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Changes in the Perception of the Teaching Profession in Polish Society

Przemiany percepcji zawodu nauczyciela w społeczeństwie polskim

Abstract

Economic, historical and social changes affect the changing perception of the teaching profession in Poland and around the world. With the increase in the availability of education, changes in the educational system, the way future teachers are trained and society's attitude towards the work done by teachers is changing. The purpose of the article is to analyse the changes taking place in the perception of the teaching profession, including an analysis of historical changes and social conditions, as well as a comparison of social research on the prestige of the teaching profession, its image and factors affecting satisfaction with the work performed by teachers. The main research method was desk research.

Keywords: teaching profession, prestige, education, society, changes, schools, universities

Abstrakt

Przemiany gospodarcze, historyczne i społeczne oddziałują na zmianę percepcji zawodu nauczyciela, zarówno w Polsce jak i na świecie. Wraz ze wzrostem dostępności wykształcenia, zmianami w systemie oświaty, sposobem kształcenia przyszłych nauczycieli zmienia się stosunek społeczeństwa do wykonywanej przez nich pracy. Celem artykułu jest przeanalizowanie zachodzących zmian percepcji zawodu nauczyciela – analiza przemian historycznych oraz uwarunkowań społecznych oraz porównanie badań społecznych dotyczących prestiżu i wizerunku zawodu nauczyciela oraz czynników wpływających na satysfakcję z wykonywanej przez nauczycieli pracy. W artykule wykorzystano metodę analizy dokumentów zastanych – badań i komunikatów z badań.

Słowa kluczowe: zawód nauczyciela, prestiż, edukacja, społeczeństwo, przemiany, szkoły, uczelnie wyższe

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Introduction

With political, economic, social and educational changes, the teacher's role in the context of the development of society and individuals is constantly changing. With the redefinition of the teacher's social role and social position, this profession's prestige also changes. As noted by Richard Ingersoll and Gregory J. Collins,¹ inherent in capturing the professionalism of the teaching profession is the prestige and status accorded to it by society. Dominika Walczak² adds that the concept of prestige is ambiguous and associated with respect, authority, dignity, pride and esteem. Henryk Domański and Włodzimierz Wesołowski³ point out that nowadays, the prestige of an individual or a profession is influenced by the level of education, necessary qualifications, social skills and remuneration. H. Domański⁴ also states that prestige is a characteristic that is difficult to capture because it is intangible, associated with a subjective assessment and often unconscious. He also notes that the prestige attributed to certain professional roles depends on the needs and functions they fulfil and satisfy in society and the rare skills of the representatives of a given profession. The rarer the skills and the more significant the needs a profession fulfils, the greater its prestige. Prestige is sometimes defined as the subjective evaluation attributed to an office or position,⁵ resulting from the rewards and values attributed to these rewards⁶ and the honour of receiving external signs of respect.⁷ At the same time, prestige and status are interchangeable concepts in Anglo-Saxon sociology, which William L. Warner defined as "the valued rank of a position."⁸

H. Domański⁹ distinguishes four types of prestige:

- (1) personal – the value attributed to an individual for their personal qualities, which can be known through direct contact or indirectly through the media;
- (2) positional – the value attributed is due to the position held by the individual and can be correlated with personal characteristics. In this view, social

¹ R. Ingersoll, K. Collins, *The Status of Teaching as a Profession*, in: *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*, eds. J.J. Spade, J. Stuber, Pine Forge Press/Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA 2018, pp. 199–202.

² D. Walczak, *Prestiż zawodu nauczyciela w percepcji różnych aktów życia szkoły*, „Studia z Teorii Wychowania” 2016, vol. 7, no. 4 (17), p. 94.

³ H. Domański, W. Wesołowski, *Prestiż – formy historyczne*, in: *Encyklopedia Socjologii*, vol. 3, ed. W. Kwaśniewicz, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw 2000, pp. 195–201.

⁴ Idem, *Prestiż*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2012, pp. 13–18.

⁵ K. Davis, *Human Society*, The Macmillan Company, New York 1949, pp. 93–94.

⁶ K. Hope, *A Liberal Theory of Prestige*, „American Journal of Sociology” 1981, vol. 87, no. 5, pp. 1011–1012.

