

ECONOMIC RESEARCH, BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENT AND CURRENT REALITY

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Scientific research is the cornerstone of the academic environment. Given this, it is interesting to establish the way in which economic research, especially accounting research, keeps up with the current reality both at the national and international level or it is separated by its scientific nature somewhere above the day to day issues. This study analyzes the evolution of the mainly approached research themes presented in scientific conferences held in national renowned universities and subsequently tries to establish a connection between the findings and the current global economic issues. The research methodology implies the combination between quantitative and qualitative research, based on theoretical aspects translated then into practice through the empirical study. The study's findings will be useful both to the academic environment and to the individuals interested in knowing the evolution of accounting research themes and their timely influential factors.

Keywords: accounting research, conferences, themes, Romania

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1. Introduction

This paper conducts an analysis of the current main research themes in the academic environment. The focus is on conferences or scientific gatherings within four Romanian universities/faculties of economic studies.

Such an analysis is necessary for various reasons. Firstly, the study aims at establishing the degree in which the Romanian academic research is updated in comparison to the European and global research (in other words, we want to establish if the national academic environment follows the external trend in what regards research conducted and disclosed in conferences, or if our system is behindhand, „out-of-date”). Secondly, we focus on determining the economic specializations studies with most interest – especially the accounting’s position in this hierarchy. Another argument at the basis of this demarche, but less important, is the fact that current research in the academic environment could lead to major discoveries in the economic field moreover as today there is the need to globally „reinvent” economy. We mention „economic reinvention” as the world states are strongly affected by the economic crisis and many questions emerge regarding the efficiency of certain economic behaviors. This subject was highly debated upon even within faculties of economic profile, and we are on the mission to determine the key elements of the debates, materialized in the economic fields that teachers, students and other interested parties focus on.

There is still one issue that needs clarification in what regards its relevance to this study: why is accounting influenced by the currently researched themes? Although the current research themes do not focus on accounting, the findings are relevant because of interdisciplinarity i.e. the connection between accounting and other economic fields (especially the financial filed) but also other social sciences (especially politics).

1.1. Objectives. Hypothesis

The paper has the following objectives:

1. Identifying the main research themes adapted to the circumstances in Romania;
2. Establishing the Romanian research themes’ update degree;
3. Establishing accounting’s position within the research themes’ hierarchy.

In order to reach these objectives we established two hypotheses.

H1. The number of conferences held in the past three years has a growing trend, taking into account the increasing changes specific to the field of economics both nationally and globally.

H2. The accounting has a low level position in the research themes' hierarchy; researchers show little interest in it as they are preoccupied with addressing more urgent issues.

1.2. Research methodology

This is an empiric case study, part of mainstream research, as it is focused on research themes adapted to the current situation. According to the mainstream nature, its research objectives are phenomena, processes, current stages and realities. It is based on hypothetico-deductivism as it starts from incipient premises, but also on technical control as quantitative and qualitative analyses are the research techniques used.

The paper was drawn up in numerous stages. Thus, in the first stage we established the research area to four Romanian faculties of economic studies. These faculties are: Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FSEGA), „Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca; Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies (ASE); Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEAA) „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iaşi and Faculty of Economy and Business Administration (FEAA) West University of Timișoara. We identified the conferences, scientific gatherings and workshops that took place in the past three years (2007, 2008 and 2009) at these faculties and universities. We selected from the names of these events the key words (the themes) and the main areas of concern. We further determined the percentage of each field in the total number of fields and the percentage of each theme in the total number of themes. Afterwards we interpreted the results, underlining the present-day themes and the position of accounting subjects in the general hierarchy.

Information regarding the scientific gatherings was collected from the official web sites of the analyzed universities and faculties. Where data was insufficient we resorted to internet search engines in order to find as many academic events as possible. The accuracy of the findings depends upon the update of the web sites and the exhaustively supply of information.

1.3 Literature review

In order for any study to gain value it must be analyzed by as many field researchers as possible. The ideas issued by different specialists may indicate new research directions, may clarify some aspects, and may add value to the initial study. The adequate environment for this type of interactions can be found in conferences, round tables, scientific gatherings.

„Circulate your papers to colleagues and ask them for both substantive and expositional comments. Give the paper in seminars at your school and other institutions before submitting to a journal” (Zimmerman, 1989: 461).

This type of meetings would add value to journals which could include in their review process better elaborated articles, articles valued before submission not just afterwards. Green et al. (2002:155) said „So how should authors maximize the value of the journal review process? They should circulate their papers and give seminars to colleagues to receive constructive criticism before submitting to a journal”.

