

## The positive and negative aspects of professional work in the experience of teachers

Pozytywne i negatywne aspekty pracy zawodowej w opinii nauczycieli  
Introduction. Research issues and methodology

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This text presents some of the results (with division into various age groups) of a broader research on values, goals, and life as well as on professional ambitions of teachers who are currently professionally active. The aim of that research was to attain knowledge about professional as well as social and cultural condition of the contemporary teachers. In other words, what are the teachers' attitudes towards values, problems, dilemmas related to the contemporary civilization, culture, and social life.

The most interesting aspect seems to be learning about issues, which the teachers deem most important in their life and work, issues that stimulate and motive them, that give them satisfaction, and in turn trigger creative activity and involvement; but also about the things they would like to achieve in their lives and professional work. Another interesting facet is what factors reduce their motivation, make it difficult for them to function professionally, what they perceive as particularly difficult to overcome, what they cannot come to terms with, and what they would like to change right away.

Examining the above issues is of special importance in relation to teachers, as their occupation and work have strong social and cultural references, and are subject to an array of new challenges and tensions. Those tensions result from introduction of necessary changes and innovations required by education – they make it possible to keep pace with the technological and information progress, which introduces a number of transformations into the culture and social life.

The need for high sophistication, both personal and professional – the quality of teachers – is emphasized in European Committee's documents, ATEE's reports, Delors White Paper and in numerous publications.

The way they will understand ethical and political conditions of their role in the time when so many, often contradictory, expectations are formulated toward education; the way they will be building relations between individual and society, which are one of the vital aspects of today's education, culture, economy, and many other areas of social life, depends precisely on the quality of teachers' professional work.

The comparative study, conducted in Europe and concerned with the profession of the teacher, shows that this occupation is currently at the center of various political and social debates and that it constitutes the subject of undertaken or planned reforms (Dyrekcja Generalna ds. Edukacji i Kultury 2002). The new contexts for education and school, such as the development of information technology, pluralization of the social life, multiculturalism, growing autonomy of local communities and schools, force the teachers to face new tasks for which they need to be properly prepared. This in particular pertains to a broader involvement of the teachers in administrative chores and in management of school, to employment of the new information and communication technologies, to promoting human rights, to civic education, and to the preparation of students to a lifelong learning (Dyrekcja Generalna ds. Edukacji i Kultury 2002, p. X).

Further tasks are brought about by popularization and growing diversity (heterogeneity) of student communities, which results from the integration of immigrant children as well as from integration of children with special educational needs and with tutorial problems, also of children and youth from poor communities and socially marginalized groups. Those tasks turn out to be very difficult for the teachers. This proves that they need to be provided with competences helping them to shape mutual relations and to communicate – this is especially important in relation to ethnic and language minorities as well as to the students with special educational needs.

The shift of cultural and civilization context, high social expectations connected to the quality of education, growing number of professional tasks, the necessity to continue learning, to further one's training and to polish one's skills cause that the teaching profession becomes more and more difficult. New challenges prove that this occupation ought to be undertaken by smart people, and at the same time in many countries and regions of EU it can be noticed that there is a dislike for this profession or even a serious risk of staff shortage. The conducted research allows to reflect that this situation is connected to overly low salary (Raport OECD 2019), hard work conditions (lack of flexibility in setting the scope of responsibilities, unsatisfactory independence of the teacher, working hours, insufficient pedagogical support, poor state of school build-

ings, being forced to work with pupils having educational problems, etc.). Frequent phenomena of lack of support for young teachers in the period of their entrance into the profession, their professional adaptation was also emphasized as the reason for their leaving this occupation in the first years of their work (Dyrekcja Generalna ds. Edukacji i Kultury 2002, p. X).

In consideration of the above, 2 problems are given the most thought in political and educational debates, in conducted researches and in European reports, namely: the necessity of modifications in the teacher's competences profile and the need to make this profession more attractive.

The conducted research has also a clear practical aspect: the knowledge of beneficial and adverse factors influencing the teachers' motivation and the quality of their work will be conducive for better understanding of their education and professional training. Cyclical research in this area will help to broaden the knowledge of teachers' educators and it will be useful in the teachers' work. It will facilitate development of appropriate education and training curricula for teachers, as well as create a better opportunity to acquire and to employ innovative solutions in teachers, education.

#### Scope, organization and the course of research

The research was conducted at the end of 2014 and 2015 in schools of varying types, in the area of Świętokrzyskie province and the neighboring provinces, using the survey "Life's aspirations, values and needs of teachers".

In total, 405 surveys were collected from teachers belonging to three age groups:

- young teachers: up to 35 years of age (141 surveys),
- middle-aged teachers (from 36 to 50 years of age) (154 surveys),
- older teachers (above 51 years of age) (110 surveys).

In order to draw a research sample, its most characteristic features should be mentioned. Applied randomly-layered sample selection, where the layer was the age of teachers.

And so, in 405 persons who have completed the survey the majority constituted women – 89.7%, and men – 10.3%. 94.4% were persons with M.A. degree, 4.5% with B.A. degree, and 3 persons with a doctor's degree. 75.9% of them were married, and 20.3% – were single. 31.9 % of these persons did not have children, 26.7% had one child, 30.7% had 2 children, and 8.7% had 3 or more children.

24.3% of the examined group lived in traditional villages; 18.0% – in communal villages, 24.1% – in commune towns, 19.0% – in medium sized towns, and 14.6% – in large cities (place of residence generally corresponds to the place of employment).

