



The current status of accounting apparatuses organization in small and medium-sized enterprises in Tuyen Quang Province

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Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are always regarded as a crucial component of the national economy. SMEs play a significant role in the socio-economic development of the country. In Vietnam as a whole, and specifically in Tuyen Quang province, the development of SMEs is a prerequisite for effectively harnessing the potential and strengths of the economy, promoting economic growth, and facilitating a modern economic restructuring. Despite the maintenance and development of SMEs in the province, there has been an increase in terms of quantity, but the average growth rate remains low. Moreover, according to statistics from the Department of Finance, the profit results of SMEs in the region remain low. To ensure sustainable survival and growth, SMEs must organize and operate their activities efficiently and effectively. To ensure sustainable existence and development, SMEs must organize and manage their operations efficiently and effectively. In this regard, improving the organization of the accounting apparatus will contribute to providing valuable information for managers in making decisions. However, due to their scale, SMEs have not placed significant emphasis on the organization of their accounting apparatus. Additionally, the legal framework governing financial and accounting matters for SMEs presents certain advantages and challenges. The research employs both qualitative and descriptive statistical methods with the aim of evaluating the current status of the accounting apparatus organization within SMEs in Tuyen Quang province. The research findings reveal that SMEs maintain a simplified and lightweight accounting structure. However, in SMEs, the accounting apparatus has not fully met the requirements for providing management accounting information for corporate governance (enterprises); the determination of the number of accountants for each position in the accounting apparatus is unreasonable; and analysis of accounting work has not yet been organized... etc. The research results contribute to systematizing legal documents related to the organization of the accounting apparatus and accounting personnel. Additionally, the research proposes policy implications and managerial recommendations to help SMEs enhance the organization of their accounting apparatuses.

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1. Introduction

The market economy in our country is increasingly developing, the scale of operations of various units is growing, economic relationships are expanding, the nature of activities is becoming more complex, and the demands for information for management are becoming more numerous and must be practical, honest, swift, and timely as international integration and cooperation demands are rising. As a result, the need for information for management is greater and must be practical, honest, prompt, and timely. Accounting is one of the crucial economic management tools for units, primarily serving the purpose of providing economic and financial information for economic management and decision-making by information users. According to Zimmerman (2015)^[14], accounting information is not only important for managers but also assists investors in making accurate decisions. To achieve this, every enterprise needs to establish an accounting apparatus that is in line with its practical conditions.

Organizing an accounting apparatus not only enhances the labor productivity of accountants but also meets the information needs of stakeholders (Nguyen Van Phong *et al.*, 2020) ^[16]. However, the diversity within the business environment and the small-scale operations pose challenges in organizing accounting activities at these units (Ciuhureanu, 2018). According to Nguyen Thi Kim Cuc and colleagues (2019) ^[15], the organization of accounting activities is greatly influenced by the expertise and professionalism of the head of the accounting department. Nguyen Van Phong and colleagues (2020) ^[16] affirm that accounting holds a crucial position within enterprises, but its role is fully realized when the accounting apparatus is well-structured. In Vietnam, the role of organizing the accounting apparatus is clearly defined in the Accounting Law (National Assembly, 2015) and Decree 174/2016/ND-CP guiding the Accounting Law (Government, 2016). Thus, the organization of the accounting apparatus is essential and mandatory for all enterprises, as specified in the current legal documents. In summary, the role of organizing the accounting apparatus in the effectiveness of business operations is undeniable, and this becomes even more crucial for SMEs. The research was conducted at SMEs within Tuyen Quang province to analyze the current status of accounting apparatus organization. Practically, it provides relevant solutions for SMEs within Tuyen Quang province in the establishment and organization of the accounting apparatus.

2. Overview of domestic and international research as the basis for research design

2.1. International research overview

There are also quite a few researches around the world focusing on the organization of accounting apparatuses. For instance:

Colpan A.M. and Hikino T. (2010) conducted research on the establishment of economic conglomerates and proposed recommendations to enhance management practices within these conglomerates. Among these recommendations were suggestions for improving the organization of accounting apparatuses and accounting regulations.