⁷ S. Ossowski, *O strukturze społecznej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1982, pp. 27–30.

⁸ W.L. Warner, *Social Class in America*, Harper Torchbooks, New York 1960, pp. 8–9.

⁹ H. Domański, *Prestiż...*, pp. 41–44.

position is defined as a compilation of education level, wealth, possessions and occupation;

- (3) situational – it is short-lived, and its duration depends on the circumstances;
- (4) institutionalised – can refer to personal, positional and situational prestige, provided that certain customary or legal standards and rules are established to define how external signs of prestige are displayed and enforced. Nowadays, the primary task of institutionalised prestige is to provide symbols that reinforce the hierarchy (e.g. physical symbols: uniform, orders). At the same time, prestige has begun to be managed in organisations through the implementation of specific strategies by those in charge of marketing and corporate image. However, the role of the media, as agencies that manage prestige and influence, for example, the public perception of professions, should also be noted. Finally, institutionalised prestige has a bonding function in organisations and social structures by integration through common values externalised in behavioural symbols (ceremonies and rituals).

H. Domański points out that the best indicator of global prestige in sociological sciences is respondents' opinions on the prestige of professions. The analysis makes it possible to determine the shape of the global hierarchy or stratification of prestige in a given country. At the same time, from the point of view of functionalists, positional prestige is a factor of social integration. Therefore, the evaluation of the prestige of individual professions makes it possible to define divisions and distances between people according to commonly shared and accepted norms. This approach to the prestige of occupations was presented by the founders of the functional theory of social stratification (Kingsley Davis, Wilbert E. Moore,¹⁰ Talcott Parsons¹¹). They postulated that a society without an agreed hierarchy would not be able to develop normally.

Transformation of the Teacher's Social Role

With the social and historical changes that were taking place, the social status of the teaching profession was also changing. As Anna Radziwiłł¹² notes, in the past, the prestige of the teaching profession was high due to the elitism of education and the continuity and closeness of tutors' contacts with parents. Similarly, the interwar period was a time when the teacher's position in society was very high due to the shortage of staff and the high qualifications of secondary

¹⁰ K. Davis, W.E. Moore, *Some Principles of Stratification*, "American Sociological Review" 1945, vol. 10, no. 2.

¹¹ T. Parsons, *Teoria uwarstwienia społecznego w ujęciu analitycznym*, in: *Szkice z teorii socjologicznej*, ed. idem, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 1972.

¹² A. Radziwiłł, *O etosie nauczyciela*, „Znak” 1991, vol. 436, no. 9, pp. 10–15.

school teachers, many of whom were university employees. Municipal teachers working in primary schools enjoyed a lower prestige. As Magdalena Smak and Dominika Walczak note,¹³ illiteracy was eradicated in Poland after the Second World War, but party activities aimed at the ideologisation of education led to the devaluation of the teaching profession. Taking up a teaching career at the time offered the possibility of rapid social advancement, but the level of teachers' education steadily declined, and their salaries decreased. The purpose of teaching was to transmit ideology. Combined with the shortage of teachers, this meant that poorly educated individuals were hired to provide universal education, which lowered the profession's prestige in society, especially among educated people. Consequently, the teaching profession was associated with indoctrination in public perception, as the teacher's ability to shape a socialist citizen was valued more than the teacher's factual and methodological knowledge.¹⁴

After 1989, a series of educational reforms were implemented to move away from ideologised education to scientifically-based teaching, changing curricula, textbooks and management staff in early childhood education, moving away from subject-based education to integrated education, and finally, the establishment of grammar schools. The obligation to finance and provide universal education (up to the secondary school level) was ceded to local authorities, which received funds for this purpose from the state budget, leading to a number of organisational and financial problems.¹⁵ According to the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS),¹⁶ the educated part of society was satisfied with the reforms introduced, of which the greatest support (81%) was for increasing teachers' salaries in line with their level of education and the quality of work. At the same time, after 1990, there was a time of a surge in enrolment in higher education institutions, the massification of higher education and a decline in the importance of diplomas obtained in the labour market. In turn, the massification of higher education also resulted in a devaluation of awarded degrees and problems related to the broad accessibility to the teaching profession associated with higher education institutions. The massification of education, which seemed to be a feasible goal for many countries to achieve, entailed a number of problems – first and foremost was the realisation that universal access to education translates into a huge number of students whose schooling must be financed.

