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# APPLICATION OF ACCOUNTING CONCEPTS IN THE WORKPLACE: A RESEARCH OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT IN SURABAYA, INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Management Accounting has a significant role in providing financial information about organizations. Such information will be used by both internal and external parties. In order to fulfill the role, Management Accounting uses several concepts or tools, for example "Internal Control", "Asset Recognition" and "Activity Based Costing".*

*This research study surveyed 276 Management Accountants in Surabaya, Indonesia. The research is designed to describe the conceptual understanding and conceptual usage level of these management accountants. Usage and understanding level dimension is important to be observed. Information about those two dimensions could be used to involve management accountant into strategic level. There are 24 concepts used in this research, drawn from accounting concepts used in practice and taught at the academic level.*

## MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT IN ORGANIZATION

Management accountant has an important role in organization. There are two significant roles of management accountant in organization. First, is to record and report transactions in financial statement for stakeholders. The first role useful for external parties, that's why society known external report as a financial statement. Management accountant must fulfill requirements of knowledge in financial accounting concept such as internal control, asset recognition and others financial accounting concepts in order to do the first role. Second, management accountant must able to do various accounting management concept such as activity based costing, cost-volume-profit analysis, balance scorecard, and another concept. For the second role, management accountant making internal report which known as management report. According to the explanation, it can conclude there are two types of accounting knowledge, which are financial accounting and management accounting. Management accounting conducts with both of the knowledge regarding with their role in organization.

Level of appropriate concepts usage in financial accounting and management accounting will depend on management level, because every management level requires different skills. According to science management, there are three management skills that employees will need (Bateman, 2007):

1. Technical skill. The ability to perform a specialized task involving a particular method or process. Technical skill needed at the first time employee wants to enter into first level managerial. Focus of this level is to execute strategic decision or make operational for the strategy decision that has been made by top level management. Management accountant in first level managerial will usage their time in technical skill which is recording transaction and making financial statement.
2. Conceptual skill. Skills pertaining to the ability to identify and resolve problems for the benefit of the organization and its member. This skill use by middle and top level management. Role of management accountant in this level to give contribution in strategic issue for top level management.
3. Interpersonal skill. The ability to lead, motivate and communicate effectively with others. This skill usually referred to people skills.

It is common in Indonesia society perspective that the role of accountant limited only in technical skill, namely operational level. But in fact, role of accountant come up with strategic level, require conceptual skill. Management accountant who use conceptual skill frequently will involved in strategic level of organization. While management accountant who regularly use technical skill, they will play their role in operational level.

In global competitive age, it is already the age for management accountant in Indonesia to involve in strategic level. Accountant is supposed to be involved in strategic level, with contribution in strategic level. This role should be played by management accountant, in order growth of organization (Rizky, 2008). Involvement in strategic level can be done by provide strategic information, not only information in the form of financial statement. Strategic information can be used by top level management as a foundation for decision making and design strategic management system. In order to take part the role effectively, hence required enough competency as professional accountant management. The competency can be measure with how management accountant mastering and implementing accounting concept (The Indonesian Institute of Accountants-IAI, 2008). Byrne, conduct with research by interviewing financial manager and operating manager in medium and large companies. His research found that financial and operating manager expects management accountant enhanced in decision making' partner (Byrne, 2007). Furthermore many researches (Wegman, 2003) conduct with the role of management accountant in management strategy level, such as research conducted by Camillus & Grant, 1980; Simmonds, 1981; Lorange et al., 1986; Bromwich, 1990; Shank & Govindarajan, 1989 & 1990; Wilson 1995; Band & Scanlan, 1995; Oldman & Tomkins, 1999; Simons 1990; Band & Scanlan, 1995; Teller, 1999.

Kaplan in his review of *The Evolution of Management Accounting* book, leveled strong criticism at the management accounting practice. Traditional accounting systems have been criticized because they focus on reporting information with little attention being given to the external

environment and the effect of competitors' decision and cost structure on current and future process of business (Abdel, 2006). This shows that management accountant is intended to satisfy top level management needs and to motivate and assist them in achieving organizational objectives in a timely, efficient, and effective manner (Kaplan and Atkinson, 1998; Hansen and Mowen, 1997). Management accountants are no longer mere scorekeepers of past performance and have become value-adding members of management teams (Kaplan and Atkinson, 1998), because the role of management accountant to be changing from bean counters to business partners (Malmi, 2001).

