

Ethical Issues & Accounting Education

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Abstract

The accounting profession has been under intense scrutiny since the corporate scandals involving Enron and WorldCom. The Code of Ethics and the standards have had to be re-examined as to their validity. The study examined whether State Universities merely meet the minimum ethics requirements set forth by their accreditation agencies, and are they offering additional courses in ethics that would enable the students to satisfy the requirements set by the states in order to become a licensed CPA. A second part of the study examined the presentation of the ethics courses. The key data that was examined was the number of ethics hours that the accreditation agency required, the number of hours the schools required for graduation, whether the classes were integrated or stand-alone or a combination of both and whether the universities were meeting the requirements set forth by the states for CPA certification. The findings show, that the universities were merely meeting the requirements set forth by the accreditation agency and many of the schools were not offering the necessary classes to prepare the students for certification. The challenge is to have the accreditation agencies align with the AICPA in regards to the number of ethics hours that are required and then mandate that the schools amend the curriculum to meet these demands.

Key words: accounting issues, ethics, accreditation requirements, and accounting curriculum

Introduction

The professional ethic standards and practices play crucial role in today's business world of accounting practices and financial reporting. They are the principle and the core foundation of all businesses, at least from the guiding principles of accounting governing bodies and setters' perspectives. In the recent years, the accounting professional has not received reputable image because of the continuing corruptions, litigations, and allegations of unethical conduct of top executives and accounting firms worldwide. Accounting practices in the United States has been discredited by the public for the internal accounting corruptions that caused many financial disasters from large public traded companies within the last decade. As a result, the accounting ethics and standards have been re-examined and questioned by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountant (AICPA) and other important government bodies whether accountants follow the Code of Professional Conduct that set by AICPA appropriately.

Brown et al. (2007) believe that there were only small number of management teams and accountants fail to meet the accounting and financial reports standard. The business press has blamed the business academics for failing to educate students with relevant skills and ethical behavior (Cohen & Holder-Webb, 2006). The magnitude of trust by the public has become tarnished each day. The AICPA and many other current large accounting firms have tried to elevate the public trust and confidence in the American capital market by promoting various image enhancements (Labaton, 2002, as cited in Brown et al., 2007).

However, it appears that this was not the case in the last decade for some American corporations because there have been as many as 10 to 15 large corporations in which have violated the basic principles of accounting practice, the accounting code of ethics, including Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat, Tyco, HealthSouth, Qwest, H&R Block, AIG, and Global Crossing (Flegm, 2005). At the present time, the accounting profession is still suffering from a lack of competence and credibility at the highest levels in the U.S. history of accounting practices. Prior to the implementation of Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2002, the general public has displaced overwhelming negative perception toward the work quality of accountants within the public traded sectors. Today, many CPAs in public sector find themselves dealing with many challenging ethical dilemmas (Knapp & Knapp, 2004). On the other hand, some professionals refuse to acknowledge that there were possibility that accountants from the above cases made professional error, but instead they see themselves or the accounting profession as victims when confronted by unethical behavior, incompetence, and allegations of negligence (Brown & Perry, 2006). In addition, accounting educators and academic community in the United States have been criticized by the public, educational observers, and other educators for providing very little or no additional ethical education within accounting curriculum (Williams, 2002). Therefore, it is crucial to examine whether or not State Universities provide enough ethical education courses within their current accounting program and curriculum in the United States. This study focuses mainly on the State public universities in 50 states rather than large universities, which includes private institutions.

Problem Background

Few would argue that accounting ethics instruction is an integral part of accounting education. Some States require ethics course be taken before a candidate can be approved to sit for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam. For example, State of Texas requires that CPA candidates complete 3 credit hours in ethics while Maine requires that all candidates complete 15 semester hours in auditing and ethics. Alternately the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the accreditation board for both Texas and Maine requires only 3 semester hours in ethics for a board approved accounting program. This poses an interesting dilemma for accredited accounting programs in Maine. Should the goal of ethics instruction be to prove students with the 15 semester hours that are required in order to sit for the CPA exam or should the goal be to meet the bare minimum ethics instruction hours that are required in order to be accredited program?

