Macrothink Institute™

Journal of Management Research
ISSN 1941-899X
2017, Vol. 9, No. 1

Accountants' Awareness of Updates of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in Malawi

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Received: Sep. 6, 2016 Accepted: Dec. 16, 2016 Published: January 1, 2017

doi:10.5296/jmr.v9i1.9989 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jmr.v9i1.9989

Abstract

This paper is intended to assess the accountants' awareness of the updates of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in terms of the standards that had been withdrawn and introduced in the period 2011 and 2013. The study targeted accountants based in Blantyre, Malawi's commercial city. A survey strategy was adopted. The results reveal that though the majority of the accountants are aware of the updates of IFRS, there are still some accountants who seem not to be aware of changes taking place in the financial reporting landscape. It is recommended that the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Malawi (ICAM) should continue conducting workshops on IFRS and accountants should patronise these workshops. Universities and colleges offering accounting education should incorporate IFRS in their accounting curricula.

Keywords: IFRS, Awareness, ICAM, Benefits, Demerits

1. Introduction

The need for a single set of accounting standards to be applied globally has been of concern of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) for some time. It seems this need is no longer a farfetched dream. The initiative by many jurisdictions to converge with IFRS has gained steady support in the world (Yeow & Mahzan, 2012). The support follows the adoption of IFRS by the European Union (EU) listed companies in 2005.The move has also been boosted by the initiatives made by SEC in the United States of America. Following SEC's release No. 33-8879, foreign private issuers, using IFRS, as issued by the IASB, are no longer required to reconcile to US GAAP to be listed and traded in the USA (Moser, 2014). Today, more than 120 countries have adopted or converged with IFRS (Larson & Street, 2011).

Malawi has not been spared from the IFRS adoption or convergence drive. While other countries are now adopting IFRS, Malawi in 2001 under the leadership of the then Society of Accountants in Malawi (SOCAM) now the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Malawi (ICAM) decided to adopt and apply International financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as the applicable framework for all publicly accountable entities in Malawi. The Public Accountants and Auditors Act of 1982 and the newly enacted Public Accountants and Auditors Act of 2012 empower ICAM to promote high quality accounting standards.

Nevertheless, the application of IFRS in Malawi has been facing challenges (ROSC Malawi, 2007). The ROSC on Malawi conducted in 2007 established that although the Society of Accountants in Malawi had directed that all companies should apply IFRSs, there is no link between the Society and the Companies Act (1984) as there is no mention of SOCAM in the Companies Act. This gap in the Act implies that ICAM lacks legal mandate to enforce the application of IFRS. However, the Act is being revised and it is envisaged that the revision will make a direct reference to ICAM and the application of IFRS. Another notable legal document, the Capital Market Development Act does not require the application of IFRS. The Act makes reference to the Companies Act (1984).

ICAM has also adopted the IFRS for Small and Medium Entities (SMEs) as the applicable framework for all non-publicly accountable entities (IFAC, 2013). In October 2009, ICAM published an official definition of an SME for purposes of determining which entities are permitted to use the IFRS for SME. All other public interest entities continue to use full IFRS.

Although the application of IFRS is gaining ground worldwide, the financial reporting landscape is not static. The International Education Standard (IES) 7 paragraph 10 states that the accountancy profession operates in an environment of change. In order to accommodate the dynamism of the financial reporting requirements, some existing accounting standards are withdrawn or revised. Sometimes new standards are introduced. The implication of these changes on accountants throughout the world is enormous. Accountants are expected to be aware of the changes which are taking place if the financial statements they prepare and present are to be relevant and achieve a fair presentation (IAS 1, par 15). It is as a result of this that Accountancy bodies have continuous professional development (CPD) or continuous professional education (CPE) programmes. IES 7 Paragraph 18 states that member bodies should require all professional accountants to develop and maintain competence relevant and appropriate to their work and professional responsibilities. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Malawi (ICAM), being a member of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) requires its members to undertake continuous professional education. The purpose of these programmes is to ensure that their members are kept up-to-date on the developments in financial reporting.

