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## **IDEAS ABOUT PROFESSIONS OF THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL BASED ON OWN RESEARCH**

### **WYOBRAŻENIA O ZAWODACH UCZNIÓW KLAS TRZECICH SZKOŁY PODSTAWOWEJ NA PODSTAWIE BADAŃ WŁASNYCH**

**Abstract:** The presented publication is the result of qualitative research on the ideas of professions carried out among third-grade students of primary school. The subject is of interest to researchers all over the world. The aim of the research was to check how third-grade students imagine professional work in general and how they imagine the work of people in particular occupations. The main problem that included specific problems was the question: What are the ideas of the professions of third-year primary school students? The research results show

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a positive image of professional work of third-grade students. They are able to identify their own interests, see the practical side of their professional work (obtaining the means necessary for living), understand the work as a service to other people (they associate the profession with the responsible work of a firefighter, policeman, teacher, doctor, secretary), they also have general knowledge about the work of their parents, correctly associate objects (props) with professions, know the names of the professions and they are able to indicate the features of a good and bad employee. The publication is supplemented with works by third-grade students presenting work in various professions.

**Keywords:** profession, professional awareness, career consulting, ideas about the professions

**Streszczenie:** Prezentowana publikacja jest efektem badań jakościowych przeprowadzonych wśród uczniów klas trzecich szkoły podstawowej na temat wyobrażeń o zawodach. Poruszana tematyka budzi zainteresowanie badaczy na całym świecie. Celem badań było sprawdzenie, w jaki sposób uczniowie klas trzecich postrzegają pracę zawodową oraz jak wyobrażają sobie pracę ludzi w poszczególnych zawodach. Problemem głównym, z którego wyłoniono problemy szczegółowe było pytanie: Jakie są wyobrażenia o zawodach uczniów klas trzecich szkoły podstawowej? Wyniki badań dowodzą o pozytywnym obrazie pracy zawodowej w oczach uczniów klas trzecich. Uczniowie potrafili określić własne zainteresowania, dostrzegają wymiar praktyczny pracy zawodowej (pozyskiwanie środków potrzebnych do życia), postrzegają pracę jako służbę drugiemu człowiekowi (kojarzą zawód z odpowiedzialną pracą strażaka, policjanta, nauczyciela, lekarza, sekretarki), posiadają ogólną wiedzę o pracy swoich rodziców, prawidłowo kojarzą przedmioty (rekwizyty) z zawodami, znają nazwy zawodów oraz potrafili wskazać cechy dobrego i złego pracownika. Publikację uzupełniają prace plastyczne uczniów klas trzecich przedstawiające pracę w różnych zawodach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zawód, orientacja zawodowa, doradztwo zawodowe, wyobrażenia o zawodach

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to present the results of the research carried out among third grade students of primary school. The ideas about professions was the subject of the research. The article complements and broadens the existing knowledge about the ideas of the youngest students about professional work. The discussed topic is very interesting due to the research group. Most of the publications presenting the results of research on career counseling concern secondary school students. Meanwhile, the content of career counseling is already implemented in preschools and early school education. Preparing an individual to choose a career and to recognize one's own professional predispositions is an important problem that is present all over the world. Rapid technological progress creates new jobs and makes it necessary to educate specialists in many fields. The article by the staff of the University of South Africa reads: "Contemporary society is characterized by rapid advancements in information technologies and globalization that heralded the start of the twenty-first century. A need for the development of innovative skills and changes in attitude towards work requirements has arisen in response to this rapid advance" (Mareea et al., 2018, p. 118).

