



## Academic Management and Contemporary Gaps

Kenia Kodel Cox;Robélius De-Bortoli

### Abstract

It is challenge to contemporary academic management to fullfil the demands of the labor market, and to have improvements with the this, considering the scientific development; through the analysis of intangibles like student performance, which can generate positive results with repercussion on institutional reputation. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) the adequate professional qualification results in employment for qualified individuals; while activities more prone to automation are observed, and greater chance of unemployment for those with low qualification. In this research there was the reading of 447 abstracts of publications, obtained by refinements applied on 4,491 initial registers, and selected 20 considering the performance of the students as a parameter of the university administration, with the objective of identifying gaps of academic management, resulting: to contemplate student learning as a dependent variable, and to extend to the documents the origin of the research data.

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## Academic Management and Contemporary Gaps

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### Abstract

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### 1. Introduction

According to the [24], the economies of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) depend on adequate training of workers. With the expand educational opportunities, the number of qualified people is enlarged, and these are more prone to be employed. By contrast, while job opportunities still exist for those with lower qualifications, their labor market prospects are relatively challenging - with low incomes and routine activities, thus at greater risk of being automated, which in turn, impacts on the increase of the probability of unemployment, being possible to exacerbate the socioeconomic inequalities.

Thus, the relationship between professional qualification and the labor market challenges educational systems and contemporary academic management, which, interacting with companies, must seek to solver institutional demands for knowledge, skills and behaviors; as well as foresee ways in which scientific

advances can result improvements for organizations.

Another challenge for academic management, according to [27], is the monitoring and intervention of student performance, with a view to evaluating and improving the pedagogical project, and other objectives of university administration, based on individual and accurate tracking; student results; which makes administrative and/or pedagogical decision making possible, "...this type of process can serve as an important support for diagnoses and interventions... according to the prescriptions that may prove necessary..." [27].

Therefore, contemporaneity also encourages academic management to overcome the limitation of turning exclusively to tangible assets and to contemplate intangible factors and assets, such as student achievement; because it can positively impact the institutional reputation and consequently its economy.

During the decades 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, according to the [23], corporate assets were no longer predominantly tangible in nature, and became intangible, and knowledge-based assets such as intellectual property (IP): rights, research and development (R&D), and software, skills, and organizational know-how. Studies in various OECD countries show that companies now invest in both intangible resources, such as innovation-related intellectual assets, as well as in capital such as machinery, equipment and buildings.

However, in this context of integration of intangibles, it is important to distinguish factors and assets, because in order to justify this categorization "... it's necessary the factor or element propitiate, directly or indirectly, for the enterprise, future economic and financial benefits." [32]

For example, according to [19], factors such as professional, functional or personal training, and reputation, may result in intangible assets in the equity scenario. Assets, interacting with other factors, tangible or intangible, result positive or negative effects on the profitability of the respective venture.

These challenges highlight the need for improvement of current educational actions. Thus, the objective is to identify the limitations and gaps of academic management, in the contemporary scenario, from the perspective of student learning.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Search Type

It is a research, as to the origin of the data, according to [18], bibliographic and exploratory, with access to records from the Journals Portal of the Higher Level Personnel Improvement Commission, in portuguese Comissão Superior de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal (CAPES).

