

# Scholarly Achievement *versus* Editorial Board Membership. The Case of the Top Ten Polish Pedagogical Journals

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## Abstract

An invitation to become an editorial board member (EBM) of an academic journal should be regarded as evidence of recognition of a scholar's research achievement and impact on his discipline. This is a requirement of Merton's norm of universalism in science, which proposes that awards and prestige ought to be held to objective and pre-established impersonal criteria that depend exclusively on the quality of scholarly output. This principle is particularly important in the context of editorial teams of academic journals. The aim of this paper is to present an empirical case study of the academic achievements of the EBMs of the top ten Polish pedagogical journals, in 2020. For research purposes, the author assumed that the criterion for nomination to the editorial board was the scholars' output, as evidenced by their publications indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases and also the number of corresponding citations. The results put into question the idea that the editorial nominations examined were indeed grounded in the publications indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases. Based on the record of EBMs output indexed in these databases, most EBMs analysed were not proven to be the most productive or cited scholars.

**Keywords:** editorial board members (EBMs); scholarly achievement; bibliometrics; Polish Journals of Pedagogy; Web of Science; Scopus

## **1. Introduction**

The process of creating and disseminating scholarly output rests on the foundation of communication, expressed through publications, whose importance and distinct role has been recognised since 1665, when the Royal Society published the first ever scholarly journal, *Philosophical Transactions*. From that day on, the peer-reviewed journal has become the central and most crucial form of communication among scholars, enabling the broad distribution and archiving of knowledge (Haustein, 2015, p. 37). As Kwiek (2018, p. 2) points out, through publications scholars gain professional recognition and respect, which is linked to the prestige they win in the academic community in connection with the quality of their research and academic output.

In the scientific communication process journals are as important as books. Their function is to communicate new knowledge in the form of research and analysis, which makes the role of the members of editorial boards (EBMs), who select content and information for publication, particularly significant. In fact, the evaluation of manuscripts by editors has a direct impact on the quality of the research and value of academic publications (Jokić & Sirotić, 2015, p. 8).

## **2. Editorial Board Members – their Competences and Role**

As noted by Espin et al. (2017) with reference to the work of Crane (1967), editorial board members (EBMs) are a small but powerful group of “dogmatic gatekeepers” who select scientists, scholars, researchers and ideas that give direction to their discipline. In fact, they can be considered to work at the top of the hierarchy of power in academia, merely by virtue of having the authority and ability to decide whether to accept or reject a paper (Xie, Wu, & Li, 2019). In their role as gatekeepers, members of the editorial boards play a crucial part in the potential growth and status of their journals, as they participate in all editorial decisions, evaluating the quality of submitted manuscripts and deciding on whether to choose them for publication or reject them (Mendonça, Pereira, & Ferreira, 2018). Thus, on the one hand they play a central role in defining the trajectories and frontiers of knowledge in their disciplines, and on the other, by recommending an article for publication, they validate not only the research but also the individuals behind it (García-Carpintero, Granadino, & Plaza, 2010; Metz & Harzing, 2009).

As Bedeian, Van Fleet, & Hyman (2009, p. 212) point out, given the central role that EBMs play it has long been recognised that those entrusted with evaluating the work of others, before it enters the pool of scholarly resources, should be individuals with unique competences, as evidenced by their scholarly achievement. Based on this argument, editorial board membership requires a track record of scholarly achievement proven by a continually expanding list of publications indexed in, e.g., Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), or other prestigious bibliographic databases, and also by a measurable impact on their discipline (Xiao-jun & Zhen-ying, 2013). This way of framing the issue at hand is at the heart of the scholarly ethos (Bedeian et al., 2009, p. 211). An invitation to become a member of the editorial board in an academic journal should therefore be an acknowledgement of the scholar's output and research achievement. In principle, therefore, the academic productivity and citability (a rough indicator of a scholarly impact) of board members should contribute to the strength of a journal within a discipline, and set standards for research excellence (Hardin, Beauchamp, Liano, & Hill, 2006).

During its term, the editorial board is responsible for looking after the prestige of the journal. In fact, its composition and scholarly achievements are indicative of the main issues represented by the journal and, ultimately, by the discipline. It is therefore true to say that editorial teams should reflect the high standards prevailing in a discipline, as these are indeed signaling the quality of the journal. The scholars on the editorial board must be professionals whose judgment is broadly accepted within their field. Indeed, research demonstrates that academic distinctions, such as editorial nominations, lose value when made on a basis other than academic merit. Besides, the fact that a member lacks experience in research, writing and publishing in prestigious journals may be regarded ethically inappropriate, and erosive of the academic stratification system which is necessary to motivate and award academic research (Bedeian et al., 2009, p. 228). If editorial board members are appointed on any other basis than academic merit, there is a risk that their authority and position may not be recognised as legitimate by the academic community (Bedeian et al., 2009, p. 214; Fogarty & Liao, 2009). With reference to such situations, Lindsey (1978, p. 73) asks directly "how do you earn respect if you do not deserve it?". Hence, if criteria other than scholarly achievement are used, they must be clearly defined and relevant to the tasks of an editorial board member (Weinrach, Thomas, Pruett, & Chan, 2006, p. 313). Interestingly, a 2007 study by Brinn and Jones, cited by Lowe and Van Fleet (2009), demonstrates that the EBMs of the accounting journals they