Purpose

The purpose of this study will be to determine if accredited accounting programs of State universities in the United States are meeting the minimum requirement of accreditation agency in ethics instruction or if the universities are choosing to offer the extra ethics instruction that students are required to complete before sitting for the CPA exam. In addition, this study will examine the manner in which ethics instruction is provided within the accounting curriculums of the universities under examination. At the present time, ethics instruction is offer in one of three manners: (1) integration throughout the accounting curriculum; (2) stand-alone courses in ethics; and (3) a sandwich approach that provides both integration and stand-alone courses (Haas, 2005).

Research Questions

The first research question concerns the number of semester or quarter hours of ethics instruction required in accredited accounting programs by each State university. Do state universities in the United States merely meet the minimum requirements of the CPA examine and accreditation agency or do they seek to provide extra ethics instruction that each Accountancy Board requires for CPA candidates?

The second research question concerns the manner in which ethics instruction is being incorporated within the accounting curriculum. Are universities integrating ethics throughout their already existing course offerings or are they offering stand-alone courses in ethics?

The third research question assesses relationship between the requirements of local Accounting Board for CPA examines and Accreditation agency's requirements have on the establishment of each State Funded university accounting program. Do universities offer ethic course because of accreditation requirements or do they offer extra ethic courses because they want to establish an excellent accounting program and prepare students for the CPA examine?

Limitations and Delimitations

One of the limitations of the study can be that not all states have an Ethics requirement to sit for the CPA exam. In such states, do the Universities teach Ethics? It would be difficult for the State Universities to push for a required class to cover a topic that is not a requirement for licensing. State Universities normally do not have the ability to change the curriculum without prior approval from the State Education Department and in addition, many have limited budgets which also do not allow for these changes to be made if not mandated. Another limitation of the study is that in the schools where Ethics is integrated into the normal curriculum are the professors actually spending time on the importance of the subject or are they just allowing the students to read the subject matter in the text book? And are these professors doing their students justice? In the classes where Ethics is integrated, what mechanism is in place to monitor whether the students are actually receiving the equivalent of the required hours to meet the requirements to be eligible for the CPA examine? In addition, if Ethics is integrated into the normal curriculum, is it included in each class or only in Auditing? The most difficult limitation would be getting accurate information from the Universities and the Professors as to the number of hours of Ethics that is being taught.

Importance

This study will be important to both universities and students in that it will show whether universities in states where accreditation requirements for accounting ethics instruction differs from CPA exam requirements aim for the bare minimum requirements or set their goals at a level which will prepare their students to sit for the CPA exam. In addition, it will examine the method of incorporating ethics within the accounting curriculum and provide a comparison of the effectiveness of those methods. Hopefully, this study will be an eye-opener for universities who too often loose sight the needs of their most important stakeholders, the students. This information could also prove invaluable for both potential and existing accounting students and accounting educators as well.

Literature Review

In this chapter, we will provide the review of the literatures and the research that are related to Ethical Issues in Accounting Education. The literature focuses on three areas and it has been organized into the following three areas: a) What are ethics? b) What are business ethics? c) Ethics in accounting education.

According to Hunt (2000), ethics uses logic, reason, faith, and/or tradition, to address many issues involving difficult decisions concerning life situations. In reality, ethics is a branch of philosophy which attempts to guide a person to understand and define a virtuous way of life which may aid in determining the actions or behaviors a person takes which are either right or wrong.

Ethics dates back to ancient Greece with the writings of Socrates (469-399 B.C.), Plato (427-347 B.C., and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), (Rowe, 1991). Both Socrates and Plato debated issues of right and wrong. It was stated by Rowe that the main focus of Socrates was that a good life was a virtuous, moral life. Throughout history, various scholars have tried to define ethics

and ethical behavior. Today, the term “ethics” has many definitions, one is the study of what is good or right for human beings, another is the study of general nature or morals and of specific moral choices, philosophy, the rules or standards governing the conduct of the members of a profession, a principle of right or good conduct, or a body of such principles; any set of moral principles or values (Hoffman & Moore, 1990, p.450).

What are business ethics? A simple definition is that it consists of rules, standards, and moral principals as to what is right or wrong in a given or specific business situation (Ferrell, Fraedrich & Ferrell, 2002).

