

CRISIS OF THE DIGNITY OF THE TEACHING STATE BASED ON EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract. *The profession of teacher has been a special profession for centuries because of its momentous mission in the area of education and upbringing of next generations of society. This brought far wider expectations ahead of it than before other professions. In the current reality, there is a widespread belief in the lack of authority and the crisis of the dignity of the teaching state. Is this situation the result of the omnipresent "fall" of values, or do the teachers themselves contribute to the extent to which they are perceived by society and students? I try to find answers to these questions in the text of the article. The crisis in the dignity of the teaching state described above is primarily associated with a change in the perception of their profession by the teachers themselves. This thesis is supported by research carried out among teachers, pupils and parents in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship. Their goal was to get to know the opinions of these groups about the moral and ethical condition of the modern teacher. In order to obtain this information, a diagnostic survey, an observation and an interview were used.*

Keywords: *dignity, ethics, morality, personality, personal pattern.*

Introduction

The profession of teacher has been a special profession for centuries because of its momentous mission in the area of education and upbringing of next generations of society. This brought far wider expectations ahead of it than before other professions. Teachers' work is still treated by many as a mission and a vocation, as a work which also pays for the future and therefore its rank is so high (Sokołowska 2007). This profession undoubtedly belongs to the group of professions, which are particularly assessed from the social point of view. This is not surprising considering that the importance of the "educational services" provided by the teacher is an expression of the fact that his role in society is still important and significant. The high position of this profession is already visible in the available definitions of the term teacher, which clearly shows that the teacher is not only a person who transmits knowledge, but in the same scope educates the personality and attitudes of their pupils. As a result, expectations before teachers are put much higher than before representatives of other professions. This problem is investigated by many pedagogues, including

J. Szempruch, J. Karbowniczek, B. Śliwerski, E. Jagiełło, D. Gołębnik, M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz and others.

Teachers are therefore required not only to have high qualifications, but also above-average competences, which should be deepened and improved in the process of professional development. In the case of this profession, ethical issues are particularly exposed due to the multidimensional nature of this profession. The ethical element is inscribed in this profession, as in every profession that has a direct impact on the fate of individuals and societies (Banach, 2003). The specificity of teacher ethics results from the nature and aims of this profession. It includes guidelines on how teachers should behave in their work and therefore has a normative character.

Condition of the teaching state

Analyzing literature, it is difficult to clearly define the professional ethics of the teacher and spread out the accents as to the importance of individual elements creating it. This is due to the fact that various contents are included in the professional ethics of teachers, so it is difficult to give an unambiguous answer to the question of what ethics is in relation to the teaching profession.

Undoubtedly, the world of teachers' values, duties, norms and ethical principles is extremely complex and problematic. It is difficult to indicate which ones have priority, which are more important. This issue is hampered by the contemporary pluralistic educational reality. The multitude of co-existing ethical stakes often places teachers in the face of difficult decisions and choices, the effects of which are not indifferent to individual educational entities. This problem affects all teachers regardless of their career level (Zajac 2013).

The teacher's duty is to take actions aimed at the good of the student, among which very strictly educational tasks referring to specific values are very important. They concern: reliable implementation of tasks related to the educational function of the school, supporting each student in his/her development, education and upbringing in the love of the Fatherland, respecting the Constitution, in an atmosphere of freedom of conscience and respect for every human being, taking care of shaping moral and civic attitudes in accordance with the idea of democracy, peace and friendship between people of different nations, races and world views (KN article 6, paragraphs 1-2, 4-5).

The tasks that the teacher has to perform indicate that their foundation is a specific system of values. Completing teaching tasks simultaneously introduces an important area of moral education. In the era of today's cultural development and scientific and technical progress (in which one sees the sources of the crisis of morality), moral education is especially needed. This need arises also from unrestricted access of children and young people to television programs showing

many evils and liberating aggression and from their continuous presence on the Internet, having a negative impact on the development and attitude of students (Łobocki, 2006). The teacher should introduce the students to the world of values, help them to distinguish good from evil and choose good. So he should shape their moral attitude. Values are necessary for human development and form the basis of social understanding, they form a "normative ethos that unites all the forces of society for the realization of the common good" (Marianski, 2000). These include: altruism, the human person, a sense of responsibility, freedom, tolerance, justice, charity, harm and truth (Łobocki, 2009). The fact is that the teacher's authority is deteriorating more and more. To a large extent, this is the effect of socio-economic processes taking place in the education itself. It is required that the school be stress free and students have the certainty of promotion.