¹³ M. Smak, D. Walczak, *Pozycja społeczno-zawodowa nauczycieli Raport z badania jakościowego*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warsaw 2015, pp. 15–16.

¹⁴ W. Dróżka, *Problemy funkcjonowania zawodowego nauczycieli w okresie zmiany społeczno-edukacyjnej*, „Studia pedagogiczne. Problemy społeczne, edukacyjne i artystyczne” 2010, vol. 19, pp. 33–37.

¹⁵ M. Kinal, *Reformy edukacyjne i rozwój koncepcji dotyczących edukacji wczesnoszkolnej Polsce w latach 1990–2017*, “UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences” 2022, vol. 3, no. 24, pp. 66–82.

¹⁶ CBOS, *Spółeczne poparcie dla reformy szkolnictwa*, oprac. B. Wciórka, Komunikat z badań nr BS/58/99, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 1999, p. 3.

In order to fund education, classes cannot be small, as local authorities will not be able to bear such a burden on their budgets. Overcrowded classes accompanied by low entry requirements into the teaching profession have resulted in lower education levels, revealing another problem, namely, the inability of teachers to move away from well-established behavioural concepts to cognitive concepts. The result of the education system operating in this way is the large numbers of poorly educated individuals who have basic literacy and numeracy skills but lack the ability to carry out higher-order mental operations and therefore fail to use their knowledge to develop and respond to the economic demands of the country. An analogous situation is found in higher education – a large number of students require full-time academic teachers, whose number is steadily increasing: in 2000, there were almost 23,000 academic teachers at universities in Poland, and their number increased by nearly 10,000 in 2018.¹⁷ In contrast, the situation is reversed with the number of university students, with just over 443,000 in 2000 and over half a million in the following years, until 2012, when their number began to fall to 388,373 in 2017.¹⁸ Michał Federowicz, Krzysztof Biedrzycki, Marcin Karpiński et al.¹⁹ point out that the primary task of education reformers is to raise the prestige of the teaching profession so that it becomes an attractive choice because only committed, educated and thinking teachers can make a real difference to the quality of education. They also note another challenge facing the state authorities – with demographic changes, retaining the most valuable teachers in the profession will be necessary.

It is worth noting that with the changes in education and learning, the life aspirations of the population and the educational structure have also changed. As recently as 1995, almost one in ten people had a university degree, less than six in ten people had secondary vocational or basic vocational education, almost one in ten people had post-secondary education, and almost three in ten people had only primary education.²⁰ This structure of society would correspond to John Dewey's concept,²¹ according to which the majority of society can only acquire practical-utilitarian qualifications while a few are able to develop intellectually. It is worth noting that Dewey's aim was not to discourage but to show that education should be practical and that adapting the school to the student facilitates making the most of the student's potential. The change in the value of education and the shift from vocational to higher education is reflected, for

¹⁷ Bank Danych Lokalnych, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/dane/podgrup/tablica> (accessed: 01.2023).

¹⁸ Bank Danych Lokalnych, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/dane/podgrup/tablica> (accessed: 01.2023).

¹⁹ M. Federowicz, K. Biedrzycki, M. Karpiński, L. Rycielska, M. Sitek, D. Walczak, *Dynamika przemian w edukacji i diagnoza problemów do rozwiązania*, The Educational Research Institute, Warsaw 2015, pp. 41-43.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 9.

²¹ J. Dewey, *Doświadczenie i edukacja*, Warszawska Firma Wydawnicza, Warsaw 2014, pp. 10-15.

example, in the fact that in 2005/2006, five out of ten people graduated from university, and young people were increasingly opting for general secondary education rather than vocational schools. The change in the structure of education has necessitated an alteration in how knowledge is imparted and tested – the teacher's task is no longer to prepare for the profession but to prepare for successive tests for higher education. It is only on university teachers that the duty to prepare students for practical work has been imposed, negating the role of shaping thought, worldview and building the reflectiveness of graduates.

