Magdincheva Shopova, M., Mitrović, A., Stojanovska-Stefanova, A., & Milašinović, M. (2026). Practices and policies for continuing professional development of accountants: A comparative analysis of North Macedonia and Serbia. *Academos Journal, Vol. 2, No. 3*, 2026, 22-32

Original scientific paper

UDC: 656-051:005.963(497.7:497.11)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65921/6x0kv829

Received: 06.07.2026.
Revised: 10.08.2026.
Accepted: 02.09.2026.

Practices and Policies for Continuing Professional Development of Accountants: A Comparative Analysis of North Macedonia and Serbia

Marija Magdincheva Shopova[1], Aleksandra Mitrović[2], Aneta Stojanovska-Stefanova[3], Marko Milašinović[4]

[1] Full Professor, University of Goce Delcev Štip, Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, Štip, North Macedonia, e-mail: marija.magdinceva@ugd.edu.mk, ORCID: 0000-0003-4352-9847
[2] Associate Professor, University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism, Vrnjačka Banja, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: aleksandra.stankovic@kg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0002-8302-0853
[3] Associate Professor, University of Goce Delcev Štip, Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, Štip, North Macedonia, e-mail: aneta.stojanovska@ugd.edu.mk, ORCID: 0000-0002-9400-8331
[4] Teaching Assistant, University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism, Vrnjačka Banja, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: marko.milasinovic@kg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0002-9346-9283

Abstract: In the context of dynamic changes, globalization, and the growing need for enhanced transparency and high-quality financial reporting, continuing education, i.e., continuing professional development, represents a key factor in maintaining and enhancing the professional competencies of accountants.
The subject of this research is to analyze and examine the role and significance of continuing professional development for accountants and certified accountants, with particular emphasis on the policies and practices implemented in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia.
The established research objective has been achieved through the application of appropriate research and analytical methods. The aim of the paper is to conduct a comparative analysis of the continuing professional development systems in the two countries by examining the legal framework, institutional arrangements, types of training, monitoring and control mechanisms, as well as the sanctions imposed for non-compliance with the prescribed obligations. The analysis indicates that, although the two systems share significant similarities in their fundamental structure, Serbia demonstrates a higher level of development with regard to digitalization and the diversity of educational programs, whereas the system in North Macedonia is more focused on the formal fulfillment of statutory requirements. The study contributes to the literature by identifying institutional and digital differences in CPD governance between North Macedonia and Serbia and by proposing policy recommendations for strengthening accountants' professional competencies in the era of digital transformation and artificial intelligence.
The conclusion of the paper presents opportunities for improving training and professional development systems through the adoption of best practices, enhancement of training quality, and the promotion of lifelong learning as a fundamental value of the accounting profession.
Keywords: accountants, certified accountants, regulatory framework, professional development, comparative analysis.

Introduction

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) represents an organized and continuous process of enhancing the knowledge and skills of accountants and certified accountants, with the objective of ensuring the high-quality, efficient, and professional performance of accounting activities. This process facilitates compliance with contemporary standards, legal regulations, and practices in the fields of accounting, finance, and taxation. All member organizations of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) are entitled and obliged to harmonize their national standards and educational programs for professional education, continuing development, and specialization with the requirements of the International Education Standards (IES 1–8), as well as to work towards the implementation and application of all international standards relating to the education and professional development of accountants. Recent studies indicate that digital transformation fundamentally changes the competencies required from accountants. Besides traditional accounting knowledge, accountants increasingly need digital literacy, data analytics competencies and AI-related skills.

Jingbo and Zaini (2026) systematically reviewed 22 empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025 to examine the use of artificial intelligence in higher accounting education. Their findings indicate that AI can improve learning efficiency, critical thinking, and other higher-order skills, while its adoption depends considerably on perceived usefulness and users' digital competencies. Nevertheless, academic integrity, excessive reliance on AI, and data privacy remain significant concerns. Although the review follows the PRISMA 2020 framework, the available evidence is dominated by quantitative perception-based studies from Asian emerging economies, with limited experimental and longitudinal research. The study therefore supports the inclusion of AI literacy, ethical judgment, data protection, and critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs in accounting curricula and continuing professional development programmes (Jingbo & Zaini, 2026).