The need to include ethics in accounting curriculum was recognized long before the accounting scandals of the 1990s. There have been many calls for requiring ethics education in the accounting curriculum in the past, but the demand has increased dramatically with the recent corporate scandals involving Enron and WorldCom which resulted in the demise of Arthur Anderson. Accounting professors have led this call as they have been increasingly frustrated with the accounting profession. The problem arises in the way the ethics is to be integrated into the accounting curriculum. In 1979, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) made ethics education a requirement for business schools (Esmond-Kiger, 2004). Not long afterward, the Bedford Committee, the Treadway Commission, and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants all agreed that ethics had to become a fundamental part of accounting education (Esmond-Kiger). While the decision to make ethics an integral part of accounting education was an easy one, implementing the required changes proved to be much more challenging. In 2003, a survey by the American Accounting Association (AAA) found that most accounting courses still did not provide adequate coverage of ethics (Haas, 2005). Haas reported that although a 2002 proposal by the Educational Committee of the National Accounting Standards Board defined adequate ethics coverage as six stand-alone course hours in accounting ethics or its equivalent, the 2003 AAA survey found that only 46 percent of schools included a separate course in ethics. The survey also found that while the time spent covering ethics varied from 30-minute coverage in a semester to integration throughout the accounting curriculum, on average 3.7 hours per semester were devoted to ethics instruction (Haas).

According to Monsour (2007), even though there is widespread agreement that ethics is an essential part of accounting education, curriculum changes have been slow. Monsour points out that a recent survey by the American Accounting Association finds that only 46 percent of colleges offer a separate course in ethics and that the overwhelming majority of the courses being offered do not provide adequate instruction in values and ethical professional conduct. Mastracchio (2005) states, as part of the survey, the syllabuses of the reported ethics courses were examined. The results show that most courses that were designated as ethics courses were: (1) more related to business law than accounting ethics; (2) included only a brief look at ethical issues; and (3) did not provide adequate coverage of ethical professional conduct (Mastracchio).

One approach is the modular one in which ethics is incorporated along with the technical coursework. This approach has assisted the textbook publishers to achieve a variety of pedagogical goals related to ethics education without sacrificing the technical content of the course (Mantzke, Carnes, & Tolhurst, 2005). While there is a need to teach more ethics, this is only one of the areas that need to be covered in an already full curriculum which presents a

difficult decision to accounting professors, What area of the curriculum do educators stress less to cover ethics correctly? The modular approach allows the educators the ability to construct their classes so that students become aware of the ethical standards that govern the profession, a useful framework for evaluating ethical dilemmas, they are given the chance to address ethical issues, make judgments and then have the opportunity to defend their choice (Romal & Hibscheiler, 2004).

At a minimum, the students are at least exposed to the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct in the courses that are geared toward CPA certification. But they may not be introduced to the many other codes of conduct that are equally important to the profession. In a study done in 1993 by McNair and Milam, it is reported that the average time spent covering ethics in an accounting education course is just over three hours. In New York State, the average time spent covering ethics amounted to just over 3.7 hours for a three-hour weekly class and was covered in each of the areas of accounting that was covered, intermediate, auditing, tax, cost and advanced accounting (Haas, 2005). By the same token, in a study done by Madison (2001) showed that Ohio colleges and universities devoted an average of ten hours to ethics in the undergraduate program.

Shahrokh M. Saudgaran, dean of the Milgard School of Business at the University of Washington – Tacoma, stated: “I hope the current problems will motivate us to move from a debits and credits approach to an accounting education that focuses not only on technical rules but also on producing competent individuals with a functioning moral compass.” (Titard, Braun & Meyer, 2004) Many schools have instituted new courses related to ethics and fraud into their accounting programs as well as adding business law classes that focus on SEC rules. Another is to examine each class and see where the implementation of ethical issues would be appropriate, as was done by the University of Texas (Titard, Braun & Meyer). Another way is to hold lectures dealing with ethics and the ramifications of inappropriate behavior in the profession.

