounting procedures is to cultivate accountants who possess the ability to adapt to evolving conditions, proficiently navigate changes, and successfully tackle present-day difficulties. The proliferation of accounting and financial rules has necessitated the acquisition of competency in these areas by both students and professionals. Students and professionals must become proficient in accounting and financial rules since they have become more numerous. There has been an increased level of interest in accounting education shown by accounting organizations, such as the European Higher Education Area and
the Bologna Process (Montano et al., 2010). The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) advocates for the implementation of a comprehensive skill development program that underscores the significance of cultivating a range of abilities among accounting professionals. This program places particular emphasis on the acquisition of communication, collaboration, leadership, solving issues, analytical, and interpersonal skills, which are deemed essential for success in the ever-changing economic environment (AngayKutluk et al., 2012). Given how important accounting education is to economic growth and how important high-quality accounting is, professional accounting education needs clear standards and goals.

Furthermore, the accounting system's capacity to provide accurate and transparent financial accounts is directly related to the efficacy of its results. The effectiveness of the system is contingent upon the implementation of a secure accounting procedure, efficient management practices, and proper policies. The field of accounting education serves as the fundamental basis for cultivating proficient individuals who possess the necessary skills to accurately assess and effectively communicate economic occurrences. Additionally, it equips them with the ability to provide pertinent information that aids in the process of making informed decisions. The aforementioned need entails the training and certification of accountants, ensuring they possess the requisite knowledge and professional competencies to effectively carry out their responsibilities. The attainment of this objective is contingent upon factors such as education, curriculum design, and the cultivation of skills. The accounting industry is under increasing pressure to adapt to the ever-evolving corporate landscape brought about by globalization and technological advances in information and communication. The organization must effectively
respond to the demands presented by these novel conditions to improve openness, disclosure, and accountability, and maintain the excellence of its outcomes.

The four phases of accounting thinking are technical or professional, academic, information system, and social responsibility. In light of the current state of social duty, accounting education must keep up with the latest trends and needs of the field. Consequently, the article has been organized into several parts. The first part functions as the introductory portion, while Sections two, three, four, and five contain the conceptual review, empirical reviews, findings, and suggestions, respectively.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Accounting Education

Authors and writers have offered contradictory and varying definitions of accounting education. Accounting education is widely recognized as a structured and regulated process overseen mostly by reputable institutions, notably universities (Eze, 2020). This procedure facilitates the acquisition of foundational information and crucial scientific and practical competencies required for the accounting vocation. Eze (2020) posits that accounting education need to priorities the fulfilment of labour market requirements via the provision of competent and extensively educated professionals. These individuals would be capable of making meaningful contributions to the economic and social development initiatives undertaken by nations. This definition underscores the need of graduates having practical experience, specialized skills, and comprehensive knowledge in the domain of accounting and auditing in order to meet the
demands of the job market. Accounting education endeavors to fulfill the requirements of the labour market by equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to become proficient professionals capable of effectively adjusting to fluctuations in the business landscape (Adekunle & Udechukwu, 2018).

The relevance of accounting education stems from the intrinsic value of accounting as a discipline and its possible societal advantages within its operational context. Key features of accounting education encompass the provision of comprehensive accounting knowledge to prepare and certify accounting personnel, the facilitation of continuous professional development for accounting practitioners across diverse economic sectors, the identification of programme and training requirements to address the challenges faced by economic entities, and the enhancement of the accounting profession through the creation of contemporary scientific curricula (Eze, 2020; (Adekunle & Udechukwu, 2018).