### The quality of professional work as perceived by the teachers

In the conducted data analyses, pertaining to the motivational aspects of the teachers' work, analogically as in the previous research conducted 25 years earlier, the concept of D. Dobrowolska (1982, p. 43 et al.; 1980, p. 76 et al.) was used. According to this approach, at least two types of values connected to work could be indicated, which at the same time constituted the basis for the teachers' aspirations and intentions. First of them corresponds to work aspects, among which content of work, its organization, physical environment, social environment (relations with colleagues, superiors, etc.), work time, salary, social benefits, development opportunities, advancement opportunities, etc. can be listed. These are usually divided into inherent and external motivational factors. Inherent factors include content of work, which within this approach is understood as an autotelic value (the professional activities themselves and their results are important here) or as an aspect that creates an opportunity for independent study and development of own interests, etc. External factors include such elements as: salary, work conditions, permanent character of employment, etc.

The other type of values connected to work is called "abstract type" and it includes all the deeper values, aspirations, motivations, and personal goals, which an individual wants to attain through their professional work. These are also aspirations relating to broader, universal, national, state references and identifications of a person, as well as values connected to a deeper meaning of the teacher's work – to the teacher's ethos.

It should be mentioned that the survey questions pertaining to the teachers' work quality were open-ended questions and as such they provided the examined teachers with a better opportunity for individual, authentic expression. Next, those questions were coded.

Values, which are most cherished and recognized in the teachers' work

The examined group of teachers was asked: "What do you care about most in your work?"

The above table 1 shows that the examined group of teachers first and foremost cares about the inherent values of work, such as: content of work and its results (thorough fulfilling of one's obligations, professionalism, educating

Table 1. Value of the teachers' professional work

| Professional values  | T   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| 1. Content of work and its results (thorough fulfilling of one's obligations, professionalism, educating of open-minded, wise, healthy generations, which could change the world for the better, transferring knowledge to the youth, so that pupils could understand the knowledge presented to them, inculcating sophistication, and teaching the pupils to be active, propagating patriotic attitudes among them, etc.) | 194 | 47.9 |
| 2. Creative atmosphere and good interpersonal relations (honesty, warm relationships within the group, good atmosphere, mutual respect, etc.)  | 115 | 28.4 |
| 3. Higher salary and fair assessment of work (conscientious, appropriate assessment of efforts invested into work, boost to self-esteem through work, appreciation at work, etc., good cooperation with parents/children, etc.)  | 27  | 6.7  |
| 4. Work conditions (good organization, child safety, permanent/steady character of employment, cooperation within teams, work time taking place at favorable hours, availability of didactic aids, opportunity to rest, etc.)  | 31  | 7.7  |
| 5. Opportunity for self-fulfillment and professional development (favorable conditions for advancement, opportunity for supplement training and professional training, etc.)   | 19  | 4.7  |
| 6. The sense of being needed and of satisfaction derived from work   | 28  | 6.9  |
| 7. Respect, esteem, authority (respect from the wards, understanding, satisfaction of the children, etc.)  | 41  | 10.1 |
| 8. Independence, autonomy, recognition (freedom in decision making, independence in teaching, etc.)  | 1   | 0.2  |
| 9. Personal and family aspects (own family, health, peace of mind, etc.)   | 6   | 1.5  |

Table 2. Values connected to the teachers' professional work vs. age (N = 380)

| What is most important to you in your work?                         | Up to 35 years of age |      | From 36 to 50 years of age |      | 51 years of age and more |      | Total |      | Chi-squared $\chi^2$ | p      | Cramer's V |
|---|-----------------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|------|----------------------|--------|------------|
|   | T                     | %    | T                          | %    | T                        | %    | T     | %    |                      |        |            |
| 1. Content of work and its results                                  | 59                    | 56.3 | 71                         | 53.0 | 57                       | 51.4 | 187   | 49.2 | 2.61                 | 0.2718 | 0.0828     |
| 2. Creative atmosphere and good interpersonal relations             | 45                    | 33.3 | 36                         | 26.9 | 28                       | 25.2 | 109   | 28.7 | 2.29                 | 0.3179 | 0.0777     |
| 3. Higher salary and fair assessment of work                        | 8                     | 5.9  | 6                          | 4.5  | 10                       | 9.0  | 24    | 6.3  | 2.16                 | 0.3395 | 0.0754     |
| 4. Work conditions  | 10                    | 7.4  | 12                         | 9.0  | 8                        | 7.2  | 30    | 7.9  | 0.32                 | 0.8506 | 0.0292     |
| 5. Opportunity for self-fulfillment and professional development    | 8                     | 5.9  | 5                          | 3.7  | 3                        | 2.7  | 16    | 4.2  | 1.69                 | 0.4302 | 0.0666     |
| 6. The sense of being needed and the satisfaction derived from work | 8                     | 5.9  | 10                         | 7.5  | 7                        | 6.3  | 25    | 6.6  | 0.28                 | 0.8705 | 0.0270     |
| 7. Respect, esteem, authority                                       | 12                    | 8.9  | 17                         | 12.7 | 9                        | 8.1  | 38    | 10.0 | 1.70                 | 0.4271 | 0.0669     |
| 8. Independence, autonomy, recognition                              | -                     | -    | -                          | -    | 1                        | 0.9  | 1     | 0.3  | -                    | -      | -          |
| 9. Personal, family aspects   | 1                     | 0.7  | 3                          | 2.2  | 2                        | 1.8  | 6     | 1.6  | -                    | -      | -          |

open-minded, wise, healthy generations, which could change the world for the better, transferring the knowledge to the youth, so that pupils could understand the knowledge presented to them, inculcating sophistication and teaching to be active, propagating patriotic attitudes, etc.) – 47.9%; next, creative atmosphere and good interpersonal relations (honesty, warm relationships within the group, good atmosphere, mutual respect, etc.) – 28.4%. Respect, esteem, authority (respect of the wards, understanding, satisfaction of the children, respect for the teacher's dignity, etc.) – 10.1%.