### **PROBLEM DEFINITION**

The role of management accountant in Surabaya is interesting to observe. The interesting things is whether they involve in operational level or strategy level, whether they use a lot accounting concept rather than use just a little. Also whether management accountant really understand about accounting concept when conduct with their role. Such the literature review above said the role of accountant in organization not just in operational level but also in strategy level. Therefore, from the explanation, the problem of this research is: "how is the role of management accountant in Surabaya' organization?"

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

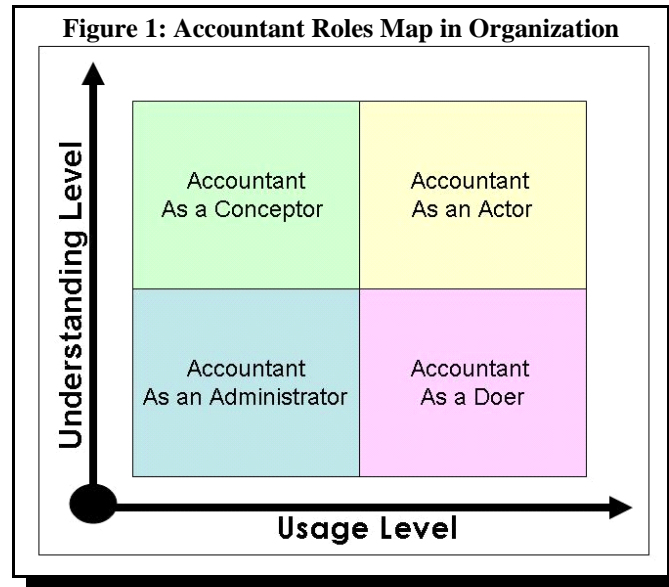
This research has an objective to obtain empirical evidence about management accountant role in workplace. This matter will prove by observe understanding and usage level of accounting concepts in workplace, namely there are 24 concepts which is often used in academic and accounting profession. Result of this research will portray the involvement of management accountant in organization, which will cover the information:

1. How far the role of management accountant in strategic level or operational level in organization.
2. Which concept that has the highest in usage level and understanding level?

### **FRAMEWORK THINKING**

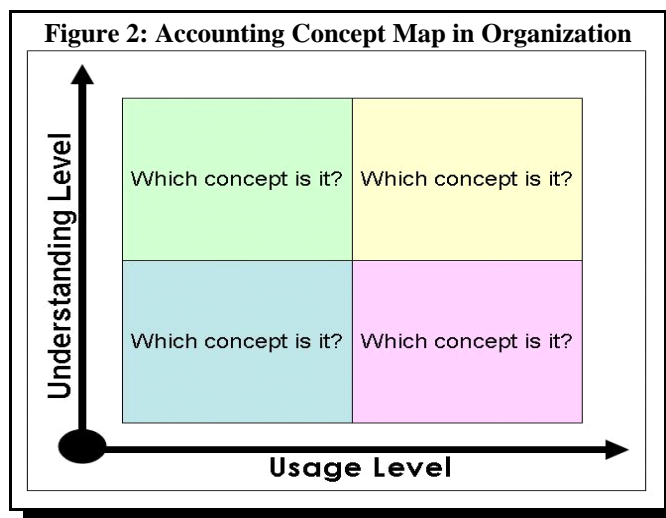
Theory of Management (Bateman, 2007) state that vocation in strategic level will further in using many conceptual skills compared to operational level. Farther The Indonesian Institute of Accountants (IAI) also advise that in global competitive age, the time has come for management accountant in Indonesia to involve in strategic level (The Indonesian Institute of Accountants-IAI, 2008). Understanding level and usage level represent the indicator that uses to asses the role of management accountant in strategic level and operational level. This research put factor understanding level, beside usage level. This factor is important to describe accountant role in organization, without understanding' factor the management accountant can't involvement as they

should they are. According to this idea, mapping of the role management accountant in organization can be show in following figure, drawn by Devie.