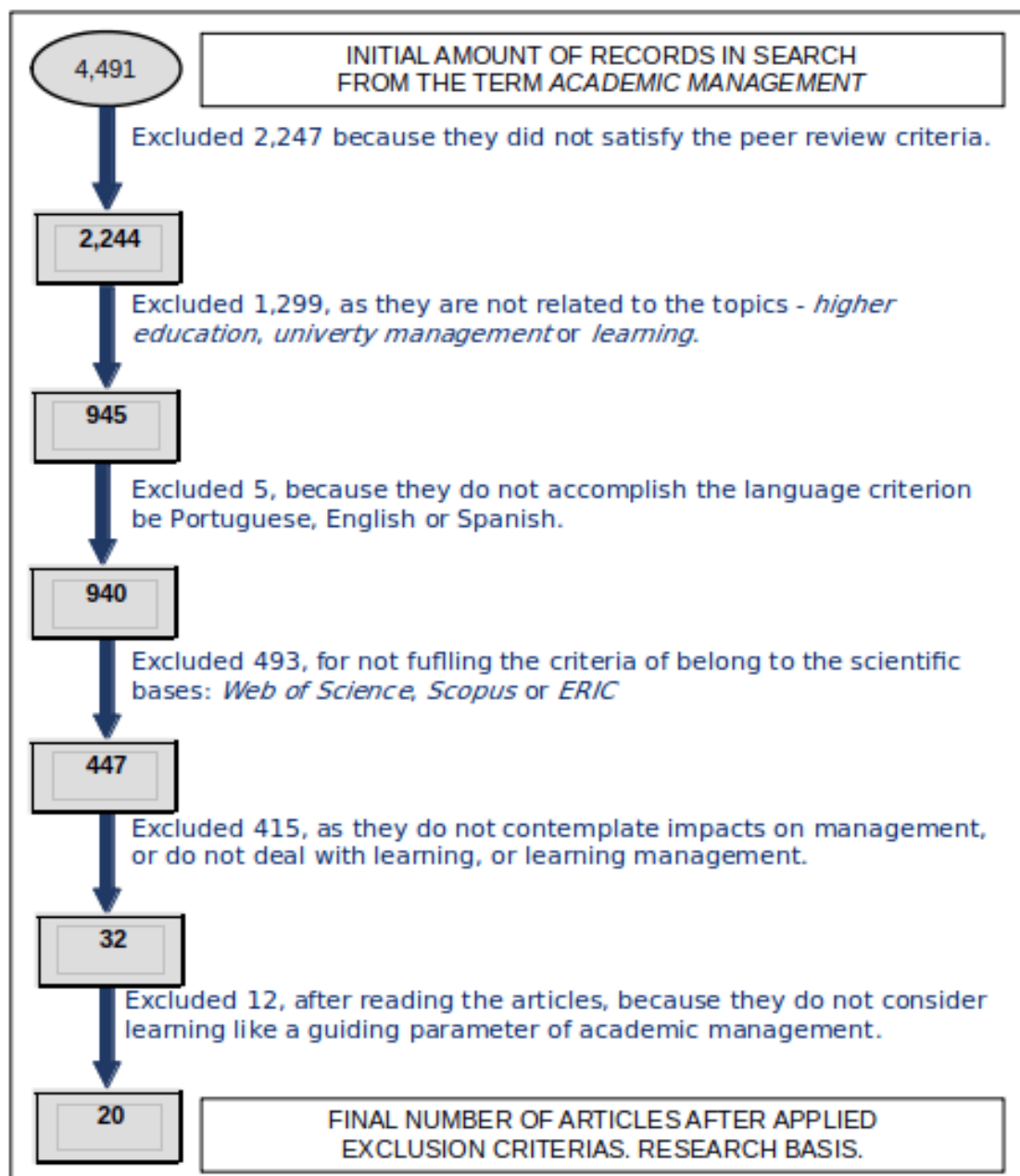
### 2.2 Data Collect

The data collect began with the search of the term *academic management* on March/30/2019, timeframe from 2008 to 2019, initially identifying 4,491 records.

Those did not satisfy the following criteria, were excluded:

- a) peer reviewed, to ensure greater reliability, resulting the exclusion of 2,247 records;
- b) related to the *higher education* and *management university* and *learning topics*, resulting in 1,299 removals, with the objective of turning the focus to the specificities of academic management;
- c) written in the languages - Portuguese, English and Spanish - 5 records being removed to preserve the researchers' ability to understand, considering the languages with which they are familiar;

d) contained in the following scientific bases, with 493 files being subtracted: (i) *Web of Science* - collection of 5 scientific data sources, which allows access to references and abstracts from all areas of knowledge, covering approximately 12,000 journals, thus ensuring wide coverage; (ii) *Scopus* - composed of research in the areas of technology, medicine, social sciences, arts and humanities; soon interdisciplinary, as well as the subject matter of the present study; and (iii) *Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)* - relating to education studies, maintained by Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), of the US Education's Department, considering that the subject under study is educational in nature.