The ability to adapt to the conditions of the changing world and accurate recognition of one's interests and abilities is very important in choosing a career path. Parents, teachers and people with vocational guidance qualifications support the unit in making an accurate diagnosis. "The role of people involved in choosing a career path focuses on activities that help the child to get to know and understand him/herself, support the child in making key choices, encourage them to share experiences and talk about their advantages and disadvantages, self-esteem is an important element in choosing the future path in life" (Chirkowska-Smolak et al., 2011, pp. 70–81). People involved in career counseling are supported by the Education Development Center (ORE). ORE employees prepared and handed over to teachers a publication *A set of exemplary vocational pre-orientation, vocational orientation and career counseling programs for the education system* prepared under the project *Effective educational and vocational counseling for children, youth and adults* (Pregler, 2017). The study includes programs for preschools and students in grades 1–3.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I want to show the importance and the essence of the problem of preparing a student for the career path using a fragment of the book by K. Brooks: "Have you ever been asked who you will become? What do you want to do? This question touches the core of your existence, it has haunted you terribly from the day you decided to go to high school, and it will not stop months or even years after your graduation. And it starts so innocently. People ask you what kind of job you want to have? So you tell them. There is a moment of silence. Then the question follows, «What do you want to do?» Think well. «I'm going to study law», you say, even if you're not quite sure you want to, but you are sure it will sound right. «I am thinking of medical studies» even if you are not interested in sciences. The questioner's face brightens, maybe even a smile appears on it. He pats you on the shoulder. «Come on, that's great!» And so begins a misunderstanding, the consequences of which you can feel all your life „(Brooks, 2010, p. 9). Indecision of the individual and seeking his/her own place in the world is the cause of frustration, dissatisfaction, discouragement and even depression. The right choice of the field of study results in self-fulfillment in the future, a mistake is a waste of time, incurring unnecessary costs and frustration hindering everyday functioning. Being guided by the profession of parents or the expectations of people from the closest environment is one of the most common mistakes related to work. Actions to accurately recognize one's own life path are undertaken very early, already in preschool and early school education. Z. Wolk writes: Professional work is one of the main forms of human activity. It is carried out in adulthood, i.e. in the period of life characterized by the greatest human potential. Before this happens, however, it is necessary to obtain appropriate preparation for this form of activity. Thus, school education despite the fact that it is generally oriented towards general education,

is indispensable for the proper positioning of a student on the professional path (Wołk, 2009, p. 72). According to Teresa Neckar-Ilnicka: "Education for success is a challenge not only for education. This is an area penetrated by parents and other people involved in upbringing. Education at every stage is an area of creating the success of a person (both children and adults, e.g. students)" (Neckar-Ilnicka, 2018, p. 71). The problems related to career counseling and the desire to obtain answers to many questions bothering directors, career advisors and specialists inspire to undertake research in this field. In the research report entitled: *Diagnosis of the state of educational and vocational counseling in lower secondary and upper secondary schools in the accounts of school principals and persons providing counseling*, we read: "The study was of a diagnostic nature – it is a description of the state of affairs in such a way that it is possible to determine the distance between the desired and the actual state. It presents the most important features of career counseling provided in the school system in Poland. The information was collected from school principals and career counselors working there. Thanks to this, it was sometimes possible to compare the opinions of these two categories of respondents, which resulted from a different perspective on the analyzed phenomenon" (Podwójcic, 2015, p. 5).

After analyzing the literature on the subject of the research, it should be emphasized that neither the Polish nor the world literature has found any theoretical and empirical works that directly address the issues of ideas about the professions of third grade primary school students. This explains the presentation of research results in a wider context and covering teenage students, high school students and career counselors from Greece, Turkey, Vietnam and Indonesia. As mentioned earlier, preparation to enter the labor market is not only a problem of Polish education. Recommendations and career counseling included in European Union documents have long been setting the course of action for career counselors in many European countries (Łukaszewicz, 2008, p. 28). The global nature of the problem is evidenced by the publications resulting from the research conducted around the world – the analysis of articles published in international journals made it possible to state that the research was conducted among others in Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, North Africa, Malaysia, France, Sweden, Greece, Romania, Spain and Nigeria

