

EVALUATION OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS IN THE FIELD OF LEGAL SCIENCES IN HUNGARY

The evaluation and system of registry of scientific publications in the field of legal studies and research shows a diverse picture in Hungary. While authors databases have been recently unified and ranking of publications/periodicals is also centralized, in the process of evaluating academic work and in the proceedings of academic career advancement (PhD, habilitation and Doctor of Sciences requirements) the evaluation systems are not used to a full extent. The following article introduces three main areas connected with this matter, namely: 1) Bibliographical databases; 2) Evaluation of articles, publications and periodicals and 3) Academic career advancement.

Bibliographical databases¹

At present there are several systems of working bibliographical databases, however among them there is one of major importance: the so-called *Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára - Database of Hungarian Scientific Work* (hereinafter referred to as MTMT Database). The work on creating a unified database was started in 2008 by the Hungarian Science Academy, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, the Hungarian Rector's Conference, the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund and the Hungarian Doctoral Council. The main aim of establishing a unified database of scientific work was to create a universally usable, multi-purpose and interoperable national database, to create a trustworthy registry of scientific work. The creation of the MTMT Database was done by a resolution of the Hungarian Science Academy's Presidium and later all institutions of higher education joined. Since 13th July

2015 the functioning of the MTMT Database has been regulated by statute and government decree. The MTMT Database is at present exclusively used by all joined institutions, as to its technical background, it allows imports from international databases (like Web of Science, for instance). In particular, the MTMT Database provides two major services: first, it serves as a unified registry of scientific work and second as an evaluation system for publications and periodicals. The MTMT Database is run by a non-profit organization in which the founders are exercising controlling rights. The database operates in Hungarian and contains data of researchers in Hungary – it works as a national database.

Joining the MTMT Database is carried out by all institutions of higher education, which provides several benefits for them. For example: the MTMT Database's development and operation is significantly cheaper than the local development and operation; data can be used for many purposes; it is suitable to meet the internal needs of the joined institutions (habilitation, internal applications, doctoral studies, statistics, management information system); there is an external quality assurance built into the MTMT Database system and last but not least the database is able to provide compatible data for the needs of larger organizations. However, the main and most relevant aspect of the MTMT Database is that it represents a unified registry of scientific work.

As for the authors, to have a MTMT Database profile is obligatory, but several services are provided with it. Among them: primary benefits for authors are that their personal scientific bibliography compilation is simple; it requires small work maintenance needs; it is widely used;

personal website can be inserted. Also the system provides citation tracking and indexing as well as is able to calculate several other scientometric information regarding the authors.

Evaluation of articles, publications and periodicals²

As to the evaluation issues, there is a different approach between domestic and foreign/international publications and periodicals. The MTMT Database itself offers a system of publication ranking which works as an in-built evaluation system. The main rule is that the evaluation concerns concrete, specific articles – so the scientific importance of a given article is evaluated. Based on the fact that the relevance of an article is among others connected with the relevance of the periodical it was published in, the MTMT Database evaluation system emphasizes the importance of journal ranking.

Despite the fact that it is commonly accepted³ that the scientific relevance of an article does not equal automatically to the scientific importance of the periodical in which it was published, the MTMT Database uses journal ranking as an important factor during evaluation processes. It is based on the experience that the concrete article's citation index undergoes a wide statistical fluctuation during the first 3-5 year period after the publication (dependant on the scientific field). Therefore, the evaluation system of articles is connected with the evaluation of publications and periodicals in the first place. Another relevant information in this matter is that the MTMT Database uses different evaluation processes for different fields of sciences realizing that every scientific field has its own characteristics. The listing of individual scientific fields is based on the two level Scopus system, containing 330 categories.

Based on above, the MTMT Database uses scientific field based publication ranking. This means that for different scientific fields different rankings are used. In the case of international publications and periodicals the MTMT Database implemented the use of the SCImago (<http://www.scimagojr.com/>) journal ranking system, which is quite similar to the ranking system of Web of Science (in the majority of cases there are overlaps in these two ranking databases). The main reason for using SCImago was its low maintenance cost, compared to other ranking

systems. This ranking system is complemented for domestic periodicals by national rankings.

The evaluation of domestic publications and periodicals is based on the fact that in the case of many science areas domestic publications represent a very relevant forum of scientific discussion. In these cases – and the legal sciences is one among them – the MTMT Database of international ranking is also supported by a national ranking. In the field of legal sciences it is remarkable that quite a number of articles is published in Hungarian (national) journals or in international periodicals which are not enlisted in SCImago database (but are considered as relevant, from a Hungarian point of view). In these cases the SCImago is complemented by the journal ranking of the Hungarian Science Academy. The ranking system is from grade A (best), B, C to D (worst). The ranking is different for every scientific field and actualized periodically.

