THE QUALITY OF ACCOUNTING EDUCATION: A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE

Gohar Saleem Parvaiz\(^1\), John Joyce\(^2\), Owais Mufti\(^3\)

ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to present the findings of empirical research that addresses the perception, and motives regarding quality of accounting education from the perspective of Malaysian students. Prior to this research the lack of information regarding quality of accounting education from the students' perspective, allowed the educational bodies to accept the quality attributes of other stakeholders on students behalf. This situation had always the potential to emerge the massive conflict among students and other stakeholders considering the role conflicting theory. Therefore the research findings not only enhances the understanding of quality attributes from students perspective but also provides the informative input for the design and implementation of syllabus, quality assurance systems and policies.

It probes the students' quality perception and their motivational factors, through survey methodology and further elaborates by using Pearson correlation and statistical regression to achieve the significance of research.

The findings reveal that all of the previously defined quality notions (exception, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation) are almost equally important (with negligible difference) and preserve their significance in the field of accountancy. It also discloses that the career aspiration and economical factors are not the only influencing motivational factors but the intrinsic factors, such as self-interest and aptitude are also important to be considered.

Therefore the foremost implication is to view the quality as a holistic approach rather than individually i.e. equal proportion of all the quality notions from the perspective of students. Other implication of the research is at the policy level i.e. to view the quality notion, 'fitness for purpose', in a broad sense at 'national-structural level', and when we move down to individual level via organisational level, it should be narrowed down accordingly to examine each quality notion separately so that to extensively identify each quality attribute.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to present the findings of empirical research that addresses the motives, and quality perceptions regarding accounting education. The research records the views of Malaysian students about the quality of accounting education and the motivational factors behind their quality perceptions. The finding of the research contributes significant knowledge in the growing discussion of quality in accounting education.

The lack of information regarding quality of accounting education from the students' perspective, allowed educational bodies to accept the quality attributes of other stakeholders as proxies. Consequently this situation was exposed to possible areas of conflict and the associated problems: under performance, de-motivation and dissatisfying results. Therefore there is always felt a need in congruence upon consensus of conception regarding quality of accounting education, from the view point of students and other stakeholders e.g. government, administrators, academics, fund donor agencies and employers etc.

Therefore the research will not only provide the conception regarding quality but also assures its motives, which are feeding students quality perceptions. Therefore the findings suppose to enhance the understanding of quality attributes and will also provide informative input for the design and implementation of syllabus, quality assurance systems and policies.

To achieve the research objectives, students' quality perception and their motivational factors are recorded, through survey methodology (5 point Likert-Scale) and further elaborated by using Pearson correlation and regression statistical tests to achieve the results.

2. WHAT IS QUALITY?

What constitutes quality in accounting education continues to be a major focal point of the literature. A review of the literature around change in higher educa-

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tion, particularly in relation to change as a result of quality initiatives, reveals two schools of thought: one relating to context and the other relating to stakeholders (Watty, 2003).

As cited by Watty (2003) the first thought attaches quality to a context and as a consequence quality becomes meaningful (Baird, 1998; Fry, 1995; Nordvall & Braxton, 1996), a creature of political fashion (Becher, 1999), multifaceted (Frazier, 1992), elusive (Neave, 1994), contentious (Taylor et al., 1998) and slippery (Harvey & Green, 1993). A number of differing views were offered in the 1980's (Watty, 2005) i.e. “Quality is fitness for purpose” (Ball, 1985), “degree to which previously set objectives are met” (de Groot, 1983), “a notion of value added” (McClain et al., 1989) etc.

A second way of thinking about quality relates it to the specific interpretations of stakeholders: consider quality by means of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the key stakeholders (Watty, 2003). Therefore segregating the concept of quality would obviously help us to depict its true aspects and through this way we would be able to better understand how different stakeholders perceive quality. Therefore Harvey and Green (1993) categorised the key aspects of quality notions in exception, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation.

While each of the above mentioned categories has the potential to overlap (Watty, 2003). Therefore it needs to be understood that any of the quality notion is not mutually exclusive.