Accountant as an Administrator is management accountant who plays a part in administration such as recording account receivable/account payable, create sales invoice or as cashier. In reality, Accountant who has position in this quadrant can't group into Accountant, because they just conduct with bookkeeping not accounting process. Accountant as a Doer is management accountant who runs accounting system in day-to-day operational of organization. Accountant as a Conceptor is management accountant have higher understanding level of accounting concept but the concept not become important yet in organization. Accountant as an Actor is management accountant who concern in strategy level or give the needed information to top level management in regarding strategic decision.

After knowing the mapping of management accountant roles, the idea continued to see understanding level and usage level of accounting concept (see figure below drawn by Devie). Both understanding level and usage level will be used as a base to comprehend the role of management accountant in organization. Using that framework thinking, researcher will know which concept has the highest in usage level and understanding level.



## ACCOUNTING CONCEPT

There are 24 accounting concepts use in this research. The concept composes 11 financial accounting concepts and 13 accounting management concepts. Represent accounting concept which is often used in academic and accounting profession. The concept was resulted from previous research and also textbook related to accounting concept in practice. The concept adopt from Chartered Institutional Management Accountant (CIMA); Dugdable, 1994; Chenhall and Langfield Smith; Luther and Longden, 2001 such mention by Abdel (2006) research and also from Malmi, 2001; Hoffjan, 2008; Rezaee et., al, 1995; Dick-Forde, 2006; Ghosh, 1997. This research also conducts with text book for the concept, which is from various accounting text book (Atkinson, et. al, 2001; IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004; Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004; Garrison and Noreen, 1997; Hansen and Mowen, 1997; Chasteen, et. al, 1998). Researcher didn't use the standard or practice from Indonesia context, because the researcher can't find the research that conduct with application concept. Most of the text-book use in Indonesia also the same text-book from United States (US) or translate from US text-book. Following represent the concept definition:

- Internal Control: consist of the plan of organization and all the methods and measures adopted within a business to safeguard its assets and enhance the accuracy and reliability of its accounting records (Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004).
- Disclosure: identify and describe the accounting principles followed by the entity and methods of applying those principles that materially affect the determination of financial position, changes in cash flows, or results of operations (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).
- Depreciation: systematic and rational allocation of the depreciable amount of an asset over its economic life (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).

- Inventories Valuation: determination of the value assigned to inventory item, using methods include weighted average, LIFO, FIFO, and identified purchase cost. (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).
- Financial Statement Analysis: evaluating three characteristics of a company: its liquidity, its profitability and its solvency (Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004).
- Time Value of Money: the opportunity cost of using money; that is, money like all commodities has a cost and can earn a return, so its value depends on when it is expended or received (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Asset Recognition: a valuation according to the future economic benefits obtained or controlled by an accounting entity as result of past transaction or events (Chasteen, et. al, 1998).
- Liability Recognition: a process of valuation on probable future sacrifices of economic benefit arising from an entity's present obligations to transfer assets or provide services to other entities as a result of past transaction or events (Chasteen, et. al, 1998).
- Revenue Recognition: a process to asses the increases in economic benefits during the accounting period in the form of inflows or enhancements of assets or decreases of liabilities that result in increases in equity, other than those relating to contributions from equity participants (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).
- Expense Recognition: a process to assess decreases in economic benefits during the accounting period in the form of outflows or depletion of assets or incurrence of liabilities that results in decreases in equity, other than those relating to distributions to equity participants (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).
- Bank Reconciliation: the process to make the balance per books agree with the balance per bank, which is the lack or agreement between two balances is due to time lags and errors (Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004).
- Activity Based Costing (ABC): system based on activities that links organizational spending on resource to the products and services produced and delivered to customers (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Service department costing: costs assigned from service departments to operating departments, by identifying the activity that drives costs in a services department and then measuring the consumption of this activity by other departments (Garrison and Noreen, 1997).
- Budgeting: the process of preparing budgets, which is a quantitative expression of the money inflows and outflows that predicts the consequence of current operating decisions and reveals whether a financial plan will meet organization objectives (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Standard Costing: predetermined unit costs, which are acceptable for financial reporting purposes if adjusted periodically to reflect current conditions (IAS, adapted from Epstein 2004).
- Performance Evaluation: a management function that compares actual results with budgets goals. It is based on internal reports prepared by management accountant (Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004).
- Activity Based Management (ABM): an approach to operations control that involves the five-step process of identifying the process objectives, charting activities, classifying activities, continuously improving process, and eliminating activities whose costs exceed their value (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Balance Scorecard (BSC): a systematic performance measurement system that translates an organization's strategy into clear objectives, measures, targets, and initiatives organized by four perspectives (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Cost of Quality: those cost incurred on quality-related processes; included prevention, appraisal, internal failure and external failure costs (Atkinson, et. al, 2001).
- Productivity Measurement: simply a quantitative assessment of productivity changes. The objective is to assess whether productive efficiency has increased or decreased (Hansen and Mowen, 1997).
- CVP Analysis: the study of the changes in costs and volume on a company's profits (Kieso and Wyeandt, 2004).
- Profitability Analysis: analysis the cost and revenue or profit data of the organization's segments, which is segment example, includes sales territories, individual stores, individual customers, product lines, services canters, manufacturing division or sales department (Garrison and Noreen, 1997).

