

Cost Management Accounting at Universities Under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs



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ABSTRACT: University autonomy is an inevitable trend and an important condition to promote the development of the education system in general and higher education in particular today. Operating in this new environment, financially autonomous public universities have many opportunities to assert themselves but also face a lot of competitive pressure. This forces universities to strengthen management and control of all activities, especially finances. The article presents the current status of cost management accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, including 4 universities: the University of Labor and Social Affairs, Nam Dinh University of Technical Education, Vinh University of Technical Education, and Vinh Long University of Technical Education. Research using interview, survey, and comparative analysis methods. From there, it points out the limitations in implementing cost management accounting work at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs. At the same time, provide solutions to overcome those limitations.

KEYWORDS: cost management accounting, university, Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to help educational institutions improve the quality of training and good cost management, universities around the world consider cost management accounting as an effective management tool to improve the quality of teacher training. To be able to well organize the cost management accounting system in public universities and consider it a management tool to provide information for management to make correct and appropriate decisions. In accordance with each training activity in the university, universities need to apply the active role of cost management accounting in their management activities, especially in conditions of autonomy.

Le Quoc Diem (2020) researched management accounting at public universities implementing financial autonomy mechanisms in Vietnam through 23 public universities implementing autonomy mechanisms in Vietnam with a level of assurance of recurrent and investment expenditure. This study has shown that public universities classify costs according to regular costs and non-recurring costs. Most universities group direct costs according to each activity: training activities, scientific research activities, and service activities. Actual surveys show that universities determine costs by process and job. 100% of public universities with financial autonomy have established cost norms and specified them in internal spending regulations approved at the annual staff conference. The surveyed universities all prepare estimates using traditional methods. Accordingly, the indicators in the estimate table are established based on the actual operating results of the year in which the estimate is made and add a value reflecting the estimated increase or estimated inflation of the coming year. 100% of public universities with financial autonomy report the performance of their departments, including analysis of the difference between operating results and estimates, with special emphasis on analyzing cost fluctuations. 100% of public universities with financial autonomy do not determine the minimum number of students to ensure revenue is enough to cover expenses. 100% of public universities with financial autonomy do not use financial techniques to analyze information.

Nguyen To Tam (2022) researches management accounting and control systems in autonomous public universities. This article studies the management accounting and control system (MACS) in public universities operating under an autonomous mechanism in Vietnam. MACS focuses on components such as budget estimates, costing based on activity level, and performance assessment (through a balanced scorecard) to achieve the university's set goals and strategies. learn. The article uses an overview research method and a case study on the content of MACS implementation at Electricity University, which is one of the first universities to be piloted to operate under an autonomous mechanism. Research shows that the components of MACS need to

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be deployed synchronously in universities to achieve the set goals and move to ds long-term development. MACS tools such as budgeting, activity-based costing, and performance assessment using the balanced scorecard are assessed and applied appropriately.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1 Financial autonomy mechanisms in public universities

According to Clause 1, Article 3 of Decree 60/2021/ND-CP clearly states "The financial autonomy mechanism of public service units is the regulations on autonomy and self-responsibility in implementing regulations on public service units". Public service items, prices, fees, and pricing roadmap for public service services, classification of levels of financial autonomy, autonomy in using financial resources, autonomy in joint ventures, association and management activities, use of public assets, and other related regulations

For public universities, financial autonomy means that the universities have autonomy in professional activities (the right to decide to organize training and scientific research activities and build strategic development plans according to the law). modern direction, competitive ability to carry out the university's functions), autonomy in organizing the staffing apparatus (the right to autonomy in arranging the apparatus, recruiting, or firing the university's staff), Financial autonomy (right to decide on the university's financial activities) Financial autonomy refers to autonomy in managing revenue and expenditure activities, managing and distributing the results of financial activities, managing funds, managing assets, etc. Among them, revenue management and financial expenditure management are the most important.

Classified by level of financial autonomy: According to Decree No. 60/2021/ND-CP dated June 21, 2021, of the government regulating the autonomy mechanism of public universities, universities have been divided into Publicly divided into 4 groups:

Public universities cover their own recurrent and investment expenditures.