The nature of the accountancy profession demands that accountants must be aware of developments in the financial reporting landscape. And accountants in Malawi are not exempted from this expectation. The objective of this study was to assess the accountants' awareness of updates of IFRS in terms of the standards that had been withdrawn and introduced between 2011 and 2013. Studies on the accountants' awareness of IFRS have been conducted in other countries such as India (Akhter, 2013; Kulkarni& Hyderabad, 2014), Nigeria (Baba, 2013) and USA (AICPA, 2011). However, such a study has not been conducted in Malawi.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Benefits of IFRS

The rate at which IFRSs are being adopted and applied worldwide, shows that the standards are beneficial to countries and the entities alike. Some of the benefits of IFRS include better financial information for shareholders and regulators, enhanced comparability, improved transparency of results, increased ability to secure cross-border listing, better management of global operations and decreased cost of capital (Gordon, 2008;Ahmed, Neel&Wang, 2010; Li 2010;Anbalagan (2013); Moser, 2014).

Bhattacharjee & Islam (2009) noted that by eliminating the many international differences in accounting standards, and standardizing reporting formats, IFRS eliminate many of the adjustments that analysts historically have made in order to make companies' financial information more comparable internationally. In this regard, IFRS adoption could make it less costly for investors to compare firms across markets and countries.

Odia & Ogiedu (2013) posit that adoption of IFRS will lead to higher share prices, reduced national standard-setting costs, increased credibility of domestic markets to foreign capital providers and potentials foreign merger partners, and to potential lenders of financial statements from companies in less-developed countries. They further add that adoption of IFRS will also facilitate easier international mobility of professional staff across national boundaries.

IFRS lead to timely recognition of losses. Coupled with transparency, this timely recognition of losses may result in increased efficiency of contracting between firms and their managers, reduce agency costs between managers and shareholders, and enhance corporate governance (Bhattacharjee& Islam, 2009; Hebert *et al*., 2013).

2.2 Demerits of IFRS

There are several reasons why the expected benefits of IFRS may not be achieved (Phan, Mascitelli & Barut, 2013). Barth, Landsman & Lang (2008) state that the adoption of IFRS leads to a reduction of accounting alternatives. This may result in a less true and faithful representation of the firms underlying economics. Sunder (2009) noted that this might discourage the discovery of an evolution toward better methods of financial reporting.

While the IFRS enjoy the status of being principle-based unlike other accounting standards that are rule-based, Hong (2008) noted that as a result of the principle-based nature of IFRS, professional judgment might create the opportunities for earning management. Yet on the other hand, it is claimed that IFRS reduces incidences of earnings management (Bath *et al.*, 2008).

Proper application of international accounting standards depends on the effectiveness of countries that have adopted the standards. In this regard, weak enforcement mechanisms of adopting nations can reduce financial reporting quality, even when high quality accounting standards are implemented (Brown & Tarca, 2007; Chen & Cheng, 2007). Chen &Cheng (2007) and Hail & Leuz (2006) are of the view that the capital market effects of IFRS are more pronounced in countries with stricter enforcement regimes and therefore better IFRS implementation. Wang & Yu (2009) and Hail & Leuz (2006) showed that capital market effects were also apparent where there were stronger reporting incentives and thus higher quality financial reporting were evident.

GAB (2012) notes that one of the demerits that will be experienced by countries adopting of IFRS is the forgoing of the benefits of any past and potential future innovations in local reporting standards specific to their economies. In this case, a single set of accounting standards cannot reflect the differences in national business practices arising from differences in institutions and cultures.

Moser (2014) states that one of the more common arguments against IFRS is that IFRS is still a global accounting experiment. This stance is due to the fact that most cause and effects of adopting IFRS have not been validated.

2.3 Awareness of IFRS

As the IFRS adoption or the IFRS convergence impetus increases, the need for greater levels of IFRS awareness is vital. Kulkarni & Hyderabad (2014) note that the accounting world is fast changing and professionals involved in the process of accounting need to adjust and adapt to the emerging situation. In order to be ready for the IFRS transition process, companies may need to emphasis increasing the awareness of IFRS (Yeow & Mahzan, 2013). This observation resonates well with the fact that the financial reporting landscape is not static. IFAC through IES 7 notes that the accountancy profession operates in an environment of change. The same education standard further states that member bodies should require all professional accountants to develop and maintain competence relevant and appropriate to their work and professional responsibilities. It naturally follows that accountants should be aware of changes that take place in relation to IFRSs. As countries transition to IFRS, awareness of the IFRSs is imperative. The awareness may relate to benefits of IFRS, transition implications and the actual application requirements of the standards.