2.2 Accounting Practice

This presumption is crucial to accounting since it serves as the foundation for calculating the value of the assets included in any organization's balance sheet. The European Commission, in its 2008 publication, strongly encourages the implementation of accounting practices for the successful management of entities of all sizes, with a special focus on the identification and avoidance of fraud and theft inside the organization. The methodical process of documenting a company entity's ongoing financial transactions is part of accounting practice ((Adekunle & Udechukwu, 2018).
The generation of legally required yearly financial statements is a critical need for companies. Organizations possess the capacity to choose among diverse accounting methodologies, although they are obligated to conform to prescribed guidelines (Obi, & Adeyemi, 2020). The term "Generally Accepted Accounting Principles" (GAAP) pertains to a universally recognized and standardized collection of accounting principles, rules, and protocols that are established and disseminated by the Financial Accounting rules Board (FASB). In the United States, public corporations are required to adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) when their accountants undertake the preparation of their financial statements(Eze, 2020).

2.3 The Issues of Accounting Education in Nigeria

The current discourse centers on identifying the key entity accountable for cultivating optimal human capacity within the accounting profession, a matter that has generated public conversation. There is a viewpoint held by some persons that educational institutions, particularly universities, should play a central and influential role(Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria [ICAN],2021). On the other, an opposing viewpoint suggests that complete authority over the topic should be vested in professional accounting groups. However, it is widely acknowledged that both institutions and professionals in accounting have significant responsibilities to fulfil (Anoa, 2009; ICAN, 2021). The university has the obligation of creating a strong academic framework that enables graduate accountants to excel, therefore maximizing the advantages gained from the technical competence training and practical experience offered by accounting professionals who serve as teachers.
The B.Sc. degree programme in accounting often has a tendency to concentrate mostly on fundamental accounting subjects. In addition, it has been noted that the curriculum in accounting programmes are not regularly revised to align with the changing demands of the corporate environment (Anoa, 2009; Okoye, 2019). There is a recent phenomenon whereby university degree curricula seem to be affected by the curriculum of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) (ICAN, 2021). The aforementioned phenomenon has the capacity to compromise the fundamental objective of a university degree, namely to provide a comprehensive and diverse education. As a result, students sometimes allocate a significant portion of their undergraduate years to the preparation of ICAN tests, therefore diverting their focus from the comprehensive B.Sc. curriculum. One other concern about the constrained breadth of accounting curriculum is to the inadequate integration of courses pertaining to ethics, financial management, and corporate governance. Given the prevalence of global financial crises and large company failures blamed on ineffective auditing and financial management practices (Osisioma, 2010; Anao, 2009; Albrech et al, 2006), this gap is cause for serious worry. In a similar vein, the structure of the curriculum as it is now implemented does not provide sufficient exposure to courses in information and communication technology (ICT). These courses are crucial for students to be able to meet the contemporary issues that are involved in the delivery of accounting services.

One notable drawback of the degree is its deficiency in providing opportunities for actual job experience, which was initially intended to be facilitated via the inclusion of an industrial attachment component in the curriculum. Due to the challenges associated in procuring industrial
attachment jobs for the growing population of accounting students, several universities have opt to discontinue the previous requirement of mandatory industrial attachment experience for accounting graduates. The absence of industry attachment training for accounting students in universities significantly contributes to employers' scepticism about the technical proficiency of newly graduated accounting professionals. The amount of funding that a university has available ultimately determines its capacity to provide high-quality education. Funding is necessary to enhance the educational infrastructure and facilitate the recruitment and retention of highly qualified instructors. The issue of inadequate financing is particularly pronounced among accounting departments, mostly due to universities' failure to effectively compete with industry in attracting a scarce pool of highly skilled and experienced accountants inside the nation. Certain educators start their first professional engagement with an academic institution and then transition to the private sector, driven by the pursuit of more lucrative compensation arrangements. If universities were provided with sufficient financing and appropriate compensation packages, the opposite outcome would have been expected.

3.0 Theoretical and Empirical review

Recently, there have been a number of discussions on the apparent gap between classroom accounting instruction and professional practise. Additionally, it is thought that traditional accounting programmes provided by colleges place more of an emphasis on getting students ready for professional certification tests than they do on transferring information or promoting the development of professional skills (Albrecht & Sack, 2000; Cheng, 2002). According to
Inaliah et al (2016), there is a discrepancy both employers and educators in their perceptions of the importance of graduate skills. Employers strongly encourage graduates to gain information at a rapid speed, especially in the context of jobs in accounting. On the contrary, educators argue that there exists an undue reliance on memorization-based learning within the realm of accounting education.

