

# SAAA Biennial Conference - 28 to 30 June 2023

## Track 2 Abstract Book

### ***[Overall best paper award winner] The use of e-learning applications in accounting at residential universities in South Africa: A social justice perspective***

Wendy Terblanche (University of Fort Hare), Elmarie Papageorgiou (University of Witwatersrand), Ilse Lubbe (University of Cape Town) and Nico van der Merwe (North-West University).

**Purpose:** In a post-COVID world, higher education institutions are searching for the optimal approach for embracing technology in learning. However, institutions (and their students), particularly in developing economies such as South Africa, face numerous social justice challenges. Social justice is about equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities. This study analyses and interprets how students' access, participation and engagement with technology influence their experiences of e-learning.

**Methodology:** Qualitative data was collected from accounting students registered at four South African residential universities in South Africa (n = 1864). Themes emerged from the analysis of the data which was performed using a qualitative research analysis tool. These themes are classified and discussed under four social justice principles.

**Findings:** The study's findings clearly link students' experiences of e-learning to social justice issues in South Africa, with some students finding successful participation in e-learning significantly more challenging than others. The nature of these challenges should be informative for institutions considering delivery modes and pedagogies that incorporate technology in learning.

**Contribution:** The experiences of students registered in Accounting programmes at residential universities in South Africa and their use of e-learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic, and interpreting these through a social justice lens, is novel. Recommendations should be useful to higher education in adapting modes of delivery and pedagogies. Policymakers and universities should be cognizant of social-justice regarding access, equity, participation and diversity when moving to online learning to achieve a post-school education system that enriches lives, promotes social justice and overcomes historical inequities.

### ***[22] A Systematic Literature Review: Assessment of Critical Thinking in Accounting and Auditing Education***

Tammy Ntisana (University of Fort Hare) and Prof Kato Plant (University of Pretoria).

**Purpose:** Critical thinking is not a new term. Specifically, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) require SAICA-accredited programme providers to develop this skill to an advanced level in students. If educators need to foster the development of critical thinking in their students, they also need to have the means to assess this skill.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A systematic literature review was conducted utilizing the Web of Science database. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) statement was used as a model to guide the process of identifying, selecting and appraising current literature on the state of knowledge of critical thinking and assessment.

**Findings:** Firstly, it was evident that the prevalent research areas were predominantly in the domains of educational research, psychology and health sciences. Research on critical thinking and assessment in the discipline of accounting appears to be very limited. The exceptionally low research output in the accounting or auditing fields in relation to critical thinking and assessment reveals a gap in the literature. Secondly, the articles identified were screened and analysed for common themes. These either did not correlate critical thinking with assessment, or indicate that critical thinking is an indirect consequence of certain forms of assessment. However, none of the literature screened reflects on how to directly assess critical thinking.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study is the first attempt within the accounting and auditing landscape to conduct a systematic literature review on the assessment of critical thinking skills.

**[23] *The role of student background and other individual characteristics in perceptions of teaching excellence by accounting and business students***

Nadia Gulko (University of Lincoln), Lies Bouten (IESEG School of Management), Natalie Churyk (Northern Illinois University), Patricia Everaert (Ghent University), Elizabeth Gordon (Temple University), Seyram Kawor (University of Cape Coast), Camillo Lento (Lakehead University), Nick McGuigan (Monash University), Sanlie Middelberg (North-West University), Saravanan Muthaiyah (Multimedia University), Suresh Sahoo (Sri Sri University), Olubukunola Uwuigbe (Covenant University) and Nadeeka Withanage (Greenwich University).

**Purpose:** In universities around the world, academics are encouraged to facilitate excellent education. Students have different perceptions of teaching quality and usually evaluate teachers on their unique teaching attributes. The study aims to broaden the existing literature on teaching excellence (TE) from students' perspectives across eleven countries. We consider these perspectives from different student backgrounds and individual characteristics measured by twelve independent variables, with the following three included in this paper: academic status, gender, and work experience.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Quantitative and qualitative empirical data are collected from all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate business and accounting students in eleven countries from a sampled thirteen institutions across five continents. Primary data is collected from students using an online survey questionnaire.

**Findings (preliminary):** The data collection is still in progress. The preliminary survey results for six of the eleven countries and a total of 788 responses to date are presented.

**Contribution:** We examine whether students' perceptions about TE vary between academic status, gender, and work experience, and what teachers' personal, classroom, and background qualities and attributes add to the definition of TE. Therefore, the emphasis is on exploring differences and similarities across multiple countries. Understanding what TE means for students would enhance teaching practices, thereby improving student engagement, enhancing the student learning experience, and developing employability skills. Further research is needed to explore how a teacher's background information may influence students' perception of TE in higher education and to what extent teachers put students' interests at the heart of teaching.

**[24] *A proposed model for evaluating the explanatory value of banks' public credit-risk disclosures under IFRS-9***

Ronald Nhleko (North-West University) and Daniel P Schutte (North-West University).

**Purpose:** This paper posits a model that could be utilised to evaluate the explanatory value of banks' public credit-risk disclosures, and thereby the claims by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) that credit-risk disclosures that comply with its latest International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS)-9 would be decision-useful to banks' stakeholders. The study was motivated by a lack of a comprehensive methodological framework that could enable one to empirically evaluate the value and objectives of IFRS-9 credit-risk reporting. The absence of such a framework constitutes a significant methodological drawback because it means that, until such time as one is established, the IASB's claims mentioned above remain largely unsubstantiated. Consequently, the empirical decision-usefulness of banks' credit-risk disclosures also remains largely unknown, albeit presumed.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study develops a logical basis for the specification of banks' accounting-based credit-risk determinants together with industry-specific, bank-specific and other macroeconomic variables within a theoretical model that facilitates the empirical observation of reported credit-risk.

**Findings:** It was established that when industry and bank-specific factors are controlled for, IFRS-9 credit-risk disclosures can be specified within an intrinsic valuation equation to observe the explanatory value of the bank-level credit-risk assumed by bank managers.

**Originality/Contribution:** The posited model makes it possible to empirically evaluate the explanatory value of banks' credit-risk disclosures, and thereby validate the IASB's claims about the value and objectives of IFRS-9 credit-risk reporting. Thus, it is hoped that this model will prove helpful to stakeholders interested in empirical evidence of the decision-usefulness of listed banks' public credit-risk disclosures.

### **[25] Is Tax Avoidance Really Tax Avoidance in the Context of State Failure**

Pieter Van der Spuy (Stellenbosch University) and Phillip de Jager (University of Cape Town).