The above value hierarchy means that the teachers hold in high regard their work's relation to teaching and educating of younger generations, they emphasize their own development and improvement of their professionalism, but they also mind the general social and human ties that characterize their occupation. There is also an element of personal motivation inherent in the teachers' professional work: they aim at satisfying many personal values and needs through their work, such as recognition, esteem and respect for the teacher's dignity.

The above results are not statistically diversified in any meaningful way with respect to age of the examined persons. Nevertheless, data presented in the above table 2 show that certain preferences differences are present in particular age groups of teachers. And so: for the youngest teachers the most important aspects are creative atmosphere and good interpersonal relations – (33.3%), we can see similar situation where opportunity for self-fulfillment and professional development is concerned – 5.9%. Among the oldest teachers higher salary and fair assessment of work are most popular – 9.0%. Middle-aged teachers care the most for recognition and respect – 12.7%.

Further calculations have revealed that there are important interrelations between the cherished values, e.g.: between higher salary and fair assessment of work, and the place of residence of the examined group of teachers – village: 5 (3.0%), small town 7 (7.4%), city 15 (11.5%); Chi-squared 8.29;  $p = 0.0159$ , Cramer's V 0.1456. Similarly, between such values as recognition and respect and the place of residence: village 16 (9.6%), small town 4 (4.2%), city 20 (15.4%), Chi-squared 7.57;  $p = 0.0227$ ; Cramer's V 0.1392. The above data show that the teachers from large cities care the most about the material values connected to the teaching work, as well as about recognition and respect. This could be connected to higher cost of living in a city and a more tangible lack of respect for teachers in a city.

## Professional expectations and goals of the teachers

Another open-ended question directed to the teachers was: “What would you like to achieve through your work most of all?”. It should be mentioned that a question formulated in this way activates a shorter and a more realistic perspective with which the meanings of various aspects of work are perceived as values to a greater degree. Analysis of data yielded from answers to this open-ended question indicates that the teachers listed here issues that they miss the most or those that they feel shortage of; issues that are nagging in the present reality (see table 3).

Table 3. Expectations and goals of the teachers pertaining to their professional work

| Professional expectations and goals  | T   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| 1. Good results of work (satisfaction derived from work results, success of the pupils/wards, pupils' self-reliance, satisfaction derived from the pupils' achievements, educating the pupils to be sensitive citizens, “transfer of knowledge to the young people and broadening of their interests”, etc.) | 82  | 20.2 |
| 2. Satisfaction, other people's gratitude (satisfaction, good relations, respect, professional fulfillment, professional success, the sense of duty well done, etc.)   | 140 | 34.6 |
| 3. Higher salary, material goods (providing living conditions to children, decent life, adequate pension, financial stability, decent salary, etc.)  | 118 | 29.1 |
| 4. Self-fulfillment and professional development, recognition (better understanding of other people, friendly cooperation, “a tough life but not a boring one”, modification of educational law regulations / opportunity to influence the reforms, etc.)  | 76  | 18.8 |
| 5. Recognition and esteem in the community/society   | 52  | 12.8 |
| 6. Fulfillment of dreams   | 5   | 1.2  |
| 7. Physical activity, health   | 1   | 0.2  |

The above table 3 shows that the examined group of teachers in their professional work most of all would like to achieve satisfaction, gain others' gratitude (contentment, good relations, respect, professional fulfillment, professional success, the sense of duty well done, etc.) – 34.6%, and also: higher salary, material goods (providing living conditions to children, decent life, adequate pen-



sion, financial stability, decent salary, etc.) – 29.1%. Farther we have the value connected to good results of work (satisfaction derived from work results, success of the pupils/wards, pupils' self-reliance, satisfaction related to the pupils' achievements, educating the pupils to be sensitive citizens, "transfer of knowledge to the young people and broadening of their interests", etc.) – 20.2 %.

Further analyses indicate that some of the values are in a statistically significant way connected to marital status and to the place of residence. And so: the value related to self-fulfillment has more meaning for single people, than for persons in a relationship: single persons 22 (28.6%), persons in a relationship 50 (17.0%); Chi-squared 5.22;  $p=0.02236$ ; Cramer's V 0.1186.

The desire to achieve good work results most often is expressed by teachers working in a village, and – least frequently – by teachers working in a city: village 41 (24.7%), town 23 (24.2%), city 17 (13.1%); Chi-squared 6.93;  $p = 0.0313$ ; Cramer's V 0.1331.

Striving for professional satisfaction (other people's gratitude, satisfaction, good relations, respect, professional fulfillment, professional success, the sense of duty well done, etc.) is most cherished by teachers working in towns, and least – by those working in a city; nevertheless, currently this is in general the most desired value connected to professional work of a teacher: village 65 (39.2%), town 39 (41.1%), city 35 (26.9%); Chi-squared 6.42;  $p = 0.0403$ ; Cramer's V 0.1281.