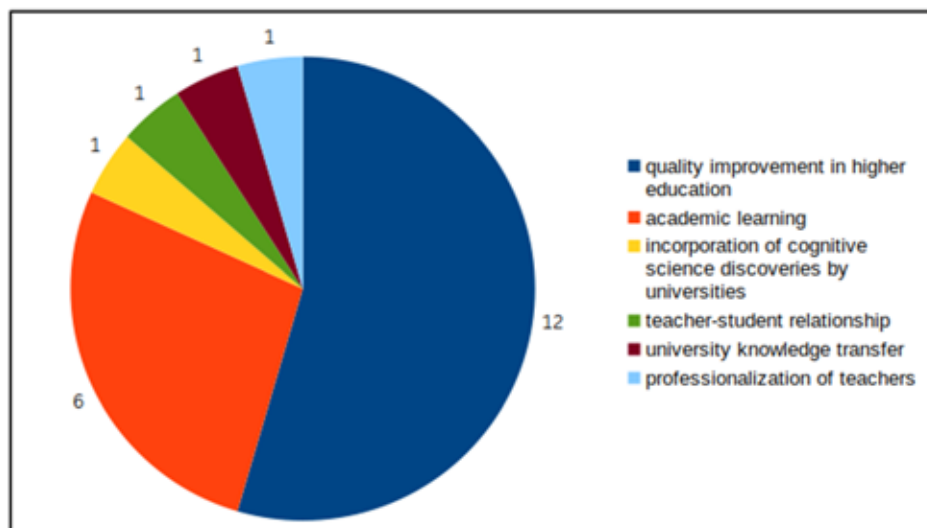


Figure 1. Flow for Selecting Research Sources about Academic Management and Learning

From reading the abstracts of the 447 records resulting from the above refinement processes: (i) 255 were excluded, which did not address academic management, or despite addressing themes that support it, such as: learning methodologies, entrepreneurial training in higher education, qualification of professor; these do not contemplate their effects on the central issue, which is indispensable for the fulfillment of the desired objective; and (ii) 192 publications were categorized that address the themes, such as: student engagement and motivation, retention and profile of graduates, 32 of which were highlighted because deal with learning - key element in the academic management process.

Then, from the 32 pre-selected publications, a sixth filter was applied, which consisted of a thorough reading of the articles, and 20 effectively were selected because are relevant for the management area and for the investigated theme, as they considered learning a important parameter of academic management (Figure 1).

Whereas [25], when dealing with the existence of an organizational model that makes it possible to adapt higher education to the new scenario - of increasing student diversity, of development holistic student skills, and adaptation to the needs of economic and scientific activity; explain that the compass of this improvement is learning, understood as enhancement students' ability to apply their knowledge, as well as for further and continuous learning.

## 2.2 Data Analysis

From the selected articles - research basis - the figures and tables, components from the Results section, were constructed using the spreadsheet manager, open source, LibreOffice Calc, Version 6.0.7.3, available from LibreOffice – The Document Foundation, identifying:

- dependent and independent variables, aiming to determine causes and discoveries of the scientific investigations analyzed, as stated by [18]; as well as the their relationship with results and impacts, categorizing them into tangible or intangible assets, or intangible factor, according to [32];
- universe and sample, aiming to understand the information that researchers consider relevant in the study about academic management;

- c) instruments and techniques applied for data collect, as stated by [18], which are: (i) documentary collect, (ii) observation, (iii) interview, (iv) questionnaire, (v) form, (vi) scale, (vii) tests and (viii) life history;
- d) statistical treatment - "...It is possible to conduct na investigation without statistics but impossible to do so without subject matter knowledge. However, by using statistical methods convergence to a solution is speeded and a good investigator beomes na even better one." [5];
- e) research classification according to the type of problem, according to [18], being: (i) explanatory predictive, (ii) of information, (iii) action, (iv) of pure investigation or (v) applied research;
- f) types of research according to the applied data analysis, being: (i) of interpretation, (ii) of explanation or (iii) of specification; as claimed by [18];
- g) categorization of the research according to the source of the data, being six, the types of research, as stated by [18]: (i) documentary, (ii) bibliographic, (iii) descriptive quantitative field, (iv) exploratory field, (v) experimental field, and (vi) laboratory.

### 3. Results

The dependent variables identified in the research base were: 'quality improvement in higher education', 'academic learning', 'incorporation of cognitive science discoveries by universities', 'professor-student relationship', 'university knowledge transfer' and 'professionalization of professors'.