Since many schools teach geared to the CPA exam, there is thought to increase the number of questions on the exam related to ethics, ethical decision-making, and finally requiring that all students who have passed the exam be required to take a separate ethics exam prior to certification. This would require the schools to more uniformly incorporate ethics into the curriculum (Burke & D’Aquila, 2004). What are the goals of Ethics Education? The goal is more than just studying the code of professional conduct but rather is creating an awareness of ethical dilemmas and providing methods of resolution (Haas, 2005)

Research Methodology

Hypotheses

In states where CPA examination requirements for semester hours of ethics instruction are higher than those of the state’s College Board accreditation requirements for semester hours of ethics instruction, universities will meet the lower accreditation requirement. Variables to be measured here are: (1) the number of semester hours of ethics instruction required for CPA candidates by the state’s CPA; (2) the number of ethics instruction hours required by the state’s college accreditation board; and (3) the number of semester hours of ethics instruction included

in the university's accounting curriculum. It is logical to assume that State Universities that offer extra ethic credit hours and stand alone ethic courses care more about students' awareness and ethical behaviors than State Universities that simply meet minimum requirement by accreditation agency and the local Board of Education.

A second hypothesis is that universities will tend to integrate ethics throughout their existing curriculum rather than offering either the sandwich approach or a stand-alone course devoted to ethics instruction. Variables here will be drawn from the universities' accounting program course offerings and include: (1) the number of stand-alone courses in ethics; (2) the number of programs that integrate ethics throughout the curriculum; and (3) the number of programs that offer the sandwich approach of an early stand-alone course followed by integration throughout the curriculum and topped off by a cap-stone course that is devoted to ethics.

Data Gathering

Due to the fact that the desired focus was on how the largest accountancy programs handle ethics education, the sample population was drawn from the public four-year universities within each of the 50 states in the United States. Data on the existing state universities was gathered from a public database that included links to the websites of each of the universities that it listed. These websites were then visited and information was gathered concerning: (1) the accrediting agency of the business/accounting department, (2) the required courses within the accounting program, and (3) the course descriptions of each of those classes.

The requirements of the accounting program were examined for specific ethics course requirements. Any specific ethics course requirements were recorded as were the total number of required ethics hours. The total number of hours for the accounting degree was also noted. Particular attention was given to any mention of ethics content within the course descriptions. A determination was then made as to whether the course focused entirely on ethics or whether ethics was merely integrated into other courses' content. The course was then assigned to either the integrated or stand-alone category of ethics instruction.

Data was gathered from each State Board of Accountancy concerning the requirements to sit for that state's CPA exam. The total number of educational hours' requirements, if any, was recorded. In addition, any specific ethics hours requirements were also recorded. In some cases, specific course requirements such as business law were noted.

Data Integration

The data the researchers collected spanned the fifty (50) states and included comparisons of three (3) state universities in each of the fifty (50) states. The sample size was 138 valid responses and was divided evenly between schools that do not require ethics and schools that do require ethics. Since the enactment of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, there is more of a need for schools to include ethics as part of the curriculums. Currently not all of the accreditation agencies have established that requirement and until the accreditation agencies require ethics, many schools do not have ethics classes in their programs of study. In addition, many of the

states do not have a requirement of ethics to sit for the CPA exam, but they do require candidates to take a separate exam on just ethics once they have passed the CPA exam. The researchers just studied state universities where it is also more difficult to make changes to programs of study.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Variance
Accreditation requirement of credit hours for Ethics	138	3	0	3	1.70	2.228
Total credit requirement for the degree	138	76.00	120.00	196.00	124.9130	177.934
Total Accounting credit requirements	138	35	15	50	27.24	37.818
Ethics requirement for the program	138	1	0	1	.50	.252
Number of ethics credits hours/courses	138	7	0	7	2.28	4.292
Stand alone or integration of courses	138	2	1	3	1.83	.349
Ethics course selection requirement (auditing, management, etc.)	138	3	0	3	1.23	1.508
CPA minimum accounting credit hours requirements per state	138	24	12	36	25.85	22.991
Valid N (listwise)	138					

Table # 1 Descriptive Statistics

Outcome Variables

There are several important outcomes related to these research questions and established hypotheses. Thus, our intention is to cross examine the requirements of ethics in curriculum from selected universities, number of semester of ethics instruction, the minimum credit hours requirements per state and the credit hours for ethics by the accreditation agency per each college, the total accounting credit requirements for each program, the number of ethics credits hours offer per program, what kind of courses are being offered by each university (stand alone, integration, or both), ethic course selection (auditing, accounting ethics, business laws, and professionalism course), a total credit requirement for each accounting program, and the minimum accounting credit hours requirements per each accounting Board for CPA examine.

