

The evolution of distance learning and its contribution to the accounting profession in Malaysia: a historical perspective

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History – United Kingdom

- In 1854, the Institute of Accountants in Edinburgh was granted Royal Charter.
- On 11 May 1880, The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW) was established through Royal Charter.
- In 1884, written examinations were introduced as requirement into the accounting profession as compared viva-voce.
- In 1888, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (now Chartered Accountants Ireland) was established by Royal Charter.
- In 1919, the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants (today Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) was formed to support cost accounting.
- In 1904, The Association of Certified and Corporate Accountants (now Association of Chartered Certified Accountants – ACCA) was established

History – Other British Commonwealth countries

- Apart from professional bodies in the UK, Malaysia recognizes professional accounting bodies from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India.
 - In 1902 – The Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants (today the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants).
 - In 1928 the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia was established and New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1894.
 - In 1952 Australian Society of Accountants (now CPA Australia) was incorporated.
 - The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) was established on 1 July 1949 as a body corporate under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 to regulate the profession in India.

History - Malaysia

Home-grown professional accounting bodies only took flight in 1958.

1. On July 26, 1958, “The Malayan Association of Certified Public Accountants” (now The Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants - MICPA) was formed as a professional body under the Companies Ordinances, 1940 – 1946.
2. The codification of the accounting body through an Act of Parliament in Malaysia only happened in 1967 with the passing of the Accountants Act, 1967.
 - In Malaysia, the word ‘accountant’ is protected as that no one can hold himself out or practise as an accountant unless he is registered as a member of MIA.

Wave 1: Accounting education overseas

- Written professional accountancy examinations in the UK was around since the 1880s.
- To become an accountant in the UK at that time would mean a student had work with a qualified member and the mentor will have to provide the student with work and also a chance to sit for the professional examinations.
 - This is known as “chambering”.
- Malaysians who wanted to become accountants had to find mentors in the UK
- Only a privileged few can afford the luxury of studying and training in UK to qualify to become accountants.

Wave 2: Accounting education through Distance Learning by Post

- An education and chambering in the UK or other recognised Commonwealth countries is a luxury.
- DL accounting courses sourced from the UK, supported many Malaysian students who were taking examinations of the scheduled bodies.
- Favourite tuition providers
 - Rapid Results College (RRC) – 1928
 - BPP – 1976
 - BPP created specialist study learning texts for those sitting chartered accountancy exams.
 - This changed the approach of studying for an examination. Before the advent of study learning texts, accounting students have to read portions of various textbooks and accounting journals

Wave 2: Accounting education through Distance Learning by Post

- Emile Woolf Group -1975 provides both DL and face-to-face tuition for ICAEW examination.
- Chart Foulks Lynch provided tuition for ACCA and CIMA through DL by post and face-to-face.
 - Like BPP they publish study learning texts for the examinations.. Using this mode of study, students would use the specialist study learning texts as course materials.
 - Students may pay extra for additional guidance by engaging a tutor who will guide the students via post from the UK. The tutor will mark and comment on the assignments given to the student by post.
 - However, assignments marked by the tutor are for guidance and not part of the assessment of the professional bodies.

Wave 3: Accounting “Tuition “in Malaysia via Foreign Distance Learning Material

- The third wave of study allows students to attend accounting tuition in Malaysia with a face-to-face instructor using specialist study learning texts earlier used in the postal learning.
- As the lead time to postal learning is long, this form of study gives the convenience of having accounting tuition with a face-to-face tutor using UK material.
- Some of the colleges even coupled their tuition with an internally accessed diploma.
 - The initial providers of tuition were government linked colleges but the private sector jumped into the band wagon.
 - Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (KTAR) and Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) in the 1970s created a more systematic environment whereby students were able to prepare for the professional examination together with a recognised college diploma.

Wave 3: Accounting “Tuition “in Malaysia via Foreign Distance Learning Material

- Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (KTAR)
 - Set up in 1969.
 - The School of Business Studies which was established in April 1971 specialises in professional accountancy education. Students of the Diploma in Commerce students prepared simultaneously for professional the examinations
 - Materials for the learning in the college were sourced from learning text from companies like BPP. Blended learning which combined material from DL institutions and on campus teaching was used.

