PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF TEACHERS

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Abstract: When the academic year is about to start and your country lacks approximately 5,000 teachers - it's a good reason to stop and think of reasons and factors that brought this "red alarm" situation. The article presents the discussion of these factors, based on the relevant literature, defines the terms "occupational prestige of teachers" and "social status of teachers" and suggests practical implications for improvement of the current situation in Israel and in the world.

Key Words: Lack of teachers, occupational status, prestige of teachers, practical implications for improvement of teachers' status

Before the beginning of this school year (2023) the Ministry Education of Israel posted a worrying number – 5, 250. This was the number that showed how many teachers the country lacks to begin the year. Principals were asked to be creative: maybe one homeroom teacher can take two classes or part of lessons will be held online? There were schools that built their schedule for five days a week instead of usual six study days. This terrific lack was explained by quickly growing population in Israel: we need more teaching positions, because we have more pupils and their needs are also growing daily". Is this the only reason for this sad phenomenon?

This current article will focus on social status of teachers only, which is also called "occupational status" or "professional status". The terms "status" and "prestige" will be defined. Factors that influence the formation of teachers' status will be given. Some teachers' perceptions of their own status will be presented. Practical implications for improving teachers' status, thus resolving the problem of lack of teachers will be included.

Definitions of "prestige" and "status"

These terms take us years back in history. According to Roucek (1957), the etymology of the word derives from Latin "praestigiae", "praestigium" – "strong man"/rope walker/the juggler. Since in the Middle Ages the "praestigiators" threw dice or put coins on a table, and then passed them to a small vessel till the audience knew where exactly the coins were and it turned up somewhere else. Then, the word had the meaning of "supernatural" skills and

abilities. As it normally happens with the languages the word became to change, thus famous Rousseau mentioned the word "prestige" in the context of dazzling our intellect and wisdom – "the prestige of our passions". In 1933, in dictionaries of sociology (for example, Fairchild's Dictionary, as cited in Roucek, 1957), the word "prestige" gets the meaning that we are used to nowadays: social power. Power is mentioned in the official document "Stratification, Inequality, and Social class in the U.S." (2007). Power is someone's ability to get others to do his or her will, even if one doesn't will to do it. Power can be given to individuals legally – authority; or illegally – power that is taken by force. The Neiv standard dictionary of the English language define "prestige" as authority. Authority is an established right, which exists in the framework of a social order. The authority allows to make judgements on several issues. "…authority or importance based on past achievements or gained by the appearance of power or ability: the moral influence of reputation or former character or process, ascendancy based on power" (Roucek, 1957, 307).

Psychologically wise, people want to believe that they are special and meaningful to a certain degree in their society. In addition, there is a belief that "prestige" can secure one's influence, dispose of material things or power. (Roucek, 1957). The official prestige is also a domination. "Some people are more respected and their behavior has more prestige than have the actions of others." (Roucek, 1957, 308). Smack & Walczak (2017) define prestige as a socially convertible value, for instance members of a certain group perceive other groups as prestigious. There are also several types of prestige according to the authors. The first type is personal prestige – this type refers to a so-called first circle of a person: friends, neighbors, family. The second type is social prestige. Social prestige relates to social position, profession and wealth. The third type is "situational prestige". This type is dynamic - it is temporary and changes under various circumstances. The last type that is mentioned by Smack & Walczak (2017) is called "institutionalized prestige" – "…characterized by customary or legally established rules on how it is shown to others, and the existence of specific rules to enforce these principles in practice." (Smack & Walczak, 2017, 23). This type includes a set of behaviors of showing respect towards specific persons, positions, social groups and other situational contexts. Yes, there are people that are respected more for their behavior and actions. There are certain scales of prestige and our society is actually categorized in accordance with these scales. If such a scale is imagined, we will be able to see it as a life continuum from top to bottom and in between there are marks since our lives have several statuses: age, gender, family, occupational, official and public statuses. Each and every status has its own "prestige". The prestige cannot stay by itself, it depends on such factors as: the values of the culture

according to geographical location, political position, specific routines, customs and even vocabulary that is used to note the prestige, for instance: "Your honor", "Your excellence", "Senator", etc. (Roucek, 1957). Empirically, prestige research deals with the idea of social hierarchy and the other to that of socially closed groups.