Description of variables

State

Colleges

Accreditation Agency

Accreditation requirement of credit hours for Ethics by each agency

Total credit requirement for the degree by university

Total Accounting credit requirements per program

Ethics requirement for the program

Number of ethics credits hours/courses offer by each program

Stand alone or integration of courses within each accounting program

Ethics course selection requirement (auditing, management, etc.) by each accounting program

CPA requirement per state- accounting requirements or Ethics course

CPA minimum accounting credit hours requirements per state for CPA examine

Accreditation requirement/Ethics	total credit requirement for the degree	Total Accounting credit requirements	ethics requirement for the program	number of ethics credits/courses	stand alone or integration of courses	Ethics course selection requirement (auditing, management, etc.)	CPA requirement per state- or Ethics course
Credit hours= number; No=0	Total semester hours	Total accounting hours	yes=1; no=0	Number of credits x course = number hours	standalone=1; intergrated=2; standalone & intergrated = 3	ethics=1; legal=2; auditing=3; no requirement=0	AICPA- the AICPA's Comprehensive Course=1;

Table 2 Data coding description

Value	Label
ethicsrequirementfor heprogram 0	No Ethics not required for Program
1	Yes Ethics required for Program
standaloneorintegrati onofcourses 1	Stand alone course in Ethics
2	Integrated course in Ethics
3	Stand alone and Integrated course in Ethics
Ethicscourseselection requirementauditingm anagementetc 0	No requirement
1	Ethics
2	Legal
3	Auditing

Table 3 Variable Values

Data analysis of Results

There are several statistical analysis applied in this research. The frequencies analysis provides a good snapshot of the statistics for these main variables in terms of their requirements for ethic credits. From 138 state colleges in 50 states as shown in Table #4, it indicates that the maximum requirement for accreditation is 3 credit hours of ethic. 78 schools are required to include a minimal of 3 semester credit hours in their core requirement of accounting course or 56.3 percent. The remaining 60 colleges have no requirement of ethic course for their accreditation purpose or at 43.5 percent.

Accreditation requirement of credit hours for Ethics					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0	60	43.5	43.5	43.5
Valid	3	78	56.5	56.5	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 Accreditation requirement of credit hours for Ethics

However, when examining the requirement of ethic course within each accounting program, the data indicates that 50 percent or 69 colleges have no requirement for accounting ethics and the other 69 colleges or 50 percent require ethic course in their accounting program (table 5). Nonetheless, 50 percent of schools require ethic course in their program does not mean that they provide strictly ethics courses in their accounting core requirements of accounting courses. From table 6 (Number of ethics credits hours/courses per program) indicates that 52 colleges has no requirement for accounting ethics. 54 colleges require 3 credit hours, 18 colleges offer 6 semester hours or two courses, 6 other schools require 4 semester hours, 7 colleges require just 2 ethics credits, and one with 7 ethics credits hours or two courses with 3 and 4 semester hours, respectively.

Ethics requirement for the program					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No Ethics not required for Program	69	50.0	50.0	50.0
Valid	Yes Ethics required for Program	69	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Ethics requirement for the program

Number of ethics credits hours/courses					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	52	37.7	37.7	37.7
	2	7	5.1	5.1	42.8
	3	54	39.1	39.1	81.9
	4	6	4.3	4.3	86.2
	6	18	13.0	13.0	99.3
	7	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Number of ethics credits hours/courses

According to the result from table 5, the split 50/50 between requirement and no requirement of ethic course for 138 accounting programs has some loop pole. As the data from table 7 indicates, there are only 27.5 percent of colleges offering stand alone ethics course or 32 colleges with standalone ethics courses (table 8). Thus, this supports our research hypothesis that schools tend to meet the bare minimal requirements of the accreditation agency. At the same time, these schools do not provide above the minimum requirements of the CPA examine by each state. 62.3 percent (Table 6) of colleges utilize integration approach to fulfill ethics requirements of the State Board of Education and Accreditation Agency.

