

Vocational Accounting Education: Are We Producing Labours or Architects of Civilization?

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Abstract—The aim of this article is to shed light on how vocational accounting education can produce architects, not mere labors of civilization. By applying dialogic learning process in six classes consisting 180 students, which implies placing love, humility, faith, and hope as base of education values for a year in a vocational accounting institution, notes of participation process were taken, and outcome was recorded qualitatively. The result shows that vocational studies which are usually regarded as mere producers of labors; a term now commonly known as factory teaching institution, is a misguided concept. The essence of education in any kind of study be they academics or vocational, is the same. It is the transfer of values, knowledge, and skill. Thus, the ability to apply accounting knowledge, will be enhanced if students are taught to be contextually and spiritually, not just rationally aware. The creation of applied accounting can only bring welfare to civilization if accounting is created with values suited to the user's belief and local wisdom.

Keywords: *accounting vocational education, civilization, factory teaching institution*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is the perception that accounting is a mere instrument and separate from any value (or claimed as a value free discipline) that causes a rigid view of accounting as technic [1,2]. As a consequence, accounting education has been claimed to serve the need of labors for corporations, hence it is under corporate hegemony[1,3].

Accounting education is usually divided into two lines or specifications for its designated outcomes: (1) academic (2) vocational. Academic education line produces thinker/knowledge builder, while vocational line produces practitioner whose technical skills are expected to exceed the academics outcome.

The term factory teaching university that blossomed in early 2000, recently re-emerged as Industrial Revolution 4.0 takes the center stage. Teaching-factory-university has an aim "...to effectively integrate education, research and innovation activities into a single initiative, involving industry and academia. Towards that end, the proposed Teaching Factory paradigm focuses on integrating industry and academia, through novel adaptations to the teaching/training curricula, achieved by the deployment of ICT-based delivery mechanisms" [4].

Interestingly, factory teaching university is designed for both academics and vocational accounting education, blurring the lines between the two. Accounting vocational study has even put more emphasis on technical issues. In polytechnics, accounting is placed parallel to information technic, civil engineering, etc. If academic education claims to suffer from the intense labor production orientation, vocational education logically would experience worse impact since vocational education is designed to produce "a formative training of working class" that was originated from the first and second industrial revolution [5].

Critic towards this pragmatic stand of education has been put forward as the cause of the "death of accounting" as a discipline of science: "Given the current course of resistance to philosophical change within the field of accountancy, the survival of accounting as a viable and independent profession may be in peril. In the future, accounting could be reduced to a technical specialties controlled solely by and within the corporation. Items that may be cited in accounting's epitaph as the major reasons for its demise as a respected independent profession include: clinging to authoritarian and paternalistic philosophies, which maintain power and recognition in the hands of a privileged few, regardless of the functional quality of their work; repression of diversity and individuality; perpetuation of subjects and methods which support an ineffective status quo; and a refusal to adapt to societal changes reflected in individual attitudes" [6].

The challenge that is faced by accounting education has never been greater as of today. Harari coined the term "Homo Deus" to refer to the shift of paradigm when human rejects the notion of God, as once put forward by the father of positive philosophy, August Comte [7,8].

Amidst Revolution Industry 4.0, the stagnant stance of philosophy in accounting education, and the replacement of God in science, vocational accounting education is in the hands of powerful institutions and corporations. This is a deviation from the true purpose of accounting education to transfer values, not just instilling skills.

Philosophies of education can be identified into naturalism, idealism, realism, pragmatism, eclecticism, and existentialism. Others describe schools of educations, rather than philosophies of education. Schools of education are classified into perennialism, essentialism, progressivism and

reconstructionism. Philosophy of education is a more eclectic view of education rather than the latter, which is recognized as view of education philosophies from socio-cultural approach.

Naturalism is the oldest philosophy of education brought by Thales and Miletosian. It believes that the purpose of education is to enhance human natural growth in accordance with nature's harmony. Human's knowledge and his/her creation are observed as part of nature's order. Idealism philosophy of education is derived from rationalism. It believes that truth and knowledge are not only abstracted from senses but also from deductive thinking process. In this view, individual is a part of spiritual wholeness of the universe. Realism denies this abstract thought of the universe. On the other hand, it believes that the universe is made of physical, concrete material form.