Up until now the term "prestige" was defined, so what is "status"? Roucek (1957) defines it as a state and gives the following example to show the difference between the terms: a man of low status can achieve high prestige, as the result his status will also change. Soldiers and scholars can win great prestige, but it doesn't necessarily change their status. Status is connected to social class. These social classes define "stratification" in a community. There are "upper", "middle" and "lower" classes in different communities. Often political, social and economic classes can be mixed. According to some anthropological investigations, the absence of social classes usually happens in the simplest forms pf community life. In greater communities, more distinction will happen (Roucek, 1957). The official U.S. document dedicated to stratification, inequality and social classes (2007), says that our society is stratified into social classes in the U.S. that are based on wealth, income, educational attainment, and professional occupation. According to the same document wealth can be measured by property and income. Income is actually one form of property. Property is a better measure than wealth. You can be considered wealthy, but your income is small. Individuals with less property, will be considered to have less power and prestige.

Occupational prestige

It is important to relate to a so-called "occupational prestige", which will directly lead to the teaching profession. A special project that would check occupational prestige took place in Great Britain in 2001, this project showed that there are three elements that form social perception: 1. Occupational prestige – comes in relation to other professions. 2. Occupational status – social groups that are graded on a special scale. 3. Occupational esteem – the society's evaluation of a profession according to personal characteristics, such as one's dedication and skills that influence the future (Stratification, inequality and social classes, 2007). Abdollahyan (2009) claims that occupational prestige is one of the common indexes of social stratification. Such a stratification happens at a work place by systematical, many times unequal distributions of symbolic and material rewards among various social positions. It is important to note here that according to Smack & Walczak (2017), very often the hierarchy of prestige does not correspond to the hierarchy of earnings. For example, technically teachers enjoy the highest prestige, but it is not a secret that their income is usually low. As cited in Abdollahyan (2009),

Davis and Moor claim in their theory: "Social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons." (p.48). According to Huppatz (2015), there is a term "inequalities in education" – on which there is no certain agreement among social theorists. The inequality relates to academic, popular and political arenas. This inequality was understood in the best way through the very concept "socioeconomic status of teachers". "This "classless society" thesis is frequently taken up in political discourse and this means that other markers of social inequality, such as race, ethnicity and rurality, or the more generic concept "social exclusion", tend to be focus of education policy". (Reay, 397 as cited in Huppatz, 2015). In Smack & Walczak's (2017) study teachers of primary, lower and secondary schools, as well as teachers of all types of upper secondary schools were questioned regarding their perceptions of the position of the teacher as compared to other professions. In most of their opinions, they express the belief that teachers should be respected since they perform responsible work, which is contributing to social development. When the participants were asked about the analogy to other professions, the teachers mentioned medical doctors, priests, social workers, lawyers, sculptors, librarians and military workers. These comparisons lead us to the fact that the teaching profession requires many competences, a teacher needs to be psychologist, academic person, sometimes social worker and a parent a bit. The teacher's prestige is based on the following criteria: 1. way of life; 2. Formal education that helps to correspond with the way of life; 3. The prestige of the profession. Ilyin, as cited in Sychev, Fanfanova & Starodubtseva (2008) says that the connection between an individuum and its status in the society becomes one's "skin". It is very difficult to define a status anyway. There are many small factors that influence it, for example the place one chooses for a vacation. It is impossible to present a hierarchy without taking into account one's personal perception of his/her own place. In addition, even such small elements of prestige as the profession of one's friends, books and journals one reads. UNESCO conference that took place in Paris in 1966 dedicated to teachers' status, the following poll results were presented (approximately 187 teachers from different areas, cities and villages participated in the poll): 94% thought salary was not respectful and simply enough for normal living; 67% thought the teachers' prestige in the society was very low; 52% mentioned stressful situations at work; 33% talked about the lack of any opportunity to improve living conditions home/apartment wise. It is important to cite here that when these teachers were asked what promotes success in this profession, most of the teachers said motivation (43.7%); self-education and creative self-realization (15.5%); staff and administration support (14.1%).