studied preferred individuals with recognised academic achievement and merit, and were aggravated by favouritism and member appointments based on non-academic or other irrelevant criteria. It turned out that the lowest-rated factor was that the EBM was a colleague of the journal editor (Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009, p. 198). Other research confirms that such “favouritism” is not only regarded as unfair, but that it potentially inhibits the intellectual development of the discipline due to what might be termed “academic inbreeding” (Weinrach et al., 2006, p. 312).

The majority of prestigious, well-respected journals with a recognisably high status prominently highlight the list of editorial board members. Some proudly display the credentials of their editors on their websites, providing links to individual profiles generated by bibliographic databases (Gasparyan, 2013, p. 972). There are many examples of journals that select their editors and reviewers primarily because of their roles as authors with solid publication records and high bibliographic metrics (citations and Hirsch index) (Bornmann & Marx, 2011). As highlighted by Besancenot, Huynh, & Faria (2012, p. 688), some established editors who are also recognised researchers attract other top scholars to submit papers to the journal they head, and in doing so recognise and select papers that are likely to have a significant impact and contribute to the journal’s status. It has been highlighted in the literature that the “outstanding editors – good authors” principle holds strongly in the contemporary publishing market (Xiao-jun & Zhen-ying, 2013). It is also acknowledged that the substantial scholarly output of a journal’s editorial team helps increase the academic impact of the journal (Xie et al., 2019, p. 1333).

When analysing the composition of editorial boards of journals, it should be stressed that they are often international. As Jokić and Sirotić (2015, p. 7) note, the presence of international experts on editorial boards becomes part of the journal’s reputation, indicating that international scholars consider the journal as sufficiently established to take their time to review texts and associate their name with the title. Undoubtedly, having editorial teams that reflect the increasing diversity of the global academic community is considered to benefit both journals and disciplines (Espin et al., 2017, p. 2). This is particularly true for the EBMs of journals which are most highly rated in a discipline. The impact of their recommendations and opinions often determines not only the current nature of the discipline but also its future progress (Bedeian et al., 2009, p. 226). It is certainly fair to say that the increasing geographic diversity of affiliations in editorial boards broadens the range of theoretical and

methodological approaches presented in journals (Harzing & Metz, 2013). Also, the presence of international members of editorial teams may be a signal to potential authors that any possible bias in the reviewing procedure is low, compared to editorial boards consisting exclusively of local academics (Rębisz, 2019, p. 227).

A synthetic summary of existing studies that present different approaches to the issue of the composition of editorial boards of academic journals was given by Jokić and Sirotić (2015, p. 8). In their paper, they point out that the empirical research on this issue can be largely divided into several thematic groups: (a) studies on the productivity, visibility and number of citations of EBMs; (b) composition of editorial boards analysed by gender or geographic distribution; (c) impact of editorial boards on journal quality, and; (d) editorial board composition in relation to particular fields of study in the social sciences and humanities.

In the literature available in Poland, the author has failed to identify any research that addresses the issue of the analysis of academic achievement of the editorial boards of pedagogical journals. Therefore, this paper (being in fact a description of a case study of a particular country) will hopefully initiate a broader discussion on the role of EBMs in building prestige and maintaining the quality of journals and will encourage a broader discussion and further in-depth analysis of the subject, not only in relation to pedagogical journals, but also those in other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

### **3. Data and Methodological Approach**

Investigating the impact and consequences of editorial work by analysing the composition of academic journals' editorial boards, including in terms of scholarly output and its impact, international diversity, gender representation, social networks of researchers, the reputation of their institutional affiliations, or issues of publication ethics is often referred to as 'editormetric' research and can be regarded as a sub-field of science and technology studies (STS) or scientometrics that investigate the developments, contexts and practices within science (Pacher, Heck, & Schoch, 2021, p. 1). As pointed out by Mendonça et al. (2018), to evaluate a journal, its prestige and impact, the above-mentioned new approach – editormetrics – is increasingly used.<sup>1</sup>

The method is based on the assumption that a high position of a journal is closely related to the position of its editors (Xie et al., 2019, p. 1334). This correlation is due to the fact that it is editors and publishers who organise and are responsible for the whole process of getting a manuscript accepted for publication. They are the ones who select reviewers, prevent against conflicts of interest, and ensure that a given review process carries out the functions entrusted to it, so that improved texts are accepted for publication and poor proposals are rejected (Kulczycki et al., 2019b, p. 2). Thus, editormetrics analyse the role of editors of academic journals and their impact on the scientific publication system (Pacher, 2021, p. 1). Hence the ability of editors to promote a journal is closely linked to their individual achievements in their specialism, which is one of the reasons why the evaluation of academic journals based on the quality of editors' output is in the context of editormetrics is so legitimate and important (Xie et al., 2019, p. 1334). It turns out, for instance, that journal owners seek to consolidate relationships with established scholars to enhance their status and improve the journal. They do so because, as some findings suggest for instance that a journal's impact has a strong correlation with the productivity of the editorial staff in terms of scholarly achievement (research output) (Haugsbakk & Nordkvelle, 2020, p. 5).