It cannot be overlooked that the teacher's shoulders are now being dumped by the effects of their own educational negligence. At this point, it is worth devoting a little space to the prestige of the teaching profession, if it exists at all in the present reality. In the International Teaching and Learning Survey (TALIS 2013) over 80% of Polish teachers reported that this profession is not prestigious, and slightly less than half indicated low authority among students.

In turn, in the study entitled *School Without Violence* (2011) 65% of teachers declared that they were ignored by students, 42% claimed that they were deliberately provoked to cause anger, and 19% of teachers were offended. Such behavior of students confirms the low prestige of the teaching profession and even its lack. Prestige granted to teachers before 1989 was a compensation for low earnings. CBOS surveys from 2013 showed, however, that the hierarchy of occupations is reevaluated - Poles are turning away from the intelligentsia professions and are appreciating physical labor competitions and which are also better paid (Herbst, Herczyński, Federowicz, Smak, Walczak, & Wojciuk, 2015).

The way of building your own authority has changed. Personal prestige is becoming more and more important, depending on the characteristics of individuals, and the role of positional prestige associated with a fulfilled job role diminishes. At present, building authority within democratic social relations is more difficult. The prestige of the teaching profession and its authority in society is inextricably linked to the concept of dignity of the teaching state, without which neither authority nor prestige is possible. Dignity is closely related to the fact of being human, it is the property of a human being. It is a continuous and lasting concept, and the awareness of its understanding is constantly evolving. It is not an abstract idea, but a criterion for shaping the social order. Human dignity is expressed in ensuring its autonomy, freedom and equality. The inherent dignity of man is the basic dimension of his existence and is the foundation of rights of decisive importance in all areas of life.

Dignity expresses the essence of humanity, motivates us to constantly improve our moral level, obliges us to respect each person. In pedagogy, dignity implies a sense of inner freedom, subjectivity, autonomy and responsibility for oneself and others. It refers to such goals of education as: building a positive self-image, respect for one's own values, creating one's own freedom and subjectivity. It is also a commitment to develop and create yourself, to unselfish relationships with other people. In the educational process, therefore, dignity is both a given and a demanded value. Personal dignity is an inherent value that everyone is entitled to. Its basis is the value of the person, permanent, non-transferable and obliging. The dignity that belongs to man obliges us to respect each person (Szczupał, 2016). So what will be the dignity of the state of teaching, which we are experiencing in the present crisis. It seems that the progressive degradation of this state deprives them of their mission, which until recently constitute elements of being a teacher. Certainly the changing realities of life, the progressive technologization and egocentric orientation of modern man are the causes. The teachers hardly find themselves in such a reality and try to meet the demands placed on them. However, are they not also very much responsible for the crisis in the dignity of the teaching state ...? Did they not forget that being a man of all modernity, that certain behaviors are simply unworthy and unethical from the perspective of the profession that they perform ...? An example of this is the functioning of teachers on social networks, where all contacts between the teacher and students should undoubtedly be regulated by clearly defined rules. It does not seem appropriate to invite or accept student invitations to a group of friends on a private profile. Photographs from beach vacations or from more personal situations are not conducive to the increase of teacher authority. It is necessary to separate private and professional life. Teachers who have a private account on a social network should reserve the privacy of content that they have on their profile, so that it is not widely available. Such familiarity is never beneficial for building a proper interpersonal relationship between the student and the teacher.

Methodology and purpose of research

The research was carried out among teachers, students and parents in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship. Its goal was to get to know the opinions of these groups about the moral and ethical condition of the modern teacher. In order to obtain this information, a diagnostic survey, observation and an interview were used.

The basis of the research is a diagnostic survey within which a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire counted 8 questions and was addressed to all three groups of respondents (with minor modifications). 187 teachers from various educational levels, 146 parents of various educational stages and 165 high school

students from the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship participated in the study. The research was carried out from February to October 2018. Interviews and observations were used as supporting methods. Interviews were conducted with individual representatives of each group of respondents. Own observations on the condition of the teaching staff were also used, the comments of which were also reflected in the final conclusions.