Changes in the Teacher's Professional Position

The change in the social role of the teacher correlated with the changes taking place in terms of prestige. With the transition from traditional societies to modern societies (called knowledge society, information society, mass society), the conglomerate of significant values, which previously could be suppressed even by rigid state structures, changed, and so did the demand of the society for certain services and the perception of professions fulfilling these needs. H. Domański acknowledges that "mass societies have shaped prestige exchanges,"²² noting that although prestige nowadays does not divide people into better and worse in an unambiguous way as in estate-based societies, establishing insurmountable barriers, it has remained an important value-ordering reality for people.

Wanda Dróżka²³ identifies three phases in the transformation of the teacher's position: (1) dependent – ideologically subordinated to the system; (2) independent – free from the political system and imposed ideology; (3) interdependent on the community – able to communicate with parents, students, cooperate with the environment and explain the changes taking place. M. Federowicz and K. Biedrzycki²⁴ note that there is a growing need for the professionalisation of the teaching profession. Teachers should stop defining themselves as clerks who follow top-down recommendations for which they are held accountable and become specialists who can correctly diagnose students, respond to their needs, and thus individualise the didactic and educational process, and then reflectively evaluate their work. It should be noted, however, that the size of classes, the increasing number of students with special educational needs and the lack of excellence in teacher education result in teachers being more likely to follow ready-made, universal scenarios than to create something on their own. This is precisely the diagnosis, group work, use of activating methods, project

²² H. Domański, *Prestiż...*, p. 73.

²³ W. Dróżka, *Problemy funkcjonowania zawodowego nauczycieli...*, p. 25.

²⁴ M. Federowicz, K. Biedrzycki, M. Karpiński, L. Rycielska, M. Sitek, D. Walczak, *Dynamika przemian w edukacji i diagnoza problemów do rozwiązania...*, pp. 13–14.

methods and formative assessment that affect the quality of individualisation, increased teacher autonomy and thus the professionalisation of this sector. If teachers are not able to think independently, they will not teach their students to do so.

At the same time, attention should be paid to emerging trends in Europe – the European Commission's Communication²⁵ states that the problems facing the education system will be an increasing number of older teachers, a shortage of trained teachers and young teachers leaving the profession. With a growing number of pupils with special educational needs, the shortage of specialists will also be acute. The projected problems will worsen if the teaching profession does not grow in importance. Therefore, it is important to measure the prestige of this occupational group and anticipate the effects of change. A study conducted in 35 countries where respondents were asked to rank 14 professions from most to least prestigious found that teachers ranked 10th (secondary school teachers) and 11th (primary school teachers). Doctors, nurses, school principals (fourth in the ranking), police officers, engineers and accountants were rated higher in the survey. In addition, the report shows that teachers are more highly valued in Asia, the Middle East and Africa than in Europe.²⁶ The authors of the Global Teacher Status Index 2018 point out that there are large discrepancies in the prestige of teachers between countries; they are also more respected by parents than by those without children and by older people and men.²⁷

In Poland, surveys on the prestige of various professions (including teachers) are periodically carried out by opinion polling institutions, including CBOS. In a 1995 survey, respondents were asked about the esteem (high, medium, low) they held for the professions listed (N=1223). The occupational groups held in the highest esteem at that time (as in 1975 and 1987) were university professors, followed by doctors in second place and school teachers in third place. This was followed by miners, judges, journalists, factory engineers, regular officers of the rank of captain, factory directors and police officers. It can be seen that professions that required knowledge and education were valued the highest. As the authors of the report note, a university professor was rated higher by educated people, while no correlation was observed between respondents' education and prestige rating in the case of the teaching profession.²⁸

²⁵ I. Katsarova, *Teaching Careers in the EU. Why Boys Do Not Want to Be Teachers*, European Parliament Research Service, European Parliament 2020, pp. 2–8.

²⁶ P. Dolton, O. Marcenaro, R. De Vries, P.-W. She, *Global Teacher Status Index*, Varkey Foundation, London 2018, pp. 17–24.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 41.

²⁸ CBOS, *Prestiż zawodów*, Komunikat z badań nr BS/56/47/95, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 1995.

