International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting
ISSN 2577-767X
Vol.1, No. 1, pp. 30-36
2017
DOI: 10.33094/8.2017.11.30.36
© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

Accounting Ethics and the Professional Accountant: The Case of Ghana

Gabriel Sam Ahinful[1]
Sheila Addo[2]
Felix Obeng Boateng[3]
Jeff Danquah Boakye[4]

[1,4]*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Finance Office, Private Mail Bag, UST, Kumasi, Ghana.*
[2]*Electricity Company of Ghana, Private Mail Bag, Nkawkaw, Ghana.*
[3]*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Finance Office Private Mail Bag, UST, Kumasi, Ghana.*

Licensed:
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Keywords:
Fraud
Ethics
Challenges
Accountant
Ghana.

Abstract

The main objective of the study is to examine the extent to which the ethics of accounting is relevant to professional accountants. In doing so, the factors contributing to accounting fraud and the ethical challenges encountered by accountants will also be examined. The main respondents were accountants and auditors from intuitions in selected districts in the eastern region of Ghana. The study revealed that to a great extent accounting ethics is relevant to the professional accountants. However, there are challenges in adhering to ethical principles/codes of the accounting profession. The study also revealed that some factors, such as money and legalistic culture contribute to accounting fraud. It recommends that efforts aim at increasing ethical knowledge and standards at all levels should be strengthen by all stakeholders in the accounting profession.

1. Introduction

There has been considerable effort at improving ethical behaviour of professional accountants. This has led to the incorporation of ethics into almost all business and professional accountancy programmes, as well as detailed code of ethics guiding practising behaviour (Armstrong, 1993; Cameron & O'Leary, 2015; Nathan, 2015). However, there still exist considerable scandals both in public and private corporations mostly orchestrated by accountants (Bazerman, Loewenstein, & Moore, 2002; Steinhoff & Hoffman, 2015). This raises questions about the relevance of ethics to the professional accountant. But whiles the extant literature has investigated the need to incorporate ethics education in accounting programmes for prospective accountants (Armstrong, 1993; Cameron & O'Leary, 2015; Ibrahim & Angelidis, 2009) there remains a paucity of research on the extent to which ethics is deemed relevant by today's professional accountants and the challenges encountered. It has been suggested that the continuous relevance of ethical standards to the practising accountant will help address /minimise the corporate scandals and improve the current public image of the accounting profession. This is because in all the cases it is not the technical competence/excellence of the professional accountants which was in question but their ethical judgement which involves character development through pre/post qualification (lifelong practical endeavour) (West, 2017). In order to address this shortfall, the current study seeks to examine the relevance of accounting ethics in modern times, factors that contribute to accounting fraud and the challenges faced by accountants as they strive to adhere to ethical standards. The insight provided will contribute to our understanding about the usefulness of ethics to the accounting professionals. Also the findings related to the relevance, fraud and challenges of ethics by professional accountants will help educators and professional bodies to improve ethical courses and code of ethics respectively.

2. Literature Review

According to Leung and Cooper (1994) ethics is defined as "a system of moral principles, by which human actions may be judged good or bad or right or wrong", or "the rules of conduct recognized in respect of a particular class of human actions." Ethics are continuous efforts of striving to ensure that people, and the institutions they shape, live up to the standards that are reasonable and solidly based. According to Leung and Cooper (1994) accountants, like many other professionals operate within a world of change in which corporate collapses, business impropriety, regulatory failure and environmental disasters are prevalent. In light of these accountants need to have a thorough appreciation of the potential implications of professional and

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

management decisions, and an awareness of the pressures in observing and upholding ethical standards, which may confront individuals involved in a decision-making process. An accountant must be able to treat finances as produce on behalf of a client in a completely objective manner (Lee, 1995; Low, Davey, & Hooper, 2008; Wyatt, 2004). A distinguishing mark of the accountancy profession is its acceptance of the responsibility to act in the public interest. Therefore, a professional accountant's responsibility is not exclusively to satisfy the needs of an individual client or employer but the entire public (Brennan, 2016; Lee, 1995). In acting in the public interest a professional accountant should observe and comply with the ethical principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care and confidentiality (Adams, 2004; West, 2017).