The following research problems were formulated:

Main problem - what opinion do teachers, pupils and parents from the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship present about the moral and ethical condition of a modern teacher?

Specific problems: What are the values and norms of conduct formed by teachers in the teaching ethics? What do the respondents think about the prestige (or lack thereof) of the teaching profession? Who is responsible for the lack of respect for the teacher and what are the reasons for this phenomenon? What constitutes the teacher's authority?

Findings

Since the subject of research is the moral and ethical condition of the contemporary teacher, the teachers' opinion will be presented in more detail. The analysis of their responses included a variable in the form of seniority, assuming that it can differentiate responses.

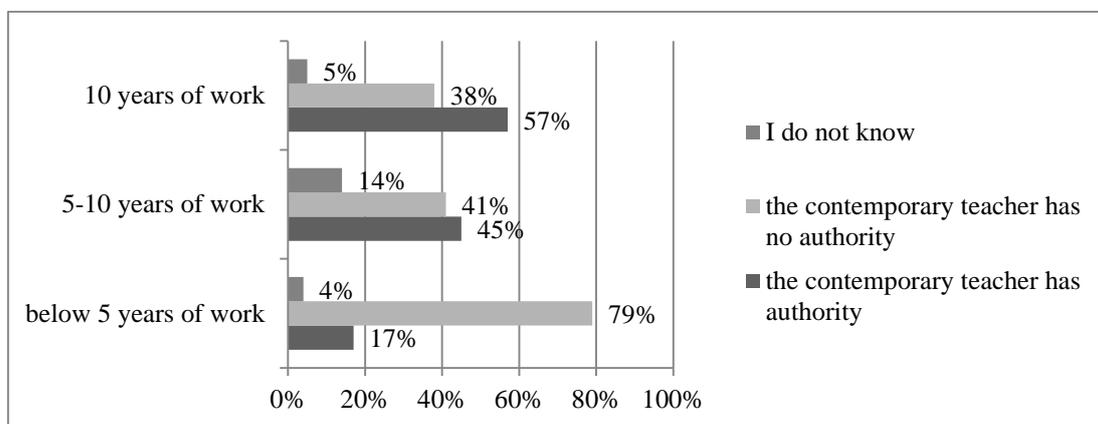


Figure 1 Teachers' opinion on the authority of the contemporary teacher

The teachers participating in the study expressed diverse opinions regarding the authority of the contemporary teacher. According to the short-term employees, he currently has no authority (79%).

In the group of teachers with seniority of 5-10 years, a similar amount reported that currently the teacher has the authority (45%) and there is no (41%). In the case of people performing this profession, the opinion is different for the

longest time, because according to the majority of them the teacher has the authority (57%).

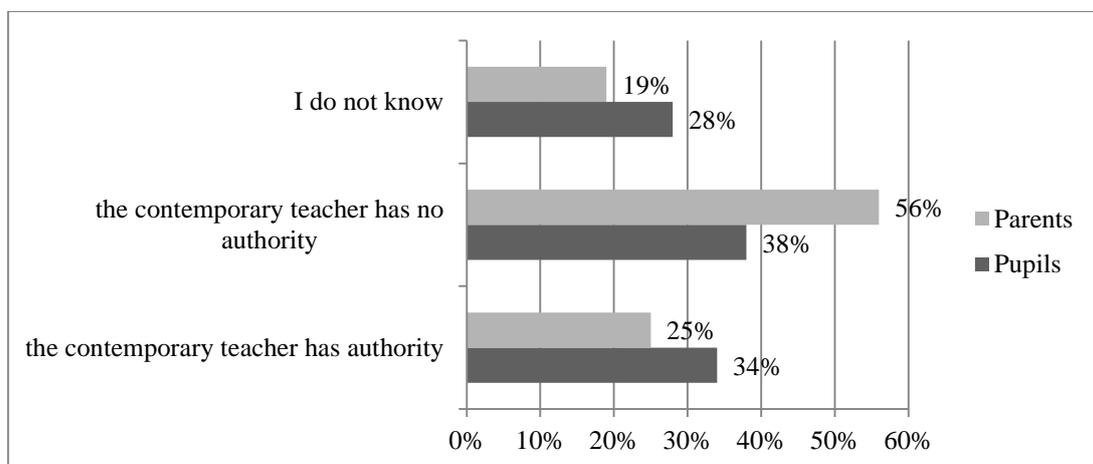


Figure 2 Opinion of parents and students about the authority of the contemporary teacher