Public universities cover their own recurrent expenses.

Public universities self-guarantee part of their regular expenses.

Public universities have regular expenses covered by the state budget.

2.2 Content of cost management accounting at public universities under conditions of financial autonomy

Cost management accounting apparatus

Organizing the cost management accounting apparatus in a public university is the arrangement, assignment, and assignment of work to people doing management accounting work in the unit so that the management accounting apparatus The costs are appropriate to the scale of operations and management requirements of that unit. To suit each organizational model of the cost management accounting apparatus of public universities, based on the specific conditions of the number of personnel, standards, and personnel assignment within the university's apparatus to choose an organizational model, including: Management accounting organizational model combined with financial accounting, management accounting organizational model independent of financial accounting and financial accounting model. Organize a mixed financial accounting and management accounting apparatus.

Content of cost management accounting

- Cost classification

Identifying and classifying costs is the most important thing to be able to manage costs and thereby make the right decisions in the process of organizing and operating business activities for the administrator. There are many ways to classify costs, such as classifying costs according to operational functions, according to economic content, according to the relationship with the level of activity, according to the relationship with business results, and according to control and output purposes. decide... Each classification method will provide cost information from different angles to the unit's administrators.

- Organize the development of a system of norms and cost estimates.

Organizing and building cost norms is the process of calculating the costs of living labor and material labor related to the production and sale of a unit of product or service under certain conditions. Organizing to develop a cost estimate is an estimate of costs for the enterprise's production and business activities in the future, clearly indicating the work that needs to be done and taking into account the impact of subjective factors. and objective.

- Organize cost determination methods.

Cost determination methods can be identified and grouped into two groups of methods. Traditional cost determination includes the following methods: the order-based cost determination method and the product cost determination method. product

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according to the process. The group of modern cost determination methods includes the activity-based cost accounting method, the target costing method (TC), and the Kaizen costing method (KC).

- Organize cost information analysis for short-term decision-making.

Analyze cost fluctuations to control costs. Analyze the relationship between costs, output, and profit (CVP) to make appropriate decisions:

- Organize and analyze cost management accounting information to make long-term decisions.

Long-term decisions are often related to infrastructure investment capital and a long investment recovery period because the project has a long duration, so it is difficult to change and is influenced by business environment factors, political factors, and the international relations of the overall economy, in addition to the income of many business periods. Therefore, analysis and evaluation to provide information for managers of cost management accounting are very important.

- Organize the preparation of cost management accounting reports in the units:

Cost management accounting reports are detailed information collected according to criteria consistent with the information needs of administrators in the management process. Therefore, the content and structure of cost management accounting reports need to fully ensure the indicators required by administrators to analyze, evaluate, and monitor costs. However, the construction of cost management accounting reports also needs to be more scientific, reasonable, and cost-effective.

- Use cost management accounting information.

Measuring and evaluating the performance of cost centers is one of the basic functions of cost management accounting. In modern cost management accounting, measuring and evaluating performance not only uses financial measures but also non-financial measures.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Interview method: The author conducted discussions between the author group and those who directly perform accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs to learn about the issues related to cost management accounting.

Actual observation method: The authors implemented this method at the unit to survey, observe the working environment, and observe the solutions to problems related to cost management accounting at universities. Studying under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

Method of synthesizing and analyzing data: After collecting the data, the author group conducted research and analysis on the current status of cost management accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs. Next, use the method of comparison and contrast between theory and reality to discover the remaining aspects.

