

TEZĂ DE ABILITARE

Domeniul: Administrarea Afacerilor

Excelență în afaceri prin calitate, inovare și sisteme integrate de management

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Abstract

Organizations increasingly compete in a complex environment, so an accurate understanding of their goals and methods to achieve those goals is vital. Quality, innovation, and quality management systems are of crucial importance in the modern business environment, regardless of the field of activity. Those directly influence organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and a company's ability to remain competitive in the market. To remain competitive and in the environment of continuous change, any organization must innovate and improve systematically, by understanding, balancing, and effectively managing the needs and expectations not only of customers, but also of stakeholders, thus models of excellence becoming benchmarks for many of these companies. More and more, technological progress, globalization, and increasing customer requirements and education levels have determined companies not to stop only at implementing a quality management system, integrating several management systems alongside the quality management system becoming a current practice at the level of organizations. Companies decide to improve their approach to environmental aspects and to employee health and safety, thus also responding to sustainability dimensions (environmental, social, and economic). Due to digitization and technological development,

organizations are preoccupied with developing management systems for cyber and cyber security, and the risks and challenges of the last period (if we refer only to climate change, energy dependence, pandemic, war, geo-economic fragmentation) induce the need to implement energy management systems, risk, and business continuity. Finally, the focus is increasingly on effective and sustainable human resource management, which ensures human resources and human capital that respond to current needs and changes induced by technological development and changes in the external environment of companies.

Innovation is not only vital for growth, but also an essential condition for sustaining it in a highly competitive market, as companies and nations must innovate to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. Undoubtedly, continuous improvement and significant innovations are crucial for any organization operating in competitive, global, and highly dynamic markets where connectivity and limited resources are rapidly changing environmental conditions. In the last two decades, innovation and innovation management have become attractive fields of study for researchers who have tried to define, classify, and investigate their impact on the performance of organizations, especially due to their practical relevance.

The paper includes and discusses the most important scientific achievements in the research field that highlight the fulfillment of the standards required for habilitation, the plan and directions of university career development, as well as the bibliographic references used to substantiate their own scientific research papers. Thus, the thesis is structured in three sections that provide an overview of the candidate's research and teaching career.

In the first section of the paper are presented the main results of the research, structured in two chapters: one dedicated to articles published in the field of Quality and Quality Management Systems, and the second dedicated to articles published in the field of Sustainability and Performance through Management Systems Integration.

In the first chapter of the first section, the results of research structured on three subchapters are presented: Continuous improvement of quality management systems by applying specific methods and tools, quality, and excellence in higher education, and ensuring effective management of human resources in the context of digital transformation and current challenges.

The research related to the subchapter Continuous improvement of quality management systems by applying specific methods and tools was published in 2 articles in journals indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge with absolute nonzero influence score, a study in a collective volume published by an international publishing house (Springer), 1 article in specialized journals indexed in international databases, and 8 articles presented at international conferences with indexed volume in ISI Web of Knowledge. The concerns regarding the continuous improvement of quality management systems by applying specific methods and tools include topics such as the application of specific tools and methods to quality management and TQM for the decision-making subsystem of an organization from the perspective of extending services / processes such as Quality Function Deployment QFD and the EFQM excellence model, Balance Scorecard, and EFQM for the development of a Project Scorecard that allows organizations effectively manage their project portfolio or Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA) for efficient risk management. Therefore, the article *A new entrepreneurial decision-making support framework for assessing business line correlations* (Amfiteatru Economic, 2015)

proposes a decision-making support algorithm that supports entrepreneurs in deciding whether initiating a new business direction (as part of the diversification strategy) is attractive. The article *Developing a project scorecard to measure the performance of project management in relation to the EFQM excellence model* (Amfiteatru Economic, 2017) presents the possibilities of adapting and operationalizing a project scorecard for SMEs, adapted from the Balance Scorecard, as a control approach to measure the monetary contribution of the results of these projects and for an effective management of the project portfolio in an organization. The article *Risk Management Methods: FMEA and its influence on risk handling costs*, (2019) presents and evaluates a risk matrix model applicable to any organizational process or field of activity using three attributes: probability of occurrence, consequence, and detection, while the article *Increasing operational efficiency through effective measurements of outsourced performances* (2018) proposes a combined risk analysis method that highlights in detail the full operational risk of each outsourced activity, enabling companies to improve the use and application of KPIs and evaluate their contracts against operational performance.