On the other hand, the parents who took part in the study in the majority admitted that the contemporary teacher has no authority as opposed to the students, most of whom, however, confirmed that the teacher has an authority today. Among the dispositions / attributes / behaviors that create the teacher's authority, the surveyed teachers first of all included: the ability to discipline students (this feature was most often indicated by the oldest respondents), honesty, justice, and personal culture (also most frequently appearing in the opinions of the longest working teachers) good mood (indicated first of all by teachers with the shortest seniority), consistency in action, keeping distance towards students (a feature preferred by teachers with the longest experience).

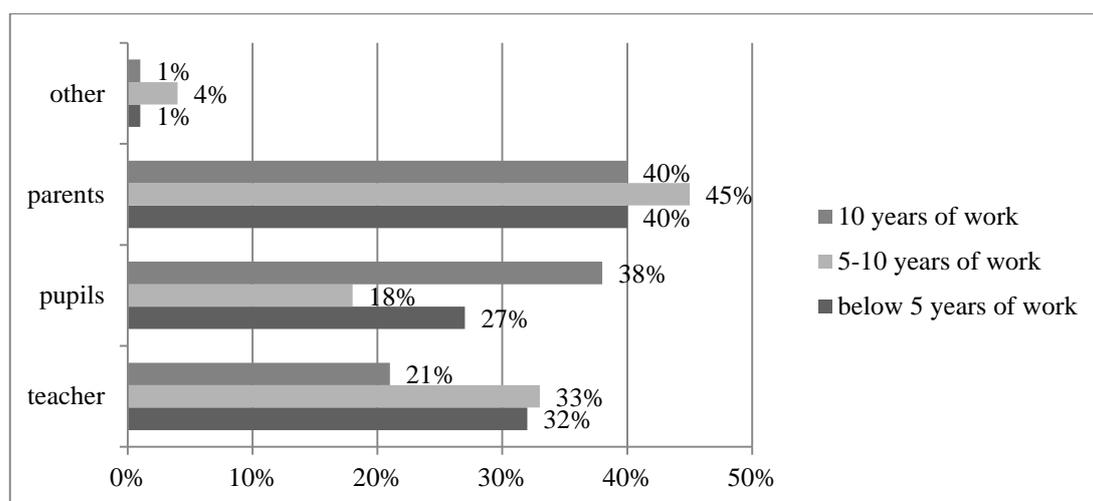


Figure 3 Sources of disrespect to teachers by teachers

According to the parents, the guarantee of teacher's authority is such qualities as: the ability to discipline students, honesty, proper dress, personal culture and maintaining a proper distance towards students. Students, on the other hand, see the authority in a teacher who is creative, consistent in action, has a sense of humor, is fair and able to discipline his pupils.

Responsibility for lack of respect for the teacher, teachers primarily burden on parents. In this case, seniority was not a factor differentiating opinions. The smallest number of teachers blames the fall of pupils' authority, while a rather large group sees the reasons for this phenomenon in the teacher's person. A small percentage of respondents indicated the prevailing socio-political and economic relations as the cause. Most parents and students, however, decided that the teacher was responsible for the lack of respect for the teacher.