An analogous survey was repeated in 1999 on a group of 1,111 respondents. Once again, the most valued profession was the university professor, with one in eight people holding it in high esteem. Doctors and teachers were rated similarly. The top ten most respected professions were judges, miners, nurses, factory engineers, factory directors and regular officers of the rank of captain. As noted in the report, at the top of the list of respected professions are white-collar jobs, where creativity is important and which are performed under deteriorating working conditions with relatively low official wages.²⁹

Another survey of 1,050 people in 2009 showed that, once again, university professors were held in the highest esteem. However, compared to the previous survey, the position of teachers dropped. Although the profession is held in similar regard as in previous years, respondents rated other occupations higher. Consequently, firefighters ranked second, followed by miners in third place. The next occupational groups were: nurses, doctors, factory engineers and only in seventh place – teachers, as well as skilled workers, accountants and officers in the rank of captain. The authors of the report note that the academic professor's prestige is linked to the expert nature of the job, intellectual independence and the prestige of the academic title itself. Jobs characterised by social utility have gained importance, and it was also noted that respect for the teaching profession is expressed more often by older people than by students.³⁰

The survey on the prestige of the teaching profession in 2013 (N=904) shows that, for the first time, firefighters outranked university professors. This was followed by skilled workers, miners, factory engineers, nurses, teachers (again in seventh position), doctors, individual farmers with medium-sized farms and regular officers of the rank of captain. The authors of the study noted a trend towards a general increase in the prestige of most of the occupations on the list, pointing out that the professions that have lost their position have a relatively stable image in society, and their public perception changes slightly.³¹

The latest survey conducted by CBOS in 2019 (N=965) shows that the highest-rated professions were firefighters, nurses and skilled workers. The miners ranked next, followed by university professors in fifth place. The next five respected professions were doctors, teachers (again in seventh place), factory engineers, individual farmers with medium-sized farms and accountants. The authors of the survey point out that while the miners and skilled workers were more respected among the less educated, the university professor is held in

²⁹ CBOS, *Prestiż zawodów*, oprac. M. Falkowska, Komunikat z badań nr BS/32/99, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 1999.

³⁰ CBOS, *Prestiż zawodów*, oprac. M. Feliksiak, Komunikat z badań nr BS/8/2009, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2009.

³¹ CBOS, *Prestiż zawodów*, oprac. A. Cybulska, Komunikat z badań nr BS/164/2013, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2013.

high esteem by the more educated section of society. Analysing the responses of university graduates alone, it can be seen that university professors were ahead of skilled workers and miners, receiving 90% support.³² Analysing the survey conducted by CBOS,³³ one can notice a tendency that occupations with high practical utility, recognised by society as necessary and fulfilling socially important functions, have gained importance. Along with the change in the educational structure of society, the professional aspirations of young people and salaries in the education and science sector, the social position of teachers and university professors has changed (Table 1). It is worth noting that the decrease in esteem for both professions is not significant – both have enjoyed similar prestige over many years: university professors have seen a 10-point decrease, while teachers have seen a 2-point drop. On the other hand, the decline in the ranking shows a reduction in the value of knowledge and education in building the profession's prestige.

Table 1. Changes in perceptions of the prestige of teachers and university professors over the years

	Average prestige scores 1975–2019 (0–100 points)						
	1975	1987	1995	1999	2009	2013	2019
University professors	90	87	80	81	84	78	80
Teachers	77	79	72	71	70	73	75

Source: Own study based on CBOS research 1975–2019.

CBOS also examined the public's assessment of the integrity and honesty of people working in a particular profession. The data indicate that scientists and teachers are considered honest and reliable. In 2000 and 2006, scientists ranked first, and teachers ranked third (behind nurses), while in 2016³⁴, the position of teachers dropped to fourth place (behind IT professionals). The high rating of the honesty and reliability of scientists has not been affected by social situations such as plagiarism, violence at universities and pathologies. At the same time, the position of teachers does not seem to have changed despite the criticism of the quantity and quality of their work. However, it is worth noting that society's general opinion of the honesty and integrity of various professions has deteriorated over the years.³⁵

³² CBOS, *Które zawody považamy?*, oprac. M. Omyła-Rudzka, Komunikat z badań nr 157/2019, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2019.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ CBOS, *Społeczne oceny uczciwości i rzetelności zawodowej*, oprac. R. Boguszewski, Komunikat z badań nr 34/2016, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2016.

