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On the compliance of a modern scientific journal with international quality standards

The article considers the issue concerning the degree of compliance of a modern scientific publication with international quality standards using the example of the scientific journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast”. The authors have introduced the concept “international quality standard of a scientific journal”, and have given its definition. They have analysed the journal’s issues for 2013, revealed the degree of its compliance with international quality standards, and identified certain goals and objectives for the “development” of the journal in 2014.

International quality standard of a scientific journal, “development” of a journal, questionnaire survey, Scopus, RSCI, impact factor.



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Some key decisions on reforming the system for training the specialists of higher academic qualifications have been adopted and are being implemented in the current year. The website of the Higher Attestation Commission under the Ministry of Education and Science of the

Russian Federation contains the draft order on the approval of the Regulations for forming the list of peer-reviewed scientific titles that publish the main research findings of dissertations for a candidate’s or doctor’s degree. If this document is approved, the existing requirements for serial

research titles proposed for inclusion in the Higher Attestation Commission list (VAK list) will be revised considerably.

In the light of the above, the issue concerning the degree of compliance of modern domestic scientific journals with international quality standards becomes especially relevant. This article considers this issue on the example of the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast”.

It should be noted that the concept of “international quality standard of the scientific journal” does not exist as such. There are several more or less homogenous requirements that the largest foreign databases set out for scientific periodicals. In accordance with the current criteria for inclusion of scientific publications in the VAK list, a journal is automatically included in this list provided that the journal meets the following minimum requirement: it has been registered with an authoritative foreign database. Taking into account this fact, we consider it possible to introduce the notion “international quality standard of the scientific journal”. Under this term we understand the compliance of the journal with the requirements of foreign and national databases set out for scientific periodicals.

In this article we take as a basis the requirements to the titles that are suggested for inclusion in the Scopus database.

In order to structure the analysis of the degree of compliance of the scientific journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” with international quality standards, the specified requirements have been grouped according to the principle of thematic community in three major blocks:

Block 1. Compliance with the requirements of scientific nature of publications.

1.1. Existence of peer review.

1.2. Relevance of published articles to the remit of the journal.

1.3. Rigorous system of selection of submitted manuscripts.

1.4. Membership of prominent researchers from different countries and Russia’s regions in the journal’s editorial council and editorial board.

1.5. “Geographic diversity of authors”.

Block 2. Compliance with execution requirements.

2.1. Compliance with bibliographic criteria.

2.1.1. Assigning of the UDC and LBC indices to each published article.

2.1.2. List of references in the Roman alphabet in each article.

2.2. Compliance with the adopted requirements for the structuring of articles.

2.2.1. A structured abstract translated into the English language in the volume of about 1800 printed characters for each article.

2.2.2. Keywords translated into English.

2.2.3. Information about the authors translated into English.

Block 3. Compliance with the requirements of openness of the title.

3.1. English-language site of the journal.

3.2. Free Internet access to the journal’s full-text articles.

3.3. Placement of the journal’s issues in domestic and foreign databases and network journal indices.

3.4. Feedback from the readers.

The analysis of the degree of compliance of the scientific journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” with international quality standards showed the following.

All the manuscripts submitted to the editorial office undergo obligatory preliminary examination. An authoritative scientist, who is the member of the Journal’s Editorial Board, is chosen as an expert. Academic novelty of the article, the originality of the author’s research findings, and their relevance to the remit of the journal are assessed at this stage.

If the conclusion is positive, the manuscript is sent for review. In accordance with the Peer Review Regulations of the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” dated May 17, 2011, approved by ISEDT RAS Director, all the submitted manuscripts are subject to mandatory double peer review.

As of December 2013, the Journal’s Editorial Board consists of 23 established Russian and foreign researchers, including RAS Academicians and Corresponding Members, Doctors of Sciences, Directors of RAS Institutes, prominent representatives of foreign science. The geographic distribution of the Editorial Board members is quite extensive. For instance, among 23 scientists comprising the Editorial Board of the Journal, 15 are the Russians and 8 – foreigners. The “Russian part” of the Editorial Board is represented by

the scientists from three Federal Districts and two Federal Cities; the “foreign part” – by researchers from four foreign countries.

The Editorial Board includes such prominent Russian and foreign scientists as RAS Academicians V.L. Makarov, V.V. Ivanter, V.V. Okrepilov, A.I. Tatarkin, Academicians of the NAS of Belarus P.A. Vityaz, P.G. Nikitenko, Professors J. Sapir, M. Kivinen, Zhang Shuhua, Wu Enyuan.