Interesting research reports come from Greece and Turkey. The article entitled: *Greek school career. Counselors' competencies and burnout syndrome* presents the results of research checking whether there is a relationship between the professional competences of Greek counselors and burnout syndrome (Kounenoua et al., 2010, p. 1890). In the second article, entitled: *Primary education class guidance program on primary education career development in 6th, 7th and 8th grades*, the author S. Aslan presented a tabular (17) study conducted among 160 students in grades 6, 7 and 8 in the city of Kirikkale. The study included 90 women and 70 men. During the research, the students were asked questions about their everyday life and plans for the future, the influence of leaders on the lives of others, They were asked to explain the changes in the roles of women and men, explain the essence of changes taking place

in themselves and in other people, the impact of their own interests on the choice of career path, skills needed to perform particular professions, students' interest in professions, knowledge and skills required to perform specific tasks, knowledge of educational institutions and levels of education. They were also asked to explain the relationship between the knowledge and choice of profession, knowledge of different schools and to explain the differences between them, choose a school suitable for the student with justification, explain relationship between effort and goal achievement (Aslan, 2011, p. 1782). School psychology and career counseling is a field that is currently very popular among educators and career counselors in Vietnam. This is evidenced by the results of the research conducted in the current year, published in the article: *Vocational orientation and the need for establishing career counseling office in Vietnamese schools*. The study covered 1200 high school students. The aim of the research was to find out about the current situation in terms of professional orientation and to understand the problems and needs in the field of career counseling of Vietnamese people. The quantitative research was conducted with the use of a questionnaire examining the current situation of problems related to professional orientation and the need for career counseling. The results showed that Vietnamese high school students face many problems related to professional orientation and need support from a school counselor. Unfortunately, the reality does not meet the needs of the students. Vietnamese schools lack a team of school educators and school counseling centers supporting students in choosing a career. After the research, it was hoped that the conclusions would contribute to the development of school psychology in Vietnam and would lead to the creation of a counseling center, a methodological counselor's office in schools (Tran et al., 2020, p. 46). In order to improve constantly the effectiveness of counseling, evaluation of career counseling programs is carried out. In the article: *Evaluation model of career counseling program in vocational high school* by academics from three Indonesian universities, the authors point out that there are too many unemployed graduates of vocational high schools and the need to modify tests used to assess vocational guidance. The test developed by the authors was aimed at nine vocational secondary schools in Yogyakarta. It was expected that the new model of research into the effectiveness of career counseling would indicate problems requiring analysis and new solutions (Martaningsiha et al., 2019, p. 318).

## METHODOLOGY

The results presented in this publication are the effect of research conducted among two groups of third-grade students using the diagnostic survey. The interview technique was used during the research. The subject of the research was the ideas about professions among third-grade students. The aim of the research was to check what are the ideas about professions among third-grade students are. The research group consisted of 44 third-grade students – 21 girls and 23 boys. The questions for the

interview questionnaire were developed on the basis of Annex 2 to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 12, 2019 on career counseling (MEN, 2019). The main research problem is contained in the question: What are the ideas about professions among third-grade students? The detailed problems – the questions to which answers were sought concerned important aspects of vocational education, which include: explanation of the concept of “profession” and “work”, knowledge of the professions performed by parents, willingness to pursue the profession of parents in the future, knowledge of the names of professions, knowledge of dangerous professions, knowledge of objects (props) typical for different professions, learning about the professional preferences of younger students, learning the characteristics of a good and bad employee. The interview with the children started with a question about their interests – point 1 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education on career counseling for grades 1–3 was taken into account: The student describes his/her interests and determines how he/she can develop them, presents his/her interests to other people. The children’s answers were quoted in the original version, which additionally shows the level of language competences of third-grade students. The conducted research is of a qualitative nature. These studies “above all allow for a qualitative description and analysis of the researched facts, phenomena or processes” (Łobocki, 2007, p. 92). “In qualitative research, the respondents are assigned a special role. [...] Children and adolescents are also treated as people from whom one can learn a lot” (Łobocki, 2007, p. 94). The use of qualitative research made it possible to get to know a broader context of ideas about professions among third-grade students and to get to know the individual perception of this issue by the respondents. The publication is supplemented with drawings by students showing the work of people in various professions.