Due to the fact that a huge number of articles are published all over the world, sources are becoming more and more important. They facilitate searching through the literature of a subject but also act as a sieve for valuable publications, leaving out those of poor quality or non-academic writing. This role is played in modern academia by bibliographic databases, including the well-established WoS Core Collection, owned by Clarivate and Scopus, owned by Elsevier. These databases index journals selected and recognised as relevant using, e.g., in the case of the WoS database, the so-called impact factor (IF), which is a recognised indicator of academic impact worldwide. Thus, the number of publications in journals with high IF becomes a measure of the quality of academic research, and the citation rates of these works are a measure of their validity (Rębisz, 2017, p. 23). The large number of publications on the market today has caused the quality and prestige of journals to become the main criterion of choice for academics who wish to present their research (Miguel, Chinchilla-Rodriguez, & de Moya-Anegón, 2011, p. 1130). This is because it is widely accepted that what truly matters is the prestige of the journal in which a publication appears, and hierarchy in this context is largely understood as the globally functioning hierarchy of journals (Kwiek, 2015). Publications and citations in peer-reviewed journals indexed in bibliographic databases are

considered to be the indicators of performance and impact (Haustein, 2015). These are some of the main elements influencing the reputation of scholars and the organisations and institutions they represent (Buzdygan & Górski, 2015, p. 102). Previous studies indicate that papers indexed in some of the prestigious bibliographic databases are considered to have higher global visibility which, in turn, has a positive impact on their citability (Adriaanse & Rensleigh, 2017, p. 2; Danesh, Fattahi, & Dayani, 2017; Norman, 2012).

It is worth emphasising that studies to date, although providing evidence that Google Scholar (GS) finds significantly more citations than the WoS and Scopus across all subject areas, show that GS indexes a substantial number of unique citations (around 50%), that are not from journals but from theses/dissertations, books or book chapters, conference proceedings, unpublished materials (such as preprints), and other document types. As noted by Martín-Martín, Orduna-Malea, Thelwall, & Delgado López-Cózar (2018, p. 1175), the scientific impact of these unique citations themselves is, on average, much lower than that of citations also found by WoS or Scopus, suggesting that the advantage of GS coverage is mostly for low impact documents. Taken together, these results suggest caution when using GS instead of WoS or Scopus for citation evaluations. Without evidence, it cannot be assumed that the higher citation counts of GS are always superior to those of WoS and Scopus, since it is possible that the inclusion of lower quality citing documents reduces the extent to which citation counts reflect scholarly impact. Thus, WoS and Scopus remain today the main sources for citation data. Moreover, the interdisciplinary coverage of these databases represents a significant strength for the study and comparison of different scientific fields (Martín-Martín et al., 2018, p. 1175).

### 3.1. Research Aim and Questions

It should be stressed that the main aim of the author's research is not to determine the quality of the ten-top ranked Polish pedagogical journals selected for the analysis, but to conduct an empirical study of the scholarly achievements of the EBMs of these periodicals as an element that may have an impact on their invitation to join the editorial boards of these journals. Taking into account the above issues, with this conceptual framework in mind, it was assumed that the members of the editorial boards of the journals selected for the study were invited to their teams based on their merit, as evidenced by the works indexed in the journals from two prestigious bibliographic

databases – WoS and Scopus. Additionally, these publications had to have a proven citation record, i.e., an impact on their field (after: Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009). In order to be able to achieve the intended main objective, the following research question was posed:

*What is the productivity and citability of editorial board members (EBMs), taking into consideration their publications indexed in the prestigious WoS and Scopus databases, looking separately into the local and international editorial contexts?*

Moreover, as already mentioned, the composition of editorial boards of journals is now very often international. Assuming the expert potential of foreign members of the editorial board, it is reasonable to use their competence and experience in the editorial process, e.g. to assess the quality of submitted manuscripts or to decide on their final publication. This carries an opportunity for development, quality and the building of the prestige of the journal. It also seems that such an approach makes it necessary to submit papers to the editorial office in conference languages (English, German, French, Spanish or Russian), mainly in English as the modern lingua franca of scholarly communication (Pérez-Llantada, 2010). Additionally, as indicated by a number of studies (Chung & Park, 2012; Danesh et al., 2017, p. 191; Lee & Park, 2012), to improve the visibility and impact of submitted papers, including in the international environment, they should be published in English.