2.1 Importance of Quality in Relation to Accounting Education:

Whatever the definition or attributes of quality, the notion of quality heid necessarily influences the design of a course contents, quality assurance systems and policies in accounting education. The lack of formal recorded information on the views of quality of accounting education from the perspective of students, would lead to the development of the syllabus and assurance systems and policies, which articulate the quality attributes desired by other stakeholders i.e. government, administrators, academics, fund donor agencies, and employers etc. This could end up with consequences like demotivation, lack of interest, low degree of involvement, under confidence and in worst case scenario again the decline in good quality students in accounting profession as faced in last couple of decades, as it (Gene Smith, 2005)

Further the research also highlight, the issue of quality in accounting education from the view point of role conflicting theory presented by Kahn et al. (1964). Role conflicting theory covers the essence of both role conflict and role ambiguity. Watty cited (2003) that Van et al. (1981) have suggested that “Individuals are often required to play a role which conflicts with their inci-
individual value systems or to play two or more roles which conflict with each others". According to Watty, (2003) role conflict and role ambiguity could be defined as "a situation where their is a lack of congruence of expectations associated with a role" and "a situation where there is a lack of clarity in relation to the expectation of the role" respectively. This reinforces the view offered earlier in this paper that if the students' expectations (and consequently their perceptions of the quality of the programme) differ from those of programme designers, then conflict could arise in several areas and lead to the under performance of the whole educational system.

In our case the focal point is actually students, who are not in isolation. They already have some beliefs, motives, and expectations, which are developing or feeding their perceptions regarding quality of accounting, while the role senders are the universities, academics, quality agencies and government. So there is a need in congruence upon consensus of conception regarding quality in accounting education otherwise there is a massive potential of conflict among students and other stakeholders which could end up with dissatisfying results and behaviours.

### 2.2 Motivational Factors:

The motivational factors are classified into two main branches: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Pintrich et al., 1993). These motives are influenced by numerous factors such as economics, social issues, work environment, aptitude, and other personal characteristics (Hermanson and Hermanson, 1995).

![Diagram of Motivation](image)

- Intrinsic motivation can be defined as the desire to learn for the sake of understanding (Donald, 1999). It could also be defined as the learning for the desire to achieve self-esteem and confidence. The factors appealing these motives could be job itself, job satisfaction, opportunity to be creative, autonomy, intellect and a challenging and dynamic working environment etc (Mei Tan & Laswad, 2006).

- The extrinsic motivation could be defined as the motivation due to the attainment of a reward or the avoidance of a punishment (Donald, 1999). The factors engaging these motives could be social pressures, new employment opportunities, career growth prospects and other economical rewards and pressures etc.

Numerous studies have revealed the fact that selection of accounting studies is highly influenced by the earning potential associated with the accounting profession. Mei Tan & Laswad (2006) found that the market related factors such as high salary, future earning and greater job opportunities are the highly influencing factors from students' aspect. A similar outcome has been noticed from the employment or career growth aspect. Number of studies emphasised the importance of market conditions and career opportunities from the students' aspect (Paolillo & Estes, 1982), Inman et al., (1989), Felton et al., (1994), Mauldin et al., (2000)). From the aptitude/self interest aspect it has been noticed that Australian students are substantially influenced by this motivational factor (Auyeung & Sands, 1997). Numerous studies have acknowledged the importance of various social pressures (parental, friends, teachers, and counsellors etc) to influence the choice of students to study accounting or not. In this regards there are a number of studies, which have proved the influential nature of this factor among Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Australian, New Zealand, Irish students (Auyeung & Sands (1997), Mei Tan & Laswad (2006), Byrne & Fiod (2005)).

Thus based on above mentioned intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factor, four important and most influencing factors have been identified for conducting this research. These factors are economical, employment/career growth, aptitude/self interest, and social pressures.

### 2.3 Who Are The Stakeholders?

In order to evaluate the changes in higher education, Parker and Jary (1995) developed a three layer model, labelled as national-structural (policy and structural changes at the national level that affect all universities), organisational (changes internal to higher education - within universities), and last but not the least individual (actions, motivation and goals of the individual academics).