### Positive aspects of a teacher's work

A broader picture of how the teachers experience their work and the values connected to it, as well as of their goals and plans, constitutes the knowledge about what they have decided to be their greatest achievement of their professional work. At the same time, that knowledge allows to learn about the positive aspects of the teacher's work, as the examined persons perceive them. Data pertaining to the above are showed in the following table 4.

What were the positive aspects, which the teachers experienced in their work, that they consider to be their greatest achievements. The greatest number of them pointed to the intellectual and self-creation aspects (opportunity for self-fulfillment and development, gaining knowledge, maturity and experience, broadening one's knowledge, development of personality, experiences, moral, spiritual, and character enrichment, emotional development, etc.) – 46.2%; only then they listed prestige and recognition (respect, regard of others, own

Table 4. Positive aspects of professional work perceived as achievements by the teachers

| The greatest professional achievements   | T   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| 1. Satisfaction derived from the pupils' achievements (pupils' good results, good contact with the youth, children's development, opportunity to spend time/work with children, etc.)  | 43  | 10.6 |
| 2. Prestige and recognition (respect, regard of others, own satisfaction, esteem, work satisfaction, gratitude in the future, sense of a duty well done, etc.)   | 156 | 38.5 |
| 3. Material goods (providing for one's family, financial stabilization, money, material independence, own living space, travels within the country and abroad, etc.)   | 134 | 33.1 |
| 4. Affiliations (a group of good colleagues, friends, meeting new people, friendship and kindness of others, etc.)   | 47  | 11.6 |
| 5. Intellectual and self-creation aspects (opportunity for self-fulfillment and development, gaining knowledge, maturity and experience, broadening one's knowledge, development of personality, experiences, moral, spiritual, and character enrichment, emotional development, etc.) | 187 | 46.2 |

satisfaction, esteem, work satisfaction, gratitude in the future, sense of a duty well done, etc.) – 38.5 %, as well as material goods (providing for one's family, financial stabilization, money, material independence, own living space, travels within the country and abroad, etc.) – 33.1%.

In research from 1989/1990, as their achievement and at the same time as the most positive aspect of their work the teachers indicated the sense of being useful, work success, sense of a duty well done. Comparison of the results tells us that today the teachers emphasize different values as the most important ones for them; they put more stress on the realistic aspects of their occupation. They expect the work to ensure them opportunity for development, to give them satisfaction, and to guarantee their material conditions.

The above table 5 shows that the teachers' approach to prestige and recognition is diversified to the greatest degree by the aspect of their age: those values are most cherished and appreciated by large number of older teachers, and least – by the young ones. Chi-squared = 9.730;  $p = 00770$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.1600$ . Those values are also to a significant degree correlated with marital state variable.

Table 5. Positive aspects of professional work perceived as achievements by the teachers, with division into age groups (N = 380)

| The greatest professional achievements    | Up to 35 years of age                                 |      | From 36 to 50 years of age |      | 51 years of age and more |      | Total |      | c <sup>2</sup> | P      | Cramer's V |
|---|---|------|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|------|----------------|--------|------------|
|   | T   | %    | T                          | %    | T                        | %    | T     | %    |                |        |            |
|   | 1. Satisfaction derived from the pupils' achievements | 12   | 8.9                        | 12   | 9.0                      | 17   | 15.3  | 41   |                |        |            |
| 2. Prestige and recognition               | 40  | 29.6 | 59                         | 44.0 | 53                       | 47.7 | 152   | 40.0 | 9.73           | 0.0077 | 0.1600     |
| 3. Material goods                         | 39  | 28.9 | 54                         | 40.3 | 33                       | 29.7 | 126   | 33.2 | 4.78           | 0.0916 | 0.1122     |
| 4. Affiliations                           | 21  | 15.6 | 12                         | 9.0  | 11                       | 9.9  | 44    | 11.6 | 3.29           | 0.1932 | 0.0930     |
| 5. Intellectual and self-creation aspects | 69  | 51.1 | 62                         | 46.3 | 42                       | 37.8 | 173   | 45.5 | 4.37           | 0.1123 | 0.1073     |

Analyses show that they are more important to persons in a relationship, than to single persons: single 19 (24.7%), in a relationship 126 (42.9%), Chi-squared 8.47;  $p = 0.0036$ ; Cramer's  $V$  0.1511. Values connected to intellectual and self-creation aspects are also correlated with marital status – they appear to be more important for single persons: single 46 (59.7%), in a relationship 128 (43.5%) ergo Chi-squared 6.43;  $p = 0.01126$ ; Cramer's  $V$  0.1317. They are as well significantly correlated with the number of children – the more children the person has, the more these values are important to them: no children 48 (30.0%); 1 child 44 (46.3%); 2 and more children 64 (42.7); Chi-squared 8.43;  $p = 0.0148$ ; Cramer's  $V$  0.1443.

Place of residence causes diversification where values connected to material goods are concerned – for teachers living and working in a village they are more important than to teachers from towns and cities: village 67 (40.4%), town 28 (29.5%), city 36 (27.7%); Chi-squared 6.17;  $p = 0.0458$ ; Cramer's  $V$  0.125.