Viviers et al. (2026) provide evidence that practice-oriented simulation can support the development of digital acumen, ethical awareness, decision-making, communication, and lifelong learning among postgraduate accounting students. A particular strength of the study is its convergent mixed-methods design, which links students' perceptions with assignment performance. However, the findings are based primarily on self-reported competence development within a specific postgraduate tax-education context, which limits their broader generalizability. The study is nevertheless relevant to continuing professional development because it suggests that accounting education should move beyond formal participation and technical knowledge toward authentic, technology-enabled activities with measurable learning outcomes. This supports the argument that CPD programmes should integrate digital, ethical, and professional competencies rather than focus solely on mandatory training hours (Viviers et al., 2026).

Arise and Moloi (2025) examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping the competencies required in the accounting profession and argue that accounting education must extend beyond traditional technical knowledge. Their AI Competency Adaptation Framework emphasizes digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, ethical awareness, and responsible decision-making. Although the study is based on a literature review rather than empirical testing of the proposed framework, it provides a useful foundation for redesigning accounting education. Its findings are also relevant to CPD systems, which should incorporate AI-related competencies, faculty and trainer development, and ethical issues such as algorithmic bias and potential job displacement. Consequently, future-oriented CPD should support accountants in adapting to technological change rather than focusing solely on formal compliance requirements (Arise & Moloi, 2025).

Evidence from North Macedonia and Serbia indicates that awareness of artificial intelligence does not automatically translate into implementation readiness, as organizations continue to face shortages of professional expertise, institutional support, and clearly developed adoption strategies (Stojanovska-Stefanova et al., 2025).

In today's environment of rapid economic and technological change, the accounting profession is confronted with continuous challenges arising from globalization, digitalization, and increasing demands for transparency and accuracy in financial reporting. These developments necessitate the continuous updating of accountants' knowledge and competencies to enable them to respond effectively to evolving regulatory requirements and professional standards.

The implementation of information and communication technologies in the educational process, aimed at improving its quality and effectiveness, is not a new concept. As early as the late 1990s, it was recognized as one of the priorities in the education of accounting professionals (Todorović, 2022, p. 23).

Continuing Professional Development constitutes a fundamental element in maintaining and enhancing the competencies of accountants and certified accountants. As a profession, accounting must increasingly emphasize the continuous education of its practitioners, enabling them to advance their professional expertise, develop relevant knowledge and competencies, and represent the profession appropriately (Jeremić & Jakovljević, 2023, p. 4).

Within this context, the establishment of effective policies and practices for Continuing Professional Development represents a key prerequisite for the development of a high-quality and responsible accounting profession. Of particular importance is the role of the institutions responsible for regulating and supervising the professional development process, as well as the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the knowledge and competencies acquired. Continuing Professional Development encompasses the undertaking of appropriate activities that contribute to the continuous enhancement of professional competence and result in the expected development of professional knowledge, skills, values, ethics, and attitudes of accountants and/or certified accountants, as well as activities relevant to their current and future professional responsibilities (Annual Continuing Professional Development Programme, 2026).

Through the concept of Continuing Professional Development, accountants and certified accountants not only enhance their theoretical and practical knowledge but also fulfill the statutory requirements relating to the minimum standards for mandatory professional development. This contributes to maintaining their professional competence and credibility in the performance of their professional duties.

According to the American Accounting Association, accounting is defined as the process of identifying, measuring, and communicating economic information to facilitate informed decision-making by users of such information (American Accounting Association, 1966). In accordance with the applicable legal framework, accountants and certified accountants are required to participate regularly in Continuing Professional Development training programmes.