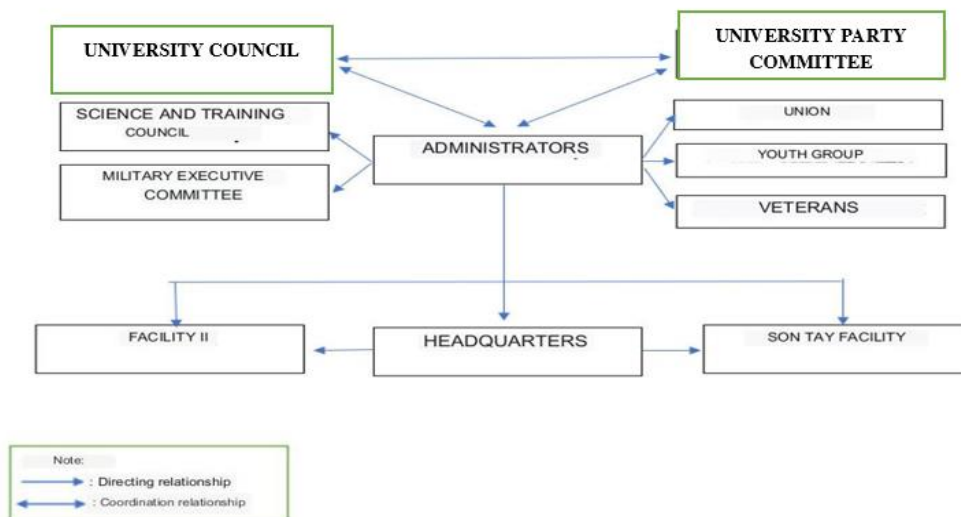
4. REALITY

4.1 Overview of Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

Currently, there are 4 universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, including the University of Labor and Social Affairs, Nam Dinh University of Technical Education, Vinh Long University of Technical Education, and Vinh University of Technical Education. Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs perform two main functions: training and scientific research. Through a field survey at four universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, the results show that the organizational structures of the universities all ensure the requirements for organizational structure in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of these university regulations and in accordance with the conditions and scale of training in each stage of the university's development.

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Chart 1. Organizational structure of the University of Labor and Social Affairs



Source: Compiled by the author

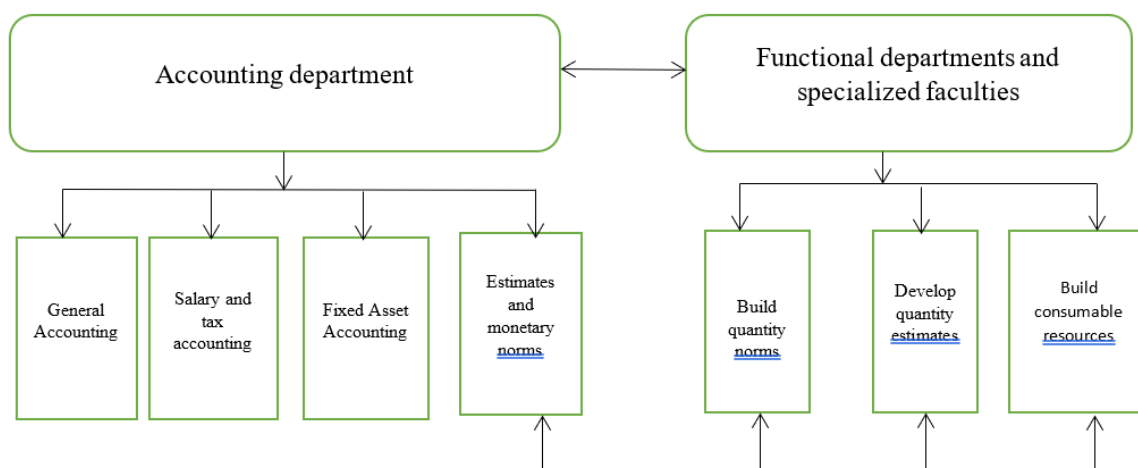
Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs operate on the principle of being funded by the State Budget and having partial financial autonomy, collecting all costs of the unit, and ensuring and developing financial resources. Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs implement a financial disclosure regime and are responsible for annual financial reporting to the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs. Subject to financial inspection and examination by financial agencies according to state regulations.

4.2 Current status of cost management accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

Current status of cost management accounting apparatus

Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs do not organize their own cost management accounting apparatus. The accounting apparatus of these universities performs both functions of financial accounting information and management accounting information.

Chart 2: Diagram of cost management accounting apparatus in universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs



(Source: Compiled by the authors)

Current status of cost management accounting content

- Current status of the cost identification organization

Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs mainly classify and account for costs to meet the requirements of the financial accounting regime. All universities identify costs based on the economic content of the costs.