As the result of Sychev's, Fanfanova's & Starodubtseva's (2008) work it is possible to conclude that the problematic status of teachers can be explained by the gap that exists between the requirements and expectations of teachers and social package that they get.

Social prestige and status of teachers in their own eyes

Yes, most of the sources focus on teacher's status in terms of "prestige" and comparison to other professions in relation to salary and work conditions in teacher's eyes: "…teacher's view the teaching profession as having a lower status compared with other professions (88%) and previous years (100%). Teachers indicate that the reasons for this attitude are new top management policies (24,4%) and low pay (16.6%)" (Aydin, Demir & Erdemli, 2015, 146). "According to teachers, only those who achieve financial success are recognized today, while the way in which people perceive teachers' renumeration is complex." (Smack & Walczak, 2017, 25). Normally teachers' salary is built of a base sum which arrives from the government and can include bonuses, such as motivational incentives. Usually, such incentives are seen not in a positive light by teachers, since they all are sure that they do their best – this is why in their opinion, the incentives need to be given equally. In addition, students' progress and their results depend on many factors and not always they are fully connected to the quality of the teacher's work. Let's ask ourselves in general, why someone would want to become a teacher? According to Lortie (2002) the "attractions" of teaching can be grouped according to "so-called" themes: 1. Teaching as interpersonal theme. 2. Teaching as the service theme. 3. Teaching as the continuation theme. 4. Teaching as compatibility theme. Teaching calls to work with young people – the desire to work with young people can be related to interpersonal theme. The service team – despite the low status, teachers are seen as someone who perform a special mission. Continuation theme stands for the fact that schools can be seen as special agencies. They have to prepare students for adult roles in the future society. The theme of time compatibility is explained by a Western example. Most Americans are required to work more days per year than a teacher. Teachers in their turn are very sensitive to this criticism. They try hard to prove that their work days do not end with the school day. Continuing the topic of perceptions of status of teachers, Hall and Langton (2006) showed these perceptions regarding the New Zealand public. From the list of occupations, the following professions were defined as a high-status profession: politicians, lawyers, doctors – but not teachers. In the "unpeople" educational blog there was an article called "Why teachers are important in society – why teachers matter?". According to the article, teachers are so important because they give children purpose and give clues for future success in life. Namely teachers are people who bring changes in students' lives and serve as the first and ultimate role models. For many students