Society places even higher expectations on professional accountants and where such expectations are not met it creates expectation gap which may be costly for the profession since there will be break of the existing social contract (Armstrong, 1993). This implies that high level of ethical behaviour is imperative to the credibility and continuous existence of the accounting profession (Nathan, 2015). People need to have confidence in the quality of the complex services provided by professionals. Because of these high expectations, professions have adopted codes of ethics, also known as codes of professional conduct. These ethical codes call for their members to maintain a level of self-discipline that goes beyond the requirements of laws and regulations (Duska & Duska, 2004; Wilson, Strong, & Monney, 2016; Zeff, 2003). However, research indicates that accountants tend to comply with the legality of ethical code rather than the morality. Being professional requires one to uphold the moral principle of doing the right thing always and not just complying with the law (Cameron & O'Leary, 2015). This is seen as a contributory factor to recent developments relating to corporate scandals ranging from Enron to the financial crisis which has made some accountants to question as well as consider the level of professionalism among practicing accountants (McManus & Subramaniam, 2014).

Notwithstanding this, there are perceived risks where codes of ethics may marginalize morality in the sense of making managers feel better about their decisions without having them challenged so long as they pursue what is enshrined in the code of ethics. In this way, code of ethics 'buy' morality and relieve individuals of that most crucial ingredient of ethical behaviour- personal responsibility (Aghdammazraeh & Karimzadeh, 2017; Elias, 2006; Lee, 1995). This in effect may lead to fraud. According to Imhoff (2003) when accounting fraud occurs, it creates a lack of confidence and uncertainty in financial reports and reduces the decision usefulness of that reports. Therefore, it shakes the confidence of investors, the public perception of corporations and accounting. Lapses in personal and professional integrity can cause crisis in corporate confidence and affect organizations and their corporate clients. The most frequent form of corporate fraud is by falsifying expense accounts or charging items of personal consumption to the company's account (Steinhoff & Hoffman, 2015; Sykes, 1988). Another key contributor to fraud is the culture of money. According Alam (1999), money plays an important role in our world. There is no denial of the fact that money and values associated with money allows us to have things that other matters become secondary and make us become more active participants in the world. But there is a question about how people's values and behaviour change when their sole purpose in life is devoted to acquiring money and its associated pleasures. Another factor stated by Low et al. (2008) is that society is increasingly being confronted with a legalistic culture that exists in corporations which seem to take the attitude that law can be interpreted to suit their own ends, that is, in such a manner that if the interpretation says that they are not breaking the law then it is fine for them to conduct the action. This means that corporations take a narrow legalistic view when performing their business. Therefore, accounting fraud continue to flourish, despite the reforms by profession and authoritative bodies. In his study about legalistic culture, Hastings (2002) shows that since the early 1980s, management styles have become more aggressive over transactions not covered by specific accounting rules. Managers have apparently adopted a permissive approach to accounting treatments and challenge auditors by arguing, "show me where it says I can't". In this regard, one wonders if ethical principles are still relevant to the professional accountant.

Bazerman et al. (2002) suggested that unconscious biases rather than deliberate corruption are the sources of accounting fraud due to the subjectivity nature of accounting. This clearly indicates the challenge faced by the professional accountant in the performance of his/her duty when considering ethics. The ability of the accountant to act in the best interest of the public will be underpinned by their understanding of ethical principles of egoism, utilitarianism, deontology and virtue (see (Aghdammazraeh & Karimzadeh, 2017; West, 2017)). Better theoretical understanding together with the current principle-based approach will improve the ethical culture and help accountants deal with dilemmas which are not specifically covered by the conceptual framework. This will enhance the ethical development of the accountant.

3. Methodology

The population of this study is made up of 207 accountants and auditors in eight districts in the eastern region of Ghana. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample 110 accountants and auditors in the districts. The choice of the region was underpinned by familiarity and convenience to the researchers. Questionnaire was the main data collection tool for the study. In line with the specific objectives of the study, the questionnaire was designed which elicited information on demographic of respondents, factors contributing to accounting fraud, relevance and challenges of accounting ethics in modern times.

