



The 6th International Student Research Conference 2021 – Editors' Note

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Abstract

This Special Issue provides a platform for research-based learning and the valuable output of these approaches. Research-based learning is a learning / teaching format in higher education that is better suited than most other to prepare students for the challenges of our digital knowledge economy. The content of the issue confirms that the students are highly interested in recent economic policy issues, especially regarding the pandemic, digitalization, and institutional developments. The selected papers tackle a wide range of topics including tax evasion and digitization, corporate strategies during the pandemic, the sharing economy, and moral development and corruption. With this publication we would like to point out that it is important to provide publication possibilities for student research in standard academic journals.

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This Special issue is dedicated to research-based learning and brings together the best papers of the 6th International Student Research Conference held at Zeppelin University in April 2021. The previous conferences took place at the universities in Oldenburg, Bochum, Berlin, Kiel, and Stuttgart (Hohenheim). In addition to continuing the series of conferences, it was our aim to enhance the international scope of this student research conference series. The academic research has traditionally been a domain of senior researchers accompanied possibly with their most advanced students, who were about to complete their post-graduate education and follow the ways of their supervisors. While this system has many advantages, it can also be criticized that it makes the research closed to new ideas. The academic career depends too much on the participation in well-established schools, which are not often criticized. Bowles and Carlin (2020) show that there is a large difference between, on the one hand, the students' interests and expectations and, on the other hand, the content of introductory courses in economics. One possible way how to deal with this contradiction is to include undergraduate students more intensively to the current economic research and provide them possibility for discussion of their first research attempts with the well-established authorities in the field. This approach builds on the longer tradition of the numerous best-thesis awards, which however usually did not receive much attention behind the juries evaluating them.

Bowyer et al. (2022) point out that research-based learning opens up the possibility for students to pursue individual questions and thus give their curricula an individual specialization. Further, it offers students the opportunity to develop research skills and significantly expand the depth and breadth of their learning experience. Willison and O'Regan (2007) advocate that a lifelong learning endeavor is created from developing research skills through research output. Wessels et al. (2020) further conclude that research-based learning provides an effective instructional format for enhancing research knowledge as well as research-related uncertainty tolerance. But there is another side to research-based learning: The students are not yet pre-determined like experienced researchers and therefore always come up with exciting and fresh questions. Of course, it is also the task of the supervisors to accompany the methodical elaboration of the research and to steer it in a concise direction.

For sure, none of us had expected a pandemic. Nevertheless, we managed to set up a virtual conference that allowed as much formal and informal exchange as possible on virtual pages developed specifically for this event. Against this background, it was a special pleasure to see nearly 80 presentations by student researchers from roughly 20 countries worldwide at the ISRC this spring. The spectrum of the presented work ranged from broad policy topics over quantitative economics to experimental trials. From these presentations, an essence of the best research projects presented has made it into this Special Issue. At this point we would like to thank the reviewers for their fruitful comments. Further thanks go to Aynur Erdogan, Head of Student Research at Zeppelin University, for her support and the realization of the conference. And, last but not least, Mihai Mutascu, Editor of the *Economic Research Guardian*, for making it possible to publish student research at such a high scientific level.

Similar to Bowles and Carlin (2020), the content of the issue confirms that the students are highly interested in recent economic policy issues, especially on the pandemic, digitalization and institutional developments. The individual papers are related to different types of the research projects, including bachelor thesis (Nicola Tretter), master thesis (Christina Strango), research project at the bachelor (Jenny Gossen) and master studies (the team of students from Peru). Research supervisors have also been included at various stages of research and publication. All papers focus on current challenges and provide interesting and important implications for practitioners as well as other researchers. *Cristina Strango* investigates whether the digitalization of public services might help to reduce Tax Evasion. She uses panel data from the EU-27 countries and applies GMM-system models to investigate the relationship. She comes to the conclusion that some U-shaped relation is observable and derives policy implications, especially for Eastern European countries.

Florian Horkey, *Nicola Tretter* and *Jarko Fidrmuc* address the question of how pre-crisis obstacles of enterprises might determine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. They use survey data of the World Bank Enterprise Surveys and apply several regression models. In their conclusion they find a negative impact of financial pre-crises obstacles and a positive impact of an innovation approach during the crisis. It is confirmed that the crisis start the process of creative destruction, but the changes tend to be slow due to the financial restrictions of the entrepreneurial sector.

Jennifer Gossen and *Fabian Reck* analyze the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sharing economy, especially focusing on Airbnb. They use monthly data on Airbnb listings, investigating them using probit models. With their results, they show that the pandemic crisis exhibits strong effects on the sharing economy, leading to a switch from short-term to long-term options. These conclusions provide insights for policy makers as well as for private entrepreneurs in the housing market.

Finally, *Melissa Sisniegas Pajuelo, Leopoldo Best Mejía, Fernando Saavedra Bardalez, Karla Caldas Marqués* and *Mateo Peralta Maceda* investigate anti-corruption policies and the level of moral development of in Peru. They apply a Defining Issues Test (DIT-SF) to 87 law students, identifying that the level of moral development is weaker than one would hope from law students. They conclude, that especially for the fight against corruption, policy makers should focus on moral development in higher education.

This unusual project provided us also an opportunity for an intensive cooperation with motivated and talented students from various universities in the specific time of the pandemic. In We could witness the further achievements of all involved students who have been progressing to more advanced stages of economic education. This direct proof through performance provide motivation for similar research projects including undergraduate students. Therefore, we would like to invite researchers at all levels of academic career to support and directly participate in similar projects.

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