(especially students with difficult background), the teacher-student connection gives these students the sense of stability. The article says teachers provide the power of education, making abstract concepts accessible for learners. These teachers guide and motivate. Teachers' dedication makes them work "round-the-clock". Moreover, teachers play a great role in the economic development of the country, since education is a fundamental aspect in the general development of any country. According to teachers themselves, factors that lower the prestige of the teaching profession are: social, cultural, institutional and personal. There are three main drivers of status according to Hall and Langton (2006): power, money and fame. Two other factors are identified as factors of secondary influence: the amount of training/skill and the extent to which the career has an influence on other people's lives. The secondary factors do not deliver and raise a status without power, money and fame – and this explains the low status of teachers according to Hall and Langton (2006). One of the dominant influencers on teacher's status is named "media" – not in a positive way. Specific barriers to teaching were named by Hall and Langton (2006): lack of discipline of students, risks – physical (violent pupils) and the risk of false accusations, low pay, heavy workloads which result in stress, getting the right people into the profession initially. It is important to mention the attractions to teaching as well: influence and important for the future society, job security – teaching is a job for life (and Covid proved it), diversity – the world of education is not boring and diverse. It is interesting to say that holidays/vacation and days off were not included by teachers as significant attractions. A study that was conducted by Alam and Farid (2011), that aimed to indicate the actual factors that affect teacher's motivation also pointed out that teachers, who participated in the study were not satisfied with their socio-economic status. More precisely, they pointed out that they felt they were not paid according to their abilities and the input that the teaching profession requires with all the challenges, such as students' behavior and job requirements. In Hyun-Joo, Kyong, Bridget, Melissa & YunJung (2018), teachers' low income was even linked to job related depression. Actually, according to the study findings, only 24% out of 100% of teachers agreed that they had reasonable salary; 54% of teachers said they had more than one pair of earning hands at home; 10% said their basic needs were available to them, when 90% claimed that the work conditions and salary need to be improved. One of the most significant findings in the study was: 64% of teachers agreed that their teaching was somehow affected by their salary. Sogomo, as cited in Gitonga (2012) also mentioned low salaries in the US as an example, emphasizing the fact that teachers with more experience and higher education earn more than those with a standard bachelor's degree, thus bringing up another important topic that relates to

teachers' status and prestige and this is – professional development and professional growth. It is important to note here, that not all teachers can pay for higher studies due to low salaries at work.

According to Multuer and Yuksel (2019), there are professional and unprofessional factors that influence teachers' perceptions regarding their status, but the most significant factors still relate to financial aspect and relations with the Ministry of Education. For example, the Ministry of Education of Israel fairly requires teachers to work differentially in the classroom, but according to Pecek, Cuk, & Lesar (2008), teachers who are the key players in implementing inclusion in practice – don't feel they are qualified enough to teach children from marginalized groups. Thus, there is a gap between requirements, demands and resources. Continuing the topic of discrepancies, Bashmanova (2012) dedicated her work to quite an obvious difference that exists between minimum privileges and maximum of responsibility of teachers. Bashmanova starts her work with a short background, saying that nowadays bigger attention towards teachers can be explained by uncertain definition of teachers' status. It is natural for people to give subjective labels to various roles and positions in the society. Originally teachers have to get high status in the people's eyes – but this is not the case. Sociologies usually divide status into the following categories: economic, socio-professional, work status and power statuses. According to Bashmanova (2012) in each and every category teacher's status finds itself in a certain disharmony. Especially it is seen in the category of socio-professional status. On one hand, as it was mentioned earlier it is clear that teacher's work is valuable, necessary, important. On the other, it can be seen that there is a huge discrepancy between what teachers are asked to do and how they are paid. For example, once teachers were mostly responsible for the pupils' educational grow, acquiring necessary skills and knowledge. Nowadays very often teachers are also responsible for the pupils' emotional development and sometimes even to execute tasks that belong to parents, families and homes of the students. The next stage is disappointment. Why? Because often the pupils' needs are wider than ones that can be taken care in a classroom and then there is an impression of teachers in particular and the whole educational system in general – that do not succeed in their mission. The next social stage according to Bashmanova (2012) is to take the teachers' job under control. Changes and reforms that are made as the result of such control are incorrect and temporary, claims Mitina (as cited in Bashmanova, 2012). The whole goal of education is to get ahead of the processes and to prepare students for the future and not to go on about various forces and political waves. And what about the economic status? According to Lunacharski (that is cited in Bashmanova, 2012) poor teacher is the end of the school. He said that more than one hundred years ago. Pessimism of teachers themselves regarding the improvement of their salaries, clearly and quite

naturally influence the way they work. Teachers worldwide wish to know exactly what is expected of them. They don't want sudden and very top-down policies and "innovations" that come with new ministers of education (in Israel recently there were frequent and rapid changes due to the crisis in politics). According to Loton – a professor from Great Britain (as cited in Bashmanova, 2012) the expectations of teachers change all the time and it is depressing: once they are seen as professionals, once as baby sitters… Moreover, when you think about the financial status of teachers and their desire to compensate their salaries by giving private lessons or working in more than one institution – the result is tired and unmotivated teachers, thus lowering the quality of instruction and education. Bashmanova (2012) finishes her work by giving an example of a conversation of a teacher in the train, that says that she is ashamed to admit that she is a teacher, while such an honorable profession is something that you should say with pride.