- Inventory Management: the process to manage organization inventory with relevant tools, such as JIT, EOQ or MRP in order efficiency and effective issue (Garrison and Noreen, 1997).
- Incremental Analysis: an analytical approach that focuses only on those items of revenue, cost, and volume that will change as a result of decision in an organization (Garrison and Noreen, 1997).

The accounting concept above can use by Accountant in operational and strategy level. Exhibit 1 below shows how the concept can conduct whether in operational level and strategy level. This comparison shows, how is Accountant make contribution in the both of that level.

Exhibit 1			
No	Concept	Operational level	Strategy level
1	Internal Control	Using the concept in conduct with internal audit activity	One of the information from internal audit activity is efficiency issue, which is conduct in every function of department by management
2	Disclosure	Using in process to make disclosure statement	The disclosure information needed by top level management to make right decision when they want to use information from financial statement
3	Depreciation	Using in calculation the balance of depreciation every period	This information can use as one of element by top level management in evaluate the efficiency of fixed asset.
4	Inventories Valuation	Using in calculation inventory value that will present in financial statement	Information about inventory balance can use to evaluate inventory management effectiveness
5	Financial Statement Analysis	Present financial statement analysis information	Top level using this information to make further decision making
6	Time Value of Money (TVM)	Using in calculation TVM issue such as net present value (NPV) from one project.	The analysis from NPV' calculation can help top level manajemen to make better decision.
7	Asset Recognition	Determine the asset' value to calculate return of assest (ROA)	Information from calculation return of asset (ROA) can used by top level management in evaluate the effectiveness of organization' asset
8	Liability Recognition	Used to determine the value for liability	Liability information can used to manage payment time in considering the organization cash flow
9	Revenue Recognition	Using to calculate the value for revenue to present in financial statement	Revenue information can used by management, for example in context customer profitability analysis
10	Expense Recognition	Determine the value for expense to present in financial statement	Expense information used for cost reduction issue by value added analysis

Exhibit 1			
No	Concept	Operational level	Strategy level
11	Bank Reconciliation	Present bank reconciliation statement	Information from this statement such as the number of outstanding check can use to analyze the payment period we should do for supplier.
12	Activity Based Costing	ABC focuses on the allocation of costs	Information about ABC can used to implement cost leadership strategy
13	Service department costing	Calculate the cost that will allocate to primary department	Information from this calculation, can use as one of elements to analyze the efficiency every department
14	Budgeting	Preparing annual budget	This information can used by top level management to evaluate, whether the budget align with organization strategy
15	Standard Costing	Use to calculate COGM	COGM can used to evaluate the price that already set by management
16	Performance Evaluation	Calculate the difference between actual and budget	This information can use to evaluate the performance of department or division.
17	Activity Based Management	Activity analysis in each department	ABM focuses on the reduction of cost by using the information from ABC calculation. Using ABC, management can trace which activity drive the high cost but didn't give significant value added in company' product/ service.
18	Balance Scorecard	Using BSC to make annual budgeting	Budgeting as one of information needed by top level to evaluate each division performance
19	Cost of Quality	Calculate the fourth elements from quality cost	This information can use in decision making such as determine the strategy that can reduce quality cost without reduce the quality
20	Productivity Measurement	Calculate the productivity each process	This information can assist top level management to analyze the productivity in each business process
21	CVP Analysis	Determine and calculate the CVP value	CVP value can use by top level management to determine the marketing action and production plan
22	Profitability Analysis	Calculate the profitability value, based on segment (ex:customer)	To determine the customer that become company focus on their strategy
23	Inventory Management	Exam the inventory tools that give information about the best tools for inventory management	Determine what tools that organization will use for manage the inventory in efficiency issue
24	Incremental Analysis	Calculate the alternatif from some of choice, such as produce or make product	From this information top level can make the best decision