Regional research provides additional evidence that digital transformation depends on more than the availability of technology. In North Macedonia, a considerable gap has been identified between organizations' interest in digitalization and their actual use of advanced digital solutions, with institutional support, financial capacity, and skilled human resources emerging as important constraints (Magdincheva-Shopova et al., 2025). A comparative study of SMEs in North Macedonia and Serbia similarly found that AI implementation readiness was influenced by access to expertise, organizational planning, perceived risks, and public institutional support (Stojanovska-Stefanova et al., 2025). Although these studies did not focus specifically on accounting CPD, their findings provide relevant contextual evidence that professional digital transformation requires coordinated investment in technology, institutional capacity, and human competencies. Although numerous studies analyse CPD from the perspective of accounting education and professional competence, very few compare CPD governance systems across neighbouring transition economies. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no comparative study has examined the institutional organisation, legal framework, digitalisation and monitoring mechanisms of CPD in North Macedonia and Serbia.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, these training programmes are organized and delivered by the Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants, in cooperation with authorized legal entities licensed to provide education in the fields of accounting, finance, and taxation, as well as qualified individuals who are recognized experts in the relevant professional areas.

Unlike North Macedonia, where the Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants performs the central coordinating role, in the Republic of Serbia Continuing Professional Development programmes are organized and implemented by relevant professional organizations and institutions, such as the Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia

and the Chamber of Certified Auditors, in cooperation with accredited educational centres and other authorized legal entities. These organizations play a central role in designing and delivering educational programmes covering accounting, auditing, finance, and taxation.
In addition, Continuing Professional Development programmes may also be delivered by qualified individuals possessing appropriate professional expertise and competencies. In accordance with national legislation and international standards, CPD programmes are developed while ensuring continuous monitoring and proper record-keeping of accountants' participation in such educational activities.
Continuing Professional Development training is mandatory in both countries, although certain differences exist regarding its implementation. In order to maintain and enhance their professional knowledge in the field of accounting, accountants are required to complete a minimum of 90 hours of Continuing Professional Development over a three-year period, including at least 24 hours during each calendar year. The initial three-year cycle begins in the year following the year in which the accountant is entered into the Register of Accountants (Law on Performing Accounting Activities, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia," No. 173/2022).
This system of mandatory Continuing Professional Development constitutes a fundamental mechanism for ensuring continuous professional growth, improving the quality of accounting services, and strengthening public confidence in the accounting profession.
The subject of this paper is the analysis of the Continuing Professional Development systems in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia, with the aim of examining their characteristics, similarities, and differences. Through a comparative approach, the study seeks to identify best practices and highlight opportunities for improving the existing systems, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of the accounting profession.
The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the methodology. Section 3 discusses the comparative findings. Section 4 interprets the results and discusses policy implications, while the final section concludes the paper.

Materials and methods

Depending on the established research objectives and the need to analyze the policies and practices of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for accountants and certified accountants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia, this study employs qualitative and comparative research methods.
In preparing this paper, the research was primarily based on relevant laws and secondary legislation governing all aspects of the accounting profession and the obligations relating to Continuing Professional Development, as well as reports issued by the competent institutions and relevant professional and academic literature in the fields of accounting and professional education. In addition, official information concerning CPD training programmes, their methods of delivery, and the criteria for recording and monitoring CPD activities was examined.
The content analysis method was applied to examine and systematize the practices implemented in both countries, while the comparative method was used to identify the similarities and differences between their Continuing Professional Development systems, with particular emphasis on the legal framework, institutional arrangements, types of training programmes, and the mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring compliance with CPD requirements. Furthermore, the descriptive method was employed to explain the characteristics of the Continuing Professional Development programmes and to formulate appropriate recommendations.
The documentary corpus for North Macedonia included the Law on Performing Accounting

Activities ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia," No. 173/2022), the Rulebook on Continuing Professional Development (2024), the Annual Continuing Professional Development Programme (2026), and official information published by the Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants. For Serbia, the analysis included the applicable Law on Accounting, the National Accounting Educational Standard ROS 31 – Professional Education and Development of Accountants, the Rulebook on Continuing Education and Professional Development of Accountants, the Association's Decision for 2026, and official information published by the Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia and the Institute of Accounting and Auditing. The documents were examined in relation to their regulatory scope, competent institutions, annual CPD requirements, recognized training formats, programme content, record-keeping procedures, monitoring mechanisms, consequences of non-compliance, and availability of digitally delivered training. The same analytical criteria were applied to both countries to ensure consistency, transparency, and comparability of the findings presented in Table 1.

