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# LEAN ACCOUNTING – BY WHEN IN ROMANIA?

Literature  
review

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## Keywords

Lean accounting  
Lean manufacturing  
Lean philosophy  
Lean production  
Value stream

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## JEL Classification

M19, M49

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## Abstract

*The research is fundamental for the technical progress; its aim is to ensure the visibility of a new concept appeared worldwide – “lean thinking” which could be successfully implemented by Romanian companies too. The article makes a review of the specialized literature regarding this new concept and analyses the evolution of the publication of articles based on the following key words: lean accounting, lean manufacturing, lean philosophy, lean production and value stream. Also, it presents the stage of publishing specialized articles by Romanian authors or in Romanian magazines indexed in international databases.*

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of Romanian economy has entered a new stage in the period of the '90s. If up until then the entire economy was working at a centralized level, the state being the sole holder of companies, after the revolution from 1989 Romania passed from communism to capitalism trying to reduce the differences between it and the developed countries by implementing a market economy based on competitiveness. Even if the first steps towards this goal may be considered to be shy in the 25 years from that moment, the Romanian companies have learned what it means to be competitive and how one can maintain itself on the market.

Although the evolution of the Romanian economy has been a favorable one, the differences from the economy of European Union are still significant. This can be observed in an indicator relevant for the economy of any country: work productivity. According to Eurostat statistics the work productivity in Romania is 6 times smaller than the European average, the level of productivity being of only 15% from the average productivity of the economy from euro zone.

It is clear that the Romanian companies have a technological handicap, but the general and sustainable increase in productivity and of the competitiveness of the Romanian economy, can take place only with the efficiency of the management and technological processes from each company.

In general, the Romanian companies want to increase the work productivity by obtaining better results resorting to low wages, fewer employees and by resource diminution. We agree that each improvement implies cost reduction but this has to be made gradually and correlated with income. So, it is very important that the wages to depend on the obtained performances (individual and team performances) and depending on work results. Lowering the number of employees doesn't necessarily mean that the company is more competitive, it simply means that it's adjusting the production costs. The employees must be stimulated, they have to be used where they are at their best, have them have activities that take out their entire creative capacity. The reduction of employees has to be the last solution for cost reduction.

The era of mass production vanished; now there are needed flexible companies which can deliver the personalized products in a timely manner in order to satisfy the demand change (European Commission – ManuFuture a vision for 2020).

All these demands imposed by the changes on the market are to be found in a new production concept based on Lean philosophy among whose advantages we can find short execution and product delivery time, lower consumption of resources, flexibility to market demands, products requested

by clients of a superior quality. Fornasiero et al (2009) recommends *lean* as being an approach by which companies react fast to market change, coping with the turbulent environment.

Like we are going to see next, internationally, the specialized literature is rich in what concerns this concept; in Romania there are only a few approaches regarding *lean*.

The main advantage of *lean accounting* is the fact that by simple methods of obtaining data, it transforms them into valuable information and generates indicators which transpose the impact of improvements over the company's results.

Lean Accounting:

- ✓ clearly identifies the financial impact of implementing the operational improvements;
- ✓ reduces the costs generated by the actual accounting system;
- ✓ delivers concise information in a way that allows them to stay at the basis of decisions for increasing results;
- ✓ motivates the implementation of long term continuous improvement;
- ✓ eliminates the loses generated by current accounting and controls the costs (keeps the costs under control);
- ✓ improves the quality of the accounting service.

## 2. Research methodology

For the scientific knowledge existent in the targeted research area we realized a quantitative research using Google Academic where we watched, globally and in time, the characteristics of researches published regarding *lean* concepts, research made after the following terms: *lean accounting*, *lean manufacturing*, *lean philosophy*, *lean production* and *value stream*, which are considered to be the most important terms of *lean* thinking. The researched period was delimited into three parts: 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2015 (08.31.2015). For the period 2010-2014 the analysis has been made for each year too, in order to present the tendency of approaching the studied topics.