The awareness level of IFRS can be assessed at different levels. The awareness may be at general knowledge level or at complete knowledge level (Kulkarni & Hyderabad, 2014). Akhter conducted a study in 2013 targeting postgraduate students of Commerce and Management in Kashmir to assess their awareness of IFRS. The study established that though the majority of the students knew the number of IFRSs that were effective in 2011, it was only a small number of students who were familiar with the contents of the IFRSs. Accounting students are expected to be conversant with IFRSs, as these will form a foundation of their working life. Knowledge of IFRS makes students understand better the financial information and the implications of any changes in the standards (Wong and Wong, 2013). This can be facilitated through the inclusion of IFRS in the accounting education curricula at higher institution levels (Larson & Street, 2011; AICPA, 2011; Baba, 2013).

Kulkarni and Hyderabad (2014) in their study of awareness among practicing chartered accountants in India established that 94percent of sampled accountants were aware of IFRS. However in terms of the extent of awareness of the IFRS only 56 percent of the respondents had a conceptual idea of IFRS.Dhankar& Gupta (2014) agreeing with Kulkarni & Hyderabad (2014) reported that there was still absence of awareness of IFRS among the stakeholders in India. This lack of awareness about IFRS was affecting the smooth transition to IFRS. Baba (2013) making a similar observation in Nigeria, it was noted that the low level of awareness of IFRS was hampering the smooth implementation of the phase one of IFRS adoption. Moser (2014) also noted that in addition to the shortage of accountants, China lacks personnel with familiarity in IFRS, thus affecting the country's journey to convergence with IFRS. Balsari & Varan (2014) observed that lack of knowledge base on IFRS led to compliance problems in Turkey.

Conducting ensitization workshops and other means of reaching out to targeted audience can raise the level of awareness. Baba (2013) laments that despite conducting a series of ensitization workshops in Nigeria, the level of awareness among companies' executives was relatively low. For IFRS to be embraced fully, the level of awareness among all IFRS stakeholders should be high. Fundamentally, raising awareness among stakeholders on potential benefits of adopting IFRS and its subsequent impact on companies'financial performance will enhance the implementation process (Baba, 2013). In the same vein, Larson and Street (2011) opine that accounting students, practicing accountants and auditors, and financial statement users around the globe need to be educated in IFRS which they consider to be a global accounting norm. According to AICPA (2011), companies will use IFRS only if they and their auditors have been thoroughly trained, and if their investors and other users of their financial statements such as analysts and rating agencies understand IFRS as well. Though the USA is on the convergence course with IFRS, AICPA is advising CPAs on the need to begin to prepare for the day in the not-so-distant future when the SEC could designate a date for voluntary, or even mandatory, adoption of IFRS by all U.S. public companies (AICPA, 2011).

3. Methodology

This was an exploratory study as this is the first time that a study of this nature was conducted in Malawi. A survey strategy was used for the study. The study targeted 105 accountants based in Blantyre. All targeted accountants responded thereby giving a 100 percent response rate. Convenience sampling was adopted. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Self-administered questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement as to whether a series of international accounting standards had been withdrawn or introduced in the period 2011 and 2013.ALikert scale that ranged from 1 to 5 was used. Secondary sources were used as a basis for assessing the respondents' answers to the questions.

4. Findings

4.1 RespondentsAttributes

The respondents' attributes have been shown in Table 1

Table 1. Respondents' Attributes

		Frequency	%
Position in Organisation	Accounting Related	62	84
	Other	43	16
Academic Qualification	Degree	92	87
	Masters	6	6
	Others	7	7
Professional Qualification	ACCA	67	63
	CIMA	2	2
	Others	36	35
Work Experience	<5 years	38	36
	6-10 years	30	29
	11-15 years	19	18
	>15 years	18	17
Use of IFRS	Yes	105	100

As shown in Table 1, 84 percent of the respondents hold accounting related positions. It has also been noted that 64 percent of the respondents have over six years of experience. This implies that the most of the respondents are seasoned accountants and so would be in a better position to answer the research questions. This is also supported the fact that 65 percent of the respondents are professional accountants and that at least 87 percent have a first degree. All respondents apply IFRS in one way or the other in their day-to-day work.

4.2 Media Used for Awareness on Updates

The respondents were required to indicate the media they use in order to be up to date with the current issues in IFRSs. The responses have been shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Media Used for Awareness on Updates of IFRS

	Medium	Frequency
1	SOCAM workshops	63
2	Other workshops (Abroad)	36
3	ACCA/CIMA Newsletters	81
4	SOCAM magazines	64
5	Websites (ACCA/CIMA/SOCAM)	77
6	General internet searches	52
7	Others	16

4.3 Awareness on Updates of International Accounting Standards

The respondents were required to indicate their agreements or disagreements as to whether the given International Reporting Standards (both IFRS and IAS) had been withdrawn in the period 2011 to 2013. A Likert scale was used. One represented Strongly Disagree, 2 Agree, 3 Neutral and 4Agree while 5 indicated Strongly Agree.