**Purpose:** This research gathers perspectives on corporate tax avoidance by interviewing corporate tax consultants. This is important because corporate effective tax rates have been in decline across the globe for the past two decades. The South African context of state failure makes it easier to rationalise a more aggressive posture in the grey area between legal tax avoidance and illegal tax evasion.

**Design:** We made use of semi-structured interviews with senior partners of eleven tax advisors of large JSE listed companies. The focus of the interviews was on the interaction between corporate culture, tax avoidance and CEO influences.

**Findings:** Interviewees argue that their clients are not aggressive tax avoiders. However, they acknowledge that clients are increasingly becoming frustrated with the lack of service delivery. Emergent was the argument that a level of tax avoidance, to fund direct spending on social goods, can be justified. It was acknowledged that some corporates are simply less aggressive tax avoiders than others, indicating a role for a stakeholder oriented corporate culture to influence and override a CEO effect.

**Originality:** Our contribution to knowledge is to improve understanding of why some corporates, all else (quantitatively) equal, are less aggressive tax avoiders. Second, we interview a uniquely informed group: corporate tax consultants. Speaking to the consultants about their client interactions in the abstract removes the pressure on the consultants to justify themselves or to protect their clients' confidentiality. This allows new insights to emerge from the engine room of corporate tax avoidance.

### **[26] Waiving a 40% subminimum class mark rule in accounting 1 – beneficial for students or not?**

Lorelle De Villiers (Nelson Mandela University), Tarish Jagwanth (Nelson Mandela University) and Suzan Terblanche (Nelson Mandela University).

**Purpose:** The Department of Accounting Sciences at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) piloted waiving the subminimum 40% class mark requirement for students to gain entry into the final examination. This study aimed to determine whether the rule change was beneficial for Accounting 1 students.

**Methodology:** A quantitative research methodology was used to address the research objective. The population of the study were all 2021 and 2022 NMU Accounting 1 students with a class mark below 40%. The sample was narrowed to students who wrote final exams in Accounting 1 modules from the population. The module databases were used as secondary data for the analysis. The final results of these students were analysed to determine the impact of the rule change on the students' throughput rate.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that students scoring below 40% fall in the range of 12% to 41% of the total class across the semesters. From this group of students, 3% to 8% who wrote the final examination, ended up passing. Although this represents a low proportion of students who managed to pass, it resulted in an increase in the overall student throughput rate, thus providing a justifiable benefit for the rule change.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to limited prior published literature in this research area. The findings of the study will also assist in determining whether the rule change should be effected permanently. An optimally designed academic programme should provide the best opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to increasing student throughput rates.

### ***[27] Integrating societal worldviews and ethics competencies in an accounting curriculum***

Nico van der Merwe (North-West University), Stuart McChlery (Glasgow Caledonian University) and Herman Viviers (North-West University).

**Purpose:** The paper considers the integration of the 'ethics and social responsibility' aspects of the foundational competencies of Lawson et al.'s (2014) framework within an accounting curriculum. This is conducted through the lens of a first-year 'ethics and worldviews' module on an accounting programme which was introduced in a South African university. The research provides evidence of the students' perceptions regarding curriculum, teaching and assessment within the module.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study employs an inductive, qualitative research design. Information was gathered through conducting semi-structured focus group interviews with students who completed the module. Interview recordings were transcribed and then analysed using the ATLAS.ti software.

**Findings:** Students generally had positive experiences of the module, including the integration of worldviews and the development of ethical and critical thinking. However, there needs to be a reconsideration of the balance between theory and practice and the worldview elements should be considered in regard to how they impact the accounting profession. Students advocated the module on the grounds of the strengthening of workplace skills and appreciated that the module is run by accounting lecturers, otherwise there would have been the danger of theorisation at the expense of practical relevance. The assessments are varied but the number of assessments and their focus need to be reconsidered.

**Originality/Value:** The paper offers suggestions to expand Lawson et al.'s (2014) accounting education framework to incorporate moral and world ideologies as a foundational competency. It also makes practical recommendations to institutions wishing to integrate similar competencies in their curriculum.

### ***[28] Developing and confirming illustrative examples on accounting for credit card reward programme transactions***

Sophia Brink (Stellenbosch University) and Gretha Steenkamp (Stellenbosch University).

**Purpose:** IFRS 15 provides minimum guidance to credit card reward programmes (CCRPs), creating uncertainty and inconsistency in accounting practices, and illustrative examples could bridge the gap between theory and practice. The objective of the research was to develop and confirm illustrative examples for accounting for CCRP transactions after the effective date of IFRS 15.

**Methodology:** This non-empirical qualitative literature study used a document analysis approach to develop illustrative examples. The Delphi technique will be used to validate and confirm the examples. The experts that will be invited to participate in the study include the management of South African CCRPs and their audit partners. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis.

**Findings:** To provide more clarity and certainty to CCRPs, six illustrative examples for various types of CCRPs were developed. These illustrative examples must now be confirmed by experts in the field.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to theory by indicating that even though CCRP transactions can be perceived as similar that different types of CCRPs should be accounted for in a different manner. This study contributes to practice by providing CCRP management with illustrative examples of the accounting treatment of CCRP transactions ensuring faithful representation of the transaction.

### **[29] Enhancing domestic revenue mobilisation with a national tax lottery: Prospects for consumer acceptance and engagement**

Anculien Schoeman (University of Pretoria).

**Purpose:** Tax non-compliance in many countries poses a threat to government to collect sufficient tax revenue. A prevalent way of businesses to avoid paying taxes on sales is to not issue receipts, especially when cash sales are made. To encourage tax compliance, tax lotteries have been implemented in over 20 countries. Since the implementation of a tax lottery system would not be viable if the shoppers would not give their cooperation, the purpose of the study is to determine: Would consumers in South Africa accept and engage in a tax lottery system?

**Methodology:** An online survey delivered 2 774 valid responses from a wide range of respondents in South Africa.

**Findings:** 76.6% of respondents are somewhat or extremely happy to participate in a well-managed tax lottery system. 74.1% of respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree that they would be motivated to only purchase from suppliers who issue receipts. There are predictors of which type of consumer would accept the tax lottery system, namely gender, monthly spending and household size as demographic variables. A positive attitude towards the tax lottery system would also increase consumer acceptance of such a system.

**Contribution:** The study contributes to the limited empirical studies that have explored tax lottery systems, especially from an African perspective. Revenue authorities can use the results to determine whether the implementation of a tax lottery system would be viable. Predictors of which respondents are more prone to accept the system could assist revenue authorities in targeted advertising.

### **[30] Identifying and understanding the personal values of Accounting Educators of South African universities**

Ilse Lubbe (University of Cape Town), Mandie Wentzel (BDO), Gail Fortuin (University of Stellenbosch) and Elmarie Papageorgiou (University of Witwatersrand).