Six dependent variables were observed, in a total of 22 occurrences, since 2 of the publications have 2 dependent variables each, while the others have only one.

The dependent variable 'improving the quality of higher education' has the highest percentage frequency – corresponding to 54.5%; followed by 'academic learning', equivalent to 27.2%. All other variables were cited by one article each, 4.5% of these (Figure 2).

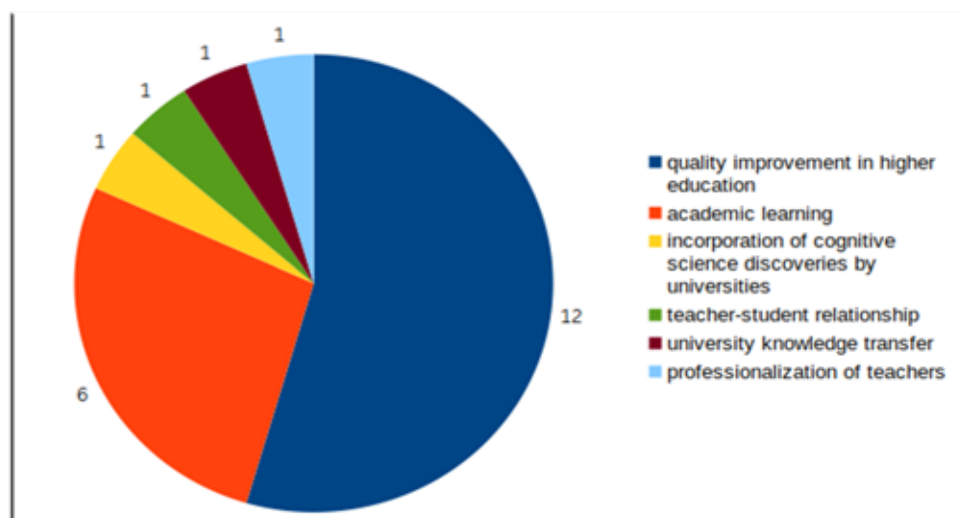


Figure 2. Ocorrences' Number of Dependent Variables in the Research Basis

Independent variables are presented in the Table 1, followed by their results/impacts categorized into tangible or intangible assets or intangible factor.

Table 1. Categories of the Results/Impacts of Independent Variables

Independents Variables	Results/Impacts	Categories
personalization of educational services	introduces innovative software environment	intangible factor
action learning, academic performance and student satisfaction	qualification process with outcomes concerning learning	intangible asset
self-efficacy, student satisfaction and predicting academic performance	11 guidelines applied to Information Technology (IT), for higher education	intangible factor
application of learning analytics	need to investigate learning analysis	intangible factor
technology acquisition	'MIT90s' framework with positive impact on learning	intangible asset
acquisition of competence, validated through the application of scale	scale to measure competence acquisition	intangible factor
video recording of lectures about anatomy and physiology	need to enhance IT resource	intangible factor
management system to evaluate and disseminate educational innovations	presents management system that enables parameterization	intangible factor
continuous update of post disaster professionals	recommendation of skills to consider in Course Pedagogic Projects (PPCs)	intangible factor
scope and depth of e-portfolio practice in higher education	'e-Portfolio' as a higher education product and process with positive outcomes on learning	intangible asset
management framework application	framework proposition of the 'MODES'	intangible factor
apply asynchronous learning network	effects of asynchronous learning network application, with positive outcomes on student performance	intangible asset
to know students in light of educational ethics of care	explains the educational ethic of care	intangible factor
use of systematic evaluation of the results of all the program	guidelines for continuous assessment application	intangible factor
use of Information and communication technology (ICTs) in higher education	guides ICT integration in higher education	intangible factor
training for knowledge transfer	recommends knowledge interchange	intangible factor

Independents Variables	Results/Impacts	Categories
leadership application in academic management	understanding the function of leadership in academic management	intangible factor
Determination of desired learning outcomes by employers	recommends focusing education on the outcomes desired by employers	intangible factor
need for mediation of transformational leadership	apply the transformational leadership	intangible factor
need for cooperation between professors	explains because professors cooperate	intangible factor

The category of results related to the most frequently independent variables is the 'intangible factor', which was identified in 80.0% of investigations of the base. Impacts involving 'intangible assets' correspond to 20.0%; and there was no impact related to 'tangible assets'.