4.3.1 Accounting Standards Withdrawn Between 2011 and 2013

The detailed responses of the applicants on IAS that have been withdrawn in the above period are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. IASs Withdrawn in the period 2011 to 2013

Standard	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
IAS 1	101	0	1	0	1	1.06	0.44
IAS 2	96	5	0	0	1	1.09	0.45
IAS 7	96	2	3	0	1	1.12	0.53
IAS 8	92	3	5	0	3	1.24	0.80
IAS 10	88	4	8	0	3	1.31	0.85
IAS 11	87	5	4	3	3	1.33	0.92
IAS 12	94	3	4	0	1	1.15	0.57
IAS 16	97	3	0	1	1	1.10	0.52
IAS 17	92	8	1	1	1	1.17	0.58
IAS 18	95	4	2	0	2	1.16	0.64
IAS 19	91	5	3	0	2	1.19	0.67
IAS 21	86	7	7	0	2	1.28	0.76
IAS 23	91	7	3	1	1	1.19	0.63
IAS 24	80	6	9	1	4	1.43	0.99
IAS 27	62	11	9	7	12	1.97	1.44
IAS 28	61	10	11	10	11	2.03	1.44
IAS 31	53	9	8	10	23	2.43	1.68
IAS 32	72	3	11	1	12	1.77	1.39
IAS 33	83	10	4	1	4	1.36	0.92
IAS 36	84	7	3	2	1	1.24	0.70
IAS 37	85	10	3	1	3	1.30	0.83
IAS 38	84	12	3	0	1	1.22	0.60
IAS 39	63	10	9	6	13	1.97	1.46
IAS 40	92	2	1	1	3	1.19	0.78
IAS 41	82	4	6	1	7	1.47	1.13

Table 4. IFRSs Withdrawn between 2011 and 2013

Standard	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
IFRS 1	84	6	2	0	8	1.42	1.12
IFRS 2	81	7	5	0	4	1.38	0.98
IFRS 3	84	7	3	3	4	1.41	1.04
IFRS 4	76	7	7	3	4	1.47	1.04
IFRS 5	82	3	5	2	6	1.44	1.10
IFRS 6	79	5	5	4	5	1.48	1.11
IFRS 7	83	6	2	0	7	1.39	1.09
IFRS 8	80	5	3	1	8	1.47	1.17
IFRS 9	75	5	1	3	11	1.63	1.36
IFRS 10	78	5	2	2	11	1.60	1.33
IFRS 11	72	6	4	5	10	1.71	1.36
IFRS 12	69	9	4	4	11	1.75	1.38
IFRS 13	74	4	5	1	10	1.61	1.31

4.3.2 Accounting Standards Introduced Between 2011 and 2013

The respondents were also required to indicate whether a given series of international accounting standards had been introduced in the period from 2011 to 2013. The means and standard deviations for the responses have been shown in Table 5 and Table6.

Table 5. IASs introduced in the period 2011 to 2013

Standard	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
IAS 1	94	0	0	1	8	1.34	1.11
IAS 2	95	1	0	0	6	1.25	0.95
IAS 7	92	2	0	0	5	1.26	0.96
IAS 8	91	4	0	0	6	1.28	0.96
IAS 10	90	4	1	0	6	1.30	0.98
IAS 11	90	5	0	0	7	1.32	1.03
IAS 12	92	4	0	0	6	1.27	0.96
IAS 16	91	3	0	0	7	1.31	1.03
IAS 17	89	4	0	1	7	1.35	1.06
IAS 18	89	2	1	2	6	1.34	1.05
IAS 19	83	5	1	3	9	1.51	1.24
IAS 21	88	6	1	2	4	1.30	0.91
IAS 23	89	5	2	0	6	1.32	0.99
IAS 24	84	3	2	3	4	1.33	0.98
IAS 27	85	4	1	1	10	1.49	1.24
IAS 28	85	4	2	3	7	1.45	1.14
IAS 31	88	5	2	0	4	1.25	0.85
IAS 32	86	5	1	1	7	1.38	1.08
IAS 33	89	3	1	2	6	1.35	1.04
IAS 36	93		2	1	6	1.30	1.01
IAS 37	91	0	1	1	5	1.26	0.94
IAS 38	91	1	2	1	5	1.35	1.34
IAS 39	85	2	3	1	8	1.43	1.16
IAS 40	90	3	1	1	5	1.28	0.94
IAS 41	78	4	5	1	5	1.40	1.03