Stand alone or integration of courses					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Stand alone course in Ethics	38	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Integrated course in Ethics	86	62.3	62.3	89.9
	Stand alone and Integrated course in Ethics	14	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Stand alone or integration of courses

Ethics course selection requirement (auditing, management, etc.)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No requirement	55	39.9	39.9	39.9
	Ethics	32	23.2	23.2	63.0
	Legal	15	10.9	10.9	73.9
	Auditing	36	26.1	26.1	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Ethics course selection requirement (auditing, management, etc.)

Pearson Chi-Square tests is also used for data analysis in testing these research questions and hypotheses. The model indicates that there is no significance between two variables, requirement of ethics and no requirements of ethics by the accreditation agency and the State Board of Education from each state. Thus, there is a relationship between the accreditation agency's requirement and the ethics requirements by accounting program from state universities.

There are other nonparametric analysis with crosstab directional measures between aforementioned variables in this research to observe the total credit requirement for an accounting degree, the total accounting requirement and ethics instruction required by accredited accounting programs by each state university in all 50 states in the United States. The results yield some interesting outcomes. The data from the table 8 indicates that there are 76 colleges or 57 percent of schools offer the bare minimum of 120 credit hours for an accredited accounting degree. It is surprising to learn that only 15 of these 138 colleges offer 124 credit hours. The other smallest group with the high requirements of 128 semester credit hours is a total of 13 colleges out of 138 or 1 percent. The other largest group with the highest requirement between 129 to 196 semester credits hours equals to only 8 colleges or less than 1 percent of the entire sample. Overall, this confirms our hypothesis that the majority of colleges in the United States only try to meet the minimum requirements of the State Board of Education and their Accreditation agency. Therefore, these accredited accounting programs do not provide or prepare their accounting students for the CPA examine.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	120.00	76	55.1	55.1	55.1
	121.00	3	2.2	2.2	57.2
	122.00	6	4.3	4.3	61.6
	123.00	6	4.3	4.3	65.9
	124.00	15	10.9	10.9	76.8
	125.00	3	2.2	2.2	79.0
	126.00	6	4.3	4.3	83.3
	127.00	2	1.4	1.4	84.8
	128.00	13	9.4	9.4	94.2
	129.00	1	.7	.7	94.9
	149.00	1	.7	.7	95.7
	150.00	1	.7	.7	96.4
	182.00	1	.7	.7	97.1
	186.00	1	.7	.7	97.8
	192.00	2	1.4	1.4	99.3
	196.00	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: Total credit requirement for the degree

The other findings of this research also supports our second research question and both hypotheses are the total accounting credit hours requirements per accredited accounting program and the different between the State CPA Board’s requirements and the requirements of each accreditation agency. The majority of colleges or 61 colleges require between 24 to 27 semester credit hours, which include auditing, management, and some kind of ethics courses. The other group of 13 colleges offers 33 semester credit hours. Unfortunately, there are only 11 colleges that provide between 35 and 42 credit hours as part of their core accounting courses. This points most state colleges do not exceed the requirements of the requirements of their state CPA Board for student to take the CPA examine.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15	3	2.2	2.2	2.2
	18	5	3.6	3.6	5.8
	20	3	2.2	2.2	8.0
	21	13	9.4	9.4	17.4
	24	38	27.5	27.5	44.9
	26	3	2.2	2.2	47.1
	27	23	16.7	16.7	63.8
	28	2	1.4	1.4	65.2
	29	3	2.2	2.2	67.4
	30	12	8.7	8.7	76.1
	31	3	2.2	2.2	78.3
	32	2	1.4	1.4	79.7
	33	13	9.4	9.4	89.1
	35	1	.7	.7	89.9
	36	8	5.8	5.8	95.7
	37	1	.7	.7	96.4
	42	1	.7	.7	97.1
	43	1	.7	.7	97.8
	48	2	1.4	1.4	99.3
	50	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Total accounting credit requirements

The final crosstab directional measure is between the total accounting requirements and the total requirement of accounting credit hours from the state CPA Board. The results from table 10 indicates that there is about 22 percent or 30 colleges do not provide enough accounting credit hours for students to meet the standard requirement of 24 credit hours. In addition, there are at least 19 colleges or 13 percent of the entire sampling colleges do not meet the minimum accounting credit hours requirements by the CPA Board with at least 30 credit hours. Again, these statistical data and analysis results support the assumption that the majority of schools do

not have a well established accounting program to prepare students for the accounting profession.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 12	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
15	6	4.3	4.3	5.8
20	3	2.2	2.2	8.0
21	4	2.9	2.9	10.9
24	68	49.3	49.3	60.1
27	12	8.7	8.7	68.8
30	31	22.5	22.5	91.3
33	3	2.2	2.2	93.5
36	9	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	138	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: CPA minimum accounting credit hours requirements per state