The main criteria for evaluation of domestic journals are: liable publisher; responsible and open editorial board; manuscripts undergo a strict evaluation (anonymous proofreading, peer-review); articles have to represent a wide scientific views and ISBN/ISSN number. Scientific journals are designed primarily for participation of professional scientific community. Non-scientific journals can be considered as partially scientific if they contain sections reserved for scientific articles, but in these cases the review of manuscript is also prescribed. A scientific publication cannot be evaluated as an article which has less than 20.000 characters in length, has no system of citations or has no references to other scientific works. Political journals, journals of general interest, daily press, weekly/monthly newsletters and such cannot also be considered as scientific publications.

Academic career advancement

Commonly, there are three plus one relevant areas where ranking systems can be used. They cover on one hand certain levels of academic progression: PhD. proceedings, habilitation, Doctor of Sciences (Doctor of the Hungarian Science Academy) and on the other hand (the plus one) the annual evaluation of academic staff.

As to PhD proceedings: the PhD studies are organized in Hungary in doctoral schools for the given science area which have complex accreditation for issuing PhD title in

the given field, that is, in the case of legal sciences, it is not limited to only certain branches of law. The minimum requirements of a PhD study are different in various doctoral schools, but it is characteristic that there is a minimal number of certain type of publication prescribed, however the ranking of the article is not an aspect of evaluation. For instance, this minimum requirement can be stated that the PhD applicant has to have at least 8 publications from the field of study (including at least 2 in a foreign language), 4 conference contributions (including 1 in a foreign language) - but it is not of major importance if the foreign publication is a conference proceedings book or a journal with impact factor. Of course during the PhD exams articles in prestigious periodicals are considered positively, which can result in higher grades during the exam, as the members of the PhD committee are normally familiar with the rank and quality of certain journals, however the general rule is that there is no point based system of publication minimum for PhD students, so the MTMT ranking system or/and the Hungarian Science Academy ranking system have no formal (or legally binding) relevance at the moment.

As to the habilitation: the basis of the habilitation is the so-called aptitude or suitability test to decide whether the applicant is suitable to fulfill the expectations for a habilitation. This suitability test is carried out by the habilitation committee, its basis is normally a relevant monograph in the field (written especially for the purpose of habilitation) together with other publications of the applicant or the academic supervisor of the applicant evaluated in a complex manner. In any case, during the habilitation a more subjective element is present – which is the consideration of the members of the committee, but there is no obligatory minimum number or quality of articles or publications.

In the third case, the proceedings of Doctor of Sciences (Doctor of the Hungarian Science Academy – the title itself is similar to the DrSc. or DSc. title known in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic), ranking systems are applied. This proceeding has a very strict evaluation method which has to be fulfilled by the applicant and has a detailed requirement system in which rankings have their major relevance. The Doctor of Science procedure is a unique type of academic achievement, a very prestigious scientific grade/level and a prerequisite to become an ordinary member of the Hungarian Science Academy. Based on these it affects

a smaller number of researchers (compared to the PhD proceedings or habilitation) and gives entitlement to represent the elite of Hungarian scientific circles. During this procedure the Hungarian Science Academy evaluates the suitability of the applicant and besides the MTMT Database also European Science Foundation (<http://www.esf.org/>) and Scopus (<https://www.scopus.com/>) databases are used.

The last area in which the ranking of publications is important is the regular evaluation of academic staff at their workplace. At present, for this purpose forms are used in which the head of the department (or head of a similar body) evaluates several categories of academic work, such as: educational and scientific work of the researcher, other academic activities, other organizational activities, etc. This annual work evaluation has a point-based system in which in every category points from 1 (worst) to 3 (best) can be given. These are basically grades given by the head of the department in connection with the evaluation of the yearly work of colleagues of a given workplace. While a higher number of publications can result in a higher grade (thus better evaluation), formally the quality or ranking of articles has no significance in this process.

Conclusions

To sum up, the unified MTMT Database represents not only a registry of scientific work, but also a ranking of periodicals and publications complemented by the rankings of the Hungarian Science Academy. The MTMT Database's ranking system is based on SCImago. The MTMT Database is accepted and universally used by all institutions of higher education and therefore is of essential importance in the system – its main function is to provide an up-to-date registry of scientific work (statistical function). The ranking function of the MTMT Database is relatively underrepresented, as at the moment there are only a few proceedings in which ranking systems are used to a full extent or have a formally binding role.

¹ <https://www.mtmt.hu/magyar-tudomanyos-muvek-tara> (20 July 2016).

² <https://www.mtmt.hu/> and https://www.mtmt.hu/sites/default/files/utmutatok/szakteruleti_folyoiratranszor_az_mmtt-ben.pdf. (20 July 2016).

³ See <http://www.ascb.org/dora/> (20 July 2016).