**Purpose:** Personal values are stable beliefs that influence the individual's behaviour and ethical decisions. This study aims to identify and describe the personal values of accounting educators using the Giving Voice to Values framework. It focuses on obtaining insights into the personal values of accounting educators and forms part of a larger, longitudinal study that focuses on the personal values of accounting students and educators.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Responses were received from 23 accounting educators who attended the 2022 Virtual SAAA National Conference, representing eleven universities and institutions, which is relatively representative of the number of universities in South Africa. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The researchers intend to repeat the data collection exercise at the 2023 SAAA National Conference, which will be in person.

**Findings:** The provisional findings indicate that the top-ranked personal value by accounting educator participants was 'Integrity' (being honest and having strong moral principles). This was followed by 'Family' and 'Spirituality', indicating the importance of family and personal care. 'Adventure' and 'Pleasure' ranked lowest personal values and were identified as less critical. Given that lived experiences influence personal values, these values reflect the participants' sentiments towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study provides valuable insights into positioning the personal values of accounting educators. Participation in this study presented accounting educators with the importance of values on ethical behaviour as it positions these against the personal values of accounting students.

### **[31] *The moderating role of corporate governance on tax planning and firm value***

Haruna Maama (Department of Financial Accounting, Durban University of Technology).

**Purpose:** Tax planning represents cost savings to firms and equally can accumulate both tax and non-tax costs, especially those associated with agency problems. As a result, the impact of tax planning on the value of firms has been a subject of academic interest. Beyond this interest, the role of corporate governance in moderating the relationship between tax planning and firm value has equally received attention among academics and corporate stakeholders. The study contributes to this debate by examining the relationship between tax planning and firm value and how corporate governance moderates such relationships among firms in East African Countries (EACs).

**Methodology:** The data for the study was collected from 99 listed firms in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda from 2008 to 2021. The data were analysed using the model specification developed by Ohlson (1995) and estimated using the GMM estimation model.

**Findings:** The results showed that tax planning has a negative and statistically insignificant effect on firm value. The results also reveal that board size negatively affects the relationship between tax planning and firm value, while board independence and gender diversity have positive effects. The study also found that ownership concentration positively influences the relationship between tax planning and firms' value.

**Contribution:** These findings suggest that corporate governance significantly influences the value relevance of tax planning. The findings also align with the agency theory of corporate tax planning, which asserts that managers could be involved in suboptimal decisions without adequate monitoring. The results have several implications for policymakers and stakeholders in East African Countries.

### **[32] *What is in a word? The information value of Key Audit Matters included in the extended audit report.***

Lise Botha (Cape Peninsula University of Technology), Phillip De Jager (University of Cape Town), Francois Toerien (University of Cape Town) and Ezelda Swanepoel (University of Cape Town).

**Purpose:** This study investigates whether Key Audit Matters (KAM), reported by auditors in South Africa, are linguistically homogenous and of information value. This is important because a common critique against audit reports of public companies, before the inclusion of KAM, was the lack of information value it provided, due to boilerplate-type audit reports.

**Methodology:** Tone analysis is paired with correspondence analysis to decide on the information value of KAM. Information value is the unexpected information gained during communication. Tone analysis was performed for companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in six industry sub-sectors, for the periods 2017 to 2022.

**Findings:** Correspondence analysis allowed us to compare the expected KAM tone profile against observed profiles for specific companies and years. The relative variation in tone serves as an indicator of possible information value. The use of linguistic tone and correspondence analysis to test KAM's information value is unique. Furthermore, we consider whether the tone of the KAM section of the audit report reflects any company- or audit-related issues or events. In contrast to prior studies on KAM, industry and company-level analyses are performed. The KAM tone of the companies and industries analysed was not homogenous in cases where there were no known audit failures. During individual company-level analysis, the KAM tone of one company, with known audit failure, was found to be homogenous.

**Contribution:** We tentatively find that companies' KAM that deviate from the expected tone profile (not linguistically homogenous) have information value and that it reflects company events.

**[33] Nexus between environmental reporting and financial performance of manufacturing firms listed on the JSE in S.A**

Nolwando L Mgilane (Durban University Of Technology), Haruna Maama (Durban University of Technology) and Ferina Marimuthu (Durban University of Technology).

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this current paper is to investigate the connection between environmental reporting and financial performance of firms listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in South Africa.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A multiple regression analysis was adopted, where fixed effect and random effect estimation techniques were used to test the relationship between environmental reporting and financial performance. The current study covered 50 listed manufacturing firms. A content analysis was utilized to attain the environmental reporting information themes from the integrated annual reports of the firms. The data collection commenced as at the period of 2016 to 2020.

**Findings:** The findings of this paper are indicative of a negative association between environmental reporting responsibility and ROE when the components of environmental reporting are tested individually. However, when these components namely: environmental reporting, social reporting and Environmental degradation are combined the findings reveal a positive and statistically insignificant relationship. The implication of these results is that an increase in environmental reporting results in a decrease in a firm's financial performance. In this perspective, the current findings recognise that the adoption of environmental reporting by JSE listed firms results in the outflow of funds and resources which might be detrimental to the financial performance of firms.

**Originality/Contribution:** The findings of this study will significantly benefit various stakeholders, such as the management of manufacturing firms, the government and its institutions, and researchers interested in the field. The study will contribute to the foregoing debate on the association between environmental reporting and financial performance.

**[34] The efficacy of the South African General Anti-Avoidance Rule: Using lessons from New Zealand**

Michelle Kirsten (CA(SA); SAIT).

**Purpose:** The general anti-avoidance rule (GAAR) has been adopted by South Africa to combat tax avoidance schemes. However, since the most recent amendment to the South African GAAR in 2006, its efficacy remains unknown because it has not been tested by the courts in its entirety. This study aims to address this concern by determining the effectiveness of the South African GAAR when compared to its New Zealand counterpart.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This study employed a 'structured pre-emptive analysis' research methodology, combining a doctrinal and reform-oriented approach. The doctrinal approach allowed an understanding of the interpretation and application of the two GAARs to be obtained, and for the identification of weaknesses in the South African GAAR with suggestions for improvement. The reform-oriented approach consisted of an application of the South African GAAR to the facts of a case from New Zealand.

**Findings:** The findings highlighted various weaknesses that exist in the South African GAAR which indicate that additional guidance should be provided to address the existing uncertainties to prevent inconsistencies that may limit its efficacy.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study aims to determine what amendments can be made to the current South African GAAR to address its weaknesses and improve its efficacy, through the lessons learnt from the New Zealand GAAR. While studies of a similar nature have been conducted prior to this study, the originality of this study is due to the selection of the case - Commissioner of Inland Revenue v Frucor Suntory New Zealand Limited (2020) NZCA 383 ("Frucor case").

