A COMPARISON OF PERSONAL VALUES OF CHINESE ACCOUNTING PRACTITIONERS AND STUDENTS

In this study, we examine the personal values and value types of Chinese accounting practitioners and accounting students, using the values survey questionnaire developed and validated by Schwartz (1992). The results show that Healthy, Family Security, Honoring of Parents and Elders, and Self-Respect are the top four values for both accounting practitioners and accounting students, although the importance of these values are not ranked in the same order. Both accounting students and accounting practitioners rank Security as the highest value type. There are few significant gender differences in values for either accounting practitioners or students. No significant difference in value types was detected between male and female practitioners and four value types were significantly different between male and female accounting students. The personal values and value types of the Chinese accounting practitioners and students are related to the Chinese cultural traditions, the impact of communism and social reforms and to the influence of Western values which have penetrated into Chinese society. Among the limitations on the generalization of the results of our study are the relatively small sample sizes, samples coming from one university and one city in China, and the use of self-reported questionnaire. Nevertheless, this study has shed some light on the values considered important or less important by Chinese accounting practitioners and students. This research is useful to accounting firms and other potential employers to assess the extent to which they take into account the values and priorities of their male and female employees. Educators, business schools and organizations in China could also include in their curricula, activities or courses that will evoke in the accounting students and employees, values that are conducive to more ethical behaviour, a wider social awareness and concern. Finally, studies investigating Chinese values and value systems should take into account the impact of Western values. A better understanding of Chinese values and value systems cannot be achieved unless this factor is considered. In addition, surprises from many studies that often claim that they find contradicting results in China are not surprises at all when one considers the strong impact of Western cultures on Chinese people, especially the young and well-educated people, many of whom are actually Westernizing. Further research in this domain will lead to greater mutual understanding for the increasing number of Western organizations and business people doing or seeking to do business with Chinese organizations and people and will as well be useful for educators and accounting standard setting bodies in China.