According to Bek (2007) teachers' perceptions of their status is low. Fuller, Goodwyn and Francis-Brophy (2013) claim that the teaching profession in general struggles to define itself in relation to other professions. In UK teachers point out their low status.

A few sources above mentioned such important points as professional level of current teachers and their constant professional development. Professional level of teachers is a very significant part of their status. Throughout this chapter the concept of "good teachers" is being raised several times and Korthagen (2004) is not an exception. Korthagen (2004) raises two important questions: 1. What are the qualities of a good teacher? 2. How can we raise good teachers? In relation to the desire to define a "good teacher", in 1970s a contrasting model was developed – the Humanistic Based Teacher Education, which focused on teacher's personality, personal growth, connection to Maslow's and Roger's humanistic psychology and theories of human's needs that need to be satisfied first (Combs et al, Joyce and Shapiro, as cited in Korthagen, 2004). Korthagen (2004) relies his model on an adaptation of Bateson's model, which depicts a persona as an onion. Yes, yes – an onion that has layers. (Dilts, as cited in Korthagen, 2004). Each layer provides a way to understand teacher's actions, ways to develop, grow and change, and etc. "The assumption underlying the model is that inner layers can influence the outer ones manifesting eventually in behavior and vice versa – the environment can forge the inner layers." (p. 78, Korthagen, 2004). The following aspects are discussed by Korthagen in relation to the model: environment, behavior, competencies, belief, identity, mission. Environment is the most visible level; behavior – most student teachers are extremely focused on this level in order to understand how to manage a classroom effectively; competencies – one's knowledge, skills, attitudes; belief – teacher's beliefs are usually formed

by one's own education. Eventually these beliefs drive one's behavior. Identity – who am I? Who do I want to be as a teacher? Finally, the last level is 'mission' or calling, especially for teachers this level is important. If you don't like children/students/teaching – why to study to be a teacher at all? Korthagen (2004) emphasizes the inner calling for the teaching profession and uses Nelson Mandela's quote: "If we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same". In Ezer, Gilat, & Sagee (2010), student teachers were asked about their perception of teacher education and professional identity among novice teachers. Teaching was perceived by most of the participants as self-realization, gaining sense and mission, enabling lifelong development. In relation to the learning process itself, most of the students preferred a constructivist approach.

In Sychev, Fanfanova & Starodubtseva (2008) the authors claim that the quality of education depends on main processes: 1. Professional development of teachers and their participation in the country processes that are meant to improve education. 2. The social politics of the country towards teachers.

Smack and Walczak (2017) support the previous arguments related to the teacher's prestige according to teachers' views, by calling this topic "a complex subject". 60% of teachers that participated in the studies conducted on the subject of the teachers' prestige since 1975 by the Public Opinion Research Centre in Poland, said that this profession didn't provide them with prestige or so-called "satisfactory remuneration". "…80% of Polish teachers indicated the lack of prestige, and slightly less than half mentioned low authority as a problematic issue when dealing with students." (Smack & Walczak, 2017, 22). When asked about the advantages of this special profession, teachers mentioned the importance of having contact with people and a whole continuum of professional development. Nikiforov (2007) compares a teacher to an artist. But he is asking, are teachers able to "create" in such conditions as they currently have? Another question that is raised in the context of Bulgarian educational system, is if teachers get skills, knowledge and experience, they come with all of this to their classrooms – but what is waiting for them there is disrespect from students, parents and finally government. Was it worth to get all this knowledge and skills? Nikiforov (2007) also calls the educational system a slow system. Many changes that need to happen quickly, take years – until we find ourselves in a crisis. If speaking about the social status of a teacher, professor Nikiforov (2007) mentions the following factors that influence teacher-civil relationships: 1. Specifics of the teacher's work. 2. Demographic characteristics of individual regions and regions related to migration. 3. Specificity in the organization of educational process. 4. Quality characteristics of and school records. Nikiforov suggests to strengthen the relationships between teachers and their