Research by Zotovie (2017) ^[3] identified that a majority of SMEs struggle with accurate accounting record-keeping, making it challenging for managers to assess the current financial status of the enterprises. The primary cause of this issue was attributed to SMEs lacking the necessary conditions to organize an accounting apparatus and train accounting personnel with adequate professional expertise.

Zhou's study (2010) ^[4] revealed that many SME managers tend to underestimate and neglect the importance of organizing accounting apparatuses.

Chhabra and Pattanayak's research (2014) ^[5] indicated that most SMEs do not fully adhere to current accounting regulations.

Husin & Ibrahim's study (2014) ^[6] affirmed that the majority of SMEs tend to opt for accounting service providers instead of hiring in-house accountants. This trend leads to a lack of coordination and delays in the information provision process. These international research findings provide essential insights into the challenges and trends related to accounting apparatus organization, contributing to the groundwork for the current research design.

2.2. Domestic research overview

Research conducted by Nguyen Thi Huyen Tram (2007) ^[7]

suggests that the organization of an accounting apparatus has a direct impact on the quality of information provided by enterprises. In particular, the key factor to perfect the organization of accounting work at enterprises is the need to build a team of capable staff to meet the requirements of the job.

The research by Vo Van Nhi and Nguyen Ngoc Dung (2011) asserts that the accounting work at SMEs is still very weak, and the information provided by the accounting is lacking and limited in many aspects, thus not yet meeting the requirements of management and operation.

Research by Ly Thi Thu Hien and colleagues (2021) ^[9] indicated that the majority of SMEs organize their accounting apparatuses in a centralized manner, and while the quality of accounting personnel is gradually improving, some SMEs still operate under a family management model. As a result, the organization of accounting work in these cases is reactive and less effective.

In summary, prior researches have emphasized the importance of organizing accounting apparatuses and highlighted existing limitations within these systems at SMEs. These limitations revolve around three main areas: (1) The model of organizing accounting apparatuses, (2) The professional competence of accountants, and (3) The delegation and assignment mechanisms within accounting work.

3. Organizational content of the accounting apparatus

3.1. Foundations of accounting apparatus organization

The accounting apparatus in an accounting unit is an assembly of accounting personnel, designed to ensure independence in performing specific accounting tasks, while also maintaining a supportive and cooperative relationship to ensure the completion of the entire volume of accounting work within the unit. In essence, organizing the accounting apparatus within an accounting unit involves the assignment of tasks among the accounting practices within the accounting department down to each accountant. To execute this, it is first necessary to establish a suitable model for organizing the accounting apparatus based on the unit's characteristics. Subsequently, specific tasks are assigned to each division, accounting practice, and accountants, ensuring optimal coordination between divisions and accountants during their task execution.

To establish a scientifically and logically organized accounting apparatus, the accounting unit should rely on several key principles as follows:

Firstly, the characteristics of the organization's activities of the unit.

Secondly, the scale and geographical scope of the accounting unit's operations serve as the basis for gauging the concentration or dispersion of accounting information. For large-scale accounting units with numerous subsidiary units operating as legal entities, a suitable accounting structure must be established to meet the processing and information provision requirements both internally and externally. In contrast, smaller accounting units, whether with or without subsidiary units and legal entities, may have a simpler accounting structure. Therefore, when organizing the accounting apparatus, a thorough analysis of the unit's scale and its subordinate units is necessary. Alongside the management structure of the accounting unit, the method of differentiating responsibilities among divisions, sections within the unit, and internal relationships also impacts the

division of accounting tasks and assignment of work to accountants.

Thirdly, the degree of economic and financial management decentralization within the accounting unit's internal operations. The higher the level of decentralization, the greater the corresponding need for suitable accounting decentralization. Typically, the extent of economic and financial management decentralization is contingent upon the unit's scale. Based on the level of decentralization and delegation between the main unit and its subordinate units, or between upper and lower levels within the unit, three levels of management decentralization can be distinguished: centralized management, decentralized management, and a combination of both.