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

Questionnaire items were developed from the literature since there were no already developed questionnaire to be adopted for the purpose of this study.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section A requested information relating to respondents' demographic such as gender, age and years of experience. Section B requested information on factors which to the best knowledge of respondents contribute to accounting fraud since it is a major act which has brought the image and reputation of the accounting profession and professionals into disrepute. There were four sub-headings under this section as corporate transparency, corporate values and behavoiur, money culture and legalistic culture with each having some questions to be answered. Section C was interested in information on the relevance of accounting ethics to the respondents with ten questions in total. Questions contained in this section were aligned to the relevance of ethics in the daily working life of the professional accountant and included items such as "It helps the professional accountant to build personal fortitude to make a right decision" and "Ethical behaviour forces accountants to confront personal relations in case of fraud". The last section (D) sought to identify the ethical challenges which are faced by the professional accountants in the course of performing their duties. All questions in sections B to D were answered using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) = 1; Disagree (D) = 2; Neutral (N) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; Strongly agree = 5.

The design of the questionnaire took into account the sensitive nature of the subject matter and therefore all respondents were assured of their anonymity by a letter accompanying the questionnaire and the fact that it was for academic exercise. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, pilot study was undertaken in Ashanti region among 10 professional accountants also working in public and private institutions to determine the suitability of the questionnaire for achieving the objectives of the study. At the end of the pilot study three items which were deemed to be ambiguous were modify to make it simple.

The questionnaires were self-administered but were delivered to respondents at their offices by hand due to the poor postal network in the study area and the fact that this approach yields high response rate (Ezeah & Roberts, 2012). However, this approach is relatively costly compared to using the post. A total of 110 questionnaires were distributed. At the end of a one month period, 110 questionnaires were retrieved. All completed questionnaires were usable. Data collected from the field were checked for errors that will affect the analysis. The questionnaires were coded for traceability and easy entry using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This quantitative data processing software was used to generate descriptive statistics which were used for analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The background demographics indicated that about 78.2% of respondents were males with 21.8% females. A clear indication of the dominance of males which reflects the existing gender profile of the profession. With respect to age distribution of respondents, about 50% of the respondents were aged 30-34years. This was followed by those within the 25-29 age brackets (29.1%), 35-39years (10.9), and 40+ (10%). The respondents with accountant designation were 60.0% and 40.0% were Auditors.

Ethics are important for professional accountants because throughout history, it has been proven that accounting partially reflects moral orders of the world in which it is practiced. It has become a moral discourse, because of the injustice that has occurred with regards to ethics within the accounting profession. The sections below present and discuss the accounting fraud, relevance of ethics and challenges.

4.1. Factors that Contribute to Accounting Fraud

The integrity of the accounting profession and the reliability of financial information provided by organizations have been undermined by accounting fraud. Accounting fraud strive on negative behaviour relating to the following four factors: corporate transparency, corporate values and behaviour, money culture, and legalistic culture (Imhoff, 2003). Factors which contribute to accounting fraud are presented in Table 1 below. Using a five-point scale, respondents were made to indicate their opinion on various statements. From the table, 80% of the respondents agreed that corporate governance undermines the quality and integrity of financial reporting. However, 20% disagreed with this opinion. 80% of the respondents were of the view that corporate governance dominates the political agenda and as a result no one disputes the need for honesty, accuracy and transparency. However, 20% of the respondents disagreed with this assertion. Moreover, 85% agreed to the statement that lapses in personal and professional integrity can cause crisis in corporate confidence but 15% disagree. 90% of the respondents were of the view that bad corporate behaviour like falsifying expense accounts can affect integrity creation; although, 10% of the respondents disagreed. All the respondents were of the view that money and values associated with money may have negative influence on one's behaviour.