To ensure a systematic and objective comparison of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) systems in North Macedonia and Serbia, the analysis was conducted according to seven predefined analytical dimensions derived from the research objectives, the relevant legal framework, and the International Education Standards (IES) issued by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC).

The selected comparison criteria were as follows:

- **Legal framework** – to examine the extent to which CPD is regulated by national legislation and professional regulations, including mandatory requirements for accountants and certified accountants.
- **Institutional arrangements** – to identify the competent professional bodies responsible for organizing, implementing, supervising, and coordinating CPD activities.
- **CPD obligations** – to compare the prescribed requirements regarding the number of mandatory training hours, reporting obligations, and compliance with continuing professional education requirements.
- **Delivery models** – to analyse the forms through which CPD programmes are delivered, including traditional classroom training, seminars, conferences, webinars, and online learning.
- **Digitalisation** – to assess the integration of digital technologies into the organisation, delivery, registration, and management of CPD programmes, including online platforms and digital learning opportunities.
- **Monitoring mechanisms** – to compare the procedures used for recording participation, verifying compliance, and maintaining professional development records.
- **Sanctions and enforcement** – to examine the legal and institutional consequences of non-compliance with mandatory CPD obligations and the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms.

These analytical dimensions were selected because they represent the key institutional and regulatory components that determine the effectiveness of CPD systems. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating similarities and differences between the two countries and for identifying best practices that may contribute to improving professional education, strengthening institutional capacity, and supporting the continuous development of the accounting profession in the context of digital transformation.

The comparison criteria were established before conducting the analysis in order to ensure methodological consistency and to reduce subjective interpretation. The same analytical framework was applied to both countries, allowing a transparent and comparable assessment of their respective CPD systems.

This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing systems and establishes a reliable basis for the comparative analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of Continuing Professional Development systems in the two countries.

The research corpus consisted of national accounting legislation, secondary legislation governing continuing professional development, annual CPD programmes, regulations and reports issued by the competent professional bodies, and relevant IFAC International Education Standards. Documents were included when they directly regulated or described CPD obligations, delivery formats, monitoring procedures, digital learning opportunities, or sanctions applicable to accountants and certified accountants. General promotional materials and documents without a clearly identifiable institutional source were excluded from the analysis.

For North Macedonia, the corpus included the Law on Performing Accounting Activities, the Rulebook on Continuing Professional Development, the Annual Continuing Professional Development Programme, and official information published by the Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants. For Serbia, the corpus included [insert the exact title and year of the applicable accounting legislation], the regulations of the relevant professional accounting bodies, CPD programmes, and official information concerning seminars, webinars, professional licensing, monitoring, and compliance.

The study is limited by the exclusive use of documentary analysis and does not include interviews or survey data.

Results

The results of the conducted analysis indicate that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) represents a key mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the professional competencies of accountants and certified accountants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia. Continuing Professional Development contributes significantly to the professional growth and competence of accountants and certified accountants (Rulebook on Continuing Professional Development, 2024).

The comparative analysis demonstrates that both countries have established mandatory Continuing Professional Development systems, with clearly defined obligations regarding annual participation in training activities, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and recording completed CPD activities. This reflects a high level of institutional commitment to the professional development of the accounting profession.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the organization and coordination of all Continuing Professional Development activities are entrusted to the Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants, in cooperation with authorized legal entities and qualified professionals. In contrast, in the Republic of Serbia, a larger number of professional associations and accredited institutions participate in the implementation of professional development programmes.

The Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia (SRRS) is a non-governmental, non-profit professional association of accountants in the Republic of Serbia, established in 1955. Its principal activities are focused on the development of the accounting profession, the education of its members, and the harmonization of national professional regulations with international standards and best practices. A significant part of the Association's activities is devoted to the continuous education and professional development of accountants, as well as to the continuous alignment of national educational programmes with internationally recognized educational standards, with the objective of improving financial reporting in accordance with international professional regulations (www.srrs.rs). The Institute of Accounting and Auditing was established in 1999 by the Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia.