![Diagram of Stakeholder Model](image)

- Derived from the three layer model of Parker and Jary (1995)

Parker and Jary's (1995) three layer model highlights the need to identify the key stakeholders i.e. government, quality agencies, universities and individual academics. Before we proceed further, there is also a
need to elaborate the stakeholders at individual level in further detail. Watty (2003, 2005) with the help of two research articles, shed the light on this ignored area of study and tried to identify as many relevant stakeholders’ as possible i.e. faculty members, students, employers, parents and society in general. Other than that McChlery & Paisy (2003) also identified the key stakeholders as tuition providers, employers, students and CIMA. Preceeding the work of identifying stakeholders, the mentioned stakeholders are divided into further two layers by preference-wise to bifurcate the direct and indirect effects i.e. employers, faculty members and students at layer one because these individuals are directly involved in the whole process therefore they will be directly blessed by its improved quality or have to bear the cost of worst effects, while parents and society should be placed at layer 2 because of their indirect and minimum level of involvement and attrition damage.

Fig. 5

Layer 1
Employers, Academics and Students

Layer 1
Parents and Society in general

However, Parker & Winter did not recognize students as a separate stakeholder in their models. B Liz & Sambell (1999) suggested that students are the ready source to provide the range of purposes for assessment, which provides numerous purposes to be met for the judgements therefore they have validated the students as a key stakeholder in the process of determining and maintaining quality in assessment. Also James (2001) cited that “students are well-equipped to judge the quality of certain aspects of higher education and we should trust their intuitions on these matters”. Byrne and Flood (2005) also proposed to enhance the efforts to understand the motives, expectations and preparedness of the students to understand the learning of accounting and aid the development of a framework to enhance the quality of accounting and the outcomes achieved. Similarly Mei Tan & Laswad (2006) also emphasises the need to understand the students’ beliefs, attitude and intentions to major in accounting. McChlery and Paisy (2003) in their work also identified student as a valid key stakeholder.

Therefore the ‘students’ are identified as a valid stakeholder to take key role in the development of a framework to enhance the quality of accounting education and assurance system & policy.

2.4 Relationship Between Motivation, Expectation And Quality Education

To create the logical flow, it is necessary to clarify the effective links between the motivational factors, expectations and quality education. This area of study is widely ignored by most of the researchers. However, James (2001) from the sheds some light with the help of Herzberg’s et al. (1993) theory of motivation on this ignored area s. He cites; “

“If Herzberg’s ideas are applicable to students and their higher education involvement, then a perceived absence of adequate hygiene factors, such as facilities and services, is likely to generate student dissatisfaction.”

Hygiene factors include both tangible and intangible factors (Herzberg et al., 1993). From the educational aspect, these factors could be teaching material, university location, study timings, inspirational teaching, study environment and other services. Therefore, it is critical for the educators to meet the students’ expectations of both sets of hygiene factors (facilities and services). The absence of the mentioned factors not only lead to disappointment, but it also means that the personal involvement of students will not be raised to the required level of criteria. Therefore, it is essential for the educators to provide the services that meet the students’ expectations based on their hygiene factors otherwise there are likely chances of below standard performance from the students’ side.

As we come to know about the teaching material as an important factor to achieve the students’ involvement therefore it is essentially required to know about the students’ motivational objectives to develop the course contents. To achieve this objective we have to critically analyse the students’ motivational factors behind their objectives and the level of significance in relation to quality perception, which they assume as a quality education.

Therefore the students’ motivational factors have influences on their expectations from education, and in turn expectations have influences on the overall quality of education (James, 2001). The extent to which the students’ expectations are aligned with the widely agreed goals of education (James, 2001) or vice versa there are more likely that the high degree of students’ involvement could be obtained. Therefore it is believed that the students’ motives are feeding their perceptions regarding quality of accounting education in a form of expectations, which needs to be fulfilled, if to achieve the desired level of students’ involvement and standard results.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A questionnaire is designed considering the prior literature (Harvey & Green, 1993, Watty, 2003, 2005; Lomas, 2002; Hermanson & Hermanson, 1995, Tan & Laswad, 2006; Byrne & Flood, 2005). The questionnaire constitutes of all closed ended questions and have a five point Likert-scale of 5 to 1 (5= strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree). The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement by simply putting a cross over the scale.

The questionnaire contains three sections in total. The Section 1 is designed to gather the data of personal
nature. The Section 2 is based on student motives to enter into the accounting education. The selected motives for the design of this section are taken from the list of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors which are employment, earning capacity, social pressures, aptitude and self-interest. Total eight questions were designed under the mentioned motivational perspective so that later on the key motivational aspects could be identified with no doubts.