Moreover, all respondents affirmed that people's values and behaviour change when their sole purpose in life is devoted to acquiring money and its associated pleasures. Additionally, 80% of the respondents affirmed that some corporations take a narrow legalistic view when performing business and this sometimes contributes to fraudulent activities. However, 20% of the respondents disagreed. Further 80% of the respondents agreed that accounting fraud continues to flourish because of poor legal framework. However,

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

20% of the respondents strongly disagreed. It can be deduced from the above findings that both institutional (internal) and personal (external) factors contribute to accounting fraud in most institutions. Institutional structures put in place such as governance to ensure that organizations operate in the best interest of its stakeholders may serve as impediment to fraud detection especially where there is overreliance on the audit committee. This is because monitoring company managers to ensure compliance is costly and stressful. Therefore, accounting fraud may flourish under systems where the board monitoring function is not very effective but all the corporate governance structures are in place. Where corporate behaviour and culture promotes fraudulent accounting practices, individuals without very strong ethical orientation may succumb to the unethical practices at such workplace to contribute to fraud. Such behaviour and culture override professional integrity which helps to prevent or moderate fraud. Different institutions have distinct organizational culture and structure. Hence, the level of fraud might differ from one firm to the other based on these differences. Money culture which may be due to individual's financial aspirations and needs pressure may easily put them into engaging in dubious accounting practices which are more likely to benefit them personally hence paying no attention to the public interest principle of the professional accountant (Adams, 2004; Frankel, 1989).

Table-1. Factors contributing to accounting fraud.

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Corporate Transparency					
Corporate governance undermines the quality and integrity of financial reporting.	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	80.0
Corporate governance dominates the political and business agenda", and that "no one disputes the need for transparency, honesty and accuracy on the part of corporation"	20.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	60.0
Corporate Values and Behaviour					
Lapses in personal and professional integrity can cause the crisis in corporate confidence and effect on organization and their corporate clients.	0.0	15.0	0.0	25.0	60.0
Bad corporate behaviour like falsifying expense accounts or charging items of personal consumption to the company's account can affect integrity creation	0.0	10.0	0.0	15.0	75.0
Money Culture					
Money and values associated with money allows us to have things that other matters become secondary and make us become more active participants in the world.	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0
Peoples' values and behaviour change when their sole purpose in life is devoted to acquiring money and its associated pleasures.	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0
Legalistic Culture					
Corporations take a narrow legalistic view when performing their business.	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	60.0
Accounting fraud continues to flourish because of poor legal framework.	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	80.0

Source: Field survey.

4.2. The Relevance of Accounting Ethics in Modern Times

As part of the specific objectives of the study, respondents' views were sought on the relevance of accounting ethics to their professional life in modern times. Table 2 below presents respondents' varied opinions on the relevance of accounting ethics to them in modern times. Majority (80%) of the respondents agreed that accounting requires ethical knowledge and skills to a great extent. However, the remaining 20% of the respondents felt otherwise. Also, 80% of respondents agreed that ethics in accounting helps clear the concept of right and wrong. However, about 5% of the respondents were not sure of their position, whereas 15% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Again, 90% of the respondents were of the view that ethics in accounting help accountants build personal fortitude to make right decision. Additionally, all respondents agreed that ethics in accounting enable accountants focus on keeping up revenue growth in the short-term without compromising the integrity of the system. Moreover, about 60% of the respondents agreed that ethics make accountants think in the long term. However, 20% were in doubt where as 20% disagreed to this opinion. About 60% of the respondents agreed that ethical behaviour forces accountants to confront personal relations in case of fraud and 80% were of the opinion that concentrating on ethical behaviours makes accountant build inner strength which enables them confront unethical challenges and ethical dilemmas in

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

their profession. Respondents also agreed (100%) that ethical behaviour in accounting helps accountants to feel comfortable when dealing with grey areas and ethics enhance the professional image of accounting.