In order to determine the most important authors who studied *lean accounting*, the research was made using the following indicators: papers, citations, papers/author and cites/author/year, with the help of Publish or Perish program. Also, using the same program, we determined the most important work in the domain *lean manufacturing*, *lean production*, *lean philosophy*, *value stream* and on *lean* thinking in general using as indicators the total number of cites and cites/year.

In order to determine which were the journals who had the most articles on the topic, the research was made by key words, using the following databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Springer, ISI Thomson, Repec, DOAJ.

In order to determine the contributions of Romanian authors to *lean* theme, the quantitative research was followed by a qualitative research to determine the theoretical (conceptual) perspective or the approached practice (empirical).

The objectives of the research are:

- a quantitative research under the aspect of the temporal criterion regarding the different conceptions of *lean* approached in the international specialized literature;
- a qualitative research under the aspect of the perspective approach (theoretical and/or practical) of specialized literature published by Romanian authors regarding *lean* trend;
- determining the most important academic magazines at an international level which approaches themes regarding *lean*, using as indicator the number of works published within the magazine.

### 3. Literature review

*Lean* thinking implies the identification of activities within the company that don't add value and eliminate them. More than simplifying the manufacturing processes, it implies cost reduction by eliminating any type of loss, including the ones from the accounting system.

*Lean* concept is presented under different aspects in specialized literature; we speak about *lean philosophy* which is the basis for *lean production or lean manufacturing*, the most important principle of *lean* thinking being *value stream*.

Rivera (2008) states that *lean* instruments are interconnected because they develop the capacities needed for the next technique. So, the implementing of *lean* thinking within the company led to the need of correlating the accounting with the existent production system, the accounting having to follow the *lean* path (Chavez and Mokudai, 2015).

Womack and Jones (1996) were the first to question the old accounting systems in the book *Lean Thinking*. They express the need of a new accounting system that can be aligned to *lean* thinking and which can respond to *lean* production system.

The *lean* production system is also know under the name of "Toyota Production System" because it's being used by the Japanese vehicle manufacturer since the 50s, but the term "lean production" was used by Womack et al (1990) in *The machine that changed the world*. Regarding the existent definitions of lean, authors like Bhasin and Burcher (2006), Bhamu and Sangwan (2013) and Pettersen (2009) have dealt with this aspect. We consider that the most relevant is the one of Womack et al (1990) who presents the *lean* production system as a system that provides the clients with what they want and which makes "more and more with less

and less – less human effort, less equipment, less time and less space".

An important series of specialized works conclude that the implementation of *lean* instruments within a company had a significant effect at the level of its performance (Womack and Jones, 1996; Basem and Raid, 2006; Evans and Lindsay, 2008; Briciu and Ofileanu, 2015).

Feld (2001) presents the benefits of implementing *lean*:

- reduce waste in:
  - human effort;
  - inventory;
  - time to market;
  - manufacturing space;
- world class quality products;
- producing in the most efficient and economical way.

Bin Zhou (2012) in his study regarding the impact of implementing *lean* within small and medium-sized enterprises, presents the following conclusions:

- reduce:
  - cost;
  - lead-time;
  - inventory and assets required;
- improve:
  - utilization of plant/facility;
  - service responsiveness;
  - profit margin;
  - quality;
  - flexibility/visibility;
  - supply quality and reliability;
- increase market share;
- maintain competitive position.

According to Hobbs (2011) *lean* implementing has the following benefits:

- lead time reduction of 60-90%;
- decrease of inventory by 10-50%;
- shop floor utilization increase by 5-40%;
- productivity improvement by 5-25%.

To be more convincing, Lanza, Jondral at Drotleff (2012) presents a study regarding the benefits of passing from mass production to *lean* production by using a simulation method which predicts the profitability if *lean* tools are implemented.

Tahat and Jalham (2013) identifies eight practices of *lean production* which he calls modern production strategy and establishes a causal relationship between their implementation and the success of *lean production* to improve the quality and productivity of the enterprise: Variability Reduction, Visual Control, Poka Yoke, Quality at the Source, Kaizen, Five S, Rost Cause Analysis and Total Quality Management.