Six universes were most commonly identified: 'higher education institutions', 'employers', 'students', 'professors', 'managers' and 'governments'; and the occurrence of five others in only one article, each: 'researchers', 'administrative technicians', 'graduates', 'school' and 'classroom'.

The universe with the highest absolute frequency was 'higher education institution', corresponding to the population of 52.9% of the scientific investigations analyzed; followed by the 'students', considered the universe in 8.8% of researches. 'Employers', 'professors', 'managers' and 'government' are research universes at 5.8% of the base, each (Figure 3).

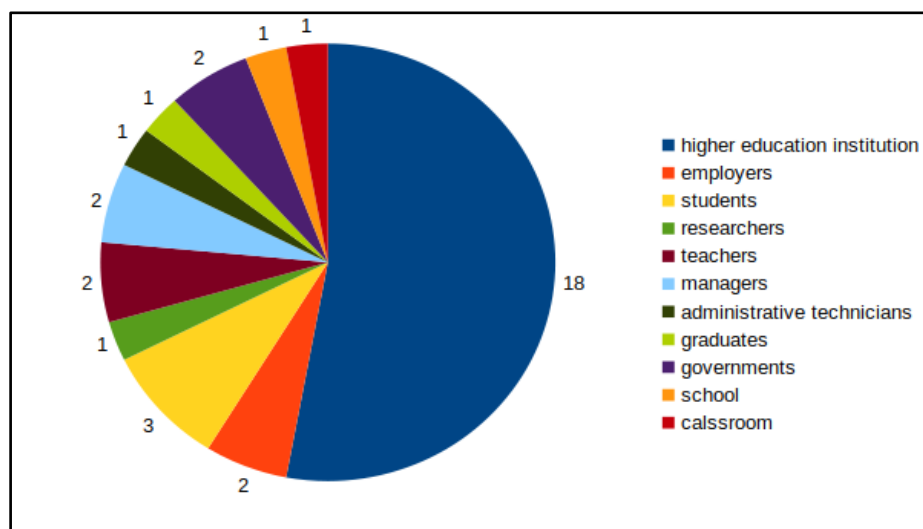


Figure 3. Number of Articles by Composition of Research Universes

It was observed that no documentary collect, or form, was applied, and the instruments that stood out for the highest number of occurrences in the research were the questionnaire, the interview and the tests.

The 'questionnaires' correspond to the most widely used data collect instrument in the research studies, the equivalent of 24.1%. These were followed by the 'interview' and the 'tests', each used in 20.2% of the scientific investigations analyzed. The other collect resources considered - 'documentary', 'observation', 'form', 'scales' and 'life story' - were grouped into one category, with a cumulative frequency of 34.4% of



researches (Figure 4).

Of the 20 scientific investigations under study, 5 applied statistical treatment to the data: 3 with structural equation modeling, 1 with exploratory factor analysis, and 1 through classification distribution. After data collect, 75.0% of the researches did not apply statistical treatment. In the remaining studies of the considered base: in 25.0%, it is observed application of the statistical methods: 'structural equation modeling', 'exploratory factor analysis', and 'classification distribution'.