These findings suggest that even though ethics have numerous importance, not all accountants and auditors totally agree to this. That is, whereas some look at accounting ethics from an optimist perspective, others look at it from a pessimist perspective. Ethics are relevant for professional accountants and auditors because their work requires a combination of standards and ethical knowledge and skills to a great extent. The overall response indicates that accountants generally agree that in modern times the professional accountant does not only need technical competence but also high level of ethical knowledge to deal with dilemmas in their working life. In this respect, the various accountancy professional bodies, national and international have developed the fundamental principles and conceptual framework to enable accountants fulfil their ethical requirements even though questions still remain as to the appropriateness of this approach (Nathan, 2015; Wilson et al., 2016). The results of the current study indicating the high level of relevance of ethics to the professional accountants in modern times is encouraging because there are several reasons why we need ethics in accounting now them ever. Recent spate of corporate scandals has brought to bear the inadequacy of technical excellence alone for the profession (Bazerman et al., 2002; Brennan, 2016). The greater involvement of accountants and accounting firms is another reason which has raised more questions about the ethical standards of the profession than answers (Ibrahim & Angelidis, 2009) and the conviction of professional accountants by the criminal justice system in most instances. Bazerman et al. (2002) in an article in the Harvard review argued that at the core of most accounting scandals is more of unconscious bias than criminality /deliberate corruption and to tackle or moderate the effect of such act(s) will require practices and regulations which recognize their existence. The ability to recognize their existence therefore depend one's knowledge and awareness of ethical standards and fundamental principles which require a combination of lifelong learning and practice (West, 2017).

The recognition of the relevance of ethics by the respondents in the study may also benefit the accountancy profession in many ways. It may ensure confidentiality and credibility of accounting information, reduce fraud, promotes professional image and integrity of the accounting profession and ensures that accountants make right decisions. Accounting being a profession like any other profession has social contract with society to safeguard the public interest and by so doing gains legitimacy (Armstrong, 1993; West, 2017). Therefore, confidentiality and fraud prevention by accountants will ensure that the public interest is protested and the social contract also remain intact. Once ethics help prevent fraud and also achieve public confidence and credibility in the output of accountants mostly financial information, the image and reputation of the accountancy profession will be enhanced. The above reasons show how professional accountants during ethical in their decision-making may benefit the entire profession. Duska and Duska (2004) emphasized that ethical standards are built on the foundation of independence, integrity, credibility, objectivity and confidentiality. They indicate that the scope and the nature of accounting activities should be provided in an ethical way. However, in practice, accountants do not always follow the rules and apply them in every aspect hence the growing concern about the need to combine ethics with legality to ensure sanctity in the accounting profession.

Table-2. The relevance of accounting ethics in modern times.

Statement- Ethics are important for Professional Accountants because:	**SD (%)**	**D (%)**	**N (%)**	**A (%)**	**SA (%)**
Accounting requires ethical knowledge and skills to a great extent	20.0	0.0	0.0	40.0	40.0
They clear the concept of right and wrong	10	5.0	5.0	30.0	50.0
They help the professional accountants to build personal fortitude to make a right decision	0.7	0.3	0.0	40.5	49.5
They enable accountants focus on short term pressures for keeping up revenue growth or for satisfying investors without compromises	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.4	67.6
They make accountants think in long term	20.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	40.0
Ethical behaviour forces accountants to confront personal relations in case of fraud	0.0	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0
Concentrating on ethical factors makes the accountants/auditors build an inner strength which forces them to make an ethical decision	0.0	20.0	0.0	80.0	0.0
It helps accountants/auditors deal easily with ethical dilemmas	0.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	40.0
It helps accountants/auditors feel comfortable dealing with grey areas.	0.0	0.0	0.0	40	60
It helps enhance professional image of accounting	0.0	0.0	0.0	60	40

4.3. Challenges Faced by Accountants as they strive to adhere to Accounting Ethics

Notwithstanding the perceived importance of ethics, there are others who warned of the risk where codes of ethics may marginalize morality in the sense of making managers feel better about their decisions without having them challenged so long as they pursue what is enshrined in a code of ethics. In this way, code of ethics 'buy' morality and relieve individuals of that most crucial ingredient of ethical behaviour-personal

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

responsibility (Elias, 2006; Lee, 1995). Cameron and O'Leary (2015) also insist that even in the ethical context, more emphasis is placed on legal component of ethical dilemmas than moral component in most pre-professional instruction and research indicates that some challenges are likely to occur even in practice.