In order to determine the presence of *lean* concept in specialized literature we considered that it would be useful to make a research of the works that contain: *lean accounting, lean production, lean manufacturing, lean philosophy, value stream*

(Table no. 1) using Google Academic. As it can be seen, the most spectacular evolution is that of *lean accounting*, which, in the period of 2010-2015, can be found in 1.543 works versus 424 works in the period of 2000-2009, which proves the high interest in this concept. All other researched concepts have a positive evolution too, the most important being the one of *lean philosophy*, concept that was used in 808 works in the period 2000-2009 and 2.540 in period 2010-2015.

The big difference between the works which approach *lean accounting* and *lean production* can be explained by the fact that *lean accounting* can exist only in the companies that have implemented *lean production*. Taking into account the fact that it is impossible to create a sizing of scientific knowledge in the researched domain (*lean*), in the next stage we determined the level of apparition of studied concepts in famous databases to quantitatively establish the works published in specialized academic literature, research that has been made taking into account the following key words that could be found in the work: *lean accounting*, *lean manufacturing*, *lean philosophy*, *lean production* and *value stream*.

The research has been made for the works published in the following databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Springer, ISI Thomson, Repec, DOAJ (Table no. 2, Table no. 3, Table no. 4, Table no. 5, Table no. 6, Table no. 7).

As expected, *lean production* has the most approaches, and the most specialized works that approach *lean* concepts and have Romanian authors can be found in Repec database.

After this selection, we identified the most important academic journals (from the point of view of the number of published works) which have in their content works that approach *lean* concepts (Table no. 8).

Without really using the most relevant selection criteria, we determined the most important specialized works from the studied research domain, for the five *lean* concepts (Table no. 9), depending on the number of citations, using Publish or Perish program.

In the case of *lean accounting* the most citations (162) and cites/year (40,5) can be found in the book of Brian Maskell, Bruce Baggaley and Larry Grasso, *Practical lean accounting: a proven system for measuring and managing the lean enterprise*, published by CRC Press in 2011, being considered the reference work in the domain of *lean accounting*. The most important authors, from the point of view of the number of published works and their citation in *lean accounting* are: B.H. Maskell, F.A. Kennedy, B. Baggaley, L. Grasso, S.K. Widener and R.R. Fullerton.

The most citations of a work in the *lean* domain (6.508) are held by the book of James Womack and

Daniel Jones, *Lean thinking: banish waste and create wealth in your corporation*.

The situation of Romanian authors that published specialized academic articles approaching *lean* concepts is presented in Table no. 10, and the scientific journals where they were published can be found in Table no. 11.

The articles published by Romanian authors were mostly theoretical articles (13), the others being methodological articles (3) and case studies (3).

#### 4. Conclusions

As it can be seen, the *lean* concept has been progressively approached, being obvious that the number of works dealing with it has significantly increased lately. This is due to the many benefits brought by the implementation of *lean* within a company, increasing its competitiveness on the market.

If the concept *lean production* is treated in the specialized literature starting with the '90s, *lean accounting* has a relatively new history: out of the total of 1.977 works containing this term (search made using Google Academic) 1.435 are published after 2010. The high number of works which contain *lean production* (43.060) in comparison with the ones which contain *lean accounting* (1.977) is due to the fact that the implementation of *lean* takes place within the production system first, being the basis of *lean* thinking. When the company has successfully implemented *lean production*, that's when the other activities within the company have to be aligned to *lean* thinking, including the accounting activity.

In what concerns its presence in specialized academic literature, a high number of ISI articles which treat *lean* concept can be observed, which shows the importance of this subject.

The actuality of the topic is given by the share of works published in 2015 (until 31<sup>st</sup> of August). So, in the Science Direct database the share is of 17,2%, in Emerald 6,35%, in Repec 19,69%, in DOAJ 11,76%, in Springer 13,89% and in ISI Thomson 4,28%.