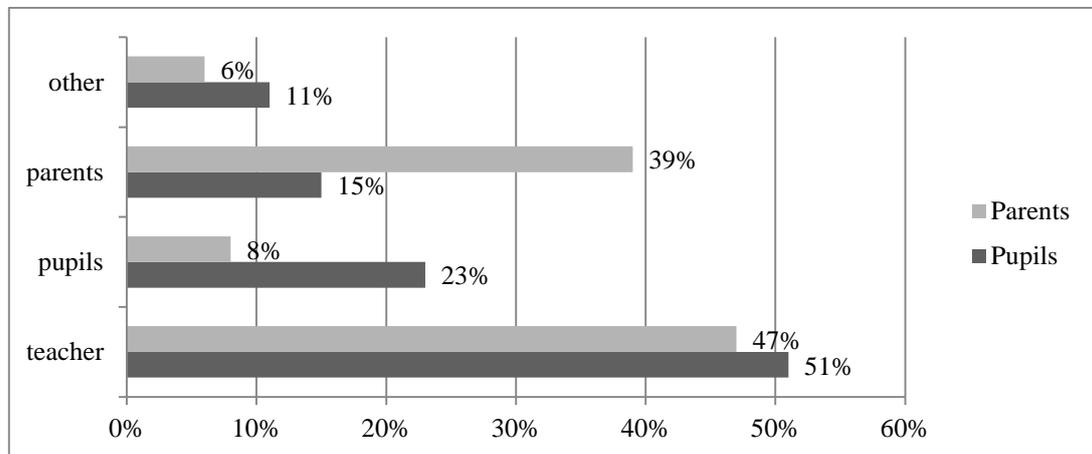


Figure 4 Sources of disrespect to the teacher according to parents and students

Teachers admitted that disrespect for people practicing their profession may result, in particular, from such reasons as inability to maintain discipline in the lesson or lack of consistency in action. They also pointed to the lack of sufficient parental control over children, too many student privileges, too high expectations of parents in terms of teacher and over-protection of parents in relation to their children. In the group of parents, the most common reasons for disrespect for the teacher included: inability to maintain discipline in the lesson, inconsistency, lack of adequate parental control, lack of value in the modern family, too high expectations of parents and their claims. The students, however, indicated the following reasons: lack of knowledge and inability to maintain discipline in the lesson, lack of parental control, lack of family values and overprotection of parents. Most of the teachers who participated in the study admitted that the teaching profession nowadays has no prestige. Teachers with a seniority of 5-10 years and teachers who worked the shortest were the most numerous.

Professionals for more than 10 years have much more often claimed that their profession is prestigious in today's world.

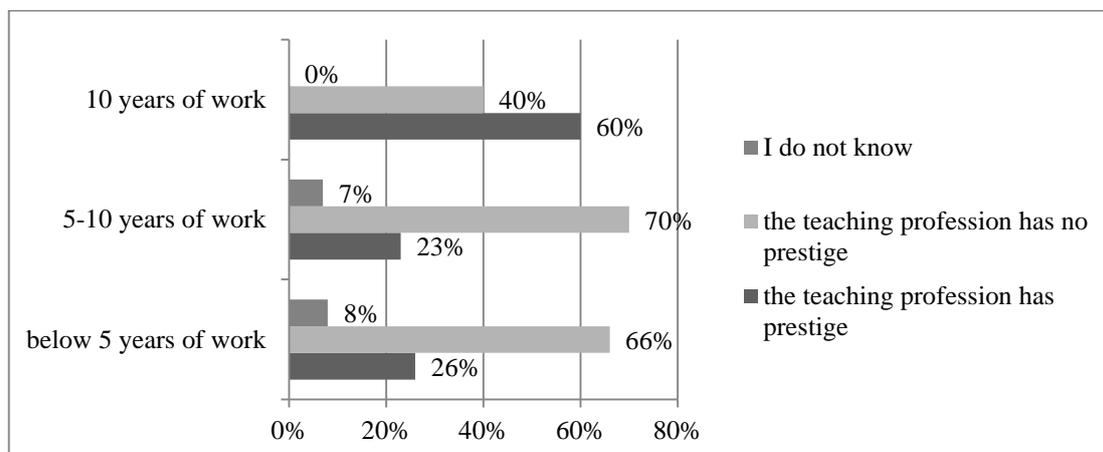


Figure 5 *Prestige of the teaching profession in the opinion of the teachers surveyed*

High-school students mostly admitted that the teaching profession is currently deprived of prestige. However, it should be emphasized that as many as 30% of them could not express their opinion on this subject. According to the parents, it is quite the opposite. More than half of them recognized that this is currently one of the most prestigious professions.