## SELECTION OF SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

According to The Indonesian Institute of Accountants ([www.iaiglobal.or.id](http://www.iaiglobal.or.id)), there are four types of accountants, which are: management accountant, public accountant, educator accountant and government accountant. The population of this research is all management accountants who work in Surabaya. Management accountant is all accountant profession besides public accountant (auditor), educator accountant and government accountant. Selection of sample conducted by using convenience sampling method, it's meaning attempts to obtain a sample of convenient elements. The selection of sampling units is left primarily to the interviewer (Malhotra, 2003). By using confidence interval criterion for one sample proportion with 5% significant level (?) and 6% error level (e), minimum sample that should be obtain to conduct this research is 267 respondents. This research conducted from 276 respondents response, which can be interpret that this research are more than sufficient in terms of minimum sample size to be obtain.

## IDENTIFICATION AND VARIABLE MEASUREMENT

According to framework thinking which have been elaborated at previous point, this research will examine the role of management accountant in organization through two variables.

1. Understanding level of management accountant in accounting concept. This variable measured in ordinal level with three options likert style technique: Agree (A), Disagree (DA) and Not Know (NK).
2. Usage level of management accountant in accounting concept. This Variable also measured in ordinal level using three options likert style technique: Always (A), Sometime (S) and Never (N). This Variable require to be measured at the same time with usage level variable, in order to see how far understanding level of management accountant when they as a respondent (primary data) of this research.

The questionnaire used in this research is divided into three sections. The first sections are asking the respondent profile. The second sections are asking question about definition of 11 financial accounting concepts and 13 accounting management concepts. This section contains random true or false statement about accounting concept which testing if the respondent understands the concept asked. The respondent should response in three options as already describe above to the definition asked. The third sections are asking respondent to choose usage level of each accounting concept.

The questionnaire composes question which show financial accounting concept and accounting management concept. The concepts asked in financial accounting is internal control, disclosure, depreciation, inventories valuation, asset recognition, revenue recognition, expense recognition, financial statement analysis, time value of money, liability recognition and bank reconciliation. While concept asked in management accounting is activity based costing, service department cost, standard costing, performance evaluation, quality cost management, inventory

management, incremental analysis, budgeting, activity based management, productivity measurement, balance scorecard, CVP analysis, and profitability analysis.

Research conducted with measuring understanding level and usage level of accounting concept. This research will result two important matters in seeing the role of management accountant in organization.

1. Mapping of role of accountant management in organization that can divide into Accountant as an Actor, Accountant as a Doer, Accountant as a Conceptor and Accountant as an Administrator.
2. Mapping of accounting concept, related with the highest concept in usage level and understanding level.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis conducted with statistics descriptive, methods of organizing, summarizing and presenting information about usage level and understanding level accounting concept in workplace (Lind, 2008). Descriptive for understanding level differentiated into categories understand and do not understand. Responder who categories "understand" is reply agrees (A) to correct concept definition and reply disagree (DA) to incorrect concept definition. While responder who categories "didn't understand" is reply disagree (DA) to correct concept definition and reply agree (A) to incorrect concept definition. The number of responder who categories "didn't understand" according to criterion above added with number responder who reply not know (NK) when asked concept definition. Responder which reply always for usage level classified into category "always" use, while responder which reply sometimes and have never been, classified into category "rarely".