Taking these issues into account, an additional aim of the study was added, to diagnose the percentage of published papers in conference languages (mainly in English), in the journals selected for analysis, in the last whole publishing year preceding the study, i.e. 2019. Thus, an additional research question was formulated as follows:

*What is the percentage of papers published in the journals analysed, in conference languages, mainly in English?*

### **3.2. The Selection of Journals**

The target population for this study consisted of EBMs of ten leading Polish peer-reviewed journals in the field of pedagogy as of the end of April 2020. The journals selected for analysis were taken from the appendix to the communication of the Minister of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW), dated

18 December 2019, containing the *List of academic journals and peer-reviewed materials from international conferences with the assigned number of points*<sup>2</sup> (Minister Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2019), valid until the beginning of February 2021.<sup>3</sup>

As of the end of 2020, the number of Polish journals assigned to social sciences from the Minister's list (77), from the discipline Pedagogy, included 72 journals with 20 points, 2 with 40 points, and 3 with 70 points, while one journal (70 points) included in the discipline of pedagogy was *Studia Socjologiczne* (ISSN – 0039-3371) and another two (40 points) were *Qualitative Sociology Review* (1733-8077) and *Images: The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication* (1731-450X) (Kulczycki & Korytkowski, 2020, pp. 27–28). These three were not included in our analysis as their profile is closer to sociology and arts than pedagogy. It can be argued, however, that the journals selected for the analysis (Table 1) are considered to have an established intellectual position for the discipline of pedagogy. Their listing and the number of points assigned to them were based on data from the POL-on and ARIANTA databases, indicating pedagogy as the journal's primary discipline (after: Rozkosz, 2017, pp. 168–173).

It is worth mentioning that at the end of 2020 as many as 87% of Polish journals published in the discipline of pedagogy were not included in the Scopus and WoS databases (Kulczycki & Korytkowski, 2020, pp. 27–28). Among the journals analysed, only *E-mentor* was in fact included in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), which is part of the WoS Core Collection: Citation Index database.

### 3.3. The Sample of Editorial Boards

As Zdeněk and Lososová (2018, p. 566) write with reference to the studies of Baccini and Barabesi (2011) and Medoff (2003), each member of the editorial board may, to a certain extent, influence the editorial policy of the journal although the final acceptance/rejection decision is usually decided by the editor/co-editor. The data on the editorial teams of the ten journals selected were collected from the information published on the websites of the respective journals between March and April 2020. The composition of editorial boards was taken from the first issue in the given year. The analysis focused on the achievements of the members of editorial teams who were at that time

Table 1: List of the analysed Polish pedagogical journals with points assigned by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019

No.	Journal title	ISSN	eISSN	Pedagogy as a basic discipline according to POL-on and ARIANTA	Points in:				Indexed	
					2013	2015	2017	2019	WoS	Scopus
1	<i>E-Mentor</i>	1731-6758	1731-7428	Yes	9	15	15	20	Yes <sup>a</sup>	No
2	<i>Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych</i>	1507-6563		Yes	8	14	14	20	No	No
3	<i>Forum Oświatowe</i>	0867-0323	2450-3452	Yes	6	12	12	20	No	No
4	<i>Horyzonty Wychowania</i>	1643-9171	2391-9485	Yes	7	13	13	20	No	No
5	<i>Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji</i>	1734-1582	2451-2230	Yes	9	14	14	20	No	No
6	<i>Przebieg Badań Edukacyjnych</i>	1895-4308	2392-1544	Yes	6	13	13	70	No	No
7	<i>Resocjalizacja Polska</i>	2081-3767	2392-2656	Yes	5	12	12	70	No	No
8	<i>Rocznik Andragogiczny</i>	1429-186X	2391-7571	Yes	8	14	14	20	No	No
9	<i>Rocznik Pedagogiczny</i>	0137-9585		Yes	5	13	13	20	No	No
10	<i>Studia Edukacyjne</i>	1233-6688		Yes	10	13	13	20	No	No

Source: The author's own elaboration based on data from the POL-on and ARIANTA databases (after: Rozkosz, 2017, pp. 153–173) and the List of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of 18 December 2019 concerning academic journals and peer-reviewed materials from international conferences with the scoring system (points) assigned; <sup>a</sup>Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) – 2015-present (WoS).

listed as the editorial boards of the online editions. Therefore, all members of editorial colleges (editor-in-chief, editors, executive editors, consultant editors, co-editors, associate editors, members of executive and advisory boards and other members of editorial colleges without a specific function) were collected for analysis, but the assistants of an editorial office, language editors, administrative or technical editors were excluded.

Two measures of academic achievement at the individual level were used for the analysis: the productivity and citability of EBMs. The information used to calculate these measures came from the WoS and Scopus online databases. The productivity and citability of individual EBMs was assessed by counting the total number of articles indexed in the mentioned databases (WoS and Scopus) authored by all 192 board members in the included sample (N=192), and the total number of their citations. For the bibliometric analysis, the member's surname and first name as it appeared in the information given by the journal were used in our analysis. Data was easily available, as having one's publications indexed in WoS and Scopus automatically involves the creation of the author identification entry by the database management system, which includes a list of publications with citations. This includes a ResearchID profile (WoS) and ScopusAuthorID profile (Scopus) for each author. It should be noted that these profiles are based on ISI Thomson Reuters (WoS) and Elsevier (Scopus) subscriptions. An author's scholarly e-profile is therefore generated by the platform, and subsequent to this authors have no control over their profiles (Ward, Bejarano, & Dudás, 2015, p. 189).