## RESULTS

**Ideas about profession among third grade students.** The interview with third grade students began with getting to know their interests (reference to point 1.1 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 – the student describes his/her interests). The students’ answers show that they are interested in (literal answers were quoted): games (13), television (6), books (3), laboratory diagnostics, playing with dolls, movies (7), animals (11), fashion (2), skiing, sports (5), hairstyles, football, cars, IT, dancing (8), drawing, nothing (1).

The second question asked was to test how the students understood the term „profession”. The test results are presented in Table 1.

It is worth emphasizing that third grade students define the concept of a profession in a positive sense. They perceive a profession as hard work, effort, service to other people. On the other hand, they see the sense of professional work – they emphasize the need to earn money to support the family or buy medicines.

**Table 1.** Defining the concept of profession by third-grade students (reference to point 2.3 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of August 16, 2018 – The student describes what work is and discusses its meaning in human life on selected examples)

What is “a profession”?
“A profession is, for example, a firefighter”
“A profession is something thanks to which you can earn money and support your family and have money for medicines”
“A profession is, in short, various jobs, I associate professions with my grandmother.”
“It is hard work that we can help others, but not always”
“Profession is very hard work”
“A profession is necessary for life”
“A profession is, for example, sports, working in a bank and various other jobs”
“I associate profession with hard work, effort”
“Work”
“The profession is that one person is a policewoman and the other is a secretary”
“A profession is needed to live to support a family”
“A profession is a person, for example a teacher, doctor or accountant”
“I associate it with work and the police, and why? I do not know”
“A profession is an occupation for children and parents”
“A profession is a doctor, teacher”
“Helping people, creating things”
“A profession is hard work - it depends what profession it is”
“A profession is a difficult job, we treat, teach, catch”
“A profession is the work of parents”

**Source:** own study.

Interest in professions is developed mainly by people from the closest environment (parents, siblings, grandparents, people who have frequent contact with a child). Conversations between adults, whose listeners and recipients are often children, provide them with knowledge about the duties and activities performed by parents at work. The research on the knowledge of the professions performed by students' parents is presented in Table 2.

The question regarding the knowledge of parents' professions has been supplemented with an additional question: Would you like to pursue the profession that your mother or father does? The answer was: Yes – 25 students, No – 18 students and „Well, a little bit” – 1 student. Summarizing the research results, it is worth emphasizing that third-grade students are not only interested in their parents' professional work, but also positively evaluate it, declaring their willingness to do it in the future.

**Table 2.** Knowledge of the names of professions performed by people from the closest environment (reference to point 2.2 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 – the student gives the names of professions performed by people in the closer and more distant environment and describes the basic specificity of work in selected professions)

Mothers' professions	Fathers' professions
Shop assistant (3)	Programmer (3)
Deals with documents	Shop assistant (4)
Yes, I know (no name of the profession)	Manager
Doctor	Producer
Works at Caritas	Works in a company
Teacher (3)	Police officer
Works at the chemist's	Makes baskets
Teacher	Accountant
Works in a drugstore	I don't know
Accountant (4)	Carpenter
Works in an office	Miner
Works in health and safety	Shop assistant
Works in a bank	As... (no answer)
Works in an office	Teacher (2)
Nurse	Works in a school for the disabled
Laboratory diagnostician	Office
Work in gassworks	Work in gassworks
Teacher	Rep
I don't know (18)	I don't know (18)

**Source:** own study.

Referring to point 2.1. Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 – The student plays various professional roles in play, the students were asked a question that allowed them to determine what names of professions are known to them. The answers provided were: farmer, librarian (4), hairdresser (9), miner (3), doctor (17), paratrooper (2), trainer, policeman (15), model (4), makeup artist, nurse (2), veterinarian (9), painter (2), cook (4), fireman (5), journalist (2), security guard, teacher (7), graphic artist (2), hotelier, dancer, baker (3), miner, „whoever you want”, priest (6), salesman (6), football player (13), singer (3), ticket collector, game creator, waiter, swimmer (2), caretaker in an orphanage, beekeeper, basketball player (2), tennis player, volleyball player (2), courier, supplier, accountant (2), writer (2), actress (7), confectioner, supplier, soldier, electrician, lifeguard, programmer, ophthalmologist, seamstress. After the question about the names of professions, a list of hazardous professions was established. According to students,