Pragmatism is a largely followed stream of education philosophy education, mainly in the USA. It is characterized by reflective thinking that springs from the basic doctrines of pragmatism: "If it works, use it" [9]. Eclecticism emerged out of the dislike in the other streams of philosophies. It takes pluralistic philosophies in the name of democracy. Existentialism stems from individualism. In general, Existentialism has been described as the attempt to philosophize from the standpoint of the actor rather than from that of a detached spectator. Hence, under this view, education has a purpose to nurture individual ability to be his/her self although it might cost pure relation and communication amongst others.

In 1916, John Dewey published *Democracy and Education* to promote progressivism that encourages vocational training. Progressivism is more in line with industrial age, since it sees that traditional view of education is static and does not possess effort to cognitively adapt to the changing world. The abstract philosophies must be made concrete through application/experience. Since it relies on experience, progressivism is tightly connected to experimentalism and empiricism [10].

Progressivism is characterized with doctrine of interest, cult of utility and intelligence testing movement. It believes on radical individualism, where a person is growing to his/her own unique capacities and growth is an ideal of ordered richness, meaning that education is essentially human experiences arising from the development of cognitive, affective and imaginative capacities [10]. Dewey proposes that education system must proceed forward through scientific method rather than move backward to intellectual and moral standard from pre-scientific century. It is clear than Dewey follows Comte's evolution of thought and regards metaphysics, hence religious beliefs, as primitive thoughts.

However, there are many critics concerning progressivism. One of them is stating that progressivism as an effort to maintain white supremacy over African American as well as power hungry and self-promotional [11].

Relating these philosophies into accounting education, it becomes clear that accounting education follows pragmatism. This is indicated in the International Accounting Education Standard Board (IAESB) Framework for International Education Pronouncements. It states that it is concerned about

the education and development of professional accountants. In paragraph 32-34 from IAESB-IFAC, it is made clear that IFAC seems to be focused on producing accounting technicians through training:

"32 "Education" refers to those learning processes that are systematic, structured, and often formal. The processes are therefore programmed to a significant extent. Education includes a form of developmental process referred to as training.

33. "Training" is a particular type of education, which focuses on how the individual does the job. Training is usually a mix of instruction and practice. It is experience related, and thus has a more practical or applied element than other forms of education. Training may be "on the job" (i.e., while the trainee is performing real tasks in the workplace) or "off the job" (i.e., which takes place while the trainee is not actually performing work).

34. Throughout this publication, reference is made to the work of the IAESB in terms of the "education and development" of professional accountants. In this sense, the phrase relates to "education" as the main process and to "development" as the outcome."

Hence, this confirms the argument that accounting education both vocational and academics are geared towards factory-teaching paradigm.

This paper aims to shed light on how accounting vocational education could produce more than just labors but architect of civilization. The means to do that is through dialogic education, which encompasses not only "how to teach" but also "what is to be taught". Dialogic education sprung from the thought of Paulo Freire, who attempted to integrate love, hope, humility, and faith for a liberating education, and in this case, vocational accounting education [12].

II. METHODS

The research took place for a year (mid 2018- mid 2019). In these two semesters, a dialogic education was conducted. There were four classes encompassing 180 senior years' student's participants in this research.

Behavioral accounting and ethics were subjects that were taught by dialogic learning process. Dialogic learning is a concept of education put forward by Paulo Freire, but in this research it has been extended. Freire never relates "love" with God, only love for justice, but there is no ultimate love but the love of God. By loving God, there will be logical consequences of love to human beings, environment and the universe as a whole. This is an absolute love or hyper love [1]. Education must also give hope to the students that they are able to change the world, they are agents of change. Without humility there will be no liberated education, since humility is needed to accept knowledge. Lastly, faith is essential to help lecturers to continuously put effort in dialogic education since education is a never-ending process.

The values of education that must be the basis of education are love, humility, faith, and hope. Love as a value means that students must be guided to see that it is their responsibility to

love others This means the students were engaged in determining the learning programs, ranging from the choice of case studies to the literature review. As lecturer, I prepared multiple role-plays and mini research practices for specific areas in behavioral accounting, such as financial accounting, management and cost accounting, and public sector accounting.