## 4. Results

In the top ten Polish scientific pedagogical journals analysed, the size of the editorial boards varied, ranging from 12 to 37 persons. The total number of board members analysed was 192 (N=192), of which 42% were women. In addition, 62 members of the editorial boards had foreign affiliations (32%).

### 4.1. Geographical Distribution of the Editorial Board Members

When analysing the editorial boards one can see the varying degrees of their internationalisation. In fact, and characteristically, all of the editorial

boards have a member with a foreign affiliation. Overall, the number of foreign scholars ranges from 22–36% per editorial office. Two journals stand out in this context with a significantly higher number of international editors. These are *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych* [Educational Research Review] (53%) and *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji* [Problems of Early Education] (50%).

Among the editorial teams, Americans (17), Germans (9) and Slovaks (6) were most represented, followed by 3 each of Czech, British and Italian editors, 2 each of Ukrainian, Swedish and Hungarian scholars and one from each of the following countries: Serbia, Norway, France, Russia, Turkey, Portugal, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark. In total international members came from 19 countries, mostly from Europe (90%), including 17.8% from Eastern Europe and 82.2% from Western Europe, followed by Asia (5%) and North America (5%).

US scholars featured most frequently as international members of editorial boards, working for as many as 7 of the 10 Polish journals, including the one with the highest number of points, i.e., *Resocjalizacja Polska* [Polish Journal of Social Rehabilitation]. German editors were also highly represented in 6 of the journals, and British and Slovak editors sit on the boards of 4 of the journals. When it comes to Czech and Swedish editors, they represented 3 of the periodicals, and 2 had Italian, Ukrainian or Hungarian editors. Also, among the EBMs of the analysed journals there were editors from Serbia, Norway, France, Russia, Turkey, Portugal, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

#### **4.2. Scholarly Productivity and Citability of Editorial Board Members**

Editormetrics, the measure used in the study, is based on the assumption that the prestige of a journal can be traced back to its editors, and that the quality of a journal may be assumed by looking into the productivity and citability of its EBMs. A quantitative assessment of the output of all members of the editorial boards of the journals was studied. Only publications indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases, which enjoy wide normative consensus in the academic community, were included in the analysis. The number of citations from publications by members of editorial boards was also extracted from these databases.

#### 4.2.1. Scholarly Productivity

The numeric distribution of the EBMs who have their papers indexed in the WoS and Scopus database are presented in Table 2. As shown, statistically speaking every second EBM has a publication indexed in a WoS (50%) and/or Scopus (52%) database. The highest number of works indexed in the WoS is by the EBMs of *E-mentor* (70%), *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji* (67%) and *Forum Oświatowe* (64%), which are publications with a weight of 20 points. The lowest number of editors publishing in journals indexed in the WoS were found in *Resocjalizacja Polska* (33%), which is also one of the two highest-scoring periodicals (70 points). A slightly higher number of editorial staff members of *Rocznik Pedagogiczny* (36%) and *Edukacja Ustawiczna* (38%) can claim to have publications indexed in the WoS database (Table 2). In the case of papers indexed in Scopus, members of the editorial boards of *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji* (78%), *E-mentor* (70%) and *Forum Oświatowe* (64%) had most papers. *Resocjalizacja Polska* yet again features as the lowest score, with only 17% of editors having papers indexed in the Scopus database (Table 2).

In the context of the scholarly productivity of the EBMs of the journals, the distribution of the papers indexed in WoS and Scopus, with a division into Polish and foreign affiliation is also of interest. It turns out that 73% of the EBMs with foreign affiliations have papers indexed in the WoS database and only 39% with Polish ones. The distribution of the papers indexed in Scopus, on the other hand, shows that the EBMs with foreign affiliations (77%) also publish almost twice as much in the journals indexed in that database than their Polish colleagues (39%) (Table 2).

#### 4.2.2. Scholarly Indicator of a Paper's Impact – Citability

For several decades, the use of bibliometric indicators to assess research or scholarly/research output has become an integral part of the academic landscape (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016, p. 787). Thus, for example, in recent years the number of citations is among the basic measures used to assess the engagement, industriousness and scholarly impact of academics, research units and countries. Despite the many difficulties of interpretation associated with this measure, it is undoubtedly recognised in the academic community as a determinant of the popularity of the researcher's output, as well as, in a sense, the quality of his or her work (Olechnicka & Płoszaj, 2009, p. 38).

Table 2: Distribution of productivity and citations of EBMs in selected Polish pedagogical journals, taking into account bibliographic data from the WoS and Scopus, and the type of affiliation (local vs. international).