Fourthly, the volume of accounting work, manpower allocation of the accounting structure, and the capabilities and expertise of accounting staff. The volume of work within the accounting structure is estimated based on the unit's operational characteristics and assessed for complexity relative to the intricacy of activities, information requirements, and management needs within the unit. When organizing the accounting apparatus, it is necessary to base the plan for recruiting employees and arranging personnel on the workload and complexity of the tasks. After analyzing the workload based on the established accounting policies, the necessary reports need to be prepared. The person responsible for organizing the accounting apparatus will identify all the required accounting functions in order to guide the construction of the accounting department.

Fifthly, financial capabilities, the degree of technological tool utilization for accounting tasks, particularly the application of information technology in general management and accounting in particular, are key considerations.

3.2. Models of accounting apparatus organization

3.2.1. Financial accounting apparatus organization model

According to Doan Van Anh and Pham Duc Hieu (2021)^[10], there are several current models for organizing the accounting apparatus, including the centralized model, the decentralized model, and the hybrid model that combines both centralized and decentralized elements. The choice of which model to adopt is determined by the head of the accounting apparatus.

The centralized accounting apparatus model is commonly applied in small and medium-sized enterprises (Ly Thi Thu Hien *et al.*, 2021)^[9]. As stated by Doan Van Anh and Pham Duc Hieu (2021)^[10], the centralized accounting model is employed by units and organizations with a concentrated operational scope. This model, also referred to as the single-level accounting organization model, centralizes the accounting function within a single central accounting department (at the main unit), while subordinate units do not have separate accounting departments. The central accounting department is responsible for the entire accounting process, from data collection, recording, processing, and accounting reporting to management reporting. This model offers the advantage of a streamlined and efficient accounting apparatus, allowing for quick information processing and centralized, unified guidance. It also facilitates auditing, monitoring, and accounting reporting and is convenient for computerization due to all accounting tasks being concentrated at a single address. However, if the operational scope is decentralized and the volume of accounting work increases, delays may occur in

information processing, and supervision at subordinate units without dedicated accounting departments may lead to limitations in adhering to initial accounting regulations. The centralized accounting organization model is generally suitable for medium and small-scale accounting units with concentrated operational scopes. This model is less suitable for large-scale units with decentralized operations across multiple locations.

The decentralized accounting apparatus organization model, according to Doan Van Anh and Pham Duc Hieu (2021)^[10], represents a hierarchical management structure where accounting tasks are carried out not only at the higher-level unit but also at subordinate units. The accounting apparatus is divided into a central accounting department and subordinate accounting departments. Both central and subordinate accounting departments have their own systems to fulfill their respective functions and duties. This model offers the advantage of conducting accounting tasks directly at subordinate units, enabling timely supervision, management, and monitoring of their activities. However, if the accounting apparatus organization is not well-structured, it may result in redundant accountants and overlap in specialized tasks. The decentralized accounting apparatus organization model is typically suitable for large-scale units with broad operational scopes in various locations. It is compatible with a hierarchical management structure where subordinate units have a relatively high level of independence.

The hybrid model of organizing the accounting apparatus, as described by Doan Van Anh and Pham Duc Hieu (2021)^[10], involves the superior unit establishing a central accounting department to handle accounting tasks for the higher-level unit, while the lower-level unit establishes multiple subordinate accounting departments. Subordinate units with decentralized financial and accounting management are assigned their own accounting departments, while those without such decentralization fall under the responsibility of the central accounting department. The advantage of this model lies in the rational assignment of accounting tasks, making it suitable for units with large operational scopes and substantial scale. However, the drawback is that this model can become complex and resource-intensive, primarily meeting the needs of large-scale units.

3.2.2. Management accounting apparatus organization model

The person who organizes the accounting apparatus needs to organize in the direction of combining financial accounting and management accounting work for accounting departments. According to Nguyen Hoang Dung and Tran Thi Luu Tam (2021)^[11], there are three organizational forms aimed at integrating financial and management accounting: the combined form, the separate form, and the mixed form. Nguyen Thanh Huyen (2021) highlights the advantages of this integration, which include simplicity, cost-effectiveness, and suitability for smaller-scale units. However, this model demands highly skilled accountants, and those responsible for task allocation must have a clear understanding of the roles of financial accounting and management accounting. Additionally, the management accounting apparatus can operate under a separate model where the positions of financial accounting and management accounting are distinct within the organization, or a mixed model where the two aforementioned forms are combined. However,

implementing the hybrid model requires significant operational expenses (Pham Hoai Nam, 2018; Nguyen Hoang Dung and Tran Thi Luu Tam, 2021) ^[11].