**[35] Evaluation of the use of a supplemental online teaching tool during COVID-19: A WhatsApp tax chatbot**

Lizelle Bruwer (University of the Free State).

**Purpose:** As part of the transition to an emergency online learning environment during COVID, a supplemental learning tool in the form of a tax chatbot, hosted on WhatsApp, was developed. The aim of the chatbot was to provide 24/7 access and feedback to undergraduate students at a residential South African university on specific tax-related content without having the lecturer physically or digitally available. The content within the chatbot was supplementary to the learning material available on the institution's learning management system. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the chatbot and its subsequent access and use by students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methodology:** A descriptive, multi-method approach evaluated the implementation and subsequent access and use of the chatbot by students. Quantitative data through the chatbot software system were collected to determine how many students accessed the chatbot during the 2021 academic year. This was followed by two nominal group interviews, collecting quantitative data (in the form of ranking) and qualitative data (in the form of verbal discussions) in the 2022 academic year with students registered for the specific module in 2021.

**Findings:** Only 3% of the total registered students accessed or used the chatbot. Barriers identified by participants for accessing and utilising the chatbot include knowledge of and about the chatbot, challenges with the platform used to host the chatbot and limited access to devices, data and connectivity.

**Contribution:** The results could inform the design and use of supplemental digital learning tools in a post-COVID, technology-driven accounting education environment.

**[36] Good corporate governance in central government: A decision tree classification and prediction analyses**

Lourens J Erasmus (University of South Africa) and Philna Coetzee (Tshwane University of Technology).

**Purpose:** Good public sector corporate governance leads to good management, stewardship of public wealth, public engagement and, ultimately, better outcomes for citizens. As South Africa has one of the worst Gini coefficients in the world, its public sector should effectively address the challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. Good corporate governance is non-negotiable, yet less than 30 per cent of government departments obtain clean audit outcomes.

**Methodology:** Supporting the drive for clean audit outcomes that equate to good corporate governance, the research objective was to determine the predictors of central government departments' corporate governance success. The study used CHAID (chi-squared automatic interaction detection) analysis, a decision-tree technique, based on information reported over a 13-year period.

**Findings:** The CHAID analyses indicated that central government departments' corporate governance success is primarily explained by three factors; namely, a quality internal audit function (main predictor), the number of fraud incidences, and the number of internal control weaknesses.

**Originality/contribution:** The result is noteworthy, as other prominent good corporate governance drivers, such as external auditing, risk management and audit committees, were surpassed by the internal audit function. This study broadens the body of knowledge, confirming that audit outcome can be used as a proxy for good corporate governance, and confirms the primary significance of a sound internal audit function as a predictor of good corporate governance for central government departments, in a developing country.



**[37] *The use of Generalised Audit Software for tests of controls by internal audit functions in the Federal Government of Canada: A comparative analysis of maturity level assessments***

Leandi Steenkamp (Central University of Technology, Free State), Louis Smidt (Tshwane University of Technology), Sezer Bozkuş Kahyaoğlu (Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University) and David Coderre (Computer Assisted Analysis Techniques and Solutions (CAATS)).

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to measure existing IA GAS functions against a benchmark developed from recognized data analytics maturity models in the use of this software for tests of controls.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This study followed a deductive mono-method quantitative approach, with a survey research strategy used to collect data. The research instrument used was informed by an existing structured research questionnaire developed as part of a prior study in 2017.

**Findings:** The assessment of the maturity of GAS use was based on three aspects (people, processes, and technology), which contributed equally to the comprehensive evaluation of the use of GAS by the IA functions of the Federal Government. Only a small percentage of respondents achieved a high overall maturity rating, indicating that the maturity of GAS use by the IA functions of the Federal Government has not yet been optimized. Except for one respondent displaying a level 5 (and that on technology only), no respondent reached a level in any aspect where there was no longer any room for improvement (even if an overall maturity rating of 5 was achieved).

**Originality/Contribution:** The comparison drawn from the empirical findings indicates no significant progress in any area or overall maturity levels since the initial study in 2017. A comprehensive discussion of the results leads to policy recommendations for shaping the maturity level assessment of future GAS use, and a lessons-learned experience from an organizational learning perspective for other countries and organizations.

**[38] *Determinants of Listed Property Capital Structure: Evidence from an Emerging Market***

Francois Toerien (University of Cape Town), Alessandro Calvosa (University of Cape Town) and Phillip de Jager (University of Cape Town).

**Purpose:** Specific features of listed property, such as regulatory debt:equity ceilings, earnings payout requirements and tax exemptions, may affect capital ratio decisions. South Africa's listed property industry has some unique features. Our study uses this context to better understand what drives capital structure decisions, based on the trade-off, pecking-order and market timing theories.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Both 'between' (pooled regression) and 'within' (fixed effects regression) models were run on a sample of 39 property companies listed on the JSE for at least two years between 2005 and 2019, representing an unbalanced panel of 314 company-year observations across three different company structures. Long-term debt-to-gross assets were regressed against proxies for asset tangibility, growth opportunities, profitability, company size, company age, share volatility, interest cover and inflation, as well as dummy variables for property fund structure and investment strategy.

**Findings:** In combination, the study evidence supports pecking order theory (first) and market timing theory (second), with the strongest evidence against trade-off theory. The former two overlap as both rely on information asymmetry. It is likely that for the regulated listed property industry, the lack of tax shield benefits resulting from REITs' non-taxable status and, less so, the regulatory leverage constraints, eliminate trade-off as a major capital structure consideration.

**Originality/Value:** The study adds descriptive knowledge to the limited body of research on the determinants of listed property capital structure within emerging markets, specifically in a country with recent regulatory changes relevant to this issue.

**[39] *Enhancing the monitoring and enforcement of tax compliance through improved beneficial ownership transparency***

Herman van Dyk (North-West University, South Africa) and Herman Viviers (North-West University, South Africa).

**Purpose:** South Africa was recently added to the FATF "grey list" because of (AML/CFT deficiencies. One of the strategic deficiencies is insufficient beneficial ownership (BO) transparency. In response to the grey-listing, legislation has been enacted to require that BO information is retained and made publicly on a BO register. South African tax legislation contains several provisions where the identity or presence of certain beneficial owners could affect the tax outcome of a transaction or position. Examples include the SBC tax concession, connected persons provisions and the exemption from dividends tax. A revenue authority's ability to promptly obtain information from taxpayers and third parties is vital to the proper functioning of the tax system. This paper evaluates if and how the proposed implementation of a BO register could enhance the ability of SARS to monitor and enforce tax compliance, particularly in relation to the BO requirements of the SBC tax incentive. It also considers the risk of the proposed BO transparency being subject to a constitutional challenge on the grounds of an infringement of the right to privacy.

