

## **SUPER BOOKKEEPERS OR ACCOUNTANTS?**

- *Eliseo A. Aurellado*

My old college textbook described Accounting as a process with the analysis and interpretation of the output as the real job of the accountant. The process of recording, classifying and summarizing financial information is the job of the bookkeeper. Yet, there seems to be so much fascination in the process that the end goal of adding value to the output through its interpretation appears to have been downplayed. Dr. Manuel A. Tipgos thought so.

I first met Dr. Tipgos and his lovely wife, Mary Lou, early this year at Resorts World. He was taking time from his teaching duties in the US. The appointed meeting capped a series of email messages over a period of 2 years where I got to know him. He had prepared a paper on re-structuring the system of education in the country particularly on Accounting which he sent to the Board of Accountancy for possible appropriate action. As a CPA in the 60's who had found a new home in the US, Manny had practiced his profession mainly in the academe as Director of the doctoral and master's program in accounting at the University of Kentucky and Professor Emeritus of Business Administration at the Indiana University Southeast.

One of Manny's advocacies was the shortening of the accounting curriculum in this country because of his concern that it was producing super bookkeepers rather than accountants. His thinking was that current accounting students are drilled too often on accounting rules in countless problems and exercises in the classroom. This "longest drill of accounting rules in the universe" as he called it is carried over into the review schools in preparation for the CPA licensure examinations.

Manny's advocacy struck a chord in me at that time as I was also on a similar path. I had started to advocate in my talks with students and the academe that perhaps the accounting curriculum should consider several tracks since not all future accountants ended up in public practice. I called it a ladderized system where I proposed a progression of accounting curriculum starting with a 2-year course on bookkeeping, 4-year courses on management accounting, internal auditing, taxation, and the current 5-year course in public accounting. Although my aim was to shorten accounting education for those who would not follow the public accounting path, Manny had a more radical approach. He wanted to shorten accounting education, period. He claimed that our accounting education was producing super bookkeepers and not accountants. He compared our curriculum with that in the US where 130 units were all that were needed to finish the course whereas we had 210 units in our accountancy course. For certain schools this had even gone up to 273 units. This situation prompted Manny to call our curriculum as anti-poor because it took so long and the costs were high.

As a member of CHED's Technical Council on Accountancy, we took up the challenge of Manny to try to rationalize the accounting curriculum. With the onset of K-12, it was possible to shift some of the subjects in the accountancy program to senior high. As a result the Bachelor's degree in accountancy was reduced to 173 units. There were also three other accounting tracks created: Accounting Information Systems, Management Accounting, and Internal Auditing. Recently, CHED came up with its

CMO on these new degrees mandating all schools offering accountancy programs to start implementing the new curricula in 2018. It was now possible to complete these accountancy courses in 4 years. Only the accountancy course will qualify the graduates to take up the CPA licensure examination; the other 3 degree courses will prepare the graduates to pursue a career other than public accounting with no compulsion to take the board examinations.

Manny Tiggos passed away this year. He would have been glad to know that his dream of a shorter and more economical accounting course in this country had finally come true.

*About the Author*

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