3.3. Human resources and accounting labor allocation

In conjunction with selecting the accounting apparatus organization model, the establishment of accounting departments, accounting practice, and the assignment of tasks to each accounting practice and accountants must be considered. To carry out this process scientifically and sensibly, it is essential to base it on the functions, duties, and nature of the unit's operations. Additionally, it should consider the characteristics of organizational activities, management structures, and the unit's management requirements.

4. Data collection method and research methodology

4.1. Data collection method

Building upon previous research findings and recognizing the existing limitations in the organization of accounting apparatuses within SMEs as mentioned above, this study conducted data collection at SMEs located in Tuyen Quang province to assess the current status of their accounting apparatus organization. The convenience sampling method was employed through surveys conducted with chief accountants and general accounts at a selection of SMEs. The total number of participating SMEs in the data collection process was 335. This sample size was calculated based on the total of 2061 active SMEs as of December 31, 2021 (Tuyen Quang Provincial Statistics Office, 2021). By combining descriptive statistical with qualitative analysis methods, this research systematically documented information about the current status of accounting apparatus organization and accountants in SMEs within Tuyen Quang province, serving as a foundation for subsequent studies.

4.2. Research methodology

Descriptive statistical method: To calculate, evaluate, and systematize primary and secondary data regarding the current status of accounting work organization in SMEs within Tuyen Quang province. Based on the collected data, the author conducted analysis and created analytical tables and charts.

Qualitative analysis method: This approach aimed to synthesize, classify, and evaluate positive and limiting aspects of the current status of accounting apparatus organization based on theoretical foundations and comparison with prevailing legal regulations. Consequently, the study evaluated the current state of accounting apparatus organization in SMEs within Tuyen Quang province,

identified limitations, and proposed solutions to contribute to the enhancement of accounting apparatus organization and accounting personnel.

5. Current status of organizational structure in smes within Tuyen Quang province

5.1. Current status of accounting apparatus organizational models

The majority of SMEs within Tuyen Quang province currently adopt a centralized accounting organizational model (out of the surveyed 335 companies, as many as 288 companies employ a centralized accounting organizational model, accounting for 85.97%). Enterprises that opt for a centralized accounting apparatus model often consist of those with fixed business locations or narrow business areas. There are 5 enterprises employing a decentralized accounting model, which includes construction and service trading enterprises with scattered business areas, organized in teams or branches. Additionally, 42 enterprises adopt a hybrid model, incorporating both centralized and decentralized approaches. These companies typically operate in fields such as construction and diverse trading sectors with multiple business locations. Overall, SMEs within Tuyen Quang province select their accounting organizational model based on the characteristics of their production and business operations.

Table 1: Applied accounting apparatus organizational models

How is the company's accounting apparatus organized?	Number of votes	Rate
Centralized model	288	85.97%
Decentralized model	5	1.49%
Hybrid model	42	12.54%
Total	335	100%

The survey shows that, in the accounting apparatus, the organization of financial accounting and management accounting is done in combination. Most of the SMEs in the province have not been focused on the organization of management accounting, even many enterprises have not organized the management accounting work, focusing on small-scale enterprises, simple production and business.

5.2. Accounting Personnel Organization

The survey results reveal that out of the surveyed SMEs, 128 have only one accountant, 147 have 2-3 accountants, 50 have 3-5 accountants, and the remaining 10 have more than 5 accountants.

Table 2: Accounting personnel organization in the surveyed enterprises

Contents	Number of votes	Rate (%)
Does the company have an organization to analyze accounting work?	335	100%
No	247	73.74
Only some parts of accounting practice	68	20.29
All accounting practice	20	5.97
Does the company issue "job descriptions" that specify the tasks and responsibilities for each position of the accountant?	335	100
Yes	238	71.04
No	97	28.96
Does the company establish standards for accounting personnel?	335	100
Yes	335	100
No	0	0

Does the company determine the staffing scale within the accounting department?	335	100
Yes	335	100
No	0	0
How are the tasks assigned to employees within the company's accounting department?	335	100
According to the accounting.	295	88.06
According to the accounting procedures.	40	11.94
Other	0	0
Does the company regularly provide training and development for the accounting staff?	335	100
Yes	312	93.13
No	23	6.87

The compilation of accounting personnel organization within SMEs in Tuyen Quang province, as presented in Table 2.6, demonstrates the following:

Firstly, organizing the analysis of accounting works within a enterprise.