No.	Journal title	Points in 2019	Number of EBMs N=192	Percentage of EBMs publishing in the WoS database N=96	Number of EBMs publishing in WoS		Number of EBMs whose publications are cited WoS		Number of citations of EBMs in WoS N=11	Percentage of EBMs publishing in the Scopus database N=99	Number of EBMs publishing in Scopus		Number of EBMs whose publications are cited in Scopus		Number of citations from publications by EBMs in Scopus N=19
					from abroad (N=62)	from Poland (N=130)	from abroad (N=62)	from Poland (N=130)			from abroad (N=62)	from Poland (N=130)	from abroad (N=62)	from Poland (N=130)	
1	Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych	70	17	53%	6	3	4	1	163	41%	5	2	4	1	194
2	Resocjalizacja Polska	70	12	33%	2	2	2	1	5471	17%	1	1	1	1	7995
3	E-Mentor	20	20	70%	5	9	4	7	2538	70%	5	9	3	7	4765
4	Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych	20	37	38%	5	9	5	4	674	41%	4	11	5	6	1043
5	Rocznik Andragogiczny	20	20	50%	4	6	2	3	48	40%	4	4	4	2	1061
6	Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji	20	18	67%	7	5	6	2	145	78%	8	6	7	3	673
7	Rocznik Pedagogiczny	20	14	36%	0	5	0	0	0	50%	3	4	3	2	15
8	Horyzonty Wychowania	20	26	50%	8	5	6	3	63	62%	9	7	8	4	144
9	Studia Edukacyjne	20	14	43%	3	3	3	3	539	50%	4	3	4	3	526
10	Forum Oświatowe	20	14	64%	5	4	5	2	1414	64%	5	4	5	3	1942
	<b>Total</b>	N	192	96	45	51	37	26	11055	99	48	51	44	35	18358
	%		100%	50%	73%	39%	60%	20%	96.7%	52%	77%	39%	71%	27%	96.1%

Source: Author's own elaboration on the basis of information on the composition of editorial boards, in the period March–April 2020, published on the websites of the journals selected for the study and data from the POL-on and ARIANTA databases (after: Rozkosz, 2017, pp. 153-173); the list of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of 18 December 2019 concerning scientific journals and peer-reviewed materials from international conferences with the number of points assigned to them; bibliometric data from WoS Core Collection (Clarivate Analytics) and the Scopus database (Elsevier).

In order to capture the effectiveness of the EBMs studied, an analysis was conducted within one of the branches of scientometrics/bibliometrics (De Bellis, 2009), i.e., citation theory (Leydesdorff, 1998, p. 5), based on the assumption that the citing party recognises the value of the cited work, and consequently that frequently cited works add significantly to the sum of our knowledge. In other words, they are “influential” (Rębisz & Kapczyński, 2018, p. 413).

The analysis of the material collected showed that in fact, out of the total number of citations (11,428) of all the items indexed in the WoS by EBMs of interest to us, citations of publications by foreign scholars constituted 96.7% (11,055), while those by Polish authors accounted for only 3.3% (373). In other words, this could mean that the works indexed in the WoS database by editors with a Polish affiliation contribute almost 30 times less to the discipline as such than publications by members of those editorial boards who are affiliated abroad (Table 2).

Very similar distributions appear in the context of the citability of EBMs, considering their works indexed in the Scopus database. In this case publications by foreign-affiliated editors are definitely more “influential” than those by local academics working for the journals in question. The number of references to the texts of foreign EBMs indexed in the Scopus database (18,358) is almost 25 times higher than that of publications by Polish editors (744). Thus, the percentage distribution of citations is 96.1% to 3.9%, in favour of works by international editors (Table 2).

#### *4.2.3. Scholarly Research Impact Indexes*

Further bibliometric analysis of the scientific achievements of the EBMs included in the survey also revealed a significant proportion of the editors of the editorial offices analysed (c.a.2/3) at the end of April 2020 were not cited at all according to Scopus (59%) or the WoS (67%) (Table 2). For editors with a Polish affiliation the distribution was even more unfavourable as the percentage of them with a zero Hirsch index in the Scopus database was 73%, and in the WoS database 80% (Table 2).

Analysing these data for each of the journals in more detail, we notice that in the case of the two highest ranked Polish pedagogical journals (70 points), at the time of this study more than 2/3 of their EBMs (71%) were not cited at

all according to Scopus or the WoS (Table 2). Their Hirsch index was equal to zero. It should also be noted that only one member of an editorial team with Polish affiliation out of eight in *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych* (70 points) and one out of nine in *Resocjalizacja Polska* (70 points) was cited according to the information available in these databases (Table 2). It is also visible that the members of the editorial staff with a Polish affiliation of the other journals analysed that occupy lower positions in the ranking (20 points), have higher productivity and effectiveness according to their citations record in the WoS and Scopus than the representatives of the Polish periodicals with the weight of 70 points (Table 2).