Table 6. IFRSs introduced in the period 2011 to 2013

Standard	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
IFRS 1	66	4	6	2	17	1.95	1.57
IFRS 2	73	3	6	1	13	1.73	1.43
IFRS 3	72	8	3	3	14	1.79	1.45
IFRS 4	72	4	5	1	17	1.86	1.54
IFRS 5	70	8	1	2	15	1.79	1.49
IFRS 6	66	6	5	5	15	1.94	1.53
IFRS 7	64	0	5	5	24	2.23	1.76
IFRS 8	62	4	6	6	20	2.16	1.67
IFRS 9	38	3	5	11	42	3.20	1.92
IFRS 10	36	2	7	4	49	3.29	1.87
IFRS 11	31	1	9	7	51	3.46	1.79
IFRS 12	29	2	6	5	58	3.61	1.79
IFRS 13	32	2	3	3	59	3.56	1.86

5. Discussion

5.1 Media Used

The results indicate that most of the respondents make use of newsletters, magazines and websites of their professional bodies. Professional bodies provide newsletters and magazines to their members in soft or hard copies form. It is worth noting that in every issue, there is always a section on updates in financial reporting. This makes newsletters and magazines a good medium for increasing members' awareness of financial reporting. Based on the respondents' feedback, workshops are also a good medium. Sixty three percent of the respondents indicated that they attend workshops that were organised by SOCAM now ICAM while 36 percent attend similar workshops abroad. Apart from organising the traditional annual conferences for members, ICAM also organises workshops on IFRS. Members of professional bodies are mandated to undergo continuing professional development (CPD) or education (CPE) and are likely to attend these workshops in order to accumulate the required number of hours. Apart from newsletters and workshop attendance, the respondents have also indicated that they use the Internet generally to get updates on IFRS. The proliferation of Internet on almost all portable devices makes it possible for the respondents to have access to these updates 24/7.

5.2 Awareness on Updates of International Accounting Standards

5.2.1 Withdrawn Standards in the Period 2011 to 2013

The respondents' responses on the standards that had been withdrawn are showing a mixed picture as shown in Tables 3 and 4. In Table 3, the respondents generally agree that the accounting standards given had not been withdrawn during the period 2011 to 2013. The standards in this range had not been withdrawn in the stipulated period apart from minor amendments as part of annual cycle reviews. This demonstrates that the respondents are aware of the latest state of affairs in as far as these standards are concerned. However, in terms IAS 27, IAS 28, IAS 31, IAS 32 and IAS 39 the picture is different. These standards have slightly higher standard deviations as compared to the standard deviations of the rest of the accounting standards.

IAS 27 was previously titled "*Consolidated and Separate Financial Statements*" because it focused on the preparation of consolidated financial statements and also on the financial statements prepared by an entity (parent) that had control of other entities. In 2011, the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) issued a revised standard and changed the title to "*Separate Financial Statements*". Issues dealing with consolidated financial statements are now falling within the scope of IFRS 10 *Consolidated Financial Statements*. In this regard, one can conclude that this standard was withdrawn. It is surprising that only 19 percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that this standard had been withdrawn in the period between 2011 and 2013.

A similar case also applies to IAS 28 whose earlier title was "*Investments in Associates*". IASB issued a revised standard in 2011 and the title changed to "*Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures*." Table 3 shows that only 20 percent of the respondents indicated that the standard had been withdrawn. IAS 31 *Interests in Joint Ventures* was withdrawn in 2011. It is only 32 percent of the respondents who indicated correctly that this standard was withdrawn in the stipulated period. IFRS 11 *Joint Arrangements* was issued by IASB to replace IAS 31.

IAS 32 *Financial Instruments: Presentation* has been amended twice between 2011 and 2013. The 2011 amendment was on offsetting financial assets and liabilities while in 2012, the Annual Improvements affected the standard for 2009-2011 Cycle. These amendments do not qualify to be classified as a withdrawal of the standard. The mean of 1.77 indicates that the respondents generally disagreed with the statement that the standard was withdrawn during the 2011-2013 period.