74% of the surveyed opinions indicate the absence of organized accounting work analysis within the enterprises. Determination of the number of accounting staff, as well as the required level of professional expertise, relies on the experience of business owners and chief accountants.

Secondly, developing "Job Descriptions" that define the tasks and responsibilities for each position of accounting personnel.

Survey results reveal that 71% of the opinions suggest that enterprises do not formulate job descriptions for accounting positions within the businesses. Instead, these responsibilities are conveyed verbally by business owners or assigned by chief accountants to individual accountant, outlining the tasks that each accountant should undertake. Conversely, 29% of the opinions indicate that job descriptions are established for various accounting sections, such as general accounting, tax accounting, payment accounting, payroll accounting, and others.

Thirdly, establishing the standard for accounting personnel within the company.

The survey results indicate that 100% of the opinions signal the lack of established standards for executing accounting tasks within the enterprises. The standards applied by chief accountants and accountants are grounded in state regulations.

Fourthly, determining the staffing scale within the accounting department.

All surveyed opinions from the businesses underscore that the scale of personnel within the accounting apparatus is established. In cases where accounting work analysis is not conducted, the determination of personnel scale relies on the business owners' experience.

Fifthly, assigning accounting personnel.

Generally, employees within the accounting apparatus of the companies are assigned fairly specific tasks. Each staff member is responsible for distinct accounting sections, ensuring accurate procedures for data collection, processing, and provision of financial and economic information about the company's operations. Accounting personnel receive structured training within their field of expertise, with the chief accountants possessing extensive industry experience, organizational, and managerial skills. However, the accounting apparatus remains uneven in terms of quality and depth. Some staff members possess strong expertise but lack experience due to their relative youth and limited exposure in this field.

Sixthly, training and development of the accountants team:

The survey reveals that 93% of the enterprises place

significant emphasis on training and enhancing their accountants. Accountants frequently participate in training sessions to update their knowledge of accounting practices in response to changes in accounting regulations. These training sessions include short-term vocational courses and seminars organized by tax authorities to provide updates on tax policies. Additionally, some companies sponsor their staff members for advanced education, providing financial support during their learning journey.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

Through the process of analyzing the current state of accounting apparatus organization in comparison with existing legal documents, it is evident that SMEs generally maintain streamlined accounting apparatus that meet the demands of accounting tasks. The accountants are well-qualified, properly trained in their respective fields, and dedicated to their work. The parts of accounting practice are clearly assigned. However, within SMEs in Tuyen Quang province, both the organization of the accounting apparatus and the accounting personnel still exhibit significant notable shortcomings:

Firstly, while SMEs have established basic accounting apparatus, they primarily focus on functions related to financial accounting, such as data collection, processing, and providing financial information. However, they do not adequately meet the requirement of providing comprehensive management accounting information to support the operational management of the enterprise. Secondly, the determination of the number of accounting personnel for each position within the accounting apparatus lacks proper rationalization. Thirdly, the analysis of accounting tasks is either not organized or conducted in a non-systematic and scientific manner, resulting in a lack of practical foundation for determining an appropriate number of accounting staff. Fourthly, the majority of SMEs have not developed job descriptions for accounting positions. This critical foundation is necessary for appropriate personnel allocation, as well as for organizing inspections and monitoring compliance with accounting processes to ensure their scientific integrity.

In light of the aforementioned observations, it is clear that despite the accomplishments in establishing accounting apparatus and competent accounting personnel, there remain notable areas for improvement within the accounting organization and personnel management of SMEs in Tuyen Quang Province. These areas include enhancing the provision of managerial accounting information, rationalizing the staffing of accounting positions, improving the systematic analysis of accounting tasks, and emphasizing the development of comprehensive job descriptions. Addressing these shortcomings will not only improve personnel allocation but also contribute to a more effective oversight

and adherence to accounting procedures, ensuring their methodical application.