The geographic distribution of the authors publishing in the Journal is also quite diverse. For example, 87 articles were published in 2013, among which 73 articles by the Russian authors and 14 – by foreign scientists (*tab. 1*). The geographic distribution of the Russian authors is rather extensive and includes five Federal Districts and two Federal Cities. Foreign scientists, whose articles have been

Table 1. Geographic distribution of the authors, who published their articles in the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” in 2013

| Total number of publications | Country of residence of the author | City/region/okrug | Settlements | Number of published articles | Total number of published articles |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 87 | Russia | Northwestern Federal District | Apatity | 10 | 49 |
| | | | Arkhangelsk | 1 | |
| | | | Vologda | 25 | |
| | | | Murmansk | 1 | |
| | | | Petrozavodsk | 2 | |
| | | | Syktvykar | 10 | |
| | | Central FD | Kostroma | 1 | 1 |
| | | Volga FD | Izhevsk | 1 | 8 |
| | | | Perm | 3 | |
| | | | Saransk | 1 | |
| | | | Ufa | 3 | |
| | | Siberian FD | Kemerovo | 2 | 3 |
| | | | Krasnoyarsk | 1 | |
| | Ural FD | Yekaterinburg | 2 | 2 | |
| | Federal City | Moscow | 5 | 5 | |
| | Federal City | Saint Petersburg | 5 | 5 | |
| | Foreign countries | Azerbaijan | Baku | 1 | 1 |
| Belarus | | Minsk | 7 | 7 | |
| Kazakhstan | | Almaty | 1 | 1 | |
| China | | Nanchang | 3 | 3 | |
| Poland | | Kraków | 1 | 1 | |
| Ukraine | | Kyiv | 1 | 1 | |

published in the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” in 2013, are citizens of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, China, Poland, and Ukraine.

A significant amount of all the “domestic publications” in the Journal belongs to the scientists living in the cities of the Northwestern Federal District (67.1%). Half of all the “foreign publications” belongs to the colleagues from Belarus (50%).

Thus, the Journal meets all the necessary academic criteria, which is indirectly confirmed by its inclusion in the RF VAK List.

The next criterion of compliance with international quality standards is the title’s compliance with the adopted execution requirements.

Currently each article published in the Journal is assigned the UDC and LBC bibliographic description indices, and starting from the first issue of 2014 each article will be provided with references in the Roman alphabet, and with a structured abstract in Russian and English up to one page of text, keywords, and information about the author; each article will be assigned a DOI. Besides, since 2009, according to the decision of the Journal’s co-founder institutes, the printed English version of the Journal has been issued. All of the above will soon bring the title into conformity with international execution requirements.

As of December 2013, the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” meets most of the criteria of openness of the title. Full-text electronic versions of articles and all other published materials are available through free access on the official website of the Journal in the Internet (<http://esc.vsc.ac.ru>) and in the Scientific Electronic Library eLIBRARY.ru, which is the basis for the information-analytical system RSCI (Russian Science Citation Index). The process of creating the English version of the Journal’s website is currently at its final stage.

Information about the articles published in the Journal regularly goes into the VINITI RAS database, international information systems Ulrich’s periodicals directory, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar. In 2014 it is planned to register the title with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

The criterion of the availability of feedback from the readers is not included in the list of official requirements of international databases to scientific periodicals. However, we find it expedient to include this criterion in the list, as it appears to be a vital tool for monitoring the Journal’s quality.

Feedback from the readers, the members of the Editorial Council and the Editorial Board of the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” is provided by annual questionnaire survey.

93 respondents took part in the latest survey of April 2013, among them: 11 members of the Editorial Council and 82 scientific associates (including ISEDT RAS researchers).

The responses were systematized and analyzed. Some of the results of the survey are given below.

For instance, 78.5% of the respondents evaluated the changes in the Journal as positive, 14% found it difficult to answer, 7.5% did not notice any significant changes.

The level of materials published in the Journal was assessed as high and sufficiently high by 92.5% of the respondents, and as average – by 7.5% of the respondents.