In order to debate the probable future of accountancy work and the changing character of the sector, James (2016) emphasized the need for better communication and collaboration among accounting practitioners, policymakers, and academic scholars. In the study conducted by Laughing (2011), the accounting profession was classified into three primary components, namely policy, practice, and research. The author emphasized the importance of professional accounting organisations in promoting discussions about the changing nature of accounting and in disseminating academic research results to professionals in the field. Nevertheless, it has been noted that these organisations have shown a slow response in adjusting to the rapid progressions in communication technology.

According to Mohamed (1991), it is argued that the existing accounting programmes are inadequate in preparing graduates to meet the future requirements of the labour market. The author outlined a range of issues that are encountered in the field of accounting education in Nigeria. Mahmoud (1998) asserts that the establishment of formal regulations and standards for the accounting and auditing profession is subject to the effect of several elements, including the surrounding environment, societal dynamics, political forces, and economic conditions. In contrast, Ali and Ahmed (2007) argued that the absence of effective coordination between
accounting education and accounting services poses a significant obstacle to the advancement of the accounting profession. The authors hypothesized that this disparity may lead to a slowdown in the progress of the discipline. According to Sayed (1994), it is important to engage in scientific study within the accounting area in order to promote the progress of accounting education and practice.

Joyce, Nga, and Soo (2013) conducted a research whereby they observed that students had a favorable perception of accountants in terms of attributes such as governance, professionalism, and ethical principles. Nevertheless, the impact of these characteristics on the function of accountants as agents of change shown variability. The position of accountants is favorably influenced by major aspects such as leadership and professionalism. Conversely, it was shown that ethical ideals not only lacked a substantial influence but were also discovered to have a detrimental correlation.

In order to learn more about how major businesses felt about the cooperation between educators and practitioners while creating accounting classes, Curuk and Dogan (2002) undertook a poll of those organizations. The researchers also examined the expectations of businesses on the necessary level and substance of accounting programs for students. Based on the findings, a significant proportion of managers inside firms reported keen interest in engaging in collaborative efforts with educators to influence the content and structure of accounting curricula. It was felt by proponents that students who were to be engaged by these organizations were to possess a holistic comprehension of several domains, including general accounting, corporate accounting, cost accounting, computerized accounting, financial statement analysis,
and tax legislation. According to AngayKutluk et al. (2012), these factors were deemed to be of significant importance.

The emphasis of Zaif and Ayanoglu’s 2007 study was on the accounting courses that Turkish universities’ business administration faculties provided. The researchers put out the suggestion that the curriculum must incorporate Financial Accounting, Auditing, Risk Management, and Internal Control, alongside Professional Ethics, due to their substantial relevance to the field of accounting. According to their results, the majority of the suggested lessons were definitely included in the curriculum. Nevertheless, the proportion of accounting classes that formed the Business Administration coursework was just 14%, a quantity that was considered insufficient to adequately address the practical requirements for students (AngayKutluk et al., 2012).

4.0 Conclusion

The primary reason for the collapse of the accounting profession in Nigeria is the incompatibility of the accounting courses offered by Nigerian institutions with the demands of the labour market. Moreover, it is important to underscore that the significance of the accounting profession in society relies on the efficient alignment of accounting education, accounting research, and the requirements of the labour market. This perspective is consistent with the argument made by James (2016) that fostering a greater alliance and cooperation amongst accounting professionals, policymakers, and academic scholars is crucial in setting the trajectory of accounting practise and research.
Numerous Nigerian colleges now offer accounting programs, however, it has been shown that these programs fall short of what is required by the labor market. Inaliah et al. (2016) provide evidence for this concept and propose that there is a notable discrepancy between both educators and employers in their perceptions of the significance of graduate skills. Employers urge for an accelerated learning method in the context of accounting jobs, but educators contend that excessive dependence on rote memory impedes the progress of accounting education. Additionally, the research emphasizes that differences in accounting curriculum between institutions have a role in the discrepancies seen in accounting practices.