When defining the scale of productivity and citability of EBMs on the basis of the data available from the WoS and Scopus databases, it is worth noting that the majority of editorial boards of the journals have one or two experts (mainly foreign), whose record shows a significant number of publications and citations in these databases, and a large group of members with a relatively small or even zero number of works and citations. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the editorial board of *Resocjalizacja Polska* (70 points), whereas of the end of April 2020 one of its members with an American affiliation was responsible for 83% of all publications by board members indexed in the WoS and for 99.5% of citations. As for the articles indexed in Scopus, the same individual was at that time responsible for 91% of all the papers of the entire editorial team indexed there and for 99.6% of the citations.

A similar situation obtains in the case of *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych* (70 points). It turns out that as of the end of April 2020 one member of the editorial board with a Scottish affiliation was responsible for 61% of all the papers published by members of the editorial and indexed in the WoS, and for approximately 89% of all citations. This single scholar alone was also responsible for 63% of all articles by board members indexed in Scopus and for approximately 87% of all citations.

For the other journals, the situation looked very similar. At that time, members of editorial teams with international affiliations usually had the highest individual share in the number of all papers indexed in the two prestigious bibliographic databases. The figure ranged from 15% to 81%. In turn, the scale of references to their publications ranged from 41% to 98% of citations of all works indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases by these editorial boards.

### 4.3. Language Distribution of Papers Published in the Journals Analysed

Finally, it is also worth looking into the data available for 2019 regarding the percentage of articles published in conference languages, mainly in English, in the pedagogical journals selected for the study. In the periodicals included in our study, throughout 2019, a total of 374 texts were published, of which only 93 were in English (under 25%). Moreover, a significant proportion of the papers published in English (approximately 70%) were authored by Polish scholars. In fact, only 31 authors with foreign affiliation featured, and only 13 articles were co-authored with foreign scholars. In earlier editions of most of these journals, publications in English by international authors or co-authored papers were even fewer. A more detailed analysis of the ten periodicals investigated showed that throughout 2019, the highest number of publications in English appeared in the two highest-ranked Polish pedagogical journals, i.e., *Resocjalizacja Polska* (70 points) and *Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych* (70 points). In the former, all texts were published in English, and in the latter the figure was 83% in 2019, increasing to 100% in 2020. As for the other journals analysed, in 2019 the percentage of works in English, in the total number of articles published in them, ranged from 0% to 30%.

## 5. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

It is hard to disagree with the thesis that the most important goal of every academic is not only to conduct research but also to place its results into the international circulation of information. This is done mostly through publication of results in journals or monographs, and only then is the researcher's work visible in the academic community. Success in research depends on the published works being read and the results used creatively by other scholars. Therefore, authors should care not only that the text is published but, more so, that it will reach people who might engage with its content (Drabek, 2018, p. 5).

Based on the research, the thesis can be put forward that the activity of a significant number of EBMs of the pedagogical journals analysed was not related to publishing in prestigious periodicals indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases, generally regarded as a measure of academic achievement (Lindsey, 1989). The analysis of data from these two prestigious databases as of the end of April 2020 revealed that statistically only half of the members

of the editorial boards of the journals selected for the study had publications indexed, including 2/3 of the representatives of the boards with a foreign and only 1/3 with a Polish affiliation. On the other hand, considering the fact that the number of citations a scholar receives for publications indexed in databases is an indicator of the relative “quality” of his or her work and impact on the research of others (Lindsey, 1989; Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009, p. 202), another thesis can be proposed; in the context of academic effectiveness understood in this way (a citability), a vast majority of the surveyed editorial board representatives fail to show adequate bibliometric indicators. Our data clearly shows that statistically 8 out of 10 members with a Polish affiliation and 4 out of 10 affiliated abroad had a Hirsch index equal to zero. This means that a considerable percentage of these academics, particularly of those with a Polish affiliation have not been quoted, and are really absent from the global circulation of research. As they are not quoted, academically speaking they are not influential, contributing little of value to the global exchange of ideas in the discipline they represent.

Unfortunately, the results presented in this paper fail to support the assumption that these scholars were appointed on the basis of their productivity or performance, as manifested by publications indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases. Neither can we confirm that their works had a measurable impact on others, which should express itself in a citation of their publications. These results question the idea that the nominations to the editorial boards analysed were indeed based on Merton’s system of meritocracy (Merton, 1974). They also undermine the thesis that the top Polish pedagogical journals have the most productive and cited academics on their editorial boards, assessed on the basis of their works indexed in the WoS and Scopus. In fact, it turns out that the publication and indexing or academic renown of a journal, in which the editors in question published their works, were not the most important factors that affected their membership of the editorial board, so the choice must have been made on the basis of other criteria. The question then arises which could be an excellent starting point for further research and work/discussion, e.g.: what really are the qualifications needed to become an EBM for a pedagogical journal (in Poland)?