The Institute of Accounting and Auditing is organized in such a way that, by drawing upon its extensive professional experience, it provides year-round support to its clients regarding the interpretation of legislation, the organization of business operations, and other issues related to their business activities. The Institute continuously organizes thematic seminars and webinars on current professional topics, provides direct consulting services, and publishes periodical publications as well as specialized professional editions (https://www.irr.rs/main/home).

Through the continuous education and professional development of its members, the Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia strives to accelerate the development and harmonization of the accounting profession while promoting the globalization of professional knowledge among accountants. The findings further indicate that Serbia has developed more advanced practices with respect to digitalization and the diversity of Continuing Professional Development programmes, providing greater accessibility and flexibility for participants. By comparison, the system in the Republic of North Macedonia remains more focused on fulfilling formal statutory requirements, with less emphasis placed on digital forms of professional education.

In both the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia, participation in Continuing Professional Development is mandatory. Consequently, any failure to comply with the prescribed legal obligations may result in the imposition of appropriate sanctions.

The similarities and differences between the Continuing Professional Development programmes in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Similarities and Differences between the Continuing Professional Development Programmes in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia

Criterion	Republic of North Macedonia	Republic of Serbia
Legal framework	CPD is legally mandatory for accountants and certified accountants	CPD is mandatory, regulated through professional bodies and legislation
Competent institutions	Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants	Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia; Institute for Accounting and Auditing
Annual obligations (hours/credits)	Prescribed minimum annual hours of continuous education	Prescribed minimum number of hours (continuous education requirements)
Types of training	Lectures, trainings, online training sessions	Seminars, conferences, training sessions, online programmes
Monitoring system	Record-keeping through the institution (attendance and certificates)	Formal system for registration and reporting of activities
Control mechanisms	Institutional checks and verification procedures	More stringent control through professional bodies
Digitalization	Partially developed	More developed online learning systems

Source: Authors' own research

Note. The comparison is based on the legislation, professional standards, institutional regulations and official CPD information identified in the Materials and Methods section.

The comparative analysis of the implementation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for accountants and certified accountants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia indicates that both countries have established mandatory CPD systems.

The reviewed institutional materials suggest that Serbian professional bodies offer a broader

range of online and hybrid CPD formats. However, the available documentary evidence does not permit a definitive assessment of the overall effectiveness or quality of digitalized CPD provision in either country.
In the Republic of North Macedonia, the training activities are primarily focused on fulfilling formal legal requirements. The findings obtained from this analysis provide a basis for further improvement of CPD programmes through the adoption and implementation of best practices. This finding suggests that Serbian CPD has shifted from compliance-oriented education toward competence-based lifelong learning.

Discussion

The comparison showed that the existence of mandatory CPD requirements did not necessarily guarantee a competence-oriented professional development system. A predominantly compliance-based approach may ensure formal participation without demonstrating whether accountants have developed the digital, analytical and AI-related competencies increasingly required by contemporary practice. Therefore, the effectiveness of CPD should be assessed not only through completed training hours, but also through learning outcomes, practical application, and the capacity of professionals to respond to technological and regulatory change.
In the context of accelerated economic and digital changes in the business environment, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes represent a fundamental element for ensuring quality and professional competencies within the accounting profession.
CPD training and the continuous enhancement of the knowledge and skills of accountants and certified accountants is not merely a legal obligation, but also a practical necessity arising from increasing demands for transparency, accuracy, and compliance with international standards, namely the International Education Standards (IES 1–8).
The comparative analysis between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia indicates that both countries have established mandatory CPD systems, which reflects an adequate level of institutional regulation in this field. However, differences exist in terms of institutional structure, organization, and implementation methods.
The differences identified between the two countries may also reflect broader contextual factors, including institutional capacity, available financial resources, the supply of qualified trainers, the digital maturity of professional bodies, and regulatory inertia. Consequently, the apparently broader digital offer in Serbia should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of superior learning quality. Future evaluations should examine participation rates, completion data, learning outcomes, user satisfaction, and the practical application of acquired competencies.
A key role in improving CPD systems is played by digitalization processes.
However, digitalization should not be limited to the online delivery of conventional training. In line with Arise and Moloi (2025), CPD programmes should also integrate AI literacy, critical thinking, ethical awareness, and problem-solving competencies required by the changing accounting profession.
In this regard, the Republic of Serbia demonstrates a more widespread use of online training and flexible learning models, which provide greater accessibility and adaptability for accountants and certified accountants, compared to the Republic of North Macedonia, where CPD programmes are primarily oriented towards the fulfilment of legal obligations.
Previous research in North Macedonia identified a substantial gap between interest in digital transformation and the actual adoption of advanced technologies. Organizations mainly relied on basic digital tools, while limited financial resources, shortages of skilled personnel, and insufficient institutional support constrained more advanced transformation (Magdincheva-Shopova et al., 2025).