Wave 3: Accounting “Tuition “in Malaysia via Foreign Distance Learning Material

- **Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM)**
 - Evolved from *Dewan Latehan RIDA* (1956) to help train rural Malays. The college conducted tuition of external professional courses such as the London Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Chartered Secretaryship, the Australian Society of Accountants and the British Institute of Management.
 - In 1966, *Dewan Latehan RIDA* became MARA College which their own Diploma in Business Studies.
 - MARA College was officially renamed ITM on 14 October 1967.
 - Established as a response to produce trained manpower at professional and semi-professional levels, especially *bumiputeras*.
 - In 1967, ITM offered tuition in the ACCA and together with the in-house Diploma in Accountancy. In 1970 CIMA, ACCA and MACPA was introduced

Wave 3: Accounting “Tuition “in Malaysia via Foreign Distance Learning Material

- **Private colleges**
 1. Offered blended learning courses to students who want to study accountancy but were unable to enter the two government-linked colleges
 2. Used the specialist study learning text from UK

Wave 3: Accounting “Tuition “in Malaysia via Foreign Distance Learning Material

- Institut Perkim-Goon (IPG) (1981) offered tuition in professional accounting courses such (ACCA and CIMA) and technician level qualifications (LCCI)
- Students attend their class to get guidance for the examinations but assessment was done by bodies.
- Systematic College (now SEGi College Kuala Lumpur) (1977)
- In the 1980s, Systematic College was the only private institution in Malaysia to offer tuition for CIMA blended with an internally accessed diploma – only KTAR and ITM could offer such a mode
- DISTED College (1987)**
- Started as a provider of DL in Malaysia.
 - From their first office in Jalan Pinhorn in Penang, provided distance learning via post of the GCE A Level courses.
 - The college later evolved into a college providing twinning programmes after they dropped their DL by post model.

Wave 4: Twinning programme in Malaysia using Foreign Distance Learning Material

- The fourth wave of came with the enactment of the PHEIA 1996 and the amendments made to the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 and the Education Act 1961.
- Before PHEIA, private colleges and institutions of higher learning were not allowed to conduct any examinations on their own. (Wan, 2007)
- The institutions can only act as tuition centres providing guidance to prepare for professional examinations.

Wave 4: Twinning programme in Malaysia using Foreign Distance Learning Material

- Students can now take a foreign degree at a Malaysian college and later in the final year finish the degree in the UK or where the mother university originated.
- This is called “twinning”.
 - The mother university overseas will provide a syllabus and course material to a local Malaysian college.
 - The teaching of the courses in Malaysia is exactly like in the mother university
 - The college may set their examinations (but moderated by the mother university).
 - The mother college from time-to-time will send their lecturers (also known as “course coordinators”) to the Malaysian colleges to either partially conduct a course or to audit the delivery of the courses in Malaysia.
- IPG (now PTPL Penang) and Systematic College moved from a pure tuition provider to a provider of “twinning” programs.

Wave 4: Twinning programme in Malaysia using Foreign Distance Learning Material

- In 1998, the first foreign branch campus of a foreign university, Monash University Malaysia, opened their doors to students in Malaysia.
- For the first time students need not go to Australia to pursue to study a university degree in accounting
- The other foreign branch campus universities offering accounting degrees include
 - Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus
 - University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
 - Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak Campus

Wave 5: Home-grown Local Degree level online distance learning

- The 2000s - Online Distance Learning (ODL) and Blended learning using the internet was introduced.
 - Wawasan Open University (WOU) is the first home-grown ODL institution in Malaysia to offer accounting which is called Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting.
 - The first cohort was admitted in 2006 and graduated in 2011.
 - The Open University of Malaysia (OUM) is the other institution in Malaysia to offer an accounting degree programme through the ODL mode.

Contribution of Distance Education to Accountancy

- DL is the only mode of delivery for students in Malaysia to become accountants in Malaysia via Part II of the First Schedule of the Accountants Act, 1967.

	Year		
	2013	2012	2011
ADMISSION OF MEMBERS THROUGH			
PART I OF THE FIRST SCHEDULE OF THE ACCOUNTANTS ACT, 1967	871	1044	
PART II OF THE FIRST SCHEDULE OF THE ACCOUNTANTS ACT, 1967	573	682	
THE FIRST SCHEDULE OF THE ACCOUNTANTS ACT, 1968	1444	1726	1496
MIA Qualifying Examination	32	34	35
Total	1476	1760	1531

Contribution of Distance Education to Accountancy

- However there are yet to be accountants from the ODL mode in Malaysia as none of the scheduled professional bodies for Malaysian practice have their assessments and training on the Online Distance learning.
- Although WOU and OUM are institutions conducting accounting courses over the ODL mode, however graduates still must sit of examinations of either of the scheduled bodies.

End Thoughts

- The 30,556 strong MIA members in Malaysia would not exist if distance learning in whatever mode (whether by post or face-to-face tuition).
- Although the government in trying to increase the number of accountants through pure face-to-face institution via Part I of the First Schedule of the Accountants Act, 1967, students still take examinations via the scheduled bodies (which are all distance learning).