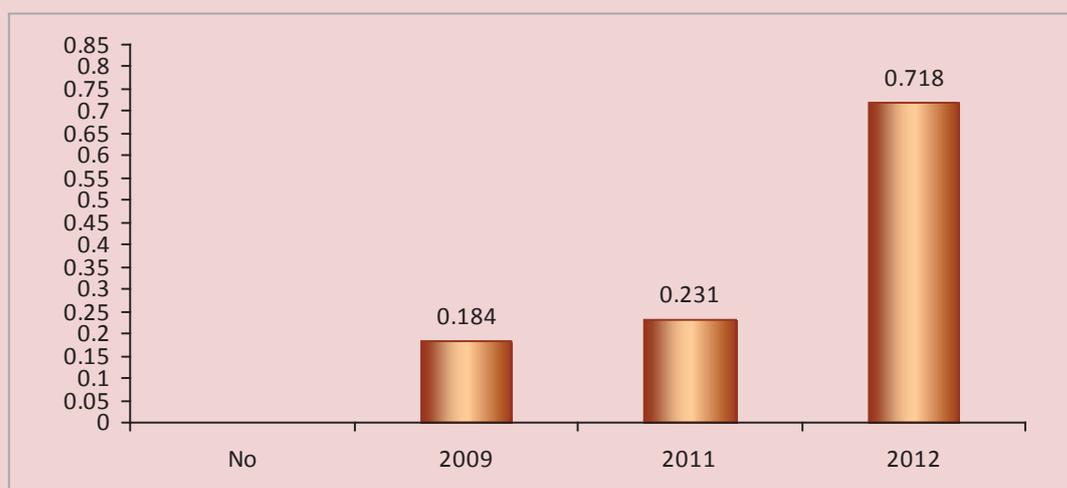
The survey shows that the articles published in the sections “Branch-wise and regional economy”, “Social development”, and “From the chief editor” arouse the greatest interest among readers (8.7 points, 8.5 points and 8.4 points, respectively).

Currently the journal “Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast” is published in four versions: Russian-language printed, Russian-language electronic, English-language printed, and English-language electronic.

Table 2. Respondents' answers to the question: "In your opinion, how much in demand are the various versions of the Journal?", as a percentage of the total number of respondents

| Answer option | Version of the Journal | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Russian-language printed | Russian-language electronic | English-language printed | English-language electronic |
| Very much in demand | 34.4 | 46.2 | 5.4 | 10.8 |
| In demand | 55.9 | 44.1 | 25.8 | 43.0 |
| Not much in demand | 5.4 | 4.3 | 44.1 | 28.0 |
| Not in demand at all | 0.0 | 1.1 | 18.3 | 10.8 |

Data on the impact factor of the journal "Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast" in the Russian Science Citation Index in 2008–2012



The Russian-language printed and electronic versions remain the most popular (*tab. 2*).

Filling in the questionnaire, the respondents made a number of suggestions on the improvement of the Journal's quality.

According to the respondents, it would be expedient to add such sections as "Economic and social forecasts", "Articles of economists from developing countries", "Institutional environment of regional development", "Civil society", "Personality capital", "Energy efficiency issues".

Speaking about the prospects of bringing the Journal to a higher level, the respondents proposed to use Internet resources more extensively, to carry out information and advertising activities with other economic scientific journals in Russia and the CIS, to

expand the range of authors and attract the leading domestic and foreign specialists in the field of social sciences as authors of the articles.

Taking into account the opinions of the Journal's readers makes it possible to promptly adjust the Journal's "development" policy implemented by its Editorial Council. This practice has a most positive effect on improving the qualitative characteristics of the Journal. For example, the improvements include the increase in the number of references to the articles published in the Journal and, consequently, the increase in the Journal's impact factor (*figure*). The figure below shows the change in the Journal's impact factor for the period from 2008 to 2012. The impact factor for 2013 is not given due to the lack of appropriate data in RSCI.

The data about the impact factor of the Journal and its place in the general list of economic publications registered with RSCI are not fixed and can be recalculated annually if the number of citations increases, and new titles are added.

The analysis of opinions expressed by the survey participants made it possible to set out new tasks for the Journal's "development". The solution of these tasks in the short term will bring the title in full compliance with international quality standards.

We can conclude that as of December 2013 the scientific journal "Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast" fully meets the requirements for scientific publications, in the greater degree the requirements of execution and openness. In the coming 2014 the Journal's Editorial Council is planning to implement the

headline goal of the Journal's "development" – to bring it to full compliance with international quality standards, to prepare and submit an application to suggest the title for inclusion in Scopus.

To achieve this goal it is important to solve the following tasks.

- Provide references in the article in the Roman alphabet.
- Publish a structured abstract of the article in Russian and English up to one page of text, keywords, and information about the author.
- Assign DOI to the Journal. Assign DOI to each published article beginning from 2014.
- Complete the development of the English version of the Journal's website.
- Register the publication with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).