communities by expanding the "information bank" – if the community knows more about the work of teachers, it will bring more understanding and probably more appreciation. 2. It is also possible to provide more opportunities for open dialogues between the sides. 3. It is necessary to rethink the system control of the achievements of the students. Naydenova (2018) – another Bulgarian author picks up and elaborates on the topic of students' achievements that appears to be one of the key components of the situation of social relation towards the teaching profession. She wrote an article and its name is "Behind all pupils' successes stands one teacher". She calls teachers "class leaders". Actually, this is what according to Naydenova (2018) the society wants to see in these leaders: 1. Professionalism. 2. Competence. 3. A personal example – according to Delor as cited in Naydenova (2018), a teacher must "rule a whole pallete" of human celebration – this metaphor correlates with comparing a teacher to an artist.

Personality matters. The topic of the importance of personality is significantly enlighten in Michael Linsin's work (2020) that built a whole theory and practice regarding a successful classroom management – his work is called "Smart Classroom Management". He says, many teachers often think they need to work very hard to "impress" students, but they forget that each person – each teacher has a unique personality. Once you share it with others and they can see the beauty of it, it will help any process (Linsin, 2020).

Another interesting fact that is pointed out by Smack and Walczak (2017) is that there is a certain gap between the public perception of the profession and the image among teachers themselves. For instance, the mass media (that was mentioned earlier as a strong factor, which influences teachers' image in the society) usually presents a negative image of teachers, each time that there is a trade union protest – it's a true "celebration" for the reporters. Kuzminsky (2019) also blames the Israeli media for a very not positive "picture" that was created about our teachers. Media does it, using extreme cases that do not necessarily reflect the majority of teachers, their professionalism and their work. Unfortunately, according to the media Israeli teachers are not professional and the care about their students is not their first priority. As the result, according to Kuzminsky (2019) less and less new students come to colleges of education and wish to become teachers. Kuzminsky (2019) also says that there is a significant gap between what she sees in the field when she is visiting schools and what the media "sells". She sees many dedicated educators.

There is also a big change in the teaching profession – once a teacher was the only source of knowledge and now his/her main role is mostly facilitating the process. This is an additional reason for young people not to choose this profession, since they would want to teach meaningfully and not only to facilitate.

Another difficulty is that nowadays a teacher needs to work hard not only for his/her students' belief, but also the parents' belief, because nowadays parents are extremely involved in all the school processes – many times too much involved.

In Brower and Korthagen (2005) another term is mentioned "occupational socialization". According to the Oxford dictionary, "occupational socialization" is about learning of attitudes and behaviors, which are necessary to competence in a context of an employment. It includes skills, which are acquired through learning, informal work norms, and peer-group values and relationships. Adler, Ariav, Dar & Kfir (2001) put the current situation with teacher's status into an equitation, in which on one hand the requirements from teachers go higher, but their work conditions and salary lower. The authors say that it became almost impossible to make the policy makers and the national budget holders to understand that by investing in teachers, we are actually investing in our future and this is taking into account that every year less interested candidates come to colleges for education. Adler, Ariav, Dar & Kfir (2001) also say that instead of taking care seriously and deeply of the whole system and its roots – the system adapted itself to the constantly changing situation. This includes temporary solutions, quick pedagogical courses, teachers who teach disciplines that they are not certified to teach, etc.