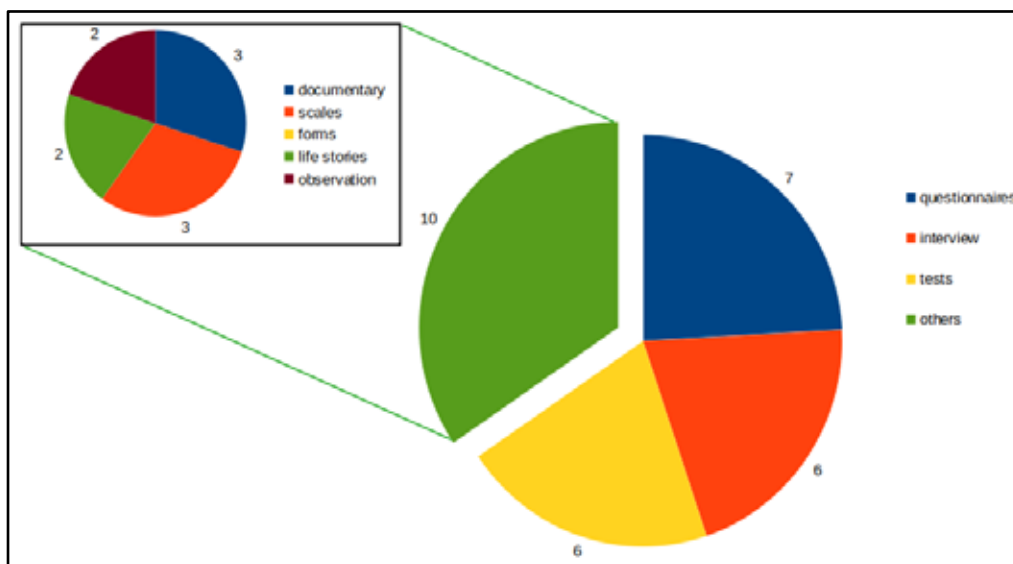


Figura 4. Articles by Main Instruments and Data Collect Techniques Applied

As for the types of problem, more than half of the research analyzed in this are 'explanatory predictive', being 4 of 'applied research', and 3 'pure'. The research approach 'applied research' was the one with the highest frequency - 13, corresponding to 65.0% of the investigations under study; while the of 'pure research' equate 35.0%. Regarding the objectives, the 'of information' have accumulated frequency 8, corresponding to 40.0%, followed by the 'of action' 35.0%, and 25.0% are 'explanatory predictive'.

Analyzing the research base on academic management, as to the method of data analysis applied, it is observed that 70.0% are 'interpretive', while 30.0% are 'explanatory', and no research with character of 'specification'.

Regarding the origin of the data, the category that presented the highest percentage frequency was the 'bibliographic': 86.3%, corresponding to 19 researches, among which 63.1% 'experimental'. And no 'laboratory' investigation was observed (Figure 5).

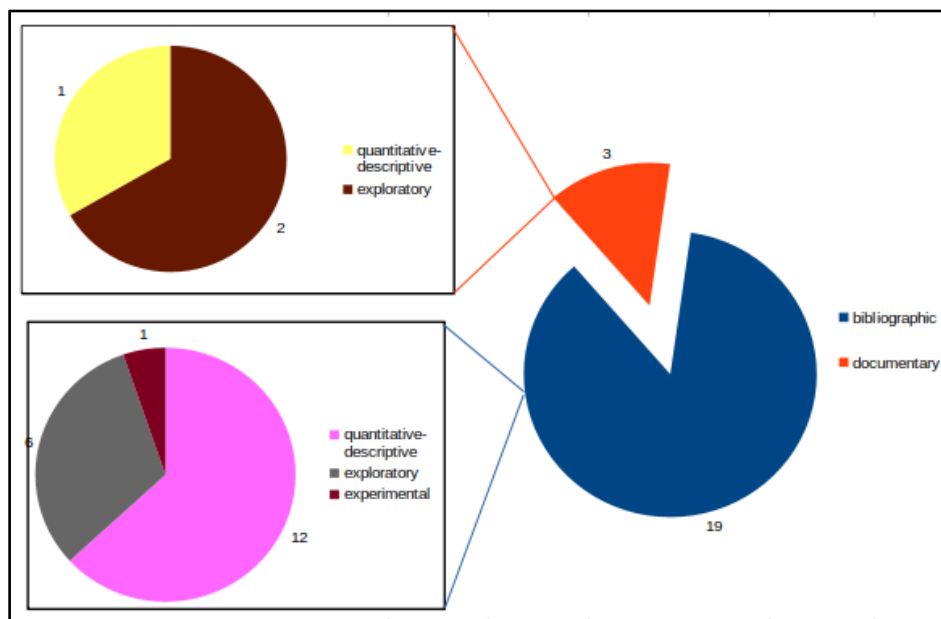


Figure 5. Number of Articles by Data Source

It is observed that the number of researches exceeds the total of 20 scientific investigations contained in the study base, as they are hybrid, that is, the data they manipulate has more than one source. In this scenario there are 17 strictly 'bibliographic', 2 'bibliographic' and 'documentary' searches, and 1 strictly 'documentary', making a total of 22 searches.

#### 4. Discussion

Regarding the analysis of the dependent variables, the fact of the 'quality improvement of higher education' to be the one with the highest absolute frequency, despite signaling commitment to the improvement of higher education, and consequently with the academic management process; It has a generalist nature.

