

Abstract

Accounting education is argued to be in crisis and several changes to it have been recommended lately (Siegel & Sorensen, 1999; Russell et al., 2000). This study is motivated by the question of how accounting education should be developed to provide the knowledge, skills and capabilities required by contemporary organizations. The aim is to ascertain the main managerial accounting tasks of practicing accountants. The relative importance of various tasks is identified and the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the competent performance of those work activities are studied. Moreover, we aim to focus on whether there has been a change in activities, especially from bean counters to business partners, and how the work will change in the next three years. The study was conducted as a survey (the number of respondents was 300, response rate 30 %). The results suggest that the most common and important activities are fairly traditional accounting duties, such as financial reporting and budgeting. These are assumed to change somewhat in the near future, however. Although no clear shift from bean counters to business partners can be detected based on this study, there are some signs of the growing importance of business partnering. The implications of these results for accounting education are discussed.