**Methodology:** Doctrinal research is applied in this study.

**Findings:** The preliminary findings of this study indicate that the proposed BO register, in isolation, is not entirely fit for purpose to efficiently monitor and enforce compliance of the BO requirements of the SBC tax incentive. A requirement by SARS to disclose current BO information of SBCs on company tax returns would be more functional.

**Contribution:** This paper considers constitutional aspects.

**[40] *The use of learner analytics to combat student achievement gap: low-income-household students studying accounting at the University of the Free State***

Olihile Walton Mosiako (University of The Free State).

**Purpose:** The achievement gap between students from low-income households and high-income households has been a persistent issue in Higher Education Institutions. The study specifically investigates this issue within the University of the Free State, particularly in a field of study that relies heavily on verbal communication and written language skills, such as accounting. The study, therefore, evaluates the effectiveness of the Learner Analytics in identifying academic challenges faced by low-income students, such as inadequate educational resources, limited access to technology, limited opportunities for social and emotional support and inadequate financial resources. The study aims to identify efficient academic support interventions by analysing the insights derived from Learner Analytics data.

**Methodology:** The study will employ a multi-method research approach. Qualitative data will be gathered through student surveys, while quantitative data will be collected from students' academic activities, including attendance to lectures, tutorials, study groups, consultations, and performance in formative and summative assessments.

**Findings:** Preliminary findings show a positive indication that Learner Analytics offers data-driven insights into challenges faced by low-income students, such as language barriers, coursework demands, and financial difficulties. These insights inform targeted academic support interventions, improving outcomes and assisting students from low-income households.

**Contributions:** This study will contribute to our understanding of the academic challenges and difficulties that students that come from low-income households face in Higher Education institutions and the most effective targeted academic support interventions that can assist in addressing these challenges.

**[41] *The moderating role of 'tone at the top' on the relationship between audit committee effectiveness and financial statement manipulation***

Alastair Marais (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Patricia Shewell (University of KwaZulu-Natal) and Claire Vermaak (University of KwaZulu-Natal).

**Purpose:** Academic research has investigated various aspects of the audit committee's effectiveness, including expertise, independence, activity, and diversity. However, the evidence regarding the committee's ability to mitigate financial statement manipulation is mixed. Due to top management's influence, the audit committee may merely fulfil a ceremonial role. Consequently, greater appreciation of 'tone at the top' is needed. This paper investigates how 'tone at the top' moderates the audit committee's relationship with financial statement manipulation.

**Methodology:** We used logit and panel regression to analyse 1 080 non-financial, Johannesburg Stock Exchange firm-year observations from 2011 until 2018. We measured financial statement manipulation using fraud and discretionary accruals. Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), we developed five audit committee characteristics and two management tones.

**Findings:** We found that an active audit committee decreased the extent of financial statement manipulation, while governance expertise and independence increased it. Although tone did not have any direct relationship with financial statement manipulation, we found that a certain, pessimistic tone subdued the audit committee's diversity and activity but empowered its financial expertise and independence. In contrast, a realistic, diverse tone empowered the committee's activity and diversity but subdued its financial expertise.

**Contribution:** Our study is the first to show how audit committee characteristics are either empowered or inhibited by 'tone at the top' in South Africa. Our results support the hypothesis that tone at the top moderates the audit committee's effectiveness. We further contribute to the literature by revealing how individual audit committee characteristics complement each other.

**[42] *How can new fraud combination theory help forensic auditors and external auditors in fraud risk assessments?***

Jean Damascene Mvunabandi (Durban University of Technology) and Ferina Marimuthu (Durban University of Technology).

**Purpose:** This article critically examined the fraud influencing factors justified by the existing theories that contribute to fraud risk assessments (FRAs).

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This study Adopted Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses to concomitantly track data that exists on fraud risk assessments used by auditors and forensic auditors from 2019 to 2023. A total of 486 publications were identified through database searches.

**Findings:** This article considers a theoretical review of other relevant fraud theories, literature was reviewed and the researchers recommend that the robust new fraud combination theory should greatly assist forensic auditors and external auditors to identify and assess fraud and perform effective fraud risk assessments. This study fills an important gap by surveying the studies conducted on fraud risk assessments strategies that can be used by auditors and forensic auditors in the last five years, implying that introducing the New Fraud Combined Theory, which is a consolidation of all the fraud models and contributory fraud risk factors for fraudulent activities enable external auditors and forensic practitioners to effectively perform fraud risks assessments (FRAs) robustly.

**Originality/Contribution:** The understanding of factors influencing fraudsters is crucial for academics, practitioners and policy makers on how to prevent, identify, detect and investigate fraud risks could be enhanced when making use of auditing services. This research will guide researchers to further research on the subject matter.

***[43] The influence of strategic management initiatives on the financial sustainability of South African small medium and micro enterprises: an online desktop review***

Aletta Neethling (CPUT) and Jp Bruwer (CPUT).

**Purpose:** This study was conducted to ascertain the influence of strategic management initiatives, as deployed by South African Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) on their financial sustainability, in theory.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Non-empirical and qualitative research was conducted which took on the form of an online desktop review. The study was exploratory, constituted inductive research and was deemed nascent.

**Findings:** From the research conducted, it appears that South African SMMEs make limited use of strategic management initiatives. Where these business entities made use of strategic management initiatives, it is highly probable that other business entities' visions, missions and objectives were executed due to their tendency of copying and pasting financial practices and/or financial operations of more successful business entities. The latter may also be a reason why these entities have weak financial sustainability.

**Originality/Contribution:** The findings of this study provide a foundation for future empirical (and/or non-empirical) research studies to ascertain how strategic management initiatives of South African SMMEs can contribute positively to their financial sustainability. Moreover, this study also fortifies the multi-disciplinary connection between accounting sciences and business strategy.

***[44] Preventing Endemic Fraud and Corruption Through Auditors and Legally Enshrined Disciplinary Boards – Empirical Evidence from South Africa and a Doctrinal Review***

Bafo Khanyeza (SAICA).

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research was to unravel the fraud and corruption phenomenon in the public sector, through the description of the non-implementation of audit recommendations and its relationship to negative audit outcomes. Furthermore, to conduct a doctrinal review of administrative and quasi-judicial accountability mechanisms.

**Methodology:** The research methodology applied was a document analysis of the yearly audit outcomes as well as a thematic analysis of the non-implementation of auditor's recommendations phenomenon and its qualitative causal relationship to negative audit outcomes. Furthermore, conduct a comparative research analysis of other various countries' accountability models.

