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Generic Skills in Accounting Education

in Saudi Arabia

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Accountancy

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Abstract

This study examines the development of generic skills in the Saudi Arabian accounting education. The lack of generic skills among accounting graduates is an issue of ongoing concern as the gaps between the needs of employers and the skills of graduates hinders the economic development in Saudi Arabia. This concern over the development of generic skills in accounting education in Saudi Arabia provided the motivation for this study.

Based on International Education Standards (IES) 3 and 4, this study examined five categories of generic skills: intellectual, personal, organizational and business management, interpersonal and communication, and ethics. Further, using Bui and Porter’s (2010) theoretical framework, the study assessed within-group constraints gap of three stakeholder groups (final year students, accounting graduates and educators), and the factors hindering the development of generic skills (i.e. constraining factors). The within-group expectation-performance gap of employers and between-group comparisons of the expectation gap and performance gap (educators vs. employers) were also explored. Finally, this study compared the expectation gap and performance gap between groups (students, graduates, employers, educators). Interviews and survey questionnaires were used to collect the data for the perceptions of the four stakeholder groups in Saudi Arabia.

The results show that all stakeholders considered all generic skills as important for accounting graduates to be successful in employment with ethical skills being rated as most important. In addition, they perceived that graduates should acquire a reasonably high level of competence in all five skills categories. The stakeholder groups believed the level of competence that have been acquired by graduates is lower than the level of competence that should be acquired suggesting that there were constraints gap and expectation-performance gap. This finding indicates that accounting education in Saudi Arabia is not producing graduates with the competencies needed in the workplaces. A number of constraints were found to have hindered the development of generic skills in accounting education and they were mostly institutional related (e.g., content oriented curriculum; large class sizes and insufficient time), and student related (e.g., students’ own motivation and lack of ability).

This study contributes to the literature on generic skills in non-western nations, where not much of the current literature is focused on. The results provided evidence of skills gaps, highlighted
areas of concern in the Saudi graduates’ skill development in accounting education and had implications for the human capital of the nation. Some suggestions for improving graduates’ skills development were provided.
Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAOIFI</td>
<td>Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AECC</td>
<td>Accounting Education Change Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACNRS</td>
<td>ACNielsen Research Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICPA</td>
<td>American Institute of Certified Public Accountants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AACSB</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAGE</td>
<td>Australian Association of Graduate Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCPA</td>
<td>Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Certified Public Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAAP</td>
<td>Generally Accepted Accounting Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAU</td>
<td>King Abdulaziz University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFUPM</td>
<td>King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFU</td>
<td>King Faisal University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKU</td>
<td>King Khalid University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSU</td>
<td>King Saud University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Higher Education Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICAA</td>
<td>Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAESB</td>
<td>International Accounting Education Standards Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IES</td>
<td>International Education Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAC</td>
<td>International Federation of Accountants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRS</td>
<td>International Financial Reporting Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAMU</td>
<td>Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZICA</td>
<td>New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBM</td>
<td>Organizational and Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMU</td>
<td>Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNU</td>
<td>Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESA</td>
<td>Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>Saudi Accounting Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMA</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCPA</td>
<td>Saudi Organisation for Certified Public Accountants</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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<td>WFB</td>
<td>World Fact Book</td>
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