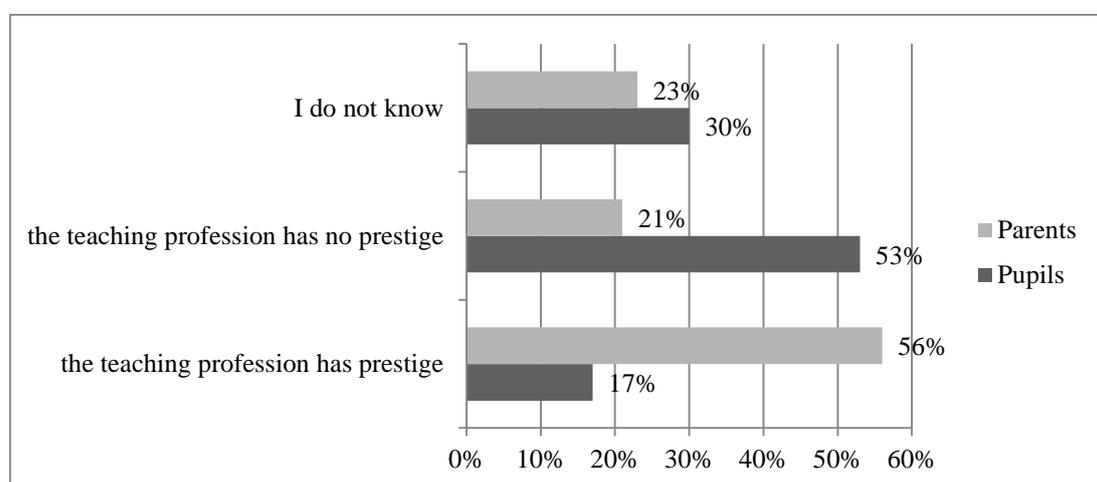


Figure 6 *The prestige of the teaching profession in the opinion of the parents and students surveyed*

In the opinion of teachers, the prestige of the teaching profession results mainly from the respect and respect of parents (less frequently students), high level of knowledge and high personal culture. In this respect, opinions were similar regardless of seniority. However, the lack of prestige is, according to all

teachers, primarily the result of low earnings. The shortest working people in the profession indicated also the inability to solve conflicts between students and pursuing their own professional ambitions at the expense of students, the longest working - low level of professionalism and too much fuss with students. Teachers working in the profession of 5-10 years have said that the reason for the lack of prestige of their profession is, in addition to low earnings, too much confusion with students and the lack of ability to resolve conflicts between them.

In the parents' opinion, the prestige of the teacher is evidenced by the respect and respect that this profession has for themselves and students, as well as the high personal culture of teachers. However, the lack of prestige results from the lack of personal culture of many teachers, inability to solve conflicts between students, and to pursue their own professional ambitions at the expense of students. Students see the prestige of the teaching profession in a similar way as parents in their own and parents' respect and in a high level of knowledge. In turn, the lack of prestige is, in their opinion, the result of the low level of teachers' professionalism, their inability to solve conflicts between students, and to pursue their own professional ambitions at the expense of students.

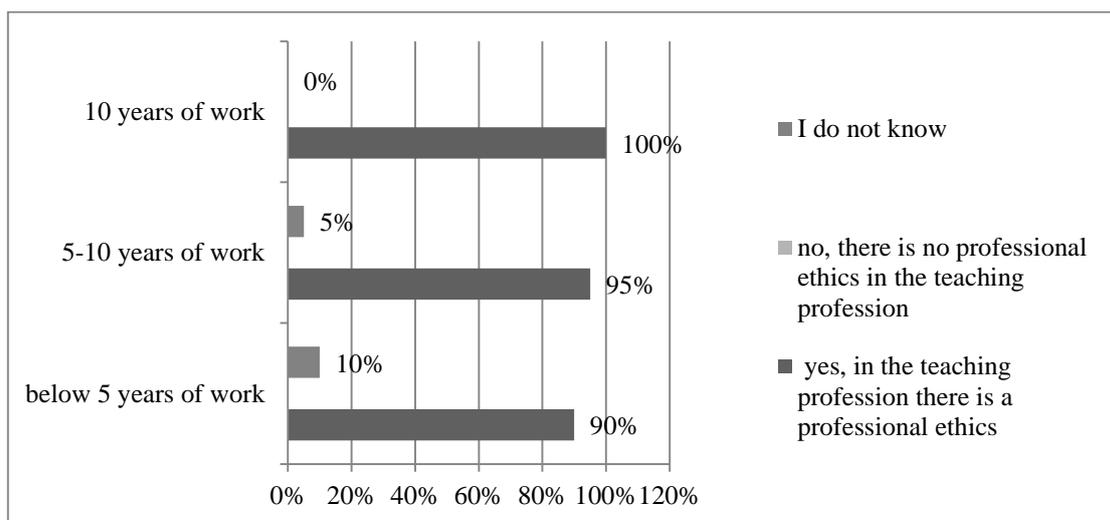


Figure 7 *The existence of professional ethics in the teaching profession in the opinion of teachers*

Almost all teachers acknowledged that they had a specific professional ethics in their profession. Only a small percentage of respondents reported that they do not know if they are. A similar opinion was presented by respondents from other groups. Both students and parents stated that in their opinion, a specific professional ethics applies in the profession.