From the total of 4.856 specialized academic articles identified in the researched databases which treat *lean* concepts, 52 works have Romanian authors, which means a percent of 1,07%. Out of the 52 works, only 3 of them deal with *lean accounting* (theoretical articles), fact that shows low interest in this subject in Romania (only 2 authors) (Ofileanu D. 2014, 2015; Crețu L. 2010). In other works *lean accounting* is only tangentially approached.

Taking into account the advantages brought by the implementation of *lean* within the company, we consider that it is necessary to treat this topic in the Romanian specialized academic literature. Also, it is important to conduct empirical studies in order to keep track of the obtained results.

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## Appendix A

Table No. 1.  
*The presence of lean concepts in specialized literature in the period 1990-2015*

Search term	Period			Total
	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2015	
<i>Lean accounting</i>	10	424	1.543	1.977
<i>Lean production</i>	8.960	16.700	17.400	43.060
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	1.610	14.000	16.800	32.410
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	27	808	2.540	3.375
<i>Value stream</i>	613	8.360	15.800	24.773

Source: Self processing after Google Academic

Table No. 2.  
*Articles identified in Science Direct database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	2	0	0
<i>Lean production</i>	80	9	1
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	67	15	0
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	0	0	0
<i>Value stream</i>	37	8	1

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

Table No. 3.  
*Articles identified in Emerald database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	2	0	0
<i>Lean production</i>	359	10	1
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	73	14	0
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	1	0	0
<i>Value stream</i>	22	5	0

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Table No. 4.  
*Articles identified in Springer database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	0	0	0
<i>Lean production</i>	590	56	0
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	392	57	0
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	41	11	0
<i>Value stream</i>	328	58	0

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website [link.springer.com](http://link.springer.com)

Table No. 5.  
*Articles identified in ISI Thomson database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	16	1	0
<i>Lean production</i>	1.134	45	10
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	836	36	11
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	27	2	0
<i>Value stream</i>	373	31	2

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website [www.isiknowledge.com](http://www.isiknowledge.com)

Table No. 6.  
*Articles identified in Repec database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	3	1	3
<i>Lean production</i>	100	18	6
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	64	13	5
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	2	0	0
<i>Value stream</i>	24	6	5

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website <http://repec.org/>

Table No. 7.  
*Articles identified in DOAJ database*

Keyword	Total	2015	Romanian authors
<i>Lean accounting</i>	2	1	1
<i>Lean production</i>	44	3	1
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	88	12	4
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	2	0	0
<i>Value stream</i>	34	4	1

Source: Processing of the data taken from the website <https://doaj.org/>

Table No. 8.  
*Academic journals selected after the number of identified articles*

Nr. crt.	Academic journals	Number of articles based on approached key concepts				
		<i>Lean accounting</i>	<i>Lean production</i>	<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	<i>Lean philosophy</i>	<i>Value stream</i>
1.	<i>The International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Tehnology</i>	-	81	63	14	46
2.	<i>International Journal of Production Research (ISI)</i>	-	47	45	-	10
3.	<i>Journal of Manufacturing Tehnology Management</i>	-	41	15	-	3
4.	<i>International Journal of Operations &amp; Production Management</i>	-	50	3	-	-
5.	<i>Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing</i>	-	13	29	1	6
6.	<i>International Journal of Lean Six Sigma</i>	-	28	12	-	5
7.	<i>Production Planning &amp; Control (ISI)</i>	-	19	19		2
8.	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	-	19	10	1	3
9.	<i>International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Tehnology (ISI)</i>	-	6	23	-	1
10.	<i>Industry WEEK (ISI)</i>	6	1	8	-	4

Source: Self processing based on the information from the databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Springer, ISI Thomson, Repec, DOAJ

Table No. 9.  
*Specialized academic works selected based on the number of cites*