Hammermech (1992:170) advised young economists to present their papers and circulate them to colleagues; „a presentation can improve your work...present your work at seminars, professional meetings and conferences...do not be embarrassed to send your work to senior people”.

2. Current research themes in specialized articles

After analyzing the conferences held all over the world for the past years, using electronic data bases such as Proquest, Springerlink and Ebscohost we noticed the fact that in the field of economics the stress lays upon regional development, workforce, with frequent references to the unemployment rate and employment opportunities, efficient resource allocation, mitigation of the economic crisis' effects, harmonization, convergence.

2.1 International held conferences

Having in mind the international conferences held in different countries we can identify the current research themes. Thus, at the fourth edition of the World Congress and the 25th Annual Reunion in North America, Portland, Oregon the discussed issues concerned: different approaches to sustainable management resources, natural resources extraction and production of material resources, the correct valuation of the production cycle within an economic entity, accounting material flows, risk valuation. (Information, Decision and Control, 2007).

During this same year an annual conference was held in Westminster, London, UK, regarding the effects of development. The subjects discussed include: the influences that could manifest over the future 30 years of development and the stages of development, which will be the biggest issues of the following 3 decades, which are the thinkers and leaders that envision the direction of development.

Another conference of international nature was held in Atlantic City between the 1st and 3rd of December 2008, and its theme was: The Economic Development of the Workforce. During the debate there were references to: business plans stimulation, usage of renewable sources of energy, the development and control of financial services (NJBIZ, 2008).

In Boston, during the same year, there was a conference on economic stimulants for unemployment, pitfalls and opportunities to finding a job, the unemployment rate and life standard (International Tax and Public Finance, 2008).

As expected, during 2009, the most debated subject concerns the evolution of the economic crisis and the possibilities to mitigate it. Thus, in Bruxelles, The European Economic and Social Committee discussed about the impact of the crisis on each member state. Laurențiu Plosceanu, the President of The Romanian Entrepreneurs Association presented the current situation in Romania in the context of the economic crisis, the Government's anti-crisis plan, its origins and the necessity to update it.

The "International Conference on the Educational Global Crisis" was held in the United Kingdom.

Mostly nowadays, in the context of the current crisis, the analysis on development in different fields is carried on. In this respect there will be a conference on adequate practices regarding the sustainability of certain under-privileged sectors. The conference's themes are: land, water and productivity consolidation in the case of rough rice crops, rice demand, ecological agriculture and the local usage of different breeds but also their impact on the natural resource renewal. The conference will be held within IPB1 (Conference Institutional Center) in Bogor Indonesia between the 7th and the 9th of October 2009.

2.2 National held conferences

The results of the analysis on the faculties mentioned above in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 are shown in Table 1. "Number of scientific gatherings held at the researched universities".

Table no 1. Number of scientific gatherings held at the researched universities

University	Year	2007	2008	2009	TOTAL
ASE		25	20	2	47
FSEGA		3	6	4	13
FEAA IAȘI		8	5	4	17
FEAA TM		2	3	1	6
Total Romanian Universities		38	34	11	83

It is noticeable that the Romanian academic environment shows a remarkable interest for scientific gatherings. Many of the conferences are held at the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies as in Romania regional development is an on-going long-term process, and the center of

the economic, social and political life is still placed in Bucharest. Second place goes to FEAA “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, third FSEGA “Babeș-Bolyai” of Cluj-Napoca, while FEAA West University of Timișoara is the fourth in our hierarchy. The economic specialization in which researchers showed interest along with the main themes of the scientific gatherings are presented in Table 2 “Economic specializations”.

Table no 2. Economic specializations

Field	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Management	7	9.59
Statistics	3	4.11
Econometrics	1	1.37
Finance	19	26.03
International economy	29	39.73
Accounting	5	6.85
Marketing	5	6.85
Macroeconomics	4	5.48
Total occurrences	73	100.00

Each field’s percentage of the total occurrences of the fields:

Percentage = total occurrences of the fields / total occurrences *100

Most scientific demarches are related to management, finances and international economy while accounting is only on the fourth position in what regards the researchers’ interest. For the past few years statistics and econometrics have gained territory as a result of the changes incurred and the new trends of research. Up until four or five years ago speciality papers focused on analyzing the theoretical aspects, the regulations and legislative methodology. Nowadays, quality research implies analysis and interpretation of mathematical, statistical models thus resulting in an interdisciplinarity far more constructive to evolution.

We separated the current research themes into general and specific themes according to Table 3 “Current research themes”.