Table 3 below presents the challenges faced by accountants as they strive to adhere to accounting ethics. All the respondents were of the view that accounting code of ethics in some cases buy morality and relieve individuals of that most crucial ingredient of ethical behaviour which is personal responsibility. The finding of this study is consistent with an observation by Lee (1995). According to Lee, codes of ethics may marginalize morality in the sense of making managers feel better about their decisions without having them challenged so long as they pursue what is enshrined in a code of ethics. In this case the compliance is limited to legal component of ethics which may not pass the public interest test. Brennan (2016) suggested that a simply test for the accountant should be will this pass the morning front pages of the national dailies? Once the answer is no then there is the need to consider high ethical standards than just the legal component. Moreover, majority (60%) of the respondents agreed that accounting ethics cause professional accountants and auditors to be under external pressure to show that they recognize their ethical responsibility. Such external pressure from the government, regulatory bodies, the media and general public may also affect the ability of the professional accountant to explore and develop further since there is that fear of getting the judgement wrong but ethics is lifelong and practical endeavour (Ibrahim & Angelidis, 2009; West, 2017). However, 20% disagreed with the remaining 20% staying neutral. Related to the above finding is the internal pressure experienced from the national regulatory body. Most (60%) of the respondents were of the view that accounting ethics brings internal pressure from the profession to follow codes of professional conduct. The attempt by the professional accountancy bodies to redeem the image of the profession has resulted in ever increasing code of ethics which all professional accountants must comply with from time to time adding to the already demanding schedule of the accountant (Nathan, 2015; Wilson et al., 2016). However, 20% were in doubt whereas 20% disagreed.

Table-3. Challenges faced by accountants as they strive to adhere to accounting ethics.

Statement	**SD** (%)	**D** (%)	**N** (%)	**A** (%)	**SA** (%)
Accounting code of ethics 'buy' morality and relieve individuals of that most crucial ingredient of ethical behaviour (personal responsibility).	0.0	0.0	0.0	60	40
Accounting ethics cause professional accountants to be under external pressure to show that they recognize their ethical responsibility.	0.0	20.0	20.0	60.0	0.0
Accounting ethics brings internal pressure from corporate governance mechanisms.	0.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	40.0
Accounting ethics brings internal pressure from the profession to follow codes of professional conduct.	0.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	40.0

5. Conclusion

The current study was undertaken to investigate the extent of relevance of accounting ethics to the professional accountant in the modern times. In doing so, the study also identified and examined factors contributing to accounting fraud and the challenges associated with ethical adherence. The key contributory factors to accounting fraud according to the findings are money culture and poor corporate values and behaviour and legalistic culture. The findings also indicated that in modern times, professional accountants perceive ethics as being very relevant to their work to a great extent. This is mainly due to the fact that accounting requires ethical knowledge and skills to a great extent. Also accounting ethics help the accountant to build personal fortitude to make right decisions. In spite of the perceived relevance of accounting ethics, there are challenges with ethical adherence. Some of these challenges include the internal pressure associated of complying with code of ethics and the ability of code of ethics to buy morality and relieve individuals of that most crucial ingredient of ethical behaviour which is personal responsibility.

There are several limitations of the study which may require the results to be interpreted with caution and not generalized beyond the current context since context is important when it comes to ethics. The study respondents were limited to only one out of 10 regions in Ghana, limiting the geographical coverage of the study. Therefore, future studies covering all the regions may help confirm the current results since geographical and cultural influences may affect individual's ethical orientation. Again, the study may be affected by social desirability bias known to be associated with sensitive social issues even though measures such as assurance of anonymity was provided to limit the effect of social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985). However, the indispensability of self-reported measures in social and organizational studies have been well documented in the literature (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Future study should look at comparing the relevance of ethics between accounting professionals and accounting students to provide insight on the level of differences that practical experience make to ethical standards.

The study has provided much insight into one of the issues of general concerns to accounting professional bodies, educators, governments and general public. This is due to the severe nature of the effects of accounting scandals on society as a whole. The results to some extent provide assurance to accounting stakeholders

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA

especially, regulatory/professional bodies and educators that the relevance of ethics has not been lost on practitioners/ accounting professionals. It is therefore recommended that accounting educators and regulatory/pofessional bodies should continue with their efforts to inculcate acceptable ethical standards into the accounting profession.