**Findings:** The public accounts committee (PAC) accountability model; together with the new Auditor General's powers to issue a certificate of debt; was found to be ineffective in curbing the non-implementation of audit recommendations. Furthermore, a worldwide comparative research analysis between two public sector accountability extremes found the de-facto PAC model, to be very poor in curbing the non-implementation of auditor's recommendations. While it found the court of accounts model to be adversarial yet effective.

**Originality:** Furthermore, this research has identified a de-jure novel South African administrative model of accountability, which is supposed to utilise the never been implemented, public sector auditor's reporting mechanism together with the legally enshrined disciplinary boards. To curb public sector rampant irregularities. Furthermore, to bridge the gap between the two extreme models of accountability. The understanding and implementation of this new accountability model could have fundamental theoretical and radical contributions towards curbing fraud and corruption in South Africa, Africa and Worldwide.

#### **[45] Discussion Forums as an Active Learning Teaching Tool in Auditing**

Rolien Kunz (University of Pretoria), Corlia Steyn (University of Pretoria) and Gerrit Penning (University of Pretoria).

**Purpose:** This paper reports on an active learning initiative in which discussion forums were introduced as an alternative to traditional tutorial classes in a post-graduate auditing course at a South-African university. The purpose of this paper is to provide students' perspectives on the value of discussion forums as an active learning teaching tool in auditing.

**Methodology:** A focus group discussion was conducted using the interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) technique, which is an inductive approach to data collection and analysis, to determine the students' perceptions of discussion forums as an active learning teaching tool.

**Findings:** Two overarching themes emerged during the IQA focus group discussions. The first category dealt with the advantages students gained from attending and participating in the discussion forums, whilst the second category related to the way in which the discussion forums were conducted.

**Contribution:** The paper adds to the active learning literature by providing insight into the use of discussion forums as an active learning teaching tool in auditing. It confirms the value and advantages of active learning to students, enhancing their overall understanding, and embedding and extending their theoretical knowledge. The comments raised by students dealing with the format of the discussion forums could be used by lecturers to improve active learning when using discussion forums as a teaching tool.

#### **[46] Accountability and transparency mechanisms in continuous assurance to achieve good governance in the South African public sector**

Ilse Morgan (University of South Africa), Louis Smidt (Tshwane University of Technology) and Lourens Erasmus (University of South Africa).

**Purpose:** Continuous monitoring of government spending is critical, as is evident from entrenched malfeasance in the South African public sector. The Fourth Industrial Revolution offers emerging digital technologies and effective transparency and accountability mechanisms within continuous assurance processes to achieve good governance. This paper examines the possible mechanisms to provide reliable and transparent information for decision-making involving oversight responsibilities.

**Methodology:** The paper presents a critical literature review supported by a thematic analysis of accountability and transparency mechanisms in the public sector, including requirements, processes, frameworks, guidelines, and legislation that contribute to good governance. The study draws on the theory of change, adopting a holistic approach focused on enhancing governance processes by going beyond traditional research that concentrates on internal governance mechanisms of transparency and corporate accountability to shareholders only.

**Findings:** Advanced technologies such as machine learning, blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) can be effectively adopted within continuous assurance processes to achieve transparency and accountability and to enhance oversight in risk management, control and governance processes. Improved assurance processes can be achieved through enforceable consequence management, improved stakeholder participation, outcomes-based measurement systems and accountability mechanisms and the effective coordination of processes and decision-making pathways.

**Contribution/Policy implication:** The study provided new insight into the field of governance and continuous assurance in the South African public sector by recommending new mechanisms to improve accountability and transparency.

**[47] Investigating the critical success factors for adopting blockchain technology in Gauteng Government departments.**

Beatah Sibanda (North-west University), Benon Basheka (Kabale University) and Jan Van Romburgh (North-west)

**Purpose:** The study aimed to investigate critical success factors for adopting blockchain technology, and to propose a framework for the adoption of blockchain technology within Gauteng government departments.

**Design:** A quantitative research approach and a random sampling technique were adopted. A descriptive-exploratory design was used. Data were collected using close-ended questionnaires from four Gauteng provincial departments and analysed using descriptive statistics and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

**Findings:** Six factors were identified as critical factors: legislative requirements, governance factors, technical and compatibility factors, cost versus benefit, management attitude, and availability of specialised skills. The results revealed that government departments would adopt blockchain if they perceived it useful. The usefulness was manifested in that respondents believed blockchain would improve the overall financial reporting of government departments. Furthermore, it could be instrumental in improving record keeping, a challenge most departments have battled. In this digital age era, aligning business processes with prevailing technologies is vital, hence the relevance of blockchain technology, as suggested by this study.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study is relevant in this digital era, where technology is changing the functioning of societies and businesses. Government departments need to align with these changes to serve the community better. Blockchain can improve transparency and accountability, a challenge that government departments have dealt with for a long time. The study proposes a framework for adopting blockchain technology in government departments as there currently needs to be a framework. The critical success factors for adopting blockchain were determined, which contribute to the body of knowledge.

**[48] Effect of internal audit effectiveness on organisational process performance indicators**

Mvelo Siyaya (CPUT).

**Purpose:** The investment in the internal audit function is extensively dependent on the value that this function adds to the processes of the organisation. Prior internal auditing studies have reviewed internal audit effectiveness with little attention paid to non-financial performance and considering the views of internal audit service recipients. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of internal auditing effectiveness in relation to non-financial internal process performance indicators.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Multiple departments of the public higher education institution were used to collect data via a questionnaire that was developed based on the existing literature. The sample consisted of senior managers, managers, section managers, and employees of the selected departments which added up to 102 participants. Data were analysed using multiple regression analysis.

**Findings:** Internal audit effectiveness contributes significantly to the non-financial performance indicators that were tested, with compliance with laws and internal procedures performance indicator being the most significant. Moreover, this study indicated that internal auditing effectiveness is greatly influenced by factors such as the independence of the internal audit function, the competence of internal auditors, management support, the coordination between internal and external auditors, and internal audit quality.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study seeks to understand internal audit effectiveness on organisational performance indicators from the perspective of internal audit clients rather than service providers.

**Practical Implications:** Understanding how internal audit effectiveness can be measured by linking it to the auditee's performance indicators can be very crucial to examine the value addition of internal auditing on organisational processes.

### **[49] Reasons for committing economic crimes in South Africa**

Andries Swanepoel (UNISA).