### Negative aspects of the teacher's work

Teachers' answers to the question about their negative experiences at work are both interesting and alarming. The reason for this is the fact that the greatest number of examined persons has cited negative influence of the teaching occupation on their health. That influence, shown in the following table 6, in

Table 6. Negative aspects of professional work as perceived by the teachers

| Negative aspects of the professional work   | T   | %    |
|---|-----|------|
| 1. Stress, (damage to health, nervousness, overwhelming mental burdening with other people's problems, deterioration of health, neurosis, professional burnout, deafness, vocal problems, etc.) | 136 | 33.6 |
| 2. Unwholesome relations at work, (interpersonal conflicts (envy, mobbing), etc.)   | 17  | 4.2  |
| 3. Lack of time for the loved ones, (lack of time for oneself, too many duties, etc.)   | 46  | 11.4 |
| 4. Lack of appreciation for the hard work (lack of understanding from the pupils, lack of will to learn from the pupils, lack of acceptance from the pupils, etc.)                              | 23  | 5.7  |
| 5. No negative aspects  | 26  | 6.4  |
| 6. Other  | 28  | 6.9  |

Table 7. Diversification connected to age in responses pertaining to the negative aspects of professional work as perceived by the teachers (N = 380)

| Negative aspects of the professional work | Up to 35 years of age |      | From 36 to 50 years of age |      | 51 years of age and more |      | Total |      | c <sup>2</sup> | P      | Cramer's V |
|---|-----------------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|------|----------------|--------|------------|
|   | T                     | %    | T                          | %    | T                        | %    | T     | %    |                |        |            |
| 1. Stress                                 | 44                    | 32.6 | 43                         | 32.1 | 44                       | 39.6 | 131   | 34.5 | 1.86           | 0.3945 | 0.0700     |
| 2. Unhealthy relationships at work        | 4                     | 3.0  | 7                          | 5.2  | 6                        | 5.4  | 17    | 4.5  | 1.12           | 0.5704 | 0.0544     |
| 3. Lack of time for the loved ones        | 16                    | 11.9 | 23                         | 17.2 | 5                        | 4.5  | 44    | 11.6 | 9.52           | 0.0086 | 0.1583     |
| 4. Lack of appreciation for the hard work | 6                     | 4.4  | 6                          | 4.5  | 9                        | 8.1  | 21    | 5.5  | 2.00           | 0.3675 | 0.0726     |
| 5. No negative aspects                    | 2                     | 1.5  | 9                          | 6.7  | 13                       | 11.7 | 24    | 6.3  | 10.83          | 0.0044 | 0.1688     |
| 6. Other                                  | 9                     | 6.7  | 8                          | 6.0  | 9                        | 8.1  | 26    | 6.8  | 0.45           | 0.803  | 0.0342     |

general meant stress and its negative consequences such as: damage to health, nervousness, overwhelming mental burdening with other people's problems, deterioration of health, neurosis, professional burnout, deafness, vocal problems, etc. – 33.6%.

Another unfavorable aspect of the teaching occupation that the examined teachers mentioned is lack of time for themselves and for their loved ones, as well as a too great burdening with work – 11.4 %.

It needs to be mentioned that the research conducted 25 years ago yielded exactly the same results: the examined persons most often indicated bad influence on health (and here first and foremost stress was listed, neuroses and their consequences), and right after that lack of an opportunity for full self-fulfillment (see Drózka 1993).

The above table 7 shows that lack of time for the loved ones is the greatest setback for middle-aged and young teachers. This can be connected to the phase of their lives, as well as to the greater responsibilities of the young persons related to them having small children, and in the case of middle-aged persons – to the necessary overseeing of their children's future and to their care for older parents. Chi-squared = 9.52;  $p = 0.0086$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.1583$ . Other variables controlled in this research did not diversify in any significant way results yielded with this question.

### Aspects of work that evoke the greatest dissatisfaction of the teachers

Another important aspect of this research is an attempt to establish what elements of the professional teaching work evoke the greatest dissatisfaction among the teachers. To examine this, an open-ended question was asked about what the teachers would like to change in their work right away, what is the greatest thorn in their side.

The above table 8 shows that the most dissatisfying issue, which according to the examined group needs to be changed immediately, are work conditions, so: regulations pertaining to employment, small salary, favoritism of the older employees, change of the management, overseeing entity, lack of appreciation for experience and reliability of a teacher, lack of methods and means to prevent aggressive behaviors and violence at school originating from pupils, connections, corruption, etc. – 45.7%.

Another dissatisfying element relates to bad interpersonal relationships so, according to the teachers' statements, such aspects as: atmosphere at work,

Table 8. What evokes the greatest dissatisfaction

| The aspects of teaching profession that evoke the greatest dissatisfaction   | T   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| 1. Bad interpersonal relationships (atmosphere, elimination of falsity, duplicity, not enough kindness among the teachers, in their contacts with superiors, and with the parents, rat race, etc.)   | 98  | 24.2 |
| 2. Bad behavior of the pupils (pupils have only rights, they can do everything, etc.)  | 17  | 4.2  |
| 3. Work conditions (regulations pertaining to employment, small salary, favoritism of the older employees, change of the management, overseeing entity, minister, lack of appreciation for experience and reliability of a teacher, lack of methods and means to prevent aggressive behaviors and violence at school originating from pupils, better accessories, connections, corruption, etc.) | 185 | 45.7 |
| 4. Professional career paths and evaluation of work  | 4   | 1.0  |
| 5. Bureaucracy, (abiding by procedures, lack of autonomy, of freedom of acting, etc.)  | 40  | 9.9  |
| 6. Nothing, I am satisfied   | 41  | 10.1 |

abundance of falsehood, duplicity, lack of sufficient kindness among the teachers as well as in their contacts with superiors, parents of the children, rat race, etc.) – 24.2%. It is also worth pointing out the bureaucracy (actions undertaken in accordance to procedures, excessive control, lack of autonomy, of freedom of action, etc.), which was indicated by 9.9% of the examined group.