References

Adams, C. A. (2004). The ethical, social and environmental reporting-performance portrayal gap. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, 17*(5), 731-757.

Aghdammazraeh, Y., & Karimzadeh, H. (2017). The role of ethics on accounting. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=2901664. [Accessed, February 21, 2017].

Armstrong, M. B. (1993). Ethics and professionalism in accounting education: A sample course. *Journal of Accounting Education, 11*(1), 77-92. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/0748-5751(93)90019-f.

Bazerman, M. H., Loewenstein, G., & Moore, D. A. (2002). Why good accountants do bad audits. *Harvard Business Review, 80*(11), 96-103.

Brennan, N. (2016). Are ethics relevant to the practice of professional accounting? *Accountancy Plus, 1*, 23-24.

Cameron, A. R., & O'Leary, C. (2015). Improving ethical attitudes or simply teaching ethical codes? The reality of accounting ethics education. *Accounting Education, 24*(4), 275-290.

Duska, R., & Duska, B. S. (2004). *Accounting ethics.* UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Elias, R. Z. (2006). The impact of professional commitment and anticipatory socialization on accounting students' ethical orientation. *Journal of Business Ethics, 68*(1), 83-90. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9041-5.

Ezeah, C., & Roberts, C. (2012). Analysis of barriers and success factors affecting the adoption of sustainable management of municipal solid waste in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Management, 103*, 9-14. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2012.02.027.

Frankel, M. S. (1989). Professional codes: Why, how, and with what impact? *Journal of Business Ethics, 8*(2-3), 109-115. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00382575.

Hastings, R. D. (2002). Accounting scandals, ethical dilemmas and educational challenges. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting, 19*(2), 222-254.

Ibrahim, N., & Angelidis, J. (2009). The relative importance of ethics as a selection criterion for entry-level public accountants: Does gender make a difference? *Journal of Business Ethics, 85*(S1), 49-58. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9946-2.

Imhoff, J. E. A. (2003). Accounting quality, auditing, and corporate governance. *Accounting Horizons, 17*(s-1), 117-129. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2308/acch.2003.17.s-1.117.

Lee, T. (1995). The professionalization of accountancy. *Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal, 8*(4), 48-69.

Leung, P., & Cooper, B. (1994). Ethics in accountancy: A classroom experience. *Accounting Education, 3*(1), 19-33.

Low, M., Davey, H., & Hooper, K. (2008). Accounting scandals, ethical dilemmas and educational challenges. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting, 19*(2), 222-254. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2006.05.010.

McManus, L., & Subramaniam, N. (2014). Organisational and professional commitment of early career accountants: Do mentoring and organisational ethical climate matter? *Accounting & Finance, 54*(4), 1231-1261. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/acfi.12029.

Nathan, D. (2015). How South African societal and circumstantial influences affect the ethical standards of prospective South African chartered accountants. *African Journal of Business Ethics, 9*, 42-62.

Nederhof, A. (1985). Methods of coping with social desirability bias: A review. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 15*(3), 263–280.

Podsakoff, P., & Organ, D. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management, 12*(4), 531–544.

Steinhoff, J. C., & Hoffman, J. S. (2015). Doing the right thing is always the right thing to do! *The Journal of Government Financial Management, 64*(4), 12.

Sykes, C. J. (1988). *Prof scam.* Washington, D.C: Regnery Gateway.

West, A. (2017). The ethics of professional accountants: An Aristotelian perspective. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, 30*(2), 1-28.

Wilson, B., Strong, J., & Monney, K. (2016). An exploratory investigation of effective accounting ethics CPE. *Journal of International Business Disciplines, 11*(2), 48-59.

Wyatt, A. R. (2004). Accounting professionalism - they just don't get it! *Accounting Horizons, 18*(1), 45 – 53.

Zeff, A. S. (2003). How the U.S. accounting profession got where it is today: Part I. *Accounting Horizons, 17*(3), 189-205.

© 2017 by the authors; licensee Online Academic Press, USA