Notes were taken during classes especially regarding students' behavior and reaction. The notes were then utilized as revision points to improve role-plays or mini research.

For this article, only two role-plays and one mini research were presented amongst several that have been used in the research. These three were chosen because they reflect (1) most diversity consciousness: "different perspective, different views", (2) empathy and God-consciousness: "transfer pricing", and (3) nationalism: "accounting based upon national ideology".

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Role Play One: "Different Perspective, Different Views"

Students should be aware that differences exist and that these differences contribute to the richness of knowledge. Understanding that diversity would have consequences on various need of accounting as well as various forms of accounting, is the opposite of the spirit of internationalization: one accounting standard for all.

To induce this awareness, a role-play was devised. This simple role-play helps students to realize that different perspective would mean different views. The exercise was quite simple. I asked the students to note down everything they see and feel while they were sitting down. Next, I would ask the students to stand on their chairs and note down what they see from different standpoint. Again, I asked them again to write down how they feel. Finally, I asked the students to sit on the floor and write down what they saw all around them. They must also write how they felt.

From there, discussion was triggered relating how reality can be different from different perspectives. Questions were asked (1) which position do you like best; (2) which position is most comfortable for you and why; (3) which position would you choose regardless what you like.

Most students agreed that every reality from different perspective is a part of a whole reality, thus it would be arrogant to claim one truth without trying to understand that every "reality" may not be "real" for others.

The discussion then proceeded to accounting and how this "different perspectives, different views" relate to accounting. One of the issues that were discussed included the effort to achieve one global accounting standard (International Financial Reporting Standards/IFRS). When Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia (Indonesian Accountants Association) adopted IFRS, a standard that guides the reporting of cooperation (PSAK 27) must be revoked. Cooperation is a true picture of Indonesian communal society, compared to individualistic Western corporation. Yet, it must perish in the name of one single global accounting standard: IFRS.

The discussion triggered students' awareness of the interest of controlling entities over countries through accounting regulation that also reduce diversities. Through this dialogic learning process, the students became more critically conscious. Their love for nation's identity was raised.

B. Role Play Two: "Transfer Pricing"

International transfer pricing is commonly executed by multinational companies (MNC) to evade tax. The students at first were given the technic to calculate consolidated incomes for MNC, especially in countries where the tax rate differs. They were shown how changing the transfer price could benefit the companies when income can be lowered and tax would be reduced.

Next, a case was presented displaying two affiliated companies engaging in transfer pricing in two different countries with different tax rates. These companies sell drug for cancer patients. An existing condition at a specific selling price and transfer price indicating a specific consolidated income as well as sum of tax paid was presented. The students were formed in to groups, and as groups they were asked to decide whether they would change the selling price and transfer price.

The results varied. Most groups would change selling and transfer prices so that the consolidated income would reflect highest amount and the tax paid show the least amount. However, one or two groups in each class did not change some prices with the following reasons (1) they have enough income (2) they want to keep the tax paid at the same amount (not more) and even less by avoiding tax.

At this time, the lecturers' role is much needed to integrate love, hope, humility and faith into the dialogic learning process. Items were then asked: (1) "did you take any consideration regarding the fact that what you are selling were drug for cancer patients?" (2) "did you regard the fact that tax is an important factor in a nation's development, and by paying less you exploit a country and not giving much in return?".

Surprisingly some students were completely unaware of the "drug cancer". They were fixated to numbers and bounded to rationality. When the cancer patients were highlighted and that the difference between being able to buy the drug or not would cause life or death, the students were amazed how they did not see that. They were shocked and some of them were upset. As a lecturer, one must bring attention about the danger of how numbers as well as mere profit orientation could induce behaviors of financial statements users and analysts.

These questions would raise issues that love and empathy for others must always exist and should not be overpowered by greed. Students must show humility in making decision even if it would concern financial aspects.

