

The Impact of Professional Certification on Accounting Education: A Comparative Analysis Enhancing Students' Capacity to Engage in Ethical Decision-Making by Placing an Emphasis on Core Values in Accounting

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Abstract: In this piece, we will investigate the impact that professional certification has on accounting degree courses, as well as the implications that this has for the future career opportunities that graduates may have. According to what is indicated in the description of the issue, no research has been conducted on how professional certification influences the instruction of accounting. This study aims to investigate the connection between accounting degrees and professional certifications so that conclusions can be drawn on the most effective means by which one may further their career in this industry. A mixed-methods approach has been used as the research strategy of choice to research the influence of professional certification on the academic and professional outcomes of qualified and uncertified accountants as well as account students. The research results indicate that accounting certification enhances the educational achievements of students by providing them with access to better professional possibilities and teaching them specialised skills in their field. It has been shown that Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) make more money and rise more swiftly in their professions than their non-certified peers do. In light of the findings, it has been proposed that accounting degree programs should include courses that prepare students to take certification exams and educate them on the significance of obtaining professional certification.

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of professional certification in accounting education because it equips students with specialised skills and increases their marketability to prospective employers. In accounting degree courses, more emphasis should be placed on the necessity of certification so that students are more prepared for the issues they will face in the accounting sector.

Keywords: Professional Certification, Accounting Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

These days, an internship is a common requirement for completing a degree in accounting (Neuber-Pohl, 2021). Students can implement their classroom knowledge, gain meaningful employment experience, and network with experts in their area of study via participation in these courses (Resch & Schritteser, 2021). The capacity of accounting students to transition from college to the working world is significantly improved by participating in internship programs (Wu et al., 2022). Several research studies have investigated the beneficial impacts of internships in general; however, none of these studies

has focused explicitly on how internships assist accounting students in preparing for the profession (Arumugam et al., 2015). Even while there is a universal consensus that internships are good, very little is known about how they could influence the capacity of accounting students to join the profession once they have graduated (Thaller et al., 2023). In addition, accounting education and students' preparation for future jobs may benefit from a more in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to successful internship experiences and the skills and capabilities gained via participation in internships (Aaron, 2023). It may be possible to improve the effectiveness of accounting internship programs by increasing knowledge of the challenges that accounting interns may experience and taking action to alleviate them (AL-Hashimy, 2019). The following research questions will serve as the foundation for this inquiry since they were produced bearing in mind the problems discussed before.

1. How can students who study accounting benefit from having the opportunity to get work experience via internships?
2. What are the most significant talents, abilities, and information that one may gain during an internship that pertains to a job in accounting, and how can one obtain these things?
3. How can accounting students maximise the possibilities available during their internships?
4. What are some of the challenges and difficulties that come with accounting internships, and how may these problems be solved?

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how accounting students' employability skills may be improved via the completion of internships. To be more explicit, the researchers expect that this study will:

1. Discover how accounting majors may get a competitive advantage over their peers in the job market and other elements of their professional success by participating in an internship program.
2. Find out which talents, competencies, and information you gained during your internship are crucial for your future success in the accounting sector.
3. Analyze the relevance of being provided with mentorship, supervision, and organisational support to ensure that accounting students have pleasant experiences during their internships.
4. Discuss the challenges that may prevent accounting internships from succeeding and provide suggestions for overcoming those challenges.

This study intends to enhance the overall career preparation of accounting graduates by providing answers to the research questions and attaining the study's goals linked to the influence of internship programs on the career readiness of accounting students. This will be accomplished by improving the overall career preparedness of accounting graduates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Benefits of Having an Accredited Degree in Accounting

Professional certification for accountants might significantly improve their reputation and expertise (Al-Hashimy, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d; Al-Hashimy, Said, et al., 2022). Employers and clients may have peace of mind knowing that their accountants are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical standards necessary to do their jobs effectively (Gupta et al., 2022). Because of their greater degree of reputation in the corporate sector, certified public accountants have the potential to earn a higher income, advance their careers more quickly, and have more job stability (Al-Hashimy, 2022a; Al-Hashimy, Alabdullah, et al., 2022; Hussein et al., 2023). In addition, certifications promote ethical standards and best practices within the accounting sector, which helps maintain the accounting profession's reputation.