As in South Korea, according to [31], the focus of education on student is the goal of educational reform that drives the country to positions that show education quality, highlighting this in international rankings, and presenting outcomes to a gap resulting of fourth industrial revolution, and requires modern and innovative ideas and practices.

Therefore, to consider the 'learning by academics' would make the researches variables in analysis more specific, turn possible to follow Korean success in education, and promote improvements in academic management.

In synergy with this need to be able to innovate, the [23] affirms that in order to remain competitive in today's knowledge age scenario, the predominant assets in companies are now intangible: knowledge-based assets such as intellectual property. However, 80.0% of the independent variables of the research studies are intangible factors, and do not provide, directly or indirectly, for the institution, future economic and financial benefits, and therefore are not active, according to [32].

Of the research universes under study, more than half correspond to 'higher education institutions', also a generalist scope such as the dependent variables. A single investigation turns to the 'graduates' and two to the 'employers' - stakeholders of the academic education process. According to [29], in universities focused

on the main requirements of employers, when developing their education programs, their graduates are desired by the job market. Therefore, the alignment of educational institutions' performance measures with organizational results is essential for academic management.

Considering the data collection instruments and techniques, the fact that 75.0% of the researches did not apply 'statistical treatment', and that 'questionnaires', 'interviews' and 'tests' stood out as the most widely used collect resources, presenting an accumulated percentage frequency of 44.4%, indicates a predominance of qualitative research in scientific investigations for academic management.

According to [3], as in the qualitative approaches the results are not tested to show whether they are statistically significant or resulting from chance, the conclusions obtained from them cannot be extended to populations. And the number of researchers interested in harmonizing the quantitative and qualitative traditions is gradually increasing, aiming to obtain the advantages of each one of them. Thus, the quantitative approach with statistical treatment should be broadened in research on academic management, aiming to obtain both quantitative and qualitative benefits.

Regarding the types of problems, as for the research objectives, the least frequent ones are the 'explanatory predictive', however, according to [27], when dealing with prediction, they argue that this constitute a “solid item to monitoring of academic managers... allowing timely intervention...”, enabling proactive management, anticipation of problems, avoiding the aggravation of circumventable situations provided that they are solved in a timely manner.

[26] explain that current management practices drive institutions to success because of the predictive power of the future, which highlights the need to overcome the low number of 'explanatory predictive' research on academic management.

Given two of the gaps already observed in the research under study: (i) predominance of independent variables focused on intangible factors, when they should focus on intangible assets, and (ii) research universes that do not include graduates and employers; the observed scenario should give more frequency to the 'explanatory' and 'of specification' investigations, since the verification of the existence of a relationship between the variables, performed in the predominant 'interpretive' researches, is only the initial step to meet the desired goals.

The low percentage frequency of 'documentary' research is not recommended, as the data to be addressed in research on academic management resides in curricula and institutional reports about student performance monitoring, for example; as well as market trends that are ascertained by funding agencies, collegiate advisory bodies, and government.

[29] apply, in their leading research, documentary data from the US Department of Labor Occupational Information Network, and argue that it is for “better defining and assessing program needs” for professional training, for “data of investigation of opinion are learning measures less stable”.

The institutional management model, according to [30], consists of: (i) Institutional Development Plan (IDP), (ii) Institutional Pedagogical Project (IPP), (iii) Pedagogical Course Project (PCP) and (iv) groups of professors should be worked in academic management researches, as these are macro processes that should serve as subsidies for academic management, aligning it with organizational strategies and policies. Among the four macroprocesses cited, three are documents: IPP, IDP and PCP, which reinforces the evidence of the need for documentary research.

The contemporary gaps observed in academic management are:

- a) contemplate student learning as a dependent variable;
- b) advance from intangible factors to intangible assets, in defining the attributes considered independent variables;
- c) contemplate graduates and employers in the research universes;
- d) apply quantitative analyzes, and consequently statistical treatments;
- e) increase the number of research with explanatory predictive objectives;
- f) broaden the scope of data analysis not limited to the verification of the existence of relationship between the research variables, explaining them;
- g) extend to documents the origin of the research data.

Thus, through interpretative analysis of research on academic management were identified justifications and north for scientific investigations on the subject.

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