**Purpose:** The occurrence of economic crimes is a serious challenge to business leaders, government officials and private individuals in South Africa. The objective of this research was to determine the main reasons for committing economic crimes in South Africa.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Primary data from web-based questionnaires (addressed to role-players in the field of the prevention, detection and prosecution of economic crimes) and manual questionnaires (completed by economic crime offenders) that were set in a statement format were used to empirically analyse the perceptions of sentenced economic crime offenders and role-players to determine the reasons for committing economic crimes in South Africa. The final realised sample included 345 respondents from the various populations of key role-players and 82 economic crime offenders from Gauteng-based correctional institutions. Mann-Whitney U tests were employed to test for significant differences between the views of role-players and economic crime offenders.

**Findings:** Both groups of respondents cited definite reasons for the commission of economic crimes in South Africa, although statistically significant differences existed in the degree of agreement. The main reasons identified for economic crimes were greed, needs/wants, facilitation of payments and tax evasion.

**Contribution:** This study was the first of its kind in South Africa to involve both role-players and economic crime offenders in the same study to identify reasons for committing economic crimes. The real challenge identified in this study is to address the occurrence of economic crimes in South Africa appropriately.

### **[50] Effects of e-learning on accounting throughput: A case study of first year accounting students at two HEIs in SA**

Andrea Govender (Nelson Mandela University) and Mvemve Mdingi (CPUT).

**Purpose:** The study analyses and describe trends in the throughput rate prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and during the pandemic for first year accounting students across two Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by focusing on blended and e-learning. First years are chosen due to a clearer comparison as the majority of first years have their first HEI experience in their 1st year of study provided, they did not do a bridging course. This ensures first years across two HEIs can be compared fairly.

**Methodology:** The study will employ a mixed methodology approach using secondary data in the form of year-end final scores of first year accounting students as well as literature. The year-end final scores to be collected and analysed will be for period between the 2017 and 2022 academic years. A purposive sample of first year accounting students will be selected.

**Findings:** The findings of the study will reveal any differences or similarities in accounting throughput rates between the period prior to the covid-19 outbreak and during it. These findings could either be consistent or inconsistent with those of other studies pertaining to the blended and e-learning phenomenon. The study will investigate the unforeseen changeover to blended and e-learning.

**Contributions:** This study will contribute to an existing body of literature by revealing several factors that need to be contextualised for blended and e-learning to thrive. This study will suggest additional control measures that could be used to protect the integrity of assessments as well as problems surrounding technology and data.

### **[51] Auditing and assurance challenges in South African private retirement facilities**

Leandi Steenkamp (Central University of Technology, Free State), Anna Coetzee (Central University of Technology, Free State) and Desere Kokt (Central University of Technology, Free State).

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is firstly to identify challenges and problems experienced by South African auditors in performing statutory assurance engagements on retirement facilities, and secondly to identify and describe problems experienced by those charged with governance of private retirement facilities relating to audit and assurance services.

**Design:** This study is rooted in the research philosophy of interpretivism and follows a qualitative research approach. A descriptive case study research design was used, and the population for this study was private retirement facilities within the Mangaung area, specifically sectional title ownership and life rights retirement facilities.

**Findings:** The findings of the study highlighted various legislative ambiguities, as well as unique audit risks attached to the auditing of sectional title retirement facilities. The participants in the study also indicated differences between risks in small and larger schemes. The auditors and those charged with governance of life rights retirement facility schemes did not identify as many problems as the sectional title role players with the audit or assurance work of the financial statements of the retirement facility. It was also found that legislation that relates to life rights retirement facilities creates no problems with the auditing of the financial statements.

**Originality:** This research contributes to the body of knowledge by providing perceptions on auditing aspects in the sectional title and life rights retirement facility industry. This information may be useful to many stakeholders such as the board of trustees, managers, managing agents, accounting, and auditing practitioners as well as people considering retirement.

### **[52] Detecting Earnings Management on Financial Reporting of Nigerian Banks: The Distribution of the Financial Ratios Approach**

Adedeji Gbadebo (Walter Sisulu University), Joseph Akande (Walter Sisulu University) and Ahmed Adekunle (Walter Sisulu University).

**Purpose:** The use of earnings management has raised concerns amongst several stakeholders. This study offers evidence to detect earnings management on the financial reporting of banks in an emerging country, Nigeria. We address two main issues. (a) We intend to detect whether the annual financial reports of Deposit Money Banks [DMBs] in Nigeria reflect the existence of earnings management. (b) We attempt to establish whether the Banks engaged in manipulations in periods 'After' the 2012 mandatory IFRS adoption relative to the Prior adoption years.

**Methodology:** We provide evidence from a newly proposed approach – the distributions of the empirical ratios method. We use two earning management design metrics and compute the distributions of ratios for 14 bank-specific 'earnings' ratios of 17 DMBs, in the periods 2001–2020. We present outcomes for the Base statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics, Asymptotic and Monte Carlo significance.

**Findings:** The main result confirms that earnings management exists in the financial reports. Generally, the evidence supposes that earnings manipulation is not a yearly phenomenon practice for the DMBs and that Nigerian banks use discretion to manage earnings information even more after the adoption of the IFRS.

**Originality/Contribution:** Confirmed whether the annual financial report of the banks reflects significant earnings management and compared the relative magnitude of the managed earnings in banks 'Prior to' and 'After' the IFRS adoption in the country in 2012.



***[53] Investigating accounting post-graduate student experiences: project-based learning methods at a UOT***

Stephanie Caroline Samuel (Durban University of Technology) and Brian Ngiba (Durban University of Technology).

**Purpose:** The world has shifted at an accelerated pace since December 2019. The way of being and doing has evolved rapidly as humanity adapted to our newfound circumstances. It is in our nature to continuously thrive for the betterment of our species. In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, the accountant role will evolve from a reporting function to a consulting function. Considering this, it is of utmost importance that accountants have the necessary skills to identify issues faced by organisations and find the best alternative to solve the problem. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on students' experiences during the PBL assessment.

**Approach:** The introduction of Project-Based Learning (PBL), strays from traditional methods of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (TLA). Traditional methods of TLA are driven by pre-determined outcomes. Whereas PBL allows students to investigate and discover possible problems without being confined to pre-determined outcomes. PBL introduces a dynamic approach to TLA that allows students to explore real-world issues and in turn sharpen their cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills. Students are encouraged to develop a learn-to-learn mindset.

**Findings:** The assessment was introduced to post-graduate accounting students at the University of Technology in Durban South Africa. Using these strategies, students needed to develop a "learn to learn" mindset. The PBL assessment involves the conceptualisation, design and realisation of a current real-world problem. The project was over 3 months and was undertaken by advanced diploma students in the accounting cluster at a UoT.

***[54] Accounting Curriculum and Employability of Accounting Graduates: A case study of South African Universities of Technology (UoTs).***

Smangele Nzama (Durban University of Technology) and Adele Alice Robinson (Durban University of Technology).