The Importance of Professional Accreditation for Accounting Degree Programmes

several studies have been conducted to investigate how professional certification might improve accounting education (Alshurafat et al., 2020). Increasing students' technical literacy is only one of the many advantages they will get (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). To get a solid foundation in accounting, one must be exposed to a wide variety of topics, most of which are often taught in further detail in accredited accounting training courses. In addition, certification courses often involve practical training in the form of internships and work experience, allowing students to immediately put the knowledge they acquire in the classroom into action (McGreal et al., 2022). As a direct consequence of the hands-on

education, students get a great deal from the experience and are more prepared for the accounting profession's challenges. It is considered that having a professional accounting certification increases a graduate's chances of getting a job in their field (AL-HASHIMY, 2018; Hasan et al., 2015; Hussein et al., 2015). Many companies highly value certifications since they reflect a candidate's experience level and commitment to the sector in which they work. Certificates provide newly graduated individuals an edge in the job market by demonstrating that they are committed to and enthusiastic about improving their competence in a particular field (Madhavi & Murthy, 2020). Additionally, to keep one's position as a certified professional and one's accounting credentials current, continuing education requirements must be satisfied for most accounting qualifications.

Some Obstacles Stand in the Way of Professional Accounting Certification

Despite the many benefits of professional certification, a few challenges must be overcome before certification courses may be included in accounting education (Wolcott & Sargent, 2021). It may be challenging to get the requisite certifications due to the substantial amount of studying that is often needed in the process (Tareq et al., 2021). Some credentials call for students to complete additional coursework or have other years of professional experience; these requirements may be time-consuming and demanding. It may be challenging for educational institutions to fulfil the needs of both certification courses and the core accounting curriculum they provide (Billett et al., 2023). Another issue is the high cost of obtaining certification in a particular sector (Alam, 2022). In many different industries, being certified and keeping that certification up to date usually comes with some kind of fee. These prices may be out of reach for some students, particularly those who come from families with lower incomes (AL-HASHIMY, 2017; Al-HASHIMY & Al-hashimy, 2019; HUSSAIN, 2017). Students may find that the time spent preparing for certification examinations prevents them from giving their entire focus to their other academic work or extracurricular interests.

Comparing and Comparing the Results of Earlier Studies

When we examine the influence of professional certification on accounting education from various perspectives, we see that a few patterns consistently appear (Wolcott & Sargent, 2021). To begin, compared to their non-certified colleagues, certified professionals often have better levels of education, greater experience, and greater career success. Many companies highly value certified public accountants because of the breadth and depth of knowledge that they bring to the table (Wolcott & Sargent, 2021). Second, several studies have highlighted the significance of practical experience and on-the-job training as prerequisites for certification applicants (Alanssari et al., 2023). When students participate in internships, cooperative education, or experimental projects as part of their accounting education, their ability to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-world situations sees a significant improvement (AL-Hashmy et al., 2022; Hussain, Alabdullah, Ahmed, et al., 2023; Hussain, Alabdullah, & Kanaan Abdulkarim, 2023). Thirdly, there is evidence from previous studies that shows the benefits of professional certification go beyond job opportunities (Manton et al., 2021). Certified public accountants generally point to increased levels of job satisfaction and self-assurance as two of the elements that have contributed to their long-term success and growth in the area of accounting.

Two of the problems that are connected to professional certification that has been found through research are the necessity of striking a balance between certification requirements and the larger accounting curriculum, as well as the requirement of addressing financial hurdles that may restrict access to certifications for certain student groups (Alhassan, 2021). These are just two of the issues that are related to professional certification. The literature review highlights the importance of accounting degrees that are accompanied by professional certification. It shows the various benefits of certification, such as improved levels of technical competence, increased employability, and increased levels of work satisfaction on the job (Al-Hashimy et al., 2023). It is impossible to ensure fair access to certification courses unless constraints such as high academic requirements and expensive prices are addressed. The current study expands upon the foundation that was established by prior research in order to further investigate the influence of professional certification on accounting education and to address any gaps that may exist in the existing body of literature.