Keyword	Most citations	Most cites/year
<i>Lean accounting (article)</i>	Kennedy Frances A. and Sally K. Widener. "A control framework: insights from evidence on lean accounting", Management Accounting Research, 19.4 (2008): 301-323	Kennedy Frances A. and Sally K. Widener. "A control framework: insights from evidence on lean accounting", Management Accounting Research, 19.4 (2008): 301-323
<i>Lean production</i>	Krafcik John F. "Triumph of the lean production system", MIT Sloan Management Review, 30.1 (1988): 41	Shah, Rachna and Peter T. Ward. "Defining and developing measures of lean production", Journal of operations management, 25.4 (2007): 785-805
<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	Shah Rachna and Peter T. Ward. "Lean manufacturing: context, practice bundles, and performance", Journal of operations management, 21.2 (2003): 129-149	Shah Rachna and Peter T. Ward. "Lean manufacturing: context, practice bundles, and performance", Journal of operations management 21.2 (2003): 129-149
<i>Lean philosophy</i>	Bhasin Sanjay and Peter Burcher. "Lean viewed as a philosophy", Journal of manufacturing technology management, 17.1 (2006): 56-72	Bhasin Sanjay and Peter Burcher. "Lean viewed as a philosophy", Journal of manufacturing technology management, 17.1 (2006): 56-72
<i>Value stream</i>	Rother Mike and John Shook. "Learning to see: value stream mapping to add value and eliminate muda", Lean Enterprise Institute, 2003	Rother, Mike, and John Shook. "Learning to see: value stream mapping to add value and eliminate muda", Lean Enterprise Institute, 2003

Source: Self processing after *Publish or Perish*

Table No. 10.

*Romanian authors based on the number of identified articles*

Nr. crt.	Romanian authors	Number of articles based on approached key concepts					Total articles
		<i>Lean accounting</i>	<i>Lean production</i>	<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	<i>Lean philosophy</i>	<i>Value stream</i>	
1.	<i>Dimi Ofileanu</i>	2 (1a, 1b)	x	x	x	2 (1a, 1b)	4
2.	<i>Laura Crețu</i>	2 (2a)	x	x	x	x	2
3.	<i>Daniel Georgescu</i>	x	1 (1a)	x	1 (1a)	x	2
4.	<i>Ilinca Hotăran</i>	x	1 (1b)	x	x	1 (1a)	2
5.	<i>Ana Maria Grigore</i>	x	2 (2b)	x	x	x	2
6.	<i>Emil Suci</i>	x	x	1 (1c)	x	1 (1c)	2
7.	<i>Mihai Apreutesei</i>	x	x	1 (1c)	x	1 (1c)	2
8.	<i>Ionela Roxana Arvinte</i>	x	x	1 (1c)	x	1 (1c)	2

*Source:* Self processing based on the information from the following databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Springer, ISI Thomson, Repec, DOAJ

*Nota:* a – one author, b – two authors, c – three authors

Table No. 11.

*Romanian academic journals selected based on the number of identified articles*

Nr. crt.	Romanian academic journals	Number of articles based on approached key concepts				
		<i>Lean accounting</i>	<i>Lean production</i>	<i>Lean manufacturing</i>	<i>Lean philosophy</i>	<i>Value stream</i>
1.	<i>Ovidius University Annals, Economic Sciences Series</i>	2	x	x	x	x
2.	<i>Business Excellence and Management</i>	x	2	x	x	x
3.	<i>Economia. Seria Management</i>	x	x	2	x	x
4.	<i>SEA - Practical Application of Science</i>	x	x	x	x	2
5.	<i>Review of General Management</i>	x	1	x	x	1
6.	<i>Holistic Marketing Management Journal</i>	x	1	x	x	x
7.	<i>Risk in Contemporary Economy</i>	x	1	x	x	x
8.	<i>Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Economy Series</i>	x	x	1	x	x
9.	<i>Analele Universitatii "Eftimie Murgu" Resita Fascicola de Inginerie</i>	x	x	1	x	x
10.	<i>European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies</i>	x	x	x	1	x
11.	<i>The Annals of the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava. Fascicle of The Faculty of Economics and Public Administration</i>	x	x	x	x	1
12.	<i>Review of International Comparative Management</i>	x	x	x	x	1

*Source:* Self processing based on the information from the following databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Springer, ISI Thomson, Repec, DOAJ