**Purpose:** Unemployment is one of the biggest issues faced in South Africa. Thus, intense competition constantly exists in the employment market, particularly, in the accounting field. The accounting profession is gradually changing. However, as the accounting world progresses, most Universities of Technology (UoTs) in South Africa fall behind. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the accounting curricula offered at UoT prepare students for employability by adhering to The SAICA competency framework.

**Design:** Traditional universities in South Africa offer SAICA accredited accounting undergraduate qualifications. It is important for UoT to ensure the accounting undergraduates they produce are adequately skilled to compete in the job market. Thus, the accounting curriculum offered at UoT were compared against the SAICA competency framework to determine if the skills taught in these accounting programs are in line with the SAICA competency framework. All six UoTs in South Africa were studied. Using the qualitative technique, the study used document analysis to analyse the accounting curriculum offered at the different UoTs.

**Findings:** Findings of the study indicate that all UoTs meet the digital acumen on The SAICA 2025CF. only two out of the six UoTs met all the SAICA acumens, suggesting that most of the UoTs in South Africa fall behind in equipping students with the skills necessary to compete in the job market.

**Contribution:** This study contributes significantly to the continuous enhancement of accounting education, ensuring UoT accounting graduates are equipped with the competencies and capabilities required to compete in the accounting job market.

### **[55] *Are We Still Ticking the Boxes: Optimising External Auditing for Higher Education: A Case Study***

Karel Fouché (University of Pretoria), Carla Coetzee (University of Pretoria) and Riana Steyn (University of Pretoria).

**Purpose:** Auditing is a practical subject taught in a theoretical environment. It has traditionally led to challenges when conveying certain concepts to students with no or limited practical experience. The new generation of students has contributed to a gradual increase in the challenges experienced by Auditing lecturers. This paper investigates how Auditing, as a subject, could be presented at an urban university to address the needs of the new generation of students in an everchanging environment.

**Design:** This study applied semi-structured interviews with lecturers and academic trainees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in an Auditing department at this urban university, presented as a case study.

**Findings:** The majority of the participants agreed on the relevance of the module content, but acknowledged that some concepts will become more understandable when students enter a practical environment. A more practical approach to teaching and assessment activities, such as blended learning techniques, practical discussions and real-life case studies, could improve students' practical understanding of the subject. Consistency among modules and lecturers to create a visible link between new concepts and embedded knowledge could enhance students' understanding when introduced to consecutive modules.

**Contribution:** Although students and lecturers face many challenges in an everchanging world, the findings in this study shed light on how such challenges could be bridged by means of the resources available. It is also brought to the attention of lecturers, that they are accountable for investigating and utilising the available resources which they are comfortable with and from which students could benefit.

### **[56] *Third year diploma in accountancy students' perception of ethics***

Bradley van der Ross (Nelson Mandela University) and Tracy Beck (Nelson Mandela University).

**Purpose:** The objective of this study is to investigate third year Diploma in Accountancy students' perception of ethical behaviour and their understanding of the importance thereof.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The respondents of this study were third year Diploma in Accountancy students studying at an Eastern Cape university in South Africa. The study adopted a positivistic research paradigm and used a structured questionnaire where response options were predetermined. An independent individual emailed the link to the online questionnaire to 100 registered third year Diploma in Accountancy students of which 61 responses were received and were deemed sufficient.

**Findings:** The majority of the respondents indicated that ethics is important to them and that they hold themselves and others to the same ethical standards with regard to, copying in tests, homework and signing an attendance register on behalf of a fellow student. Furthermore, findings indicate that the lecturers' must demonstrate ethical standards through their actions, must emphasise the importance of ethical values and incorporate ethics education into the accountancy lecture as often as possible. By including an ethics component in the accountancy syllabi throughout the accountancy programme, students were eager and more willing to learn about the realistic consequences of their actions.

**Originality/Contribution:** This study contributes towards research on ethics in the accounting education in developing countries such as South Africa. Furthermore, it provides insight on how third year Diploma in Accountancy students perceive ethical behaviour and the importance thereof.

**[57] A comparative study of the tax benefits available to non-profit organisations and their donors in South Africa, India and Australia**

Carla Bendeman (Independent), Tracy Johnson (University of Cape Town) and Riley Carpenter (University of Cape Town).

**Purpose:** Non-profit Organisations (NPOs) are of great importance in the provision of social and development needs in South Africa. They take on activities that help lift the burden placed on Government in the provision of these needs. It is thus imperative for NPOs to have a supportive environment to carry out their public beneficial mission. Consequently, tax benefits are available to these organisations as well as donors. Preferential tax treatment requires adherence to tax legislation. Current tax legislation in South Africa covers a comprehensive scope of tax benefits available to NPOs and their donors. However, due to the high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment in the country, refinement might still be needed in our legislation.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The tax legislation in Australia, as one of the most developed economies in the world, and India, another developing country with high levels of social and economic problems are compared to South Africa. NPO definitions, tax benefits available to NPOs and deductions available to donors donating to these organisations in the three countries were identified, critically evaluated, and compared to one another.

**Findings:** A conclusion was drawn that the tax benefits available to NPOs and donors in South Africa are relatively comprehensive and sophisticated.

**Originality/Contribution:** Several tax benefits highlighted in this study, which are available to NPOs and donors in the tax legislation of India and Australia but not South Africa, should be considered by the South African Government, incentivizing and broadening the scope of the formation and development of NPOs in South Africa.

**[58] Accounting academics' experiences with the teaching-research nexus**

Anchal Ramsarghey (Durban University of Technology) and Kevin Ramsarghey (Mangosuthu University of Technology).

**Purpose:** The Department of Higher Education (DHET) has encouraged academics to engage in the pursuit of academic scholarship. The research-teaching nexus is a topic of contention that will remain a perennial debate across all disciplines. The aim of this paper is to establish the reasons for low research output among accounting academics. The study is also intended to provide insights into the contextual relevance of research as expected of accounting academics in the pursuit of new knowledge.

**Methodology:** Purposive sampling was used to elicit responses for a qualitative methodology of analysis. Academic staff of accounting departments were interviewed, using purposive sampling to elicit responses which were coded using thematic analysis. The qualitative methodology used enabled the design of a framework for accounting academics to utilize to maximize their research productivity.

**Findings:** By identifying the factors that inhibit research, a strategy was developed to mitigate the inhibiting factors using soft system methodology's (SSM) learning cycle.

**Conclusion** The researchers concluded by suggesting possible research areas that fall outside the realm of "technical knowledge" to address complexities brought about by additional legislated practices to the profession.