ABSTRACT

Higher education globally is characterized by numerous universities producing millions of graduates with slightly differentiated professional degrees. Graduates later race for common professional certification as the normal requirement of the job market. The motivation for many private universities is to break even even, remain profitable and sustain their positions in the market place. Public universities with science orientations focus more on scientific competence, research, innovation, and professionalism. A new system of Chartered Professional Examinations for non-business degrees is proposed and discussed in this article. The objective is to promote professionalism, develop and test competence and create an equivalence of all similar degree programs awarded by universities. Universities reserve the right and autonomy to function and award degrees as independent institutions of higher learning. Harmonization of examinations improves university education and standardize degrees across universities. PhD programs and master’s degrees are exempt from these examinations since many PhDs are research focused, therefore the contribution of a PhD degree is evaluated by the value of its scientific output.

Keywords: chartered professional examinations, degrees, professionalism, universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The changes in higher education are already recognized (Knight, 2008). Globally Professional examinations are fewer across hundreds of degrees at universities, common for Accountancy and Medical professions (Platt & Barron, 1953), Statistics (Smith, 1995), Engineering (Hai-bin, 2009), Administrators and Secretaries (Williams, 1928) and Supply Chain Management (Larson, 2008). In other countries, professionals join by registration to boards of Chartered Architects and Engineers. Brimer (1968) presents earlier transitions in examinations, most of the Chartered Professional systems have origins in the British system around the mid-1850s, and other countries have adopted them as Country based systems (Murphy, 1984; Richardson, 1992). Certification ensures that employees possess the necessary professional skills adequate enough to perform their duties. The Accountancy profession has gained much popularity in certifying its graduates compared to other professions. The demand for ACCA and CPA has continued to increase indicating the relevance of these skills in the marketplace. Several students desire to be part of certifying bodies (Owusu et al., 2018).

The article also relies on the general body of knowledge and systems on integrated reporting (Owen 2013). Chartered Professional Examinations (CPE) increase workers’ mobility and provide opportunities across borders increasing industry and business growth and efficiency in regions where such skills are limited. The trust built by certifying bodies among professionals builds a foundation for certifying processes.

Higher Education will continue to change due to increase in student population, decreasing funding for institutions due to competition for Government resources, the advent of e-learning and increasing number of online and un vetted courses, random offering of courses with less convergence towards profession growth and development. Though many challenges exist there are opportunities in higher education. In a multitude of university programs that exist there is an acceptable classification of degrees globally by standard professions in business, humanities, and sciences. The common profession give rise to standard procedures for developing an agreed system of certification. The objective of this work is to establish a framework for Chartered Professional Examinations across related disciplines. The approach sets another level of equivalence for qualifications among diverse degrees and universities.

Divergence exists within institutions that are more profit-oriented, in this class of institutions and universities multiple programs are developed and duplicated to generate more revenue with less involvement of education regulators, business, society and other major stakeholders compared to those focusing on research, student development, innovation social and economic development.

II. THE SYSTEM

Numerous factors could explain why there are many private students, one of which is the limited number of Government-sponsored students, the location of universities, the required number per program, economic reasons, and
choice among others. Employees today have to decide whether the degrees offered at all Universities are equal. The first decision rests on knowing whether the awarding university is licensed, and its programs approved by a regulatory authority. The article proposes that the central independent body to regulate CPE is the Central authority in collaboration with Professional bodies. The system will require graduates to sit for Chartered Professional examinations for non-business degrees.

ACCA and CPA certification already test and certifies business competence for business degrees. However, PhDs and programs in arts and social sciences are exempt from Chartered Examinations. The goals of graduates are to find employment, post-graduate progression, and innovation to create more jobs and other opportunities for society. Though universities are independent, they ultimately produce graduates for a common market.

\[\text{Certificates} \quad \text{Award of Chartered Professional Certificates by Professional Bodies Regulated by a National Regulatory Body.}\]

\[\text{Results} \quad \text{Assessment} \quad \text{Professional Examinations managed by Experts (Written or Practical)}\]

\[\text{Adoption of Examination System by Professional Bodies and National Regulatory Body} \quad \text{National and International Approval} \quad \text{Ministry of Education and Sports, International Professional and Certification Bodies, ISO}\]

\[\text{Examination Protocol}\]

Fig. 1 Proposed Framework for Implementation of Chartered Professional Examinations.

Chartered Professional Examinations will establish a more uniform standard, while universities retain their autonomy and uniqueness. The Certification will be necessary for students interested in joining other international universities for Master and PhDs since their degrees will be similar irrespective of the universities they attended eliminating the need for preparatory courses to join Master and PhDs programs in other countries. This system will increase competition and improve the quality of university education in building professionalism and acceptance of degrees for universities and employees abroad.

A. Universities

Universities need to prepare students to sit for chartered examinations. Competences required to excel in a chartered examination need to be integrated into their curricula and delivery methods (Ewell & Rodgers, 2014; Clayton 2012) to reduce the hours required in preparing for examinations as different methods are adopted by students in preparation for chartered examinations (Dong et al., 2019). Extensive literature has been developed by current professional certification bodies and systems that are benchmarks for developing the best CPE system. Further certification should increase credits on operations research and qualitative methods as businesses are operating in a changing competitive changing environment that needs new solutions and data to inform management decision processes (Hopper, 2013; Johnston et al., 2002; Kiens et al., 1983). Trublood (1986) argues that accountants proficient in research contribute significantly to the growth of their organizations.