The Section 3 contains 11 questions in total. Three questions underpinning the notion of fitness for purpose, value for money and excellence each, while only two questions for transformation were designed.

### 3.1 Data Description

The samples constitute of Malaysian students at under graduate level, arrived for the study of accountancy at Sheffield Hallam University in year 2007 in different Accounting and Finance programmes.

In total 84 questionnaires were distributed among the students. All the available students at session have responded. The numbers of respondents from each programme are shown below in a tabulated form;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BA (Honours) Accounting</th>
<th>BA (Honours) Accounting &amp; Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of respondents</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Section 1 - Personal Attributes

There were 22 male and 62 female students among total respondents. Most of the students were in between the age range of 22-24, however there were 9 students below 22 and 3 students above 25 years of age. The students who were above the age of 25 have the 1-4 years of accounting related work experience, while most of the other students have the experience below 1 year. About previous qualification, all of the students were advance diploma holders in the field of accounting or business studies, so in short all of the students had the taste of accounting.

#### 4.2. Section 2-Motivational Factors Results:

Students are motivated by number of influential factors to proceed for higher education in the field of accountancy. Therefore the 2nd part of the questionnaire was especially designed to know the reasons why students have opted the accountancy related courses.

As we can see that economical, employment/career growth and aptitude/interests motivational factors have slight difference of mean scores, which reveals that the mix of these three motivational factors drives the majority of students' intentions to choose the accountancy programmes. This argument is also supported by (Byrne & Flood, 2006; Moi Tan & Laswad, 2006). Therefore it is essentially required to consider the above mentioned motivational factors to design and set the objectives of any accounting programme to attract the quality students. It also reveals that the career aspirations and economical factors are not only the influencing factors but also the self-interest and aptitude is considered to be important from the students' aspect. It means that the accountancy programmes should also emphasize the relevance of the course contents to deep understanding of accounting approaches so that the intellectual growth and stimulation should occur other than compliance driven documentation and the requirement of private and public sector.

#### 4.3. Section 3 – Quality Perception Results:

The 3rd section of the questionnaire was designed to know the students' expectation from the selected accountancy courses.

All of the questions have received mean score in between the range of 3 to 5, which means students have considered all of them important. According to ranking wise the students perceive the most important in top order are;

- An accounting education that prepares them for professional qualifications (ACCA/CIMA) i.e. 4.23 mean score with 86% of level of agreement. This shows the students confidence level over the syllabus of accounting bodies and reveals their expectation under quality notion of fitness for purpose.
  - The 2nd ranked expectation is to increase in earning ability (4.19 mean score with 87%) which supports the quality notion of value for money.
  - The 3rd ranked expectation is to bring new jobs opportunities (4.13 mean score with 88% of level of agreement), which comes under the quality notion of fitness for purpose.

From the opposite end

- Students perceives the least important the 11th ranked, accounting programme that enables them to achieve distinctive achievements and awards (3.87 mean score with 73% level of agreement) supports the quality notion of Excellence.
  - The 10th ranked expectation is to deliver promised educational objectives with mean score 3.96 with 80% level of agreement designed under the quality notion of value for money.

To achieve a decisive approach the mean of all the expectations have been calculated under each category defined as earlier i.e.
Table: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because of the associated range of new job opportunities. (Employment)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because of the associated career growth prospectus. (Employment)</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because this will increase my earning ability/power. (Earning capacity)</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program to increase my command and control over accounting tools and techniques. (Aptitude/interest)</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because I want to experience intellectual growth and stimulation. (Aptitude/interest)</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because of the social status enjoyed by professional accountants. (Employment)</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because I have personal interest in accounting studies. (Aptitude/interest)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an accounting program because of parents/friends/counsellor/advisor influence. (Social pressure)</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to students all of the quality notions are almost equally important however there still exists the slight difference in the mean scores i.e. Fitness for Purpose holds 1st position, Transformation 2nd, Value for Money 3rd and Excellence 4th. All of the quality notions receive more than 80% of the level of agreement. Therefore there is no question to promote one quality notion on another or one is more suitable than other from the students’ aspect, all of the notions are valid from the students’ point of view and bear almost equal importance. The recommendations are to view quality as a holistic approach or combination of all the mentioned four quality notions in equal proportion.