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For training activities, costs include: direct costs: payment for lecture hours, graduation internship guidance, graduation thesis; training management costs; training service costs: electricity, water, halls, classrooms, etc. Costs for partners, Other costs...

For scientific and technological research activities, costs include: scientific labor costs; article writing costs; seminar and conference costs; expenses for purchasing raw materials, fuel, and materials; office supplies costs; purchasing tools and equipment; Travel expenses, per diem expenses, other expenses...

For service activities, costs include: salaries and wages; material costs: tools, instruments, equipment, etc.; service costs purchased from outside: electricity, water, etc.

In addition, to determine the price of training products, the surveyed universities identified costs according to cost objects:

(i), direct costs include: salaries of lecturers directly teaching; depreciation costs of lecture halls and teaching facilities; electricity, water, and other necessary items such as chalk and paper.

(ii), indirect costs include: costs for management of each faculty and subject, such as salaries, allowances for officers, management staff, service at departments, depreciation costs, and other expenses. Other administrative issues arising at the faculties include Management and service costs for the whole university: salaries, allowances for management staff in departments, conference costs, business trips, fixed asset depreciation costs, administrative costs arising in departments, telephones, electricity, and water for the whole university; Costs to support students: Library costs, team costs, extracurricular activity costs...

For undergraduate and postgraduate training activities, training costs are collected by universities, including direct costs and indirect costs.

Direct costs are collected for each major and course based on actual costs incurred, including salaries and teaching hours of lecturers based on salary coefficients, teaching assignments, and schedules. Teaching: depreciation costs for lecture halls, classrooms, and teaching aids are based on the period of use, number of lessons, etc. in a day; other costs are assigned on a proportional basis to the number of classes in the department.

Indirect costs are grouped by each department on the basis of actual costs incurred. Indirect costs will be allocated to each training major and each course according to the following criteria: Costs for faculty management are allocated according to the number of classes in the management faculty; university-level management and service costs are allocated according to the number of classes in the whole university; Student support costs are allocated according to the number of students in each major.

For scientific research activities and short-term training courses, universities determine the costs for each job. Costs are determined and calculated according to each research topic, each course, and each specific project. Costs for activities of each project, topic, course, etc. are estimated by universities for each topic and course, so when completed, they are settled according to the implementation content, project costs, Certificate topics and courses include direct costs and indirect costs.

Direct costs include training facilities, training costs, and other service costs.

Indirect costs include two types: indirect costs directly related to projects, contracts, and training courses. Accounting separately accounts for each of these activities, then allocates them to each activity. contracts, courses according to criteria such as number of students, time of use, etc. For indirect costs commonly used throughout the university, such as administrative management costs, other costs are allocated to the project, and course contracts are based on criteria and facilities prescribed by each university, which can be based on the average training cost of the industry or student as a percentage based on experience, then recorded as received for each contract, project, and course.

Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs have also identified costs according to the level of activity. With this identification, costs include variable costs, fixed costs, and mixed costs.

Table 1: Cost classification table by level of activity at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

| Target | Activity level | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Variable costs | Fixed Costs | Mixed costs |
| 1. Human-related expenses | | | |
| 1.1. Salary and salary-based deductions | x | | |
| 1.2. Allowances and benefits | x | | |
| 2. Professional operations expenses | | | |
| 2.1. Expenses for curriculum, materials, books, and newspapers | x | | |
| 2.2. Expenses for re-enrollment and examination fees | x | | |

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| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 2.3. Expenses for procurement of supplies and professional equipment | x | | |
| 2.4. Expenses for training and retraining of civil servants | | x | |
| 2.5. Other training and development expenses | | x | |
| 2.6. International Cooperation Expenses | | | x |
| 2.7. Expenses for Training Activities and Movements | x | | |
| 2.8. Scholarship and Re d Expenses | x | | |
| 3. Administrative Management Expenses | | | |
| 3.1. Operation Costs | | | x |
| 3.2. Payment for public services | | | |
| Electricity | x | | |
| Water | | | x |
| Environmental sanitation | | x | |
| Gasoline and diesel | x | | |
| 3.3. Payment for information and communication services | | | |
| Internet and postal fees | | | x |
| Telephone | | | x |
| Books, newspapers, magazines | | x | |
| 3.4. Conference expenses | | | |
| Expenses for delegates' participation | x | | |
| Expenses for decoration, celebrations, and beverages | | | x |
| 3.5. Recruitment expenditure | | | x |
| 3.6. Other expenses | | | x |
| 4. Purchase and repair expenses | | | |
| 4.1. Asset acquisition costs | | x | |
| 4.2. Asset repair costs | | | x |