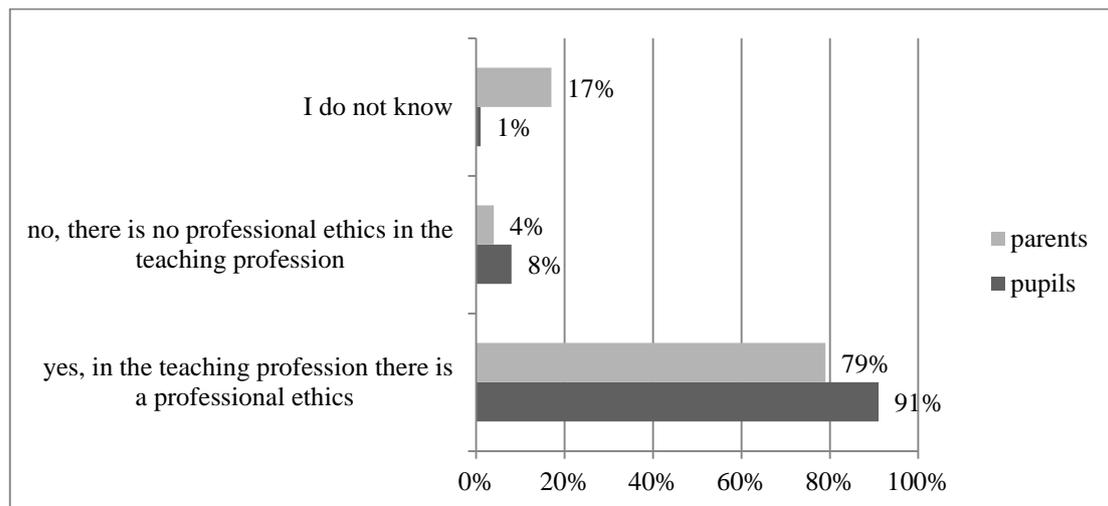


Figure 8 The existence of professional ethics in the teaching profession in the opinion of students and parents

According to all teachers, teachers' ethics are primarily made up of such norms and values as honesty. Short-term workers also pointed to the culture of expressing themselves, keeping distance to students and separating private and professional life. Teachers with the longest experience also pointed to the observance of the rules regarding proper dress, the culture of expressing themselves and separating private and professional life. According to people who work as teachers for 5-10 years, a teacher's label create justice and respect the students' right to express their own opinions. Defining the values and standards forming the teacher's label, parents most often pointed to: honesty, adherence to a specific dress code, culture of expressing oneself, restraint in expressing emotions and keeping confidentiality in matters concerning pupils. In turn, for students, professional teacher ethics should primarily include maintaining confidentiality in matters concerning students, respecting students' right to express their own opinions and fairness. They also often pointed to honesty.

Summary

Research conducted among teachers, parents and students shows that most of them see a crisis of teacher's authority. This is also confirmed by interviews conducted with selected teachers, parents and students, as well as own observations made over many years of work in various educational institutions. There is a widespread opinion that the profession of a teacher is no longer as respectable in society as it used to be. There are different opinions among the respondents about who is responsible for this state of affairs. Teachers most often indicate parents, believing that their claim-making attitude and excessive expectations towards the teacher's person have led to this. Indeed, this opinion

seems to be largely consistent with the real state. Interviews with parents and many years of observation of their behavior confirm that they regularly blame school and teachers for their educational failures. They remove part of parental responsibilities from one another, requiring their implementation from teachers. School, however, cannot replace parental education, so there are tensions in teacher-parent relations. The effect of this is, in turn, parents' opinion, according to which the teachers are responsible for the failure of their own authority and lack of respect. Unfortunately, there is a lot of truth in this statement.

High unemployment and the ease of gaining pedagogical qualifications makes the profession of a teacher perform people completely inappropriate. The research carried out is of a very general nature and is only an outline of a problem requiring more detailed research and analysis.

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