There are no significant interrelations connected to age, nevertheless the percentage data show that *bureaucracy* is most bemoaned by older teachers, who still have fresh in their minds the school from before the reform of 1999, school that didn't enforce detailed reporting, complex procedures, and the so called *playing of an office worker by the teacher*. The youngest representatives of the examined group on the other hand treat bureaucracy as something obvious, something that is inseparable from their work.

The remaining variables also do not differentiate the obtained results, which could show that the problems, difficulties and shortages discovered in the research are problematic for the general examined group of teachers.

Table 9. Differentiation of responses to a question about issues which evoke particular dissatisfaction, with division into age groups (N = 380)

| The aspects of teaching profession that evoke the greatest dissatisfaction | Up to 35 years of age |      | From 36 to 50 years of age |      | 51 years of age and more |      | Total |      | c <sup>2</sup> | P      | Cramer's V |
|--|-----------------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|------|----------------|--------|------------|
|  | T                     | %    | T                          | %    | T                        | %    | T     | %    |                |        |            |
| 1. Bad interpersonal relationships   | 38                    | 28.1 | 30                         | 22.4 | 29                       | 26.1 | 97    | 25.5 | 1.20           | 0.5479 | 0.0563     |
| 2. Bad behavior of the pupils  | 7                     | 5.2  | 4                          | 3.0  | 6                        | 5.4  | 17    | 4.5  | 1.08           | 0.5827 | 0.0533     |
| 3. Work conditions   | 60                    | 44.4 | 64                         | 47.8 | 49                       | 44.1 | 173   | 45.5 | 0.42           | 0.8109 | 0.0332     |
| 4. Professional career paths and evaluation of work                        | 1                     | 0.7  | 2                          | 1.5  | -                        | -    | 3     | 0.8  | -              | -      | -          |
| 5. Bureaucracy   | 7                     | 5.2  | 15                         | 11.2 | 14                       | 12.6 | 36    | 9.5  | 4.63           | 0.0986 | 0.1104     |
| 6. Nothing, I am satisfied   | 15                    | 11.1 | 15                         | 11.2 | 11                       | 9.9  | 41    | 10.8 | 0.13           | 0.9387 | 0.0182     |



## Difficulties and problems which are most annoying in the teacher's work

The results yielded were confirmed in the light of responses given to a different open-ended question on: what prevailing difficulties and problems are experienced first and foremost by the contemporary teachers?

Table 10. Prevailing difficulties and problems experienced by the teachers

| Prevailing difficulties and problems experienced by the teachers  | T   | %    |
|---|-----|------|
| 1   | 2   | 3    |
| 1. Small salary (for hard, underappreciated work, etc.)   | 64  | 15.8 |
| 2. Overly complex path of professional advancement  | 3   | 0.7  |
| 3. Overwhelming amount of "fancy bureaucracy" (that does not lead to anything, etc.)  | 82  | 20.2 |
| 4. Difficult entry into the occupation for the young persons (difficulties connected to finding employment, lack of full-time jobs, lack of positions, lack of stability, etc.)   | 2   | 0.5  |
| 5. Lack of sufficient professional competences which would help handle the children (e.g. pertaining to keeping the discipline, educational failures, ( <i>teacher, not a buddy</i> ), lack of discipline among the pupils, lack of esteem, etc.)   | 11  | 2.7  |
| 6. Tough, inadequate work conditions (ongoing reforms of the educational system, changes in the minister's position, unclear regulations, overloaded curricula, lack of time for school tasks, bringing work home, lack of time/opportunity for individual approach to a pupil, insufficient school staff (lack of educators, psychologists) combined with growing risk of addictions, pupils' aggression, overwhelming amount of work per teacher, too great a number of pupils in classes, the necessity to constantly train further, lack of opportunity for advancement when the ultimate professional advancement is already obtained, small chances for professional career, unfair treatment, lack of support, lack of agreement, envy, helplessness, jealousy, competition, "stereotypical" curriculum, management's reluctance to introduce new methods of teaching, criticism of work methods, lack of free trainings, lack of courses/trainings on a particular subject, etc.) | 108 | 26.7 |
| 7. Lack of respect from the pupils, parents, community/society (difficult cooperation with the parents, lack of cooperation with the parents, problems in relations between teachers and parents,   | 158 | 39.0 |

| 1  | 2   | 3    |
|--|-----|------|
| lack of interest in school on the part of the parents, poor cooperation with the parents, fear of being negatively assessed by the parents, parents with demanding attitudes, lack of respect within the community/society, lack of adequate appreciation, lack of understanding for the teaching profession, decline of school's and teacher's esteem, media's negative campaign, etc.) | 158 | 39.0 |
| 8. Problems originating with pupils: (pupils' laziness, pupils without any hobbies, addiction to computers, low intellectual level of the youth, pupils' inadequate behavior at school, aggression, etc.)  | 56  | 13.8 |
| 9. Poor equipping of schools (too low a number of didactic aids, etc., underfinancing of the educational system, etc.)   | 43  | 10.6 |
| 10. Existential aspects: (lack of employment stability, fear of losing one's job, emotional problems: frustration, helplessness, stress, professional burnout, occupational diseases)  | 104 | 25.7 |

Data in the above table 10 show that as the most difficult perceived are such problems as: lack of respect from the pupils, parents, community/society – 39.0%, then tough, inadequate work conditions – 26.7%, and also existential problems related to lack of employment stability, fear of losing one's job, frustration, helplessness, etc. – 25.7%.