In the second sub-chapter, Quality, and excellence in higher education, some of the research results conducted during the doctoral period are presented. These results were published in three books at Sedcom Publishing House Iasi, 1 book chapter published by a Springer publishing house, 3 articles published in journals indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge with nonzero AIS, 2 articles published in journals indexed in international databases, 3 articles published in the volumes of international conferences with volume indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge. The main results of this period refer to the use of benchmarking as a tool for achieving sustainable success in higher education, the use of indicator systems related to the efficiency of educational processes that allow the hierarchy of offers, but also the impact of knowledge management in sustainable higher education institutions (*Study of Knowledge Management Impact on Sustainable Higher Education Institutions*, 2022). The article *Sustainable success in higher education by sharing the best practices as a result of benchmarking process* (Amfiteatru Economic, 2011) proposes the development of a qualitative hierarchical model for Romanian universities and, at the same time, the promotion of benchmarking as a useful tool for comparing performance between institutions. *Descriptive and multidimensional indicators for ordering educational offers* (Economic Computation and Economic Cybernetic Studies and Research, 2009) proposes a ranking of educational offers offered by 9 universities in Romania, according to scores calculated based on graduates' answers to questions investigating workplace adaptation, professional satisfaction, quality, and usefulness of acquired knowledge, while *Ordering educational offers using a model of acquired competencies* (Economic Computation and Economic Cybernetic Studies and Research, 2007) presents a method of ordering educational offers according to scores, based on an input-output model of competences acquired during the educational process.

The third subchapter presents research on possible ways to improve human resources management in the context of digital transformation and current challenges. These research results were presented in 1 article published in the journal indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge with non-zero AIS and 2 articles published in the volumes of international conferences with indexed volume in ISI Web of Knowledge. The main results of this period refer to the factors that influence the preference of employees to work in the telework system and the methods for

evaluating employee performance in the context of the challenges of digital transformation. The article *How Digitalization, Work-Family Balance, and Work Efficiency Can Influence Employees' Preferences for Teleworking in the Future* (Inzinerine Ekonomika-Engineering Economics, 2023) analyze the perceptions of Romanian employees on the very complex issues involved in teleworking: the ease/difficulty of adopting new ICT tools and technologies; impact on work efficiency; on work-life balance and on the physical and mental health of employees. The research explores all these associations and identifies differences in perception determined by gender, age, education level, family status, industry, and the size of the organization in which they work. The article *Study on methods for evaluating employee performance in the context of digitization* (2020) analyzes, in the context of digitization, the advantages and disadvantages of goal-based assessment and 360-degree evaluation, as well as their impact on the performance of the organization.

In the second chapter of the first section, the results of research on Sustainability and performance through the integration of management systems, structured on three subchapters are presented: Measuring and improving the performance of organizations that have implemented an integrated management system, Innovation management and developing innovation capacity to increase competitiveness and Innovation and energy efficiency: integration of renewable energies for economic development Sustainable.

The research results related to the subchapter Measuring and improving the performance of organizations that have implemented an integrated management system were published in 3 articles in journals indexed in international databases, and 3 articles presented at international conferences with indexed volume in ISI Web of Knowledge. The concerns regarding the performance and sustainability of organizations that have implemented an integrated management system include topics such as identifying a set of performance indicators related to integrated management systems in SMEs (article *Performance Indicators Used by SMEs in Romania, Related to Integrated Management Systems*, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2014), implementation of integrated management systems, such as Information Security Management System, Business Continuity Management System, Innovation Management System, and Environment Management System using methodologies and tools for continuous improvement and resilience such as Agile (article *Information Security Management System and Cyber Security Strategy Implementation in the context of SCRUM*, 2021) or Six Sigma (*Application of Six Sigma Tools for Improvement of Information Security Management System Study*, 2017). The article *Performance Indicators Used by SMEs in Romania, Related to Integrated Management Systems*, analyzes the implementation stage of a management system in small and medium-sized enterprises and, at the same time, identifies the performance indicators that are used for this purpose.