According to Panayiotis and Charalambos (2015), those who possess an innate interest in accounting tend to have more positive views towards both the course itself and the accounting profession, in contrast to those who do not possess such interest.

5.0 Recommendations

A number of workable techniques might be suggested based on the previously mentioned worries, constraints, and limits in order to successfully solve the issues and improve the effectiveness of accounting practices. The establishment of a strong educational framework for accounting professionals' training is within the purview of universities. In order to effectively accomplish this objective, it is essential for institutions to endeavor toward the establishment of reputable accounting degree programs. The Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree programs have to be all-encompassing, including a wide range of courses that provide students with a robust theoretical and philosophical comprehension. This will sufficiently equip them for the diverse
array of responsibilities they may assume in the contemporary economy upon completion of their studies.

As a result, there's a pressing need to expand educational opportunities in areas including business administration, entrepreneurship, mathematics, ethics, finance, corporate governance, and applied economics. By incorporating these courses into the curriculum, students will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in administrative roles and fulfill fundamental academic research obligations. Prior to graduation, it is also essential to reinstitute programmes that are required to complete an internship, much as they are in fields such as medicine and law. This policy will help graduates of accounting programmes stay connected to the field. The lack of focus on the development of the skills required to manage the accounting challenges faced by small businesses, which make up a large percentage of firms in Nigeria (Uche, 2010; Kear, 1981; Ezejelue, 1976; and Inanga, 1976), is a significant flaw in both university accounting curricula and professional accounting training programmes. Given the present circumstances, it is imperative to reevaluate the accounting curriculum with the aim of including specialized courses that cater to the unique accounting requirements of small enterprises, particularly those operating as sole proprietorships. Universities have the potential to greatly enhance the career prospects for graduated accountants in Nigeria by actively cultivating expertise in small company accounting.

In order to rectify the previously stated issue of an insufficient staff-to-student ratio, it is essential for accounting departments to endeavor to maintain a staff-to-student ratio of 1:30, as suggested by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for undergraduate accounting programs. One potential approach to facilitate the attainment of this target with relative
simplicity would be implementing a substantial reduction in the total number of students admitted. Nevertheless, while taking into consideration the substantial demand for enrollment in accounting programs, decreasing the number of students admitted is not a preferable resolution. Alternatively, a recommended strategy is augmenting the tutorial staff by providing more appealing remuneration packages and research grants to accounting instructors at higher education institutions. It is also recommended that accounting instructors maintain membership in at least one professional accounting organisation. There are several benefits associated with affiliating oneself with such organisations. Professional organisations often coordinate Mandatory Continuing Professional Education (MCPE) lectures for its members. Participating in these seminars facilitates the continuous professional development of lecturers by enabling them to be abreast of the most recent advancements in the area of accounting. Furthermore, these seminars provide professors the chance to deliver presentations and subsequently have their scholarly articles published. Nevertheless, the act of acquiring membership in professional accounting organisations entails some expenses, which might potentially deter certain educators from pursuing such affiliations. In order to enhance membership rates, it is recommended that universities provide funds to cover the expenses associated with academic staff memberships or establish a mutually beneficial cost-sharing agreement. In order to enhance staff development, it is recommended that accounting lecturers engage in collaborative efforts with accounting businesses, commercial organisations, and colleagues from other academic institutions during periods of holidays, sabbaticals, and research leaves.
Furthermore, it is recommended that the university administration take the initiative to provide in-service training sessions for instructors who need enhancement in their teaching methodologies. To prepare students for a variety of work prospects after graduation, accounting education should put a strong emphasis on teaching them three key characteristics. Anao (2009) posits that there exists an interconnection among three key attributes: education, skill development, and a positive work attitude. The university should place a high priority on giving students a solid foundation in accounting that they may build on to get more technical and professional proficiency via specialized training.

References