4.4. Statistical Analysis:

To find out the relative importance of each motivational factor and relationship type with the overall quality perception of accounting, the only available way is to shift our consideration towards statistical analysis. In our case the analyses is by using multiple regression to find out the relevance and power of relation of each motivational factor with the overall quality perception of the accounting education. For this purpose each questionnaire has been analysed separately. Perception presents the mean quality notion as a whole from the students aspect (dependent variable), however employment, aptitude, economical, and social presents the motivational factors (independent variables).

From the statistical analysis we can see that it clearly supports the qualitative analysis by mean and standard deviation values. The social factor is most spread out than any other factor with least mean score. However from least spread out, employment, aptitude and economical factors are in a row.

To find out the correlation between variables, the Pearson correlation technique has been employed. As we can see from the results that the employment, aptitude and economical factors have positive linear relationship with perception other than social factor which has negative.

Therefore to learn more about the relationship and relative importance each motivational factor (independent variables) and the perceived quality perception (dependent variable) of students, the regression analysis has been employed. The results are presented in a tabulated form below.

The term Beta Coefficient is important in the context of regression analysis. It is used for measuring the volatility of a dependent variable in the context of the independent variables. Therefore we have to look at the beta values under standardized coefficients in the above mentioned table. The employment is the most important factor to influence the students’ perception to quality, means a change of one percent in employment factor is expected to produce a change of 0.352 (beta) percent in
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to prepare me for a professional qualification (ACCA/CIMA). (Fitness for purpose)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to increase my earning potential. (Value for money)</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to bring new job opportunities at my doorstep. (Fitness for purpose)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to empower me to achieve high degree of understanding. (Excellence)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to create a deep learning of accounting approaches. (Excellence)</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to increase my intellectual capabilities and broaden my horizon. (Transformation)</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to change my style of learning (transforms me from learner to a critic in general). (Transformation)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to enable me to meet the demand of the accounting profession. (Fitness for purpose)</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to meet my desired educational expectations. (Value for money)</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to achieve promised educational objectives. (Value for money)</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect the accounting program to enable me to achieve distinctive achievements and awards. (Excellence)</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality notions</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
<th>St/Agree Level (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitness for Purpose</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5:

Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>4.0450</td>
<td>.36605</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>3.9332</td>
<td>.43784</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>3.7550</td>
<td>.48643</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economical</td>
<td>4.0476</td>
<td>.59929</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.0238</td>
<td>.96147</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

quality perception. The 2nd and 3rd influencing factors in a positive way are the aptitude and the economical factors respectively. The social factor is the only factor which has a negative relationship with the quality perception means a change of one standard deviation in social factor is expected to produce a negative change of 0.008 (beta) in standard deviation of quality perception, which makes it least important. Other than that this factor is also insignificant because of its P value (sig) i.e. 0.929. Therefore it would not be wrong to say that social pressure is the irrelevant motivational factor to shape the students quality perceptions regarding accounting studies.
Table 6:
Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Aptitude</th>
<th>Economical</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>.481*</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>-.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>-.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economical</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>-.164</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7:
Coefficients (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model (1)</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bt</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.688</td>
<td>3.339</td>
<td>.49780</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>2.2950</td>
<td>0.0913</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>1.1660</td>
<td>0.0792</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economical</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>2.218</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-.0030</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employment, Aptitude, Economical, Social
b. Dependent Variable: Perception

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

CONCLUSION

To effectively develop an educational environment and the course contents that engage the soul and minds of students, there is a need to have the exact knowledge of the motivational factors that impact on students learning.

Initially it has been found that a mixture of employment/career growth, aptitude/self interest and economical factors are the key motivational factors, shaping the students’ intentions to enter into accounting education. Further the significance and importance of each motivational factor has been tested by using Pearson correlation and regression analysis, which revealed the significance of each motivational factor i.e. employment/career growth (positive relationship - beta = 0.352) factor then aptitude/self interest (positive relationship - beta = 0.223) and last but not the least economical factor (positive relationship - beta = 0.218) respectively. It also revealed that the social pressures (negative relationship - beta = 0.008) are unlikely to motivate enough a student to opt an accountancy course at higher level of education because of insignificance (sig >0.05 i.e. 0.929). Therefore the mentioned motivational factors are considered to be important from the research point of view, which revealed the fact that the career aspiration and economical factors are not only the influencing factors in isolation but the self interest and aptitude are also considered to be important from the Malaysian students’ aspect. This means that the accountancy programmes should not only emphasizes the relevance of the course contents to compliance driven documentation and the requirement of the private and public sector but also emphasises the need for understanding of deep accounting approaches and their critical evaluation.

