

# Editorial

## The sense of publishing in Scopus: The case of Colombian authors of business, Management, and Accounting fields

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The two most important changes of the Colombian research in Administration over the last decade are (1) the publications internationalization, and (2) the creation of PhD degrees (Malaver & López, 2016). Within the number 52 of *Cuadernos de Administración* journal, published in 2016, there are some articles that analyze in depth the recent research tendency in that knowledge field, and they all get to the conclusion that one of the most important changes is the publications trend. Colombian research in Administration has been systematically studied for more than one decade, and now, the systematic analysis of the Colombian research in Accounting has emerged (Macías, 2016), while the national dynamic of international business has been much less studied (Anzo, 2012). In this work, the Scopus publications related to those disciplines are critically analyzed.

The Colombian authors in Business, Administration and Accounting areas have increased the articles publications in Scopus exponentially, over the last decade. In the period 1990-2002, between 1 and 8 articles per year with participation of Colombian authors were published. But in 2003, 18 were disclosed, in 2004, 23 were disclosed, and the number was rising until reaching 107 articles in 2009, 246 in 2014 and 307 articles published in 2015 (Scopus, 2016). By November 2016, 1.729 documents published since the nineties were accumulated. The greater number of articles has been contributed by Universidad Nacional de Colombia (17%),

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the Universidad de Los Andes (16%), the Universidad EAFIT (6%), the Universidad de Antioquia (6%), the Universidad del Valle (5%) and the Pontifica Universidad Javeriana (4%). The other institutions are about 100, but they each contribute less than 3% of the articles.

An increase of this kind seemed to reflect a great maturity reached by Colombian academy in Business, Administration, and Accounting over the last decade, and an aggressive insertion in the international debates. Even, huge contributions by Colombian academy to international discussions for each of these disciplines could be expected. Though, it seems to be that this explosion of publications has been reached in order to get indicators in universities, and not because there is a real involvement by Colombian academicians in the international debates. This editorial defends the hypothesis that the majority of publications of this area in Scopus respond to university requirements, but no sense has been given to the participation in those discussions. That is, the task of publishing in Scopus is done, however, the sense of these publications is wasted.

In this vast area of knowledge there are many fields as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1976) called “scientific field”. For instance, there is the innovation field, the entrepreneurship field, the knowledge management field, the internationalization field, the area of management accounting, among others. Each one is, in Bourdieu’s sense, a field of struggles; that is to say, it is a space where collective knowledge is attempted to be constructed through new proposals that are discussed. These proposals are taken as papers to first level congresses and are postulated to the journals with the highest quartiles of Web of Science (WoS, formerly ISI) or Scopus; there they are discussed both by the first ones who came to the field, who defend positions of power, as by the new members, who in some cases assume “subversive” positions, in Bourdieu’s terms. In each field, agents struggle to acquire or defend a scientific authority, and is there where the boundary of knowledge of each discipline is moved.

Publishing in Scopus journals is supposedly to participate in the discussions of knowledge boundary, it is to enter into the huge leagues in each field, to connect internationally, establishing dialogues between our empirical realities and theoretical and methodological proposals, among worldwide discussions. However, what we are doing is to publish the most of papers in a few number of journals that have three negative features: (1) are in the lowest quartiles, (2) are generic and (3) are regional. What it means is that these journals appear with the lowest levels of citation within Scopus, which, due to their generic classification are not the core of discussion of any particular field, and because they are from Latin America they do not arouse interest beyond the region. These three characteristics mean that the vast majority of articles are not taken into account in any international discussion, that they are ignored, that nobody reads them, that no one quotes them, and that they remain in the margins, despite being registered in Scopus.

Despite an article is high-quality, if it is published on a Q4 journal it will be of less interest; within the training for authors, they are always invited to cite the articles from the highest quartiles (Q1 and Q2), which are closer to the knowledge borderline. Otherwise, if an article on innovation is published on a journal that is not specialized in innovation, no one is going to look for it, anyone who is participating in discussions of innovation will privilege specialized sources in their field. Unfortunately, in Business, Administration, and Accounting areas, Latin journals have not gained prestige in the scientific world, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon, so it is very unlikely that an article published on a regional journal catches attention in the discussions of knowledge boundary. That triple combination makes most Scopus articles in this area play no role in international discussions, remain anonymous, and be completely ignored.