Overall, there several important findings from this study that is essential to address here. From this research, the results points out that majority of schools do not provide adequate accounting requirements and especially ethics instruction required for the accounting program. The other critical finding is lacked of extra accounting ethic credit hours and stand alone ethic courses. As a result, these accounting programs pay very little attention to the students' ethical awareness and ethical behaviors in terms of accounting curriculum design.

Conclusion & Future research recommendation

Conclusions

Integrating ethics into existing required accounting courses appears to be the favored approach to ethics education. Auditing followed by Business Law are the most popular courses in which to integrate ethics instruction. The apparent limited coverage of ethics in other accounting courses is surprising to say the least. While according to Haas (2004) accounting educators agree concerning the importance and necessity of ethics education, less certainty is apparent regarding both the means and methods that should be used to deliver that instruction. This study supports those findings by revealing the lack of consistent nation-wide standards on specific ethics education requirements within accounting programs. In addition, our study reveals that state professional qualification programs such as the CPA do not emphasize ethics instruction in the requirements for the educational qualifications to sit for the exam.

Recommendations

The results of this research are primarily descriptive and, as a result:, should: (1) provide important benchmarks for universities to establish where they stand relative to the norm of accredited state schools; (2) furnish a starting point for academic discussion and assessment of future ethics education proposals; and (3) assist accreditation agencies in reassessing current accounting curriculum requirements. The ethics education differences that exist across state

universities as a whole and even within universities that fall under the requirements of the same accrediting agencies as shown by this study reveals the for both review and dialog concerning the establishment of consistent standards pertaining to both ethics instruction placement and method of presentation within accounting curriculum. In order to be effective, this dialog must include accounting academics and their respective accrediting agencies and state boards of accountancy.

Areas for Future Research

In contrast to the lack of ethics educational guidance and requirements provided in the United States, a 2006 study conducted by the International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) reveals strong attitudes and stands on the approaches to the development of professional ethics in accounting educational programs among its member nations, which ironically includes the United States among its membership. The IAESB report strongly supports the view that undergraduate accounting programs are the appropriate area for instilling the ethical values and knowledge that will guide professional behaviors. The IAESB also states that this education should begin as soon as possible with a dedicated, stand-alone ethics course being introduced early in the accounting program. In addition, the IAESB study stresses the importance of requiring a capstone ethics course and even goes so far as to point out that certain of its member nations support the proposal that students who fail the course should not be allowed to enter the accounting profession. The IAESB report also stresses the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of ethics instruction by assessing workplace performance. These guidelines are in sharp contrast to the findings of this study. In light of the strong move toward greater compliance to international standards on behalf of the United States, further study is needed on ways to narrow this gap in both attitudes and actions.

In addition, further research is needed into the differences, if any, that may exist in the area of ethics education curriculum of private as opposed to the public institutions. Evans and Marcal (2005) find that private schools view one of their primary missions as values education. If that mission influences curriculum choices, ethics education may be seen as being more important at private institutions. Further research should reveal whether this attitude results in ethics education placement within the accounting curriculum and the amount of time devoted to ethics instruction. In a like vein, another area of that is worthy of further investigation is that of the potential differences in ethics education that may exist between accredited and non-accredited universities.

Benefits

The primary goal of this study will be achieved if re-examination and discussion of current ethics instruction curriculum placement and presentation are sparked as a result of the findings. In order to benefit the most important but often forgotten stakeholders in this debate, the accounting students, it is imperative that consistent standards be established and implemented. In order to be truly effective in arriving at and implementing any proposed changes in ethics education requirements, this dialog must include accounting academics, accrediting agencies, and the corresponding state boards of accountancy. In addition, some effort should be made to obtain inputs from the accounting students as well. Only by the inclusion of

each of these responsible and affected parties can any meaningful, consistent, and lasting changes result.

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