Inadequate work conditions constitute the greatest difficulty for middle-aged teachers, who are to the greatest degree burdened with duties –  $p = 0.0126$ .

There were no statistically significant interrelations between age and the other most acute problems and difficulties.

### Summary and conclusions

The above research allows to conclude that the professional lives of the teachers have moved away from values related to ethos, lifestyle oriented at realization of intellectual and socially active mission, the responsibility for the young generations, for the future of the country, values characteristic for the tradition of the Polish culture, and the progressive, democratic role of the intelligentsia in the history of our country, and toward the values which are to a greater degree connected to the *everyday life*, current work, school, qualifications, advancement degree, training, work and living conditions – and this pertains not only to the young teachers.

The research also shows that there is a wide area of matters and problems which are hard, nagging, which cause dissatisfaction, and make work and life difficult. In that area we can find such issues as: “material situation”, “conditions of leisure”, “availability of entertainment” and “social relations at school”.

The examined group of teachers is bothered in their everyday work by lack of creative atmosphere, cooperation culture, trust, understanding for their tough occupation, respect for their efforts from the parents, pupils and society.

The conducted research shows that teachers are annoyed first and foremost by lack of respect coming from pupils, parents, community/society, difficult cooperation with parents or lack thereof, fear of being negatively assessed by the parents, demanding attitude of the parents, lack of esteem within the community/society, lack of adequate appreciation, lack of understanding for the teaching profession, decline of school's and teacher's esteem, media's negative campaign, etc.

Another set of issues that bother currently professionally active teachers the most are difficult, inadequate work conditions, which constitute the greatest annoyance for middle-aged teachers, who are to the greatest degree burdened with duties.

Significant problems are also connected to the teachers' everyday life; many of them emphasized absurdity of *fancy* – as they wrote – school bureaucracy, which does not lead to anything good.

Financial, material issues, hard work conditions, bad social relations prevailing at schools, lack of time for and the opportunity to rest, or for cultural entertainment – these are all matters, which continue to be unsatisfied and unsolved in the teaching profession.

The matters described above would testify to prevailing, despite transformations and reforms, peculiar syndrome of *permanent shortage* and hindrances at school, and at the same time to the pressure of universal demotivating factors that lower the professional satisfaction of the teachers. This situation needs to be changed through actions aimed at stronger than it was so far, more comprehensive support of the teachers in their work.

In this context, the conclusions drawn from the research conducted by Institute of Public Affairs can be interesting. They postulate that it is necessary to take up a wide debate about school, work of teachers, and supporting them in education and in further professional development. The authors conclude that there is no curriculum concept whatsoever, especially where education of teachers already professionally active is concerned. The existing needs are not identified in any detail, the same is true for own potential and for the oppor-

tunity of cooperation with other entities. The attempts at introducing changes into the operation of institutions supporting teachers usually are of local character.

Meanwhile, teachers are reporting more and more different problems and difficulties connected to work with which they could not deal on their own. Cited research of Institute of Public Affairs indicates that most often these are: educational problems and those connected to cooperation with parents; bureaucracy and professional advancement; the number of pupils in classes and diverse levels of pupils' competences; social problems relating to poverty of children and their influence on educational performance (Murawska, Putkiewicz, Dolata 2005).

The subject matter rarely is taken up by researches relating to the teaching profession, nevertheless precisely in this occupation, just like in the profession of a doctor, clergyman, lawyer, etc., therefore in occupations of intellectual and cultural mission character, vocation and social services, (so called occupations related to ethos, in English *profession*), the adequate work and living conditions are necessary for proper functioning. In this place the research of Witold Rakowski (2000) should be mentioned (concerned with conditions of work and living of teachers), as well as research of Henryka Kwiatkowska (2005). Within the autobiographic research (Drózka, Miko-Giedyk, Miszczuk (red.) 2012; Drózka 2017) concerned with generations of teachers, the matters of living conditions, work, state of health, financial situation, contacts with culture, social life were prominent. It needs to be mentioned that in the space of the last quarter of the century the above mentioned issues were perceived as significant shortages and annoyances of teachers' living as well as of professional existence, poor health condition, involvement in professional work paid for with illnesses, material shortages.

At present certain changes in needs hierarchy can be noticed, which shift toward a stronger stress on self-fulfillment needs, spiritual development, recreation, as well as health, the need for the teachers efforts to be appreciated, for better education, better atmosphere, better social atmosphere at schools, in the community, in a word – toward the quality of life and work of teachers, so issues which once were in Poland often dominated by financial, housing shortages, difficult conditions for work and development.

Research and its results point to conclusions pertaining to improvement of education quality and further professional development of teachers in the context of their need to be able to handle many difficulties at work connected to pupils and parents, etc.