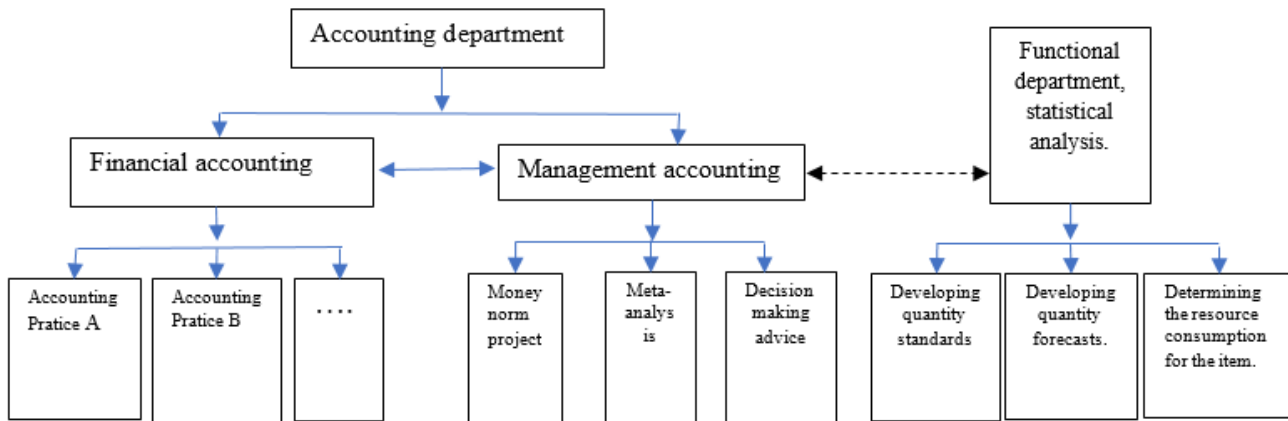


Fig 1

6.2. Recommendations

The reality demonstrates that accounting departments of medium-sized enterprises typically consist of 3-5 accountants, while small-scale enterprises usually have 1-3 accountants. Therefore, organizing management accounting in combination with financial accounting within each accounting practices of the enterprise's accounting apparatus is suitable. However, for financial accounting and management accounting to fully leverage their information provisioning capabilities, a scientific and well-structured approach is necessary. It should align with the specific characteristics, organizational structure, and management requirements of the enterprise. Close coordination between different accounting sections within the company is essential for effective collection and provision of both financial accounting and management accounting information.

Within the scope of research and practical aspects regarding the organization of accounting operations within SMEs in the province, to enhance the structure of the accounting apparatus in SMEs, the authors propose the following specific improvement directions:

Firstly, refining the organization of the accounting apparatus. To effectively utilize the capabilities of various departments within the enterprise, and to specialize tasks such as establishing standards and budgeting, while simultaneously establishing a management accounting information system that serves the decision-making process of management, the current approach of staffing for management accounting tasks is not appropriate. The author suggests adopting a mixed organizational model for the accounting apparatus. In this model, the financial accounting and management accounting departments are structured within the accounting section, similar to the combined model. However, the management department does not execute all its functions independently; rather, it collaborates with other departments within the enterprise to perform certain tasks, such as establishing standards and creating budgets. For example, the Technical Department determines the consumption standards for raw materials, labor, and construction machinery to create estimates for material quantities and equipment. Similarly, the Human Resources Department develops estimates for labor quantities. Based on these estimates and quantities, the management accounting department constructs the value estimates and carries out other management accounting

functions.

By implementing these recommendations, SMEs in Tuyen Quang Province can further enhance their accounting apparatus's efficiency, aligning with both financial and management accounting demands, and contributing to the overall effective management and operation of the enterprise.

6.3. Limitations of the research

The research only encompasses qualitative research methods, without quantifying the impact of organizing the accounting apparatus on the enterprise's performance outcomes. Subsequent studies could be conducted for each type of enterprise or specific sectors of operation to address these limitations.

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