

# PAFA's vision is uniformity of accountancy standards

With sub-Saharan African economic growth outstripping most other regions - and some countries experiencing annual growth rates of 7% or more - both the big business and SME sectors will fuel growing demand for auditing, integrated reporting, and other professional financial services provided by the profession.



Vickson Ncube, CEO of PAFA

The Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA) recognises that accountants play a role in business growth over and above accounting. "Research has shown a direct correlation between the percentage of business graduates in a population and the growth of developing countries' GDPs, and 35% of all the companies listed on the JSE have accountants as CEOs," says Vickson Ncube, CEO of PAFA.

"When it comes to the various accreditation bodies, we are brand-agnostic - the profession as a whole is our concern," says Ncube, a Zambian-born accountant who began his career at the Zambian State Insurance Corporation. "PAFA is financed via members' subscriptions - 39 professional accounting bodies from 34 African countries. We've also received extraordinary support - a number of big firms, like Deloitte, SNG and KPMG, have provided services free of charge, and we receive logistical, service and secretarial assistance from SAICA in Johannesburg."

## Vision is twofold

PAFA's long-term vision for the continent is twofold: it aims to strengthen existing accounting institutions around Africa and in those countries with no professional bodies, to work with stakeholders to create them, and it works towards uniformity of standards in African accountancy. "Which is not to say we think the various professional bodies should abandon their individual brands," says Ncube.

"Many of these brands are powerful in their own right, and we need to harness that power, but we also need to work on making sure that all these institutions conform to an agreed international set of norms and standards. This is important for

multinationals, who see the continent as an investment destination - so migration of skills must be possible."

Adopting common standards thus makes reciprocity arrangements between PAFA's member bodies possible, allowing them to recognise each other's qualifications and make migration easier.

## **Member countries**

PAFA also supports the lobbying for efficient financial regulation in member countries. "We encourage our member-bodies to talk to their counterparts in the legal sector, for example, about appropriate legislation. That way, each professional body keeps its own certification criteria, but we're all playing by the same rules," Ncube adds. "The needs of the Kenyan, Ugandan and South African businessmen are the same. You need accountants who can add value to the business, to add strategic and planning value, not just to perform the checklist functions."

As important as education and training is to PAFA in the long-term, it also needs to maintain its immediate focus on the business at hand. "One of PAFA's most important strategic pillars is to develop the status of the profession in the continent. With South African businesses extending their operations rapidly into Africa, this is equally important for them - and by extension, for many SAICA members. PAFA and the professional accounting bodies must stay involved in African development, in raising African issues on the international agenda, and in collaborating to ensure uniformity in auditing, ethics and business practice across the continent."

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