Source: Compiled by the authors

- Current situation of organizing cost norms for construction

Through the survey, it shows that all 4 universities have organized the construction of norms, which are regulated in internal spending regulations approved by the university and then approved by the university principal. The organization that develops cost norms is often co-developed by many experts in different departments, led by the Finance and Accounting department. At these universities, the lecture hour fees for lecturers, internal spending norms, etc. are usually determined by experts from the Department of Finance and Accounting, Training Management, Quality Management Department, and Science and Cooperation Department. Internationally, faculties... through experimental surveys, construction, and exchange, then the Board of Directors decides.

- The current situation of organizing cost estimates

Currently, universities have developed estimates. The process of making estimates at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs is usually divided into two steps: building quantitative estimates, then building expenditure estimates. Organizing the construction of quantity estimates is often carried out in functional departments such as training management, quality management, science and international cooperation, general administrative organization, equipment management, and other departments. Specialized faculties, including estimates: enrollment targets at each level and each training system; contracts; scientific research projects; science and technology projects; training plans; recruitment of civil servants; capital construction investment plans; equipment procurement for management and teaching... Expenditure estimates are built on the basis of estimated quantity estimates. Built by functional departments. The overall expenditure estimate of the whole university is built on the basis of balancing the total revenue and expenditure of the whole university and then allocated to each task. Expenditure estimates are made by the Finance and Accounting department of the universities. Based on long-term development strategies and each period, universities build appropriate estimates.

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- Current status of organizing cost information analysis for short-term decision-making
Current status of cost fluctuation analysis: Currently, universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs have performed analyses of cost fluctuations. The initial analysis of cost fluctuations is done by the universities on a yearly basis and is carried out in the finance department. Accounting Department with the purpose of evaluating the implementation situation compared to the estimate and compared to the previous year in general.
- The current situation of the organization analyzes the relationship between costs, output, and profits.
Through the survey, no university under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs currently performs CVP analysis. According to experts' opinions, calculating the break-even point for contracts has been considered but is mainly based on the economic content of the expenses.
- Current status of organizing cost management accounting information with decisions on tuition prices
Universities under the Ministry of Labor and Invalids are not allowed to decide their own tuition fees. Universities under the Ministry of Labor and Invalids determine tuition fees according to relevant state regulations, must publicly announce tuition fees for each academic year and the expected course, and must implement Current public regulations for educational institutions under the national education system are regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs. Therefore, universities under the Ministry of Labor and Invalids rely on investment costs, regular operating costs, and expected surpluses to determine tuition fees to suit people's income and quality. training provided.
- Current status of organizing cost information analysis for long-term decision-making
Long-term decisions are often seen in universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, such as: opening a new training major for all levels of training; building service centers and centers for research and application of science and technology and production; joint training with domestic and foreign organizations; investing in building facilities to serve training and scientific research tasks; For these long-term decisions, universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs have not used them yet. Financial techniques for analyzing information In investment reports for projects, only technical and economic reports are used as a financial basis for project approval. Analytical techniques for choosing long-term decisions
- Current status of the organization of cost management accounting reporting systems in universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs
At universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, they prepare periodic financial reports according to regulations. For management accounting reports, universities have prepared them periodically or when requested by internal management levels in the university.
- Current status of using cost management accounting information
Currently, most universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs only use a number of methods, such as the comparison method to evaluate the level of completion of cost centers and the elimination method to evaluate factors affecting indicators in the cost analysis process. Currently, no university fully uses the balanced scorecard (BSC) method to evaluate operations and management. Regarding the cost center assessment reporting system, most universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs have established it to serve financial accounting. Current reports of universities include reports of expenses according to the content of personal payments, professional expenses, procurement and repair expenses, etc.