³⁵ CBOS, *O uczciwości i rzetelności zawodowej*, oprac. W. Derczyński, Komunikat z badań nr BS/37/2006, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2006.

Table 2. Opinion on the honesty and integrity of scientists and teachers between 2000 and 2016

	Average scores of respondents (1–5 points*)		
	2000	2006	2016
Researchers	3,86	3,94	3,73
Teachers	3,44	3,60	3,53

Source: Own study based on CBOS surveys 2000–2016; *1 – very high; 5 – very low.

The TALIS 2018 international survey of 260,000 teachers from almost 50 countries shows that the vast majority of teachers (90%) feel satisfied with their job and do not regret their choice of career path (91%). At the same time, only just over a third of the teachers surveyed claimed that the teaching profession is respected by society, and disappointment related to professional prestige was positively correlated with teachers' age.³⁶

In Poland, research on the image of teachers was conducted by CBOS in 2012, and no new data has emerged since then. At that time, half of the public thought that teachers worked too few hours per week and that their holidays lasted too long. A third of the public thought that teachers' salaries were too low (in 2012, the average salary of a trainee teacher was PLN 2,265 and of a certified teacher – PLN 3,109;³⁷ in 2022, the average salary of a trainee teacher was PLN 3,424 and of a certified teacher – PLN 4,224³⁸). The vast majority of the public valued the work of teachers, considering it to be very responsible, difficult and stressful. Seven out of ten respondents believed that teachers were highly qualified, and one in two said that teachers did a job that gave them a lot of satisfaction. Four out of ten respondents felt that teachers had a sense of mission.³⁹

Anna Michniuk⁴⁰ found on the basis of her analysis that the salaries of beginning teachers in Poland were less than half the average of those in the European Union countries. At the same time, David Card⁴¹ stated that after reaching a cer-

³⁶ OECD, *What TALIS 2018 Implies for Policy*, in: *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris 2019, pp. 25–52. DOI: 10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

³⁷ Serwis Samorządowy PAP, *Stawki minimum. Publikujemy tabelę wynagrodzeń zasadniczych nauczycieli*, Warsaw 2014, <https://samorząd.pap.pl/kategoria/edukacja/stawki-minimum-publikujemy-tabele-wynagrodzen-zasadniczych-nauczycieli> (accessed: 07.02.2023).

³⁸ Serwis Samorządowy PAP, *Nowe stawki wynagrodzenia zasadniczego nauczycieli 2022 r. (rozporządzenie)*, Warsaw 2022, <https://samorząd.pap.pl/kategoria/edukacja/nowe-stawki-wynagrodzenia-zasadniczego-nauczycieli-2022-r-rozporządzenie> (accessed: 07.02.2023).

³⁹ CBOS, *Wizerunek nauczycieli*, oprac. M. Feliksiak, Komunikat z badań, nr BS/173/2012, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw 2012.

⁴⁰ A. Michniuk, *Dlaczego współcześni nauczyciele rezygnują z pracy w szkołach państwowych? Raport z badań*, "Rocznik Pedagogiczny" 2020, vol. 43, pp. 153–154.

⁴¹ D. Card, A. Mas, E. Moretti, E. Saez, *Inequality at Work: The Effect of Peer Salaries on Job Satisfaction*, "The American Economic Review" 2012, vol. 102, no. 6, pp. 2984–2986.