Table no 3. Current research themes

General themes	Number of occurrences	Percentage
The economic/financial crisis	11	21.15
The European Union	12	23.07
The Integration	5	9.61
The corporative/organizational environment	4	7.69
Statistical modulation	3	5.76
Monetary policies	4	7.69
Financial/Capital Markets	7	1.92
International Finance	2	3.84
Public administration	2	3.84
Public debt	2	3.84
Total general themes	52	100.00
Specific themes	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Payment	1	2.70
Audit	1	2.70
Development	13	25.00
Competitivity	7	18.91
Globalization	3	8.10

Instability	3	8.10
Information	4	10.81
Regulations	5	13.51
Total specific themes	37	100.00

Each theme's percentage of the total occurrences of themes:

Percentage = total occurrences of the fields / total occurrences * 100

It is noticeable that economic development, the European Union and the economic/financial crisis are the most debated subjects. This hierarchy is in accordance with the Romanian academic environment because Romania is mostly interested in sustainability as a member of the European Union. The number of conferences on EU integration held at the faculties from our country between 2007 and 2008 has the highest percentage. By the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 the situation is offset by the subject of the financial crisis.

Themes on accounting are rarely debated. In respect to this there are some conferences on public administration, public debt, payment in the public sector, audit and accounting convergence. The academic environment in Cluj-Napoca deals with the subject of audit and accounting convergence annually within a conference with the same title. The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies debates on public administration in Romania in the context of entering the European Union. The focus of economic research is on the influential factors of the state's incomes and expenses such as the economic crisis or the affiliation to a world-important union. Other interesting subjects are international transactions, capital markets, the social impact of economy, the development of economic efficient models.

3. Conclusions and discussions

The results of this study highlight the idea that scientific research and conferences are currently mostly focused on the global economic-financial crisis. The crisis is indeed one of the main subjects of interest but between 2007 and 2008 the scientific demarches in the Romanian academic environment were mainly concerted with Romania's position in the European Union and the Romanian economic system's alignment to the western system.

In respect to the interpretation of the hypothesis, the first one i.e. "The number of conferences held in the past three years has a growing trend, taking into account the increasing changes specific to the field of economics both nationally and globally" is invalidated by 75%. In the Romanian academic environment there were 83 scientific gatherings – conferences, workshops and research activities. There is a high interest on the part of the Romanian professors and students in academic demarches but this interest is not equally distributed within the Romanian territory as the majority of the event takes place in Bucharest. As the annual evolution of the number of conferences shows there is a growing interest of the academic environment from Cluj-Napoca, Iași and Timișoara in organizing more and more scientific events. However, there is a decrease in the number of conferences held. On the one hand this could be a result of the financial crisis that affects all sectors, including the educational and research areas. On the other hand this can be explained by the growing quality of held conferences as there is a longer period in their succession which enables the studies to be better elaborated with a higher value. This trend can be noticed even at an international scale as renowned universities organize conferences at two, three or four year apart.

Further within this theory it was speculated that Romanian universities replicate the research themes of British universities. This was also infirmed as in the case of Romania there is a high interest for national issues and our country's position as a new member of the European Union. In the second part of the analyzed period the conferences focus on the economic-financial crisis,

but this can also be explained as the crisis reached a global level and economists are interested in this subject at an international level.

The second hypothesis i.e. “The accounting has a low level position in the research themes’ hierarchy; researchers show little interest in it as they are preoccupied with addressing more urgent issues” is fully confirmed. Researchers are not highly interested in accounting. In the Romanian academic environment there are conferences focused on this issue. This is how the conference on financial-accounting audit and accounting convergence was established (FSEGA, Cluj-Napoca). Another subject from the accounting field in accordance with Romania’s integration the European Union was adapting public administration to the European regulations. However, the accounting themes are among the latest positions within the current research themes’ hierarchy.

4. Future research

For the future, an interesting direction for expanding the study would include a detailed analysis of the general and specific accounting themes subject to research. Moreover, a comparison with the situation in other countries could also be interesting. It is a known fact that the United Kingdom sets the directions in scientific research. Numerous economic theories have been issued by British, American or French scientists. In addition, each of these cultures has its own particularity which triggers prolific scientific research.

Another issue which we wish to address in future analyses is the Romanian students’ interest in certain research subjects. Thus, by conducting a survey on a representative we could determine how students value the timely degree of conferences held in the Romanian academic environment. Also, we could identify in this way the interesting themes that could be approached. Using the same survey we could establish if students in Romania consider that universities create the adequate environment for research studies or if, on the contrary, they are tempted to conduct research activities abroad.

These are the current objectives of future research but, of course, they will be adjusted according to the evolution of the Romanian and international economic environment and their future representativeness.

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