From 1729 documents in this area that appear in Scopus with the participation of Colombian authors, 687 (40%) are published on only four regional journals: 369 on *Información Tecnológica* (Chile), 129 on *Innovar* (Colombia), 114 on *Cuadernos de Administración* (Colombia) and 75 on *Espacios* (Venezuela). The other articles are spread over more than 150 different Scopus journals. As it can be seen in Chart 1, 61% of the articles published on the four main journals, have not received any cite since they were published, 91% have received two cites or less, and none of the articles has been cited at least in ten opportunities in other Scopus publications. If the 1729 articles are sorted from the most to the less cited, the first article from *Cuadernos de Administración* appears at position 209, and the first one from *Innovar* journal appears at position 376. These two Colombian journals are very demanding; it is hard to publish on them and they are in Scopus since 2008, nevertheless, they do play an active role international discussions.

Alternatively, an increasing group of Colombian academicians has used different ways to make part of international discussions. One of them is the professor Julia Clemencia Naranjo from Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Manizales; she has become the most cited Administration author in Scopus, through an article about innovation culture published on *Management Decision* (Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Sanz-Valle, 2011). This article was published in 2011, and it registered in November 2016, 111 cites in Scopus, and 290 cites on Google Scholar; it is about a widely recognized contribution within innovation field. The professor Julia has had an active participation in the Colombian academic ground, and she has had an impact not only through her national publications, but also she has formally reached to influence innovation processes in some Colombian companies.

Chart 1. Citation of articles published on regional journals.

Journal	Total of articles	Citation rate accumulated in Scopus								Publication period
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6-9	10 o más	
Información Tecnológica	369	189	73	55	22	11	8	11	0	2006-2016
Innovar	129	92	26	9	2	0	0	0	0	2008-2016
Cuadernos de Administración	114	73	20	12	5	1	2	1	0	2008-2015
Espacios	75	66	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	2011-2016
Total	687	420	122	82	29	12	10	12	0	2006-2016
% of Total participation	100%	61%	18%	12%	4%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2006-2016

**Source:** own design, based in Scopus (2016).

Using similar strategies, academicians from different cities have reached participating in international discussions. One of those people is the professor Claudia Álvarez, from Universidad EAFIT, she has gained a position within the boundaries discussions in entrepreneurship field (Alvarez, Urbano, Coduras, & Ruiz-Navarro, 2011) and in November 2016 she received an international formal recognition due to her publications impact. Also, there are professors such as María Alejandra González from EAFIT and Juan Fernando Vélez from Institución Universitaria Salazar Herrera, who participate in boundaries of discussions in the entrepreneurial internationalization field (Gonzalez-Perez & Velez-Ocampo, 2014). Professors like Alexander Zúñiga from Universidad San Buenaventura of Cali and Marisol Castillo from the Universidad Santiago of Cali; they are also participating in the boundaries of discussions in the tourism field (Zúñiga-Collazos, Harrill, Escobar-Moreno, & Castillo-Palacio, 2015). Like them, there are other professors who have been able to break the boundaries of those discussions and they are beginning to gain scientific authority in those fields. In most cases, this dynamic has been reached through links with PhD degrees that are actively involved in Anglo-Saxon discussions.

In the accounting case, any Colombian academic is participating in the boundaries of discussions. In Latin America, especially the Mexican professors Luis Felipe Juárez Valdés and Elizabeth Ocampo Gómez stand out. Professor Luis Felipe has published on the most prestigious accounting journal of mainstream in the world: *The Accounting Review* (Swanson, Rees, & Juarez-Valdes, 2003) and the main International Business journal: *Journal of International Business Studies* (Eden, Juarez-Valdes, & Li, 2005). The professor Elizabeth has published on the three main alternative accounting journals: *Accounting, Organizations and Society* (Neu, Ocampo, Graham, & Heincke, 2006); *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* (Neu, Silva, & Ocampo, 2008) and *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* (Neu & Ocampo, 2007). They work on network with colleagues from developed countries where they studied their PhD degrees and they have been in Colombia, sharing their expectations with academicians in the Universidad de Medellín and the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana of Bogotá.

The point of interest is that most of the documents that appear in Scopus are published on journals with very little impact, and that the articles with the international citation are published on extra-regional journals. It is that, “doing the task” of publishing in Scopus does not guarantee to make part of boundary discussions in each field, that there is no collective awareness about the need to participate in the borderline areas of knowledge, and despite the progress, the real international insertion of a very large group of academics who are publishing in Scopus is still pending.