Assessing the situation

Besides the results achieved in cost management accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, some limitations still exist:

Accounting apparatus: The management accounting organization is combined between the accounting department and other departments. However, this model has the disadvantage that cost management accounting information is scattered in many departments, so when administrators need cost management accounting information, they do not know which unit to get and what information to get. Information often lacks systematicity.

Developing cost estimates: Construction costs in the estimates are calculated by period, so the facilities portion is estimated on the basis of the total investment cost in facilities for a period on the basis of cash. As for estimates for each specific project, contract, or case, facility costs and general management costs are calculated mainly based on experience with little specific research to provide a basis. The calculation basis is scientifically based or has not been taken into account for allocation.

Determining costs for cost subjects: Currently, in universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, determining costs for cost subjects mainly uses the determination method. costs by job. However, the allocation of indirect costs to each specific job and project is not accurate because the criteria used for allocation are not reasonable (the criteria often used by universities are the number of students, the number of students, etc.). hours of use, etc. The activity-based cost determination method has not been applied by universities to calculate fees for a course or a student.

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Using cost management accounting information to measure and evaluate performance results: Measuring and evaluating performance results is a function of cost management accounting. Nowadays, measurement not only uses financial measures but also uses non-financial measures. However, universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs have not used this method.

Some solutions to improve cost management accounting work when having financial autonomy at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs

About the cost management accounting apparatus

Universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs consider organizing their accounting apparatus according to a mixed model. Accordingly, the two departments of financial accounting and management accounting are arranged to perform their functions in the same Finance and Accounting department as a combined model. However, the management accounting department does not perform all functions and tasks but combines with other departments (Training Management, General Administrative Organization, Equipment Management, etc.) to perform some job functions (establishing norms, estimating, etc.).

Complete the organization and construction of the cost estimation system.

To serve the analysis of cost fluctuations, estimates must be prepared starting from departments and detailed for each expenditure item. Current estimates at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs are mainly prepared according to the fiscal year, while some courses and project contracts have a duration shorter than one year or longer. To help universities be proactive in their operations, when developing cost estimates, universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs need to allocate them according to implementation time and prepare estimates for each level of activity. Dynamic: build cost estimates distributed over time; build flexible cost estimates.

Determine costs for cost objects: Determine costs according to the operating process. With this method, universities will determine training costs for all students at all levels and the existing training systems of the university.

The solution uses cost management accounting information to measure and evaluate performance results.

To provide cost information for measuring and valuing performance results, revenue and expenditure difference reports are a very necessary form of management reporting. Through the report, administrators can determine the cost structure and revenue and expenditure differences between faculties and the entire university. These reports can be prepared according to estimates or according to actual data generated during settlement at the end of the fiscal year. According to the information in the report, administrators make timely and appropriate decisions during operations to achieve efficiency.

Using the balanced scorecard method to measure and evaluate performance at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs in Vietnam is necessary and appropriate in the future. financial goals, customers, internal processes, and training and development goals. Each goal can have one or more departments participating in its implementation. So that senior managers can evaluate the performance results of departments at the lower management level, they need to have assessment criteria through reports. Implementation reports and analysis reports prepared and reported by departments

5. CONCLUSION

The autonomy mechanism is an inevitable trend, meeting the requirements of the law of development. Therefore, universities are forced to adapt, and if they want to survive and develop in this new environment, the application of cost management accounting is extremely necessary, contributing to improving the competitiveness of the unit, overcoming problems of waste and ineffective activities in the public environment, and helping the unit grow stronger and more sustainably. Cost management accounting has become an important tool for business administrators; it plays an active role in managing, operating, and controlling economic and financial activities. For units operating in the field of education and training, the application of cost management accounting is an objective factor to ensure training quality, build brand, and enhance competitiveness. The article has focused on solving the following issues: Systematizing the theoretical basis on which universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs can apply management accounting to manage finances in the most effective way Based on the analysis of the current status of cost management accounting at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, objectively evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of cost management accounting at the universities. University under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs At the same time, the article has proposed solutions to improve cost management accounting when having financial autonomy at universities under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs.

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