About quality of accounting education; as it is being believed that the students’ motivational factors are feeding their perceptions regarding quality of accounting education therefore the students responses have been collected over the four quality notions as expressed by Harvey & Green (1993). According to Malaysian students’ all of the quality notions are almost equally important (with negligible difference) and preserve their importance in the field of accountancy.
Therefore the recommendations are to view quality as a holistic approach (as also recommended by Kelly et al. (1999)), combination of all the mentioned quality notions equally from the perspective of students. There is no question of dominance of one quality notion to another or one notion should be promoted more than other. Research findings revealed the same importance for all quality notions in equal proportion with very slight differences, which not only validate all the quality notions form the students' aspect but also gives us the idea to view quality as a whole. Therefore there is no question to align quality of accounting with one quality notion and dismiss the others.

IMPLICATIONS:

This research has developed a profile about students' motivational factors and their quality attributes of accounting education in detail. Also the students are not the only stakeholder in educational planning therefore considering this, there is always a need to change some of the quality attributes in the mind of the students, where difference varies because the students’ expectations alone are not a robust basis for driving educational system (James, 2001). Therefore the educators should design the accounting programme in such a way that gradually transforms students’ perceptions willingly addressing their motivational factors. Or if required necessary redesign, redefine or rephrase program objectives and contents so that to have students consensus to avoid conflict among their roles and perception during education.

Another important implication is at policy level that is to view quality “fitness for purpose” in education, at a broad view. In contrast a narrow view is the suggestion to fragment quality notion and to find out the complex interlinks from the view point of various stakeholders (Harvey, 1998). The broad view is to accommodate all of the other quality notions (value for money, excellence, and transformation) in fitness for purpose (Watty, 2005). As defined earlier fitness for purpose relates quality to a purpose, which should be defined by the provider. Therefore if we consider purpose from the view point of Quality Assurance Agency then the quality programme is the one which includes the views of all the key stakeholders and referral points such as CIMA, administrators, academics, and students etc. So in short if we consider the fitness for purpose from the view point of QAA (national-structural level) then it has already accommodated all the quality notions as in a form of major stakeholders' and referral perceptions. Similarly if we perceive the quality perception from the view point of college or university (organisational level) then its purpose is to meet the requirements and strategic goals set by all the interested parties such as QAA, ACCA/CIMA, employers, administrators, academics, and students, which again accommodates all of the other quality notions in fitness for purpose. The definition of fitness for purpose is valid in both contexts. Therefore the idea is to view fitness for purpose at national-structural level in a broad view (holistic approach covering all the other quality notions) refeereing to Parker & Jary (1995) three layer model, and when we move down to individual level via organisational level, it should be narrowed down accordingly to view each quality notion separately so that to identify each quality attributes extensively. All of the quality notions bear importance in different proportion from the perspective of various stakeholders at individual level, which must be considered at system assurance & policy level by mutually exclusive process.

FURTHER RESEARCH:

There is an urgent need to explore the quality attributes of accounting education from the perspective of employers under Harvey & Green (1993) quality framework, so that the views of quality attributes from the stakeholder at layer 1 (reference to individual level – Parker & Jary (1995)) should be completed. And then further it should be compared with the work of Watty’s (2005) and this research. So that a consolidated view of quality attributes from the perspective of layer 1 stakeholders (employers, academics and students) should be formed and transmitted to upper levels as a joint quality perception.

The education providers are believed to be the gatekeepers of quality assurance systems and policies therefore another important area is to develop a ‘perception transformation model’ considering all stakeholders conception regarding quality, to willingly make over students’ perception avoiding role conflict.

LIMITATIONS:

One of the major limitations of the research finding was the availability of the limited sample i.e. only of Malaysian students.

REFERENCES