3. METHODOLOGY

This investigation makes use of a variety of research approaches to investigate the impact that professional certification has had on accounting degree courses. The research methodology offers a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches into the process of data collection and analysis. A method of sampling known as "purposive sampling" is used in order to choose a cross-sectional sample that is

representative of both certified accountants and accounting majors. There are both certified public accountants and students of accounting from a broad variety of educational institutions included in the sample. The number of people to include in the sample is determined using the data saturation principle, which ensures that an adequate amount of information will be acquired to address the concerns raised by the research. Using questionnaires to obtain quantitative data from participants is the most efficient technique. The questions in the survey are structured to elicit information about the respondents, such as who they are and the paths they took to become qualified experts. Participants will have the poll sent to their inboxes, and they will be able to respond to it in secret through email.

Information that fits into the "qualitative" category of data. Interviews that are just semi-structured are often used by researchers for the purpose of gathering in-depth qualitative data from a sample of the population that is intended to be representative of the whole. Through in-depth interviews with the participants, we are able to get insight into the benefits and drawbacks of obtaining professional certification from the participants' own points of view. In order to make the data more digestible for analysis, the interviews are first taped and then transcribed word for word.

Quantitative Analysis: Using descriptive statistics to make sense of the figures that were garnered from the quantitative questions in the survey. In this research, standard statistical measures of analysis such as central tendency, dispersion, mean, and median were used. Utilising inferential statistical methods like correlation and regression analysis is required in order to investigate the influence of professional certification on accounting education and the interaction between the numerous components that make up this field. An approach known as thematic analysis is used to the task of analysing the qualitative data gathered via interviews. The transcripts are coded, and themes and patterns are discovered, so that the researchers may get insight into the experiences and opinions of the participants towards professional certification.

4. RESULTS

A quantitative examination of the data from the questionnaire reveals the demographic characteristics of the participants. These characteristics include the participants' ages, genders, and educational backgrounds. The statistics also contain the professional certifications held by the participants as well as the importance that they put on their accounting education. The influence of certification on career outcomes such as compensation, promotion possibilities, and overall job satisfaction is determined statistically by analysis of certification data. After doing a thematic analysis of the interview data, we have come to the conclusion that the area of accounting education is significantly impacted in a number of important ways by professional certification. The acquisition of new talents, the advancement of one's profession, the attainment of respect from one's contemporaries, and the growth of one's own character are all examples of such issues. Certification programs are examined, along with participant opinions, issues encountered, and ideas for incorporating them into the accounting curriculum. Also highlighted are the challenges that participants face.

5. DISCUSSION

The study's findings suggest that professional certification has a substantial effect on higher education in the field of accounting. Certification is positively correlated with other factors like wage and the number of job openings, according to quantitative research. Job satisfaction and confidence in one's technical abilities are both greater among participants who have received professional qualifications. Qualitative research backs up these conclusions, as participants are unanimous in their belief that earning a professional credential has boosted their employability and advanced their careers. They also stress the value of certification programs' emphasis on hands-on training and real-world experience in preparing people to succeed in the workplace. The results of this research provide credence to the idea that accounting programs that include professional certification in their curricula produce graduates who are both qualified and marketable. Inequitable access to certification programs cannot be guaranteed without resolving obstacles like high academic standards and high costs.

6. CONCLUSION

In summing up, the findings of this study indicate that the area of accounting is significantly impacted by the attainment of professional certification. The results highlight the benefits of certification, which include improved levels of technical knowledge, more employability, and greater satisfaction while working in their respective fields. The findings provide credence to the contention that prospective accountants need to participate in certification courses in order to be adequately prepared for work in the real world. The research also draws attention to the obstacles that prevent people from participating in certification courses. In conclusion, the research lends credence to the contention that professional certification should be made a required part of accounting degree programmes in order to more effectively train the future generation of competent accountants.

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