### RESEARCH RESULT

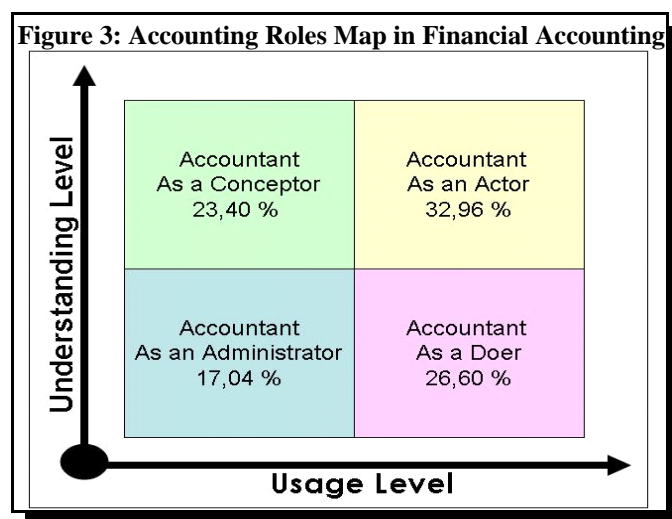
Pursuant to result from descriptive analysis, responder at this research generally works on frontline managers or operational level (52.90%). A number of 38.04% responder has been worked more than 3 years as Accountant. Generally they work in limited company (65.94%).

Table 1: Respondent Profile			
Profile		Frequency	Percentage
Position	Frontline Manager	146	52.90%
	Middle-Top Manager	130	47.10%
Working Experience	0-1 year	66	23.91%
	>1-2 year(s)	64	23.19%
	>2-3 years	41	14.86%

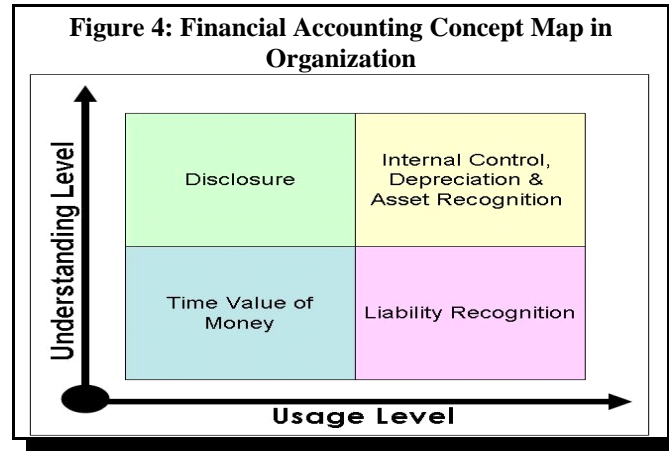
	More than 3 years	105	38.04%
Corporate Body	Limited Company	182	65.94%
	Limited Partnership	42	15%
	Firm	13	5%
	Trading Company	30	11%
	Foundation	7	3%
	Other	2	1%

Source: Processed from raw data

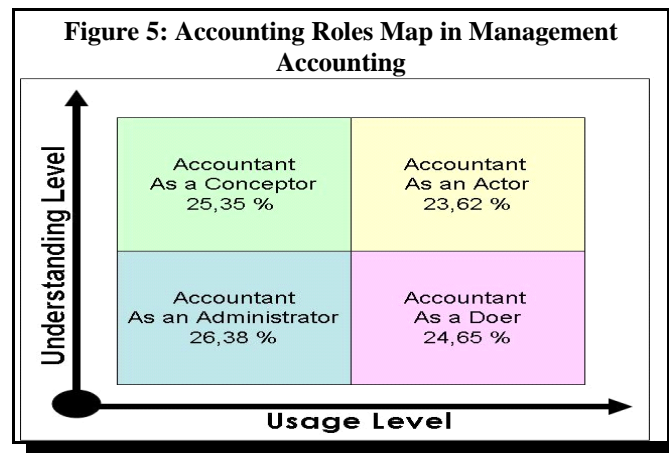
Result of analysis to questionnaire in financial accounting area, indicate that most of management accountant in Surabaya positioned on "Accountant as an Actor". This result show in usage level of financial accounting concept, management accountant in Surabaya more involve in strategy level or give the financial information for management that needed in decision making. Mapping in usage level of financial accounting concept can be seen in following matrix, drawn by Devie.