IAS 39 *Financial Instruments: Recognition and Measurement* is an odd standard because of the projects that IASB undertook on financial instruments. In 2009, IASB issued IFRS 9 *Financial Instruments* that replaced the classification and measurement of financial asset provisions of IAS 39. Again in 2010 IFRS 9 was reissued to incorporate new requirements on accounting for financial liabilities and carrying over from IAS 39 the requirements for de-recognition of financial assets andfinancial liabilities. In 2013, IFRS 9 *Financial Instruments* (Hedge Accounting and amendments to IFRS 9, IFRS 7 and IAS 39) was issued. Finally in July 2014, a final version of IFRS 9 was issued and replaced all the requirements of

IAS 39. In this case, it can be concluded that IAS 39 was not withdrawn in the period 2011 to 2013.It is interesting to note that despite all these developments 72 percent of the respondents indicated that this standard was not withdrawn in the period in question.

In terms of the IFRSs that were withdrawn in the period 2011 to 2013, the majority of the respondents agreed that all the standards shown in Table 4 had not been withdrawn in this period. This shows that most of the accountants are aware of the developments pertaining to these standards.

5.2.2 Introduced Standards in the Period 2011 to 2013

Table 5 shows the responses on the IASs that had been introduced in the period of the study. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents disagree with the view that the standards in the table were introduced in the period 2011 to 2013. The respondents' position on these standards is correct apart from IAS 27 and IAS 28. IAS 27 was reissued in 2011 so that it should focus on separate financial statements of the parent. IAS 28 was also reissued in 2011 and its title changed to *Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures*. Only 10 percent of the respondents indicated that IAS 27 and IAS 28 were introduced in the period 2011 to 2013.

On the other hand, the results indicate that the respondents have different views on whether the IFRSs were introduced in the period under study. For IFRSs 1 to 8, the majority of the respondents are of the view that these standards were not introduced in the period 2011 to 2013. This observation is correct. The last standard, IFRS 8 was introduced in 2006. However, the number of respondents (between 20 and 30 percent) who indicated that these IFRSs were introduced in the period 2011 to 2013 is substantial. The implication of this observation is that some accountants are not fully aware of the developments pertaining to accounting standards. Akhter (2013) made similar observations in his study among postgraduate students of commerce and management in India. He concluded that although the majority of the students were aware of IFRS, there was still a knowledge gap in terms of contents of the IFRSs.

The respondents' views are still divided on IFRS 9 *Financial Instruments*. This standard was introduced in 2009 as part of the IASB efforts to reduce complexities of financial instruments. In this regard, the respondents who indicated that this standard was not introduced between 2011 and 2013 may be right. However, another version of IFRS 9 was issued in 2013. Some of the respondents agreed that this standard was introduced between 2011 and 2013. This view may also be correct. The IASB has now issued a final version of IFRS 9.

The majority of the respondents have indicated that IFRSs 10 to 13 were issued in the period 2011 to 2013. This observation is correct. The standards in this range were issued in 2011. Some of the respondents indicated that these standards were not issued in the period under study. This demonstrates that some accountants are not fully aware of the developments in accounting standards.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study have shown that although the majority of accountants in Malawi are aware of the IFRSs that had been withdrawn or introduced between the period 2011 and 2013, there are still other accountants who are not fully aware of the updates in IFRS. These findings are in line with those of other researchers who have noted that there is generally a low level of awareness of IFRS among the IFRS stakeholders (AICPA, 2011; Akhter, 2013; Baba, 2013; Dhankar and Gupta, 2014; Moser, 2014). The impetus for adoption of IFRS that started in earnest in 2005 is still gathering momentum. In this case, it is imperative for IFRS stakeholders and specifically accountants to be fully aware of the IFRS, not only knowing which standards are enforceable at the moment, but also how to apply the same as they prepare and present financial statements.

Therefore the recommendation is that ICAM should still conduct IFRS workshop and encourage its membership to attend the workshops. In the same vein, the accountants should attend these workshops because they have an obligation to continue updating themselves continually and not necessarily because some of the workshops may be conducted at the lakeshore resorts. Again, ICAM should continue highlighting the updates in IFRS in the members' magazine and on the Institute's website.

Universities and colleges offering accounting education should incorporate IFRS in their curricula. This will ensure that the students acquire the knowledge of IFRS that they will apply upon completing their studies.

This study had targeted accountants in Blantyre which is just one of the four cities in the country. It is recommended that future studies should target accountants and other IFRS stakeholders in all the four cities. There are different levels of assessing awareness of IFRS. While this study focused on the accounting standards that had been withdrawn or introduced in the period 2011 to 2013, further studies can be conducted on the accountants' awareness of the requirements of the actual standards.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Bachelor of Accountancy year four students at the Polytechnic who assisted in collecting data for the study.

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