In the second subchapter, Innovation Management and Innovation Capacity Development for Increasing Competitiveness, there are presented the research results published 1 book chapter published by a Springer publishing house, 2 articles published in journals indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge with nonzero AIS, 3 articles published in the volumes of international conferences with indexed volume in ISI Web of Knowledge. The main results of this period refer to the use of QFD as a tool for developing a model for assessing organizational innovation capacity, the influence of national cultural differences in terms of innovation capacity of

European Union countries, and also product innovation management for sustainable business. The article *A study on the relationship between cultural dimensions and innovation performance* in the European Union countries (Applied Economics, 2020) aims to analyze all 28 current countries of the European Union based on EIS and Hofstede data – focusing on the national cultural dimension and how innovations can be more promising early in the process with regard to individual culture. This EU28-wide analysis should subsequently provide a deeper understanding of how to form teams and establish the ecosystem to lead the organization successfully through innovation processes. The study *Anwendung der Quality Function Deployment (QFD) Method zur Entwicklung eines Bewertungsmodells der organisationalen Innovationsfähigkeit* (2021) proposes a tool that can help an organization evaluate its current innovation performance, then grow, and sustain it. The study *A review of the literature on product innovation management in the context of organizational sustainable development* (Amfiteatru Economic, 2019) addresses sustainable development through product innovation from the perspective of organizations. The main objective of this research is to identify whether there is a relationship between requirements related to the need for innovation, in particular product innovation, and the increasingly current requirements related to the sustainable development of organizations.

The third sub-chapter presents research on innovation and energy efficiency: integrating renewable energies for sustainable economic development. These research results were presented in 1 book chapter published by a Shaker Verlag publishing house, 2 articles published in journals indexed in international databases and 6 articles published in the volumes of international conferences with indexed volume in ISI Web of Knowledge. The main results on this topic relate to the influence of supply chain decarbonization for the energy sector and the legal obligations for companies in Germany regarding energy auditing to increase energy efficiency.

The article *Energy transition on the horizon: Highlights and lowlights within the power energy sector for supply chain decarbonization* (2022) makes a critical analysis of commitments to decarbonize supply chains, with a focus on the energy sector, based on international business experts and literature. The articles *Study on SMEs interest in energy efficiency in Germany* (2019) analyze to what extent the exemption from legal obligation leads companies in Germany to deal with the issue of energy efficiency, while the article *A study of the knowledge of the legal obligation of public authorities to serve as a model in the field of energy efficiency* (2018) examines to what extent companies in Germany involving public authorities fulfill their legal obligation to carry out energy audits and act as role models.

In the second section of the paper, the stages taken in the professional education and teaching career of the candidate are presented. The courses held by the candidate are presented, especially those from the study programs of the Faculty of Business and Tourism. In terms of scientific contribution, the main achievements are listed, consisting of books and book chapters published as coauthors in national and international publishing houses, articles indexed in Web of Knowledge with absolute nonzero influence score, articles published at international conferences with volumes indexed in Web of Knowledge – Conference Proceedings, articles published in national and international journals indexed in international databases, external international conferences (other than those indexed in Web of Knowledge – Conference

Proceedings). The impact of these publications can also be analyzed in terms of citations in Web of Knowledge and Scopus indexed articles. The last part of the second section presents the candidate's academic career development plan, presenting the research objectives and didactic objectives.

The third section of the thesis includes numerous bibliographic sources that have substantiated the theoretical bases of the research presented in this paper and cover the vast issues of the areas, which are useful both for documentation in carrying out the teaching activity and for new research directions.