Referring to the rate of papers published in a foreign language (English) in the pedagogical journals analysed, the author’s research data do not differ much from the material analysed by Kulczycki, Rozkosz, & Drabek (2019a, p. 15), who reported that between 2009 and 2014 only a small percentage of

articles in the social sciences and humanities published in Polish journals were written in English (11.8%), while the majority of papers were presented in Polish (82.7%). In the case of the author's research, the rate of all papers in English, in the analysed periodicals in the whole year 2019 was about 25%. The other studies show that the lack of high productivity in English by representatives of the social sciences and humanities is due to the fact that scholars representing these disciplines tend to publish books, mainly in their national languages, and treat publications of articles in journals as secondary (Aaltojärvi, Arminen, Auranen, & Pasanen, 2008, p. 6; Rychlik, 2017).

Certainly, nowadays publishing in English seems necessary, as its dominance as the modern lingua franca provides uniformity in communication and allows academics from all over the world to carry out joint projects (Pérez-Llantada, 2010). In the author's opinion, the low percentage of papers published in conference languages, if only English, can be partly justified in pedagogy as it is often of "local" character, dealing with subject matter mostly of local interest. The problems it tackles are often debatable in local academic communities, which does not call for communication in English. However, as Kokowski (2015) points out, this does not mean that the local character of the problems faced by the humanities and social sciences makes them less valuable, but that they are always formulated in a specific language, and historical and cultural context. Nevertheless, such a state of affairs limits the presence of scholars in the international exchange of academic thought on the one hand and, on the other, as demonstrated by research, it does not help reduce the significant asymmetry in favour of English-speaking countries in the distribution of citations in the humanities and social sciences (Maisonobe, Grossetti, Milard, Jégou, & Eckert, 2017, p. 479). Thus, it is worth asking the next question; to what extent is the potentially local nature of the sciences related to the broadly defined field of pedagogy an actual issue rather than, perhaps, a form of self-justification used by many Polish researchers working within this system? (Rębisz, 2017, p. 33).

As already mentioned, in the journals examined 2019 saw a predominance of Polish authors, publishing overwhelmingly in Polish. In this situation, questions arise about both the assigned and expected roles of international members of these boards, who are at the same time the most productive and influential (cited) scholars working for these journals. By virtue of their function, their duty ought to be centred on developing and building the prestige of the journal through their own editorial work, evaluation of manuscripts,

appointment of reviewers and decisions on which articles to publish (Kulczycki et al., 2019b, p. 2). Is this what they actually do? Is their academic and editorial potential maximised? Or perhaps their role as shown by studies on the internationalisation of Polish journals in the social sciences and humanities (Kulczycki et al., 2019a) is merely reduced to accepting an honorary invitation, sitting on the editorial board without performing any duties at all, apart from helping the journal meet the required assessment parameters in terms of its internationalisation and thus to gain more points? And does this situation not affect the small increase in the number of texts published in these journals by authors from other countries? If only in the context of the pedagogical journals analysed in this paper, these questions but also other issues, e.g. the perception and maintenance of journal quality and the value or role of an EBM need further research, as they need to be faced and reliably answered.

The results presented are not without their limitations. The official list of EBMs may not have been up-to-date due to the time lag – often of several months or so – between the nomination or departure of a member from an editorial board and its publication. In addition, institutional affiliation does not necessarily correspond to the actual nationality of the board member. However, these factors are unlikely to distort and significantly affect the results.

Secondly, the empirical study of the scholarly achievements of the EBMs of the top ten Polish pedagogical journals should be treated only as a case study of a particular system and research policy, the state of pedagogics as a science and the practice of awarding points to journals according to a national metrics.

Thirdly, we should bear in mind that the lack of relevant achievements of editors expressed by bibliometric indicators from the WoS and Scopus databases, does not necessarily influence the quality of published texts in the journals in question. In the context of these and their editorial boards, we cannot statistically confirm or refute this thesis. The vast majority of the journals mentioned are not indexed in WoS and Scopus, and it is difficult to calculate a journal's h-index and hence compare it with the h-index of EBMs.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A similar approach is taken, among others, by Xie, the creator of the ETSI index (Editorial Team Scholarly Index) (Xie et al., 2019)

<sup>2</sup> The rules for the construction of the scoring list of journals in the period under review were given in the relevant regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and were further specified in the Minister's Communication in the year of assessment. The assessment of a journal, on the basis of which it was awarded an appropriate number of points, comprised three stages: formal assessment (e.g.: percentage of authors with foreign affiliation; indexing in databases; number of articles published per year; percentage of reviewers with foreign affiliation; frequency of publication; language of publication; percentage of scientific council members with foreign affiliation; online version; and duration of the journal's existence), evaluation of bibliometrics, and expert evaluation (the journal evaluation panel in the relevant scientific field). On the list, published by Ministry of Science and Higher Education dated 18/12/2019, of *the selected journals and peer-reviewed proceedings of international conferences*, journals were assigned 20, 40, 70, 100, 140 or 200 points. The more points assigned to a publication, the greater its 'weight'.

<sup>3</sup> On 9 February 2021, The Ministry published an updated listing with new pedagogical journals and a new scoring system.