Further conclusions could pertain to improvement of work conditions and limiting of bureaucracy at school. A pressing matter seems to be more frequent and longer than thus far vacations conducive for health sustaining, as well as less normalized, flexible and shorter working hours divided into work in class and other occupations, including tasks connected to further training, general and cultural development. Much earlier retirement from this very difficult profession, if not one of the most difficult, should be something obvious that does not raise any doubts.

Finally, it should be noted that in retrospect the studies described were carried out in a different socio-political context. Their aim was to show how the last 25th Polish transformation influenced the professional situations of teachers, their assessments, their aspirations, etc. In particular, it was a comparative analysis of the results of the study, with the results of the same studies from 1989/90 years, which I describe more broadly in my book (Dróżka 2017).

Meanwhile, in 2015 the year, there was another socio-political change, which resulted in reforms in education, including the insolvency of the gymnasium and changes in curricula, as well as in professional pragmatism. This requires further research.

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## SUMMARY

Article contains an analysis of the results of research on the value of the work of teachers in different: young, middle-age and older. To care about the quality of education and the teaching profession, interest seems to know what teachers appreciate in their work, what they consider most important, what they especially stimulates and motivates, which makes them satisfaction, which triggers the activity of creative and commitment; what they would like to achieve in his life and career. What the factors of their dissatisfaction, which cannot be reconciled, which immediately would change. As these preferences change over the years.

The research was conducted at the end of 2014 and 2015 using the survey “Life’s aspirations, values and needs of teachers”. Total collected 405 surveys from teachers in the 3 age groups, teachers, young, middle-age and older.

In the light of the studies carried out have been observed a characteristic tendency to stronger emphasis in the work and life of teachers values more associated with everyday life, the current work, school qualifications, degrees of advancement, practice, working conditions, life-and this applies not only to the young. Smaller is the emphasis on the importance of the values associated with ethos, lifestyle-oriented projects intelligence missions, responsible for the young generation, the future of the country, the values specific to the tradition of Polish culture and progressive, democratic role intelligence in the history of our country.

Studies indicate that in the professional work of teachers there is a significant area of cases and issues challenging, that worry, the root causes of discontent, barriers to work and life. Belong to such things as: “material situation”, “conditions of rest”, “the availability of entertainment” and “social relations in school”.

Despite the passage of time, the results of the study have gained relevance, in the situation of persistent tensions in the professional background of teachers, which resulted in a strike in 2019.

The paper is an attempt of deepened reflection over the processes of globalisation. The author is trying, to look at these processes under the angle of challenges they are carrying which for modern societies and countries in the social and economic sphere. The globalization is measuring a lot nonetheless for her the large impact is being taken note to the course of economic processes. They are shaping, because the economic position of individual states, that is the living conditions of societies as a whole.

**KEYWORDS:** teachers, careers, work values, needs, aspirations

## STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł zawiera analizę wyników badań na temat wartości w pracy zawodowej nauczycieli w różnym wieku: młodych, w średnim wieku i starszych. Wobec troski o jakość edukacji i zawodu nauczycielskiego interesujące wydaje się poznanie tego, co nauczyciele cenią w swej pracy, co uznają za najważniejsze, co ich szczególnie pobudza i motywuje, sprawia im satysfakcję, wyzwala aktywność twórczą i zaangażowanie, co chcieliby osiągnąć w życiu i w pracy zawodowej. Jakże zaś czynniki ich demotywują, utrudniają funkcjonowanie zawodowe, co im szczególnie przeszkadza, z czym nie mogą się pogodzić, co natychmiast chcieliby zmienić. Jak preferencje te zmieniają się wraz upływem lat pracy.

Badania przeprowadzono na przełomie 2014 i 2015 r. z zastosowaniem ankiety nt. „Aspiracji życiowych, wartości i potrzeb nauczycieli”.

Ogółem zgromadzono 405 ankiet od nauczycieli w 3 grupach wiekowych, nauczycieli młodych, w średnim wieku oraz starszych.

W świetle przeprowadzonych badań zaobserwowano charakterystyczną tendencję do silniejszego akcentowania w pracy i życiu nauczycieli wartości bardziej związanych z codziennością, bieżącą pracą, szkołą, kwalifikacjami, stopniami awansu, praktyką, warunkami pracy, życia, i dotyczy to nie tylko młodych.

Mniejsze jest zaś przywiązywanie znaczenia do wartości związanych z etosem, stylem życia nastawionym na realizację misji inteligentnej i społecznikowskiej, odpowiedzialności za młode pokolenie, przyszłość kraju, wartości charakterystycznych dla tradycji polskiej kultury oraz postępowej, demokratycznej roli inteligencji w historii naszego kraju.

Badania wskazują, że w pracy zawodowej nauczycieli istnieje znaczny obszar spraw i problemów trudnych, nurtujących, będących przyczynami niezadowolenia, utrudniających pracę i życie. Należą doń takie sprawy, jak: „sytuacja materialna”, „warunki wypoczynku”, „dostępność rozrywek” oraz „stosunki społeczne w szkole”.

Pomimo upływu czasu uzyskane wyniki badania zdają się zyskiwać na znaczeniu, w sytuacji utrzymujących się napięć w środowisku nauczycieli na tle zawodowym, co skutkowało podjęciem strajku w 2019 r.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** nauczyciele, praca zawodowa, wartości pracy, potrzeby, aspiracje.

WANDA DRÓŻKA – Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach  
e-mail:wanda.drozka@ujk.edu.pl

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