Based on the findings obtained, it can be concluded that there is a clear need for further improvement of the Continuing Professional Development process, particularly in the direction of digitalization and shifting the focus of training from mere compliance with obligations towards the enhancement of professional competencies. The effectiveness of CPD systems can be further improved through the introduction of more flexible and innovative learning models. The originality of this study lies in providing the first comparative analysis of CPD governance systems in North Macedonia and Serbia, integrating legal, institutional and digital dimensions while identifying policy recommendations for strengthening professional accounting education in the context of digital transformation.

Conclusions

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) represents a key and mandatory element for maintaining and enhancing the competencies of accountants and certified accountants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia. It ensures compliance with contemporary legal regulations, international standards, and dynamic changes in the economic and technological environment, thereby directly contributing to the high-quality and professional execution of accounting activities.

Professional sustainability increasingly depends on employees' capacity to acquire new competencies in response to technological, economic, and organizational change. This reinforces the need for CPD policies that move beyond formal compliance and support the continuous development of relevant professional skills (Magdinceva Sopova & Stojanovska-Stefanova, 2024).

The comparative analysis of the implementation of Continuing Professional Development programmes for accountants and certified accountants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia shows that both countries have established mandatory systems of continuous education. In the Republic of Serbia, a higher level of institutional development is observed, particularly in terms of digitalization and the diversity of training programmes, whereas in the Republic of North Macedonia training activities are predominantly focused on the fulfilment of legally prescribed obligations. The findings obtained provide a basis for further improvement of CPD systems through the application of positive experiences and best practices.

The study was limited to documentary analysis and did not assess accountants' experiences, satisfaction, learning outcomes, or the practical application of competencies acquired through CPD. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as a comparison of formal regulatory and institutional arrangements rather than a definitive evaluation of CPD effectiveness. Future research should combine document analysis with surveys or interviews involving accountants, certified accountants, regulators, professional bodies, and training providers in both countries.

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that Continuing Professional Development represents a fundamental prerequisite for the development of a high-quality, responsible, and trustworthy accounting profession. In the future, it is particularly important to further enhance these systems by increasing digitalization, expanding the range of training programmes, and placing greater emphasis on the practical application of acquired knowledge, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of professional development.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

American Accounting Association. (1966). *A statement of basic accounting theory*.

Arise, O. A., & Moloi, T. (2025). Towards a future-ready accounting education: Opportunities and challenges of integrating artificial intelligence into contemporary accounting curricula. In T. Moloi (Ed.), *Impacting society positively through technology in accounting and business processes: Proceedings of the 5th International Conference of Accounting and Business, iCAB 2024* (pp. 993–1015). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84885-8_54

Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2022). *Law on performing accounting activities* [Закон за вршење сметководствени работи]. *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 173/2022*. https://slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/79f5e9200a4a44d6bef83f51fb60ad18.pdf

Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2025). *Law amending the Law on Performing Accounting Activities* [Закон за изменување и дополнување на Законот за вршење сметководствени работи]. *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 47/2025*. https://slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/a41320cb7cda466a963a8c78d18c91fa.pdf

Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia. (2022a). *National accounting education standard ROS 31: Professional education and development of accountants* [Национални рачуноводствено-образовни стандард РОС 31: Професионално образовање и усавршавање рачуновођа]. https://www.srrs.rs/savez/ros31_srpski.pdf

Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia. (2022b). Rulebook on continuing education and professional development of professional accountants [Правилник о континуираној едукацији и усавршавању професионалних рачуновођа]. In *National accounting education standard ROS 31: Professional education and development of accountants* (pp. 106–108). https://www.srrs.rs/savez/ros31_srpski.pdf

Association of Accountants and Auditors of Serbia. (2025). *Decision on membership fees and professional obligations for 2026* [Одлука о чланарини и професионалним обавезама за 2026. годину]. https://www.srrs.rs/savez/odluka2026.pdf

Coşkun, S., Coşkun, S., & Yavuz, İ. (2026). Fifty years of accounting education research: Global trends and insights from bibliometric and thematic analysis. *SAGE Open, 16*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251415066

Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2024a). *Annual programme for continuing professional development for 2025* [Годишна програма за континуирано професионално усовршување за 2025 година]. https://www.isos.mk/download/godishna-programa-za-kontinuirano-profesionalno-usovrshuva%D1%9Ae-za-2025-godina/

Institute of Accountants and Certified Accountants of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2024b). *Rulebook on continuing professional development* [Правилник за континуирано професионално усовршување] (Management Board Decision No. 0204-061). https://www.isos.mk/wp-content/uploads/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%83%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%80%D1%88%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5-compressed.pdf

International Federation of Accountants. (2025). *International Education Standard 6: Initial professional development—Formal assessment of professional competence*. https://education.ifac.org/part/ies-6

International Federation of Accountants. (2026). *International Education Standard 3: Initial professional development—Professional skills*. https://education.ifac.org/part/ies-3

Jeremić, N., & Jakovljević, N. (2023). Accounting in the age of ChatGPT [Рачуноводство у времену ChatGPT-a]. *Računovodstvo, 67*(1–2)

Jingbo, Z., & Zaini, M. H. B. (2026). Perceptions of artificial intelligence in accounting education in higher education: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 10*(3), 3184–3198. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100300236

Magdincheva-Shopova, M., & Stojanovska-Stefanova, A. (2024). Green skills of human resources in small and medium enterprises. *Knowledge – International Journal, 67*(6), 921–926. https://ojs.ikm.mk/index.php/kij/article/view/7481

Magdincheva-Shopova, M., Stojanovska-Stefanova, A., Petroska-Angelovska, N., & Boshkoska Klisaroski, M. (2025). Digital transformation in small and medium-sized enterprises: The case of North Macedonia. *Academos Journal, 1*(1), 31–39. https://doi.org/10.65921/dj22tr75

National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. (2019). *Law on accounting* [Закон о рачуноводству]. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 73/2019 and 44/2021*. https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2019/73/2

Stojanovska-Stefanova, A., Mitrović, A., & Magdincheva Shopova, M. (2025). From awareness to action:

Preparedness of SMEs for artificial intelligence implementation in North Macedonia and Serbia. *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education, 13*(3), 637–648. https://doi.org/10.23947/2334-8496-2025-13-3-637-648

The International Education Standards emphasize the development and formal assessment of professional skills and competencies (International Federation of Accountants [IFAC], 2025, 2026)

Todorović, M. (2022). ICT knowledge and the effectiveness of online teaching [Познавање ICT и ефективност онлине наставе]. *Računovodstvo, 66*(1–2)

Viviers, H. A., Saunders, W., Girdley, R., & Pullen, E. (2026). Developing digital acumen, ethical awareness and professional competencies through a tax simulation project: Perceptions of postgraduate accounting students. *The International Journal of Management Education, 24*(2), Article 101378. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2026.101378

Wu, E., Jalaludin, D., & Azhar, Z. (2026). Accounting graduates' work readiness in the digital era: A dual-perspective analysis of technical, information technology, and soft skill competencies. *The International Journal of Management Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2026.101487