What the Scopus rates reflect, is in line with studies published in Colombia on the recent evolution of research in the area. Some authors stated, for instance, despite the progress, the disciplinary development of administration in Colombia is still a “rudimentary” process, belated two decades in relation to Europe and four decades in relation to the United States (Sanabria, Saavedra, & Smida, 2014, p. 16). This is explained in part by the important level of conceptual heterogeneity and perspectives, which obstruct the existence of consensus between researchers, and because it has not been possible to consolidate a critical mass with sufficient level (Calderón et al., 2010; Gutiérrez, Castaño, & Vivares, 2013).

Although the anti-intellectual and hostile environment to the theory that existed in the 1980s and 1990s was overcome, when Colombian faculties of Administration could be positioned without the need to investigate (Malaver & Lopez, 2016), and when “Elite” research groups have been established in the major cities (Castaño, Gutiérrez, & Lozada, 2012), there are still “suspicions” that much of the research is not rigorous and therefore it cannot be relevant (Martínez & Páez, 2016, p.106). While in the developed countries, research in the area has been recently focused on disciplinary development, theory and rigor as a source of excellence, in Colombia the professional, and the empirical research aimed at solving entrepreneurial problems is being emphasized, but with “poor” results (Malaver & López, 2016, Martínez & Páez, 2016).

The possible ways to advance in these discussions are diverse. For instance, over the last 15 years, different types of “conversations” between published articles on the main Latin American journals of Administration have been established (Ocampo-Salazar, Gentilin, & Gonzales-Miranda, 2016). In the region, an entire international field on “organizational studies” is emerging, differentiated from what has been built in other territories (Gonzales-Miranda, 2014), but at the same time, this identity has points of connection with European and North American organizational studies (Sanabria, Saavedra & Smida, 2013). In international Business the topics that lead the field, the object of study itself, the currents, the most influential actors, and the ways to be explored are identified (Anzo, 2012). In accounting, the most attractive regional efforts are identified (Macías & Moncada, 2011), the challenges for journals (Macías, 2013) and new hopes were born with two specialized journals that have recently entered Scopus: *Contaduría y Administración* from UNAM of Mexico and *Actualidad Contable* FACES from Universidad de los Andes of Venezuela; with these two journals it is necessary to make collective efforts to integrate them into the boundary discussions.

There is some progress in the construction of meaning, a still emerging collective construction that is characterized by the concern from academicians in three fundamental topics: (1) academic programs and training; (2) scientific production and research (3) administration and management of Schools. The field has evolved, it has been shaped, and it has advanced in a construction of critical, emancipatory, transformative and anticolonialist sense (in the epistemological sense of the term). This critical sense has at least three features: (1) it questions the random adoption of foreign patterns, (2) it defends the development of own models, adapted to local organizational realities and (3) it tries to diminish the local competition between institutions by the number of students. The “critical sense” present in the works is a “latent basis”, but still “invisible” in most of the actors; in all senses, it is important as a starting point for the creation of a new dynamic (Sanabria et al., 2014).

In the several papers, it is concluded that much progress has been made in the last decade, but that the time spent is short and the experience and learning are still minimal. In one of the works, it is noticed that “there is still a long way to go to build a consolidated administrative discipline” (Sanabria et al., 2014, p.19). In another work, it is stated that the advance has been reached due to “institutional pressures” from Colciencias, the Ministry of Education, the rankings and the international accreditations, but “the process of internationalization of publications is still in its infancy (...) the challenges to consolidate and expand publication on international journals of higher quality are huge”(Malaver, 2016, p. 66).

It is possible that local publications lose institutional support very early, because each time they make less real contributions to publishing institutions. Latin American journals are being used only as a “platform” for publishing later on European and North American journals, thus, publishing on Q1 has become almost an “existential” goal for researchers (Malaver, 2016, p. 63). If publishing on regional journals makes no sense for Colombian authors, even when the journals are in Scopus, What future can those journals expect and the support to their institutions? The foreign institutional demands have achieved that, Latin American authors increase their participation in Scopus exponentially in the last decade, but the benefits and sense of the publications will lead regional journals to becoming less relevant in these dynamics.

In summary, the data presented here reveal three patterns of Colombian publications in the area of Business, Administration and Accounting in Scopus. First of all, most articles are being published on quite important journals locally (the best ones), but they have a very low international impact, even null in most cases. Second, the articles with the greatest impact, which do participate in major international discussions, are published on extra-regional journals. Finally, articles that have reached an impact are published mostly in co-authorship with academicians from developed countries, and, in most cases, field work has been done outside Colombia.

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