Another worrying piece of data that was published in Adler, Ariav, Dar & Kfir (2001) is that according to the Israeli statistic among all higher studies colleges, namely students of colleges for education are the lowest and the requirements to be submitted to these colleges are very low. For example, matriculation tests grades and psychometric tests grades are the lowest in colleges for education in comparison to other universities and professions – 85 out of 100 – matriculation; 553 – psychometric; when in universities it is usually 95- matriculation; 97 – psychometric. The authors believe that namely the improvement of the manpower – future teachers, will bring the necessary improvement in education.

According to McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, Louis & Hamilton (2004) one of the most popular models nowadays to keep teachers accountable is pupils' scores on standardized achievement tests. This model is a 'product' of a 'No Child Left Behind' (2001) act. This model is not optimal, since there are many statistical discrepancies that can influence pupils' achievements, in addition there are different kinds of students' outcomes, for instance disciplinary actions, scores and even attendance. Due to this fact, not necessarily one specific model can demonstrate a real effectiveness of a teacher, therefore the authors suggest alternative models to evaluate teachers. The models are the following: covariate adjustment models; repeated cross-section models of gains; cross classified models; layered model. Covariate

adjustment model – prior scores are seen as covariates is models for current outcomes. The assumption is that there is a normal random respectively to previous grades and teacher effects. Repeated cross-section models of gains – score can be analyzed to obtain so-called "gains". Differencing score is sufficient in order to capture the cross-grade structure. Cross-classified models assume that testing at the same intervals for all students is reasonable and often used for many testing programs. This is usually done in order to see if the teaching practices work. According to the articles, when time periods between tests is not constant, there will be an influence on "variances" and "covariances" for errors among students. Here cross-classified models can help to get more precise results. There are also models that take into account students' ethnical group, age, family structure and socioeconomic status.

In Altenbaugh's book about social history of teaching in 20th century in America (1992), the following topics are raised: teachers' work is called women's work, the whole chapter of the book is dedicated to belonging of teachers to specific communities in America, mostly religious and racial ones; a special comparison and distinction of teachers are made between teachers as professionals or teachers as workers. In Elizabeth Boyle's work about feminization of teaching in America, she wrote about the process that occurred between colonial times to present times. This process is especially crucial to the current thesis, because: "As the gender ratios of teachers changed, so did the pay and the social prestige associate with teaching." (Boyle, 2004, 1). She does name several factors that influence the gender changes in choosing the profession, such as: working with children (especially with the young ones) requires several character features, as the progress evolved – new professions (more suitable for men) were discovered. It is interesting that Boyle wrote that namely the process of feminization influenced (in other words lowered) the prestige of teacher's profession. Before 1800 in America the education was mostly for white men, in 1800 the process of universal education has started. The process of industrialization also played a significant role. As the result, more professions for men were offered, as was mentioned earlier. Today, not only in America teachers are mostly women, the low payment doesn't add to the prestige of the profession, but according to Boyle (2004), not in every country of the world this profession is underestimated, for example in such country as Japan – teachers are more respected, since the value of their job and the fact that teachers are raising future generations is well understood. It is also important to add that, according to Boyle (2004) the low estimation of the teaching profession doesn't connect only to the fact that teachers are mostly women, it is more connected to the fact as the society sees women in general. Boyle (2004) finishes her work on a note of hope, that with the processes of equal standing worldwide, occupations that are dominated by women (including teaching) will

hopefully receive higher respect. Continuing the social line in relation to teachers, Berzin, Maltsev, and Shkurkin (2017) point out that among various social-demographic characteristics of a teacher (like gender, which was mentioned earlier), the teacher's family status is also significant and interesting statistics wise. According to the statistics that is presented in their research that was done in a city in Russia (Ekaterinburg), 22.7% of teachers were not married; 13.8% were divorced; 6.0% widowed; 57.1 % married. The following questions arose: how does family status influence on teachers' professional status and their well-being? It could be natural to hypothesize that for unmarried teachers, one of the most important things would be to get married and to build their families, rather than focusing fully on professional issues. Berzin, Maltsev, and Shkurkin's research (2017) also revealed that what bothers unmarried teachers a lot is their financial well-being. It is harder to be financially alone. On the other hand, teacher who were married or who had kids were constantly concerned about their families and kids and teaching concerns naturally occupied the second place. Another conclusion that was made by Berzin, Maltsev and Shkurkin (2017) is that the politics in the education sphere does not relate seriously enough to the importance of teachers' family status and its possible influence on teachers' positions in the society and their psychological well-being, which is directly related to the family status as the mentioned research shows.