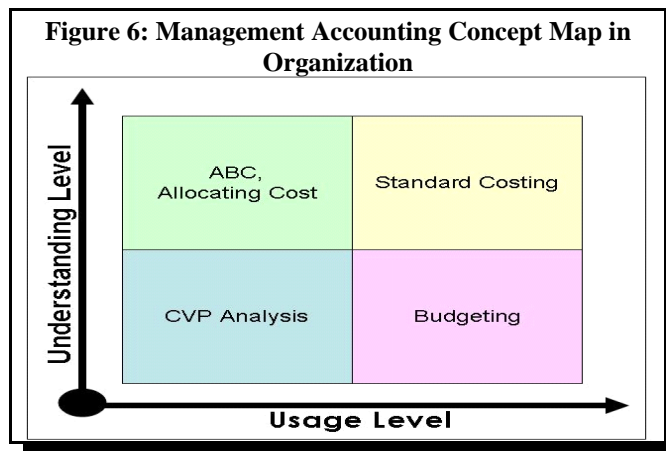
In the case of financial accounting concept, internal control, depreciation and asset recognition represent three highest concept usage level and understanding level. This result shows three of the concept represent popular concept in Surabaya, either from personal side of management accountant and also from requirement side of organization. Mapping of usage level in financial accounting can be seen in following picture, drawn by Devie.



Regarding of management accounting concept, result shows that most of management accountant in Surabaya have position on "Accountant as an Administrator" and "Accountant as a Conceptor". As the a Conceptor show management accounting in Surabaya more contribute in administration activity and a lot have high understanding level in management accounting concept but the concept had not become important yet in organization. Mapping of accounting management concept can be seen in following figure, drawn by Devie.



In the case of management accounting concept, standard costing represent the highest in usage level and understanding level. In management accounting context show this concept very popular from personal side of management accountant and also from side requirement of organization. Mapping of usage financial accounting concept can be seen in following figure below, drawn by Devie.



## CONCLUSION

According to research result, can conclude that:

1. Management accountant in Surabaya have understanding level higher in financial accounting concept. According to descriptive analysis, management accountant in Surabaya more regular use financial accounting concepts compared to management accounting concepts. Similar conclusion also report by Malmi (2001) in Finland (although the research just observes in usage level) and also Ghosh (1997) in Singapore. While Sulaiman' research (2004) shows in management accounting context, contemporary tools (ABC, TQM and BSC) is lacking use rather than traditional tools (standard costing and budgeting) in four countries, Singapore, India, Malaysia and China.
2. In the accountant role context, management accountant in Surabaya more personate "Accountant as an Actor" regarding financial accounting perspective. On the contrary in the case of management accounting perspective, management accountant in Surabaya more involve as "Administrator" and "Conceptor".

## DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATIONS

1. According to usage level and understanding dimension, there are four recommendations related to accountant role in organization:
  - a Accountant as an Administrator must separated from accounting community, because actually there are not accountant, they just conduct with bookkeeping.
  - b Accountant as a Doer must train to be accountant as an Actor.
  - c Accountant as a Conceptor must give trust by involving them in strategic level.

- d Accountant as an Actor need to develop, especially their soft skill or personality skill, because they are the candidate for organization leader in the future.
2. Important for accounting department (academic) in university or college to shift strategy issue as an important discipline such as business school. The indicator of an important discipline is student can see in explicit issue about the interrelationship accounting concept in accountants' work to strategy.
  3. Further research could include larger set of respondent profile including more demographics variables. Statistical analysis could be used to seek if there is relationship between respondent profile and the accountant role in organization.
  4. In this research understanding level measured using a test sheet in the second sections of the questionnaire. This section contains random true or false statement about accounting concepts definition and gathered response in three options likert style technique. Further research could refine this method by gathered more information using likert style technique with larger set of options. This larger set of options considered more natural to measure understanding level. A larger set of option could also be applied to measure usage level.
  5. Improvement for further research could also include statistical analysis to test whether there is significant evidence of relationship between usage level and understanding level. Other statistical analysis suggested is to test whether the understanding level on management accounting support understanding level in financial accounting. Statistical model to identify accountant role in organization of an accountant based on his/her understanding level and usage level could be useful in order to take an action as described in suggestion 1.

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