This kind of role-play is holistic since it encompasses various aspects of learning. The exercise requires students to practice their calculative skills in determining consolidated income, yet at the same time it exercises students' emotion/empathy. Such role-play would also place hope that students could become agents of change when one day they take important places in the society. Most of all the decision

should reflect faith that everything we do must be accountable to God in this world and the hereafter.

C. Mini Research: "National Ideology as the Base of Accounting"

The lecturer could also ask students to do mini research to have a glimpse of reality for they must be a part of society soon enough. This mini research was conducted after a discussion about nation's ideology. An ideology is the basis values that a nation believes to be the guidance in life.

Indonesia has Pancasila (the five tenets/principles) which are: (1) Oneness of God; (2) Humanity that is just and civilized; (3) Unity in nation; (4) People that is guided by wisdom in deliberative representation; (5) Social justice for all. If this is a nation's ideology, then it should also be reflected in accounting practice as well.

It became clear in a guided discussion that at the moment the nation practices accounting that is filled with self-interest as reflected in the profit bottom line orientation. Conventional accounting practice is very egoistic in nature. Relating to the previous role-play, the students experienced how they themselves were too fixated in getting most profit and least tax.

The students prepared a list of questions for interviews to their friends as well as other lecturers about the possibility of having Pancasila to be integrated to the practice of accounting. They were awed by their own findings. The findings indicate that Pancasila is regarded as a nation's ideology by all and Pancasila is regarded important, yet there is a reluctance to embrace it into accounting practice. We discussed about the separation between consciousness and action; and how such reality exists.

After the research, another guided discussion as a part of dialogic learning process took place. We discussed about the power of international accounting bodies such as International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and International Accounting Standard Board (IASB), and their roles in establishing international standards.

The discussion went on to the history of accounting and the lost values in accounting. For instance, Luca Pacioli who was regarded the father of accounting, in his book *Summa de Arithmetica* wrote "In the name of God" to begin financial report. This shows utmost accountability should be to God, yet how is it now this accountability is no longer apparent?

The students were also introduced to how different value if placed as objectives of financial reporting would produce different practice. Value Added Statement (VAS) was then brought to light. The students were asked to describe the differences between VAS and Income Statements [13]. The absence of profit in VAS is because the different values placed in the purpose of accounting. The reason why VAS is not taught during the envious years is because of the dominance of US accounting standards.

By having a dialogic learning process, the students became aware that the world has gone astray from godliness values. It is their job to put accounting on the right track again.

D. Vocational Accounting Education as Producer of Architects of Civilization

As an educator, one must be aware that this profession is a privilege. The amount of time that should be spent as the demand of the curriculum is usually seen as a burden. It is true that much energy is needed to design a dialogic learning process such as role-plays, mini research, case studies, etc. Yet, this will not be seen as an obstacle if educator realize that not everyone has the privilege to "shape" a human being into his/her full potential, instead of being shaped into a machine.

Vocational accounting education that is packed with technical exercises should not reduce the true purpose of education. If the true purpose of education is to make human aware of their obligation on earth, that is to devise civilization, then it is more than possible to form great architects of civilization with great technical skill also.

The one point that must be realized is that it is not just about "what to teach" but also "how to teach". In role-play about transfer pricing, for instance, it does not take a long time to make students aware of their rational-opportunity maximizers nature.

The mindset of vocational accounting academics should also shift from being labors to architects of civilization. There has been a phenomenon of seeing vocational education as second best to academic education. There have been cases where vocational accounting education could produce great entrepreneurs who provide job opportunities for their surroundings. This confidence must be introduced to accounting students that they too would not end up to be mere labors of industry.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that dialogic learning process which places love, hope, humility and faith as the basis of vocational accounting education can mold students into a full-holistic human being. These results in the rise of students' religious-critical being who would be able to utilize his/her potentiality to create or become the architect of civilization, were apparent in this study. Of course, not every student can be transformed. The stream of liberal-capitalistic society has unfortunately slipped into every aspect of life. Yet this effort is every lecturer's obligation to transfer values into accounting education. While practicing love, hope, humility and faith into accounting education, the lecturers are also "forced" to live those values, hence it is not just transforming students but also transforming self as well. Without a critically conscious lecturer/educator, it would be impossible to have a dialogic learning process.

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