Practical implications for the possible improvement of the teachers' status and prestige in the society.

1. Better selection of future candidates and nurturing professionalism from the college's bench

The implications that are based on relevant literature, personal experience and observation can be organized in a hierarchical order, for example candidates for teaching need to be better selected and this task is in pedagogical colleges' hands. The initial requirements need to be higher. Once selected, their preparation needs to be relevant and flexible in the field, since the field changes all the time. The training needs to be scientific, methodological, pedagogical and psychological (Naydenova, 2012 & Nikiforov, 2007). "Advocates of greater professionalism link to it to "professional unionism", which they see as concomitant to building a union "that is flexible, responsible, and public spirited". (Kirchner & Koppich, 1993, 201), one that is characterized by "moving away from self-interest and self-protection to diagnose complex problems and to change systems". (Kirchner and Koppich in Stromquist, 2018, 38).

2. Set a clear scheme of promotion procedures for teachers

After raising the teaching standards and professional expectations from teachers, a clear program of promotion procedures for teachers needs to be set (Gitonga, 2012). In places where the school facilities are in bad conditions, more Government's attention and budget is needed.

According to Hall and Langton (2006), teachers need to be paid more for the job they do; outstanding teachers should be paid more than the rest; schools also need to support teachers more than they do it now.

3. Public opinion and vision of teachers needs to be improved

Nikiforov suggests to strengthen the relationships between teachers and their communities by expanding the "information bank" – if the community knows more about the work of teachers, it will bring more understanding and probably more appreciation. 2. It is also possible to provide more opportunities for open dialogues between the sides. 3. It is necessary to rethink the system control of the achievements of the students. Smack and Walczak (2017) support, the public's opinion can be so negative, just out of misunderstanding of the teacher's job. The public sees long vacations, free days and strikes. They do not see the real workload, tests, talks to parents, etc.

4. Teachers' work hours need to have a clear limitation, just like in other professions

An unpleasant heritage left by Covid times – "Zoom". It is almost impossible nowadays to separate between work day and family time. Since "zooming" is an online act, it can happen anytime and anywhere. Teachers are said "it's Zoom anyway, you can connect from your child's birthday party".

5. Teachers' well-being needs to be important to the stake-holders

According to OECD, for good education – we need teachers with self-efficacy, well-being and confidence. Teachers that want and take ownership of their profession. To encourage teachers' growth, policy makers need to inspire and promote innovation. The weaker are teachers, the more they will be told by the ministry what to do. (Schleicher, 2018). Policy-makers need to collaborate with teachers before setting new standards and bringing new changes into the system.

6. Positive relationships with parents are crucial

Teachers normally tend to distance themselves from parents, saying that those don't have enough professionalism as they do. The emphasis the teachers put on professionalism in these relationships is necessary in their eyes in order to protect their position. They are also defensive in the first place, due to poor experiences they had in the past (Baeck, 2010). Logically, if the public opinion and media change their views and relation to teachers for the better – the parents will improve their relation too.

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The article presented the definitions of "prestige", "status" and "occupational or professional prestige/status" in relation to teachers. Factors that lower teachers' prestige were cited. Teachers' perceptions of their status were mentioned. The significant gap between requirements and pay was found and analyzed and finally, practical implications were suggested. Eventually, it is important to remind that teachers prepare future citizens and future professionals, thus directly influencing prosperity of any country – it does sound worthwhile to invest and nurture our teachers from the day they even thought to join this meaningful profession.

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