Universities are the main producers of accountants that register and undertake chartered examinations. However, professional, and academic programs have remained structurally unchanged with minimal convergence over the years, there exist differences in curricula and assessment, but delivery largely remains related (van der Merwe et al., 2014; King & Davidson, 2009). Testing full professional competence within a university system as indicators of performance are limited thus meeting professional needs seems to be complex (Pasewark 2021), it is necessary to balance academic and professional goals (Paisey & Paisey, 2007).

B. Examinations

A National Regulatory Authority and professional bodies have the mandate to manage Chartered Professional Examinations. In anticipation of Chartered Professional Examinations, curricula across programs will be standardized to be professionally relevant. The nature of the exams should test core professional knowledge, problem-solving, critical thinking, analytical abilities, innovation and professional writing (Davidson, 1996), however possessing the Chartered Professional Certificate is an added advantage in recruitment for employment. Eligible CPE students are bachelor graduates. Several certifications (Table I) have existed for a century, irrespective of these, degrees still appear to be different within similar professions at different universities. Testing centers are ideal places for conducting examinations to avoid institutional bias and harmonization of management procedures.

Popular certifications are in the field of Business, Management and Administration. Medical, Engineering and Law adopt regional or country-based certification or registration by professional boards.
TABLE I: COMMON CHARITRED PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Fields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>CPA, ACCA</td>
<td>Business, Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>CIM</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>CMI</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>CIPS</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>CGI</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TThe list is not conclusive.*

Some Universities have formed alliances with certifying bodies and reviewed their business curricula for undergraduate degrees incorporating ACCA courses to create an integrated program equivalent to the certification awarded for undertaking a 2 to 3-year training of ACCA after the bachelor’s program, similar protocol if adopted in certifying non-business degrees would greatly improve university education. This route has saved significant time and other resources for graduates and increased the weight and acceptance of their bachelor’s degrees. CPA has developed over the ages because of global standards that need to be followed by companies during financial reporting. It is widely accepted that professionals that receive such certification have developed sufficient competence and capacity to report based on international standards. In other fields, certification will mean competence to perform professional tasks unifying global standards and professionalism, the common route for university and program standardization is through the popular ISO standard system of certification.

III. DISCUSSION

Universities annually produce thousands of graduates from various professions, mostly in humanities and business. The professionalism and competence of several graduates need testing to fit world standards that are ever-changing compared to university systems. Most degrees are too theoretical with minimal link to future workplace job requirements. Benchmarks for developing and implementing Professional Examinations have evolved over 200 years most especially ACCA and CPA Examinations recognized globally. Studies show that the Accountancy profession has excelled in promoting certification of its professionals, it is a requirement to have these qualifications to seek employment in departments of accounting and finance in most reputable organizations. GMAT is another examination that is accepted globally as an entrance examination to MBA programs though the content and styles of these papers vary greatly by country and university. Institutional contexts need to be evaluated to ensure the success of harmonizing education procedures (Coryell et al., 2012).

Chartered examinations are seen as a pre-requisite for university internationalization and globalization (Lubbe 2020). Attitudes of students have an influence on these professional examinations (Cheng et al., 2012). Harmonization of University admission dates, academic calendars and system implementation is necessary (van der Vleuten, 2013). Implementation will significantly improve university education and standardize degrees awarded by universities. Chartered Examinations will reduce degree heterogeneity in similar professions that results in different interpretations and selection challenges among recruiters. Equivalence is established across universities accelerating professional development and wider career growth. CPE are highly accepted and desired examinations in all professions. A unified system of examination by national and international professional bodies is necessary to promote global acceptance and labor mobility in non-business professions. However, finding by Ellington and Williams (2017) show that reliance on certification syllabi constrains broader education goals even though there are benefits to integrating certification competence in standard bachelor degrees to promote postgraduate excellence at chartered examinations. Extreme certification is relevant for professional excellence but places less emphasis on developing research capacity for employees which is essential in solving business problems and promoting innovations.

Accreditation procedures that guide certification for various professionals are discussed by several authors (Hudson & Ramsay, 2019; Sentance & Csizmadia, 2017; Lengnick-Hall & Aguinis, 2012; Carliner & Hamlin, 2014; Fleming-Castaldy & Gillen, 2013; Pusey et al., 2005; Adams et al., 2004; Matlock et al., 2001; Moline, 1986). Partnerships between universities and professional bodies will further the attainment of certification (Yapa 2000; Harvey et al., 1995). Chartered Professional Examinations that are popular have very minimal requirements of less than bachelor’s degree which possess future professional consequences (Gammie & Kirkham, 2008). The framework presented applies to Chartered Professional Examinations for professionals with a minimum of a bachelor’s degree.

FUNDING

The author received no funding for this manuscript.

CONFICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest. The first concept of inter-university examinations was developed by the author at Mountains of the Moon University in 2015.

REFERENCES