tain earnings threshold, money ceases to be a factor shaping job satisfaction. Therefore, employers should take into account other factors besides salaries that motivate people to work effectively. Job satisfaction consists of factors such as organisational culture, relations with superiors and colleagues, promotion opportunities, form of work, social recognition and individual characteristics of employees. In a study conducted by Mariola Kinal⁴² among preschool and early childhood education teachers (N=487), most teachers (91%) rated their job satisfaction as good or very good. More than half of the respondents were highly motivated to work, with employees of non-public and private primary schools declaring high motivation to work most often and public kindergartens least often. At the same time, more than half of the teachers (56%) felt they did not have the opportunity to earn a high income. Two-thirds of the teachers said they had the opportunity to obtain successive degrees of professional promotion (public and private institutions were surveyed; in private institutions, the opportunities were fewer due to legal regulations). Four out of ten teachers felt that they experienced high or medium stress at work, the same number of respondents thought the stress they experienced was low or very low, and two out of ten teachers said they experienced no stress at work. A. Michniuk,⁴³ analysing her own research, found that the main reason why teachers left the profession was low salaries; other reasons included intimidation by headteachers, divisions within the teaching community and education reform. A. Michniuk also points out that teachers can be encouraged to return to the profession by higher pay, better working conditions, employment in one place, fewer classes, fixed working hours and the introduction of a teaching assistant. An increase in job satisfaction, positive motivation for self-education and improving qualifications, as well as a salary increase, could translate into an increase in society's esteem for the teaching profession.

Summary

The professional position of teachers in rankings remains unchanged. Teachers are held in high esteem by around 70% of the public. However, it can be observed that society has started to appreciate other occupational groups which (referring to H. Domański's definition) have higher qualifications, social skills, higher salaries or rare and valued skills. In order to increase the prestige of the teaching profession, it is necessary, first of all, to ensure that this occupation is

⁴² M. Kinal, *Kultura organizacyjna wybranych rzeszowskich przedszkoli i szkół*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2021, pp. 140–150.

⁴³ A. Michniuk, *Dlaczego współcześni nauczyciele rezygnują z pracy w szkołach państwowych? Raport z badań...* pp. 160–161.

professionalised and that teacher education studies are studies of positive choice, where the entry threshold is high, and graduates are required to have extensive professional knowledge. In addition, the use of ready-made teaching materials and textbooks by teachers results in the public perception that anyone, including individuals without a degree, can carry out guided tasks. Such a view of the teacher's work contributes to lowering the esteem of this occupational group.

The research report of M. Smak and D. Walczak⁴⁴ found that the prestige of the teaching profession is enhanced primarily by the personal qualities of teachers – the ability to communicate effectively with the internal and external environment of the organisation is particularly valued. In addition, autonomous teachers who have developed a partnership style of working with their students and show a high level of content-related and methodological knowledge can count on recognition in the eyes of society. The last element affecting the prestige of the teaching profession is the restoration of schools to the position of an educational and cultural centre, which brings together the students, parents and the local community by undertaking a variety of socially meaningful activities. The report's authors also point to a number of factors that reduce the prestige of the teaching profession. For example, they point out that teachers have ceased to be the main source of knowledge, and by focusing only on imparting knowledge, instead of developing thinking, they are lowering the status of their profession in a way. Another element that negatively affects the teacher's image is the lack of public knowledge of the specifics of the teacher's work and the non-teaching burdens they have to face. The authors also point out that teachers themselves often speak negatively about working conditions, reforms, pupils, thus creating an unflattering image in the public's consciousness, and the media further reinforce such an image of teachers. The report shows teachers themselves believe that the activities of trade unions damage their image. Other elements detrimental to the prestige of the teaching profession, according to M. Smak and D. Walczak,⁴⁵ include too low remuneration not commensurate with qualifications, low quality of teacher education, a dysfunctional system of professional promotion of teachers, attachment to behavioural theories and lack of recognition of the rights and subjectivity of students by teachers, divisions and lack of communication within the teaching community.

As shown in the article, the prestige of the teaching profession is influenced by many factors that do not easily improve. A key element, pointed out by many theoreticians, seems to be a change in the system of educating future teachers and, above all, accepting candidates who meet certain criteria – the introduction

⁴⁴ M. Smak, D. Walczak, *Pozycja społeczno-zawodowa nauczycieli. Raport z badania jakościowego...*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, pp. 3–4.

of entrance examinations. In order for the best candidates to enter the profession, it is also necessary to ensure appropriate salaries and working conditions that enable the current pedagogical demands to be realised through work rather than voluntary work and the implementation of superordinate tasks. It also seems necessary to develop an appropriate organisational culture for the school, linked to the organisation's mission, so that teachers work together to achieve their goals and values and create a coherent image for external stakeholders.

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