they include: soldier (21), policeman (15), journalist, traveler, firefighter (31), swimmer, jumper (2), acrobat, model, carpenter, writer, ambulance service, missionary, footballer, builder (7), boxer (2), plane, paratrooper (7), pilot, snowboarder, gliding, mountaineer, stunt rider, skier, miner, climbing.

Performing duties at work involves the use of items typical for a given profession on a daily basis. The results of research on objects (props) necessary for work in a given profession are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Objects (props) typical for representatives of professions in the opinion of third-grade students (reference to point 2.6 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 – the student uses accessories and tools in accordance with their intended purpose and in a creative and unconventional way)

Profession	Characteristic object (prop)
Teacher	Blackboard (10), chalk (14), register (2), notebook, knowledge, abacus, ruler (3), book (10), pen
IT specialist	Office (4), IT, computer (26), pen, knowledge, laptop (8), microphone
Hairdresser	Scissors (22), brush, comb (7), hairdressing salon, hair trimmer (6), dryer (4)
Cook	Pot (16), spatula, food, spoon (5), apron (9), cook hat, stove, bowl, spices, frying pan (4)
Doctor	Medicines (14), syringe (4), stethoscope (10), prescription, doctor's coat (3), injection (7), First Aid Kit, thermometer (2), bandage (3), plaster
Policeman	Pistol (24), weapon (2), handcuffs (9), baton (6)
Accountant	Money (12), book (15), calculator (7), binder (3), office, papers (2)
Shoemaker	Thread (7), shoes (27), sewing machine, needle (2), fabric (3)
Tailor	Shoes (15), sweaters (2), needle (15), dress, sewing machine (7), hammer, buttons, threads
Flight attendant	Repair, maid, food (8), airplane (15), pilot, food cart, snack (3), tray (3), mindfulness, card, don't know
Pilot	Airplane (38), steering wheel (2), cap, rudders, driver

**Source:** own study.

It is worth noting that the variety and richness of the vocabulary collected during the research proves that students of the third grade correctly perceive the props used by representatives of various professions in their daily work. They are highly aware of the activities performed by people working in a given profession.

Each “boss” would like to have good employees in his/her team. The question: *What are the qualities of a good employee?* allowed students to express their own opinion on the behavior and characteristics of the employee. In some cases, students associated characteristics with a specific profession, for example: “the policeman is brave”. According to students, a good employee is: nice (22), fast, wise (15), helpful

(2), elegant, hard-working (10), good (7), responsible, cultured (4), polite, kind (4), good for others, helpful, focused, fun, higher pay raise, observant, hard-working (7), cheerful, not late, honest, brave, a good employee stays longer.

Another question asked was the opposite of the previous one – What are the qualities of a bad employee? and What should an employee not do? According to students, an employee should not be lazy (24), cannot steal (15), cannot be silly, cannot sleep at work – fall asleep (15), does not listen to the boss, is rude (17), dirty, cannot destroy, cannot disturb (5), cannot shout (9), break things, cannot beat (2), should not bully others, cannot disregard the rules, cannot play on the phone (18), cannot watch films (16), cannot be disobedient, cannot complain, cannot use violence, cannot cheat, cannot smoke, cannot drink alcohol.

Point 2.3. of the regulations on career counseling says that the student should describe what work is and discuss its meaning in human life on the basis of selected examples. The answers to the question: Why does a person work? are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The importance of work in human life (reference to point 2.3 of the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 – the student describes what work is and discusses its importance in human life on selected examples)

What is work? Why does a person work?
“To have money” (36 replies)
“We work to earn money and for fun”
“We work to have money, a house, food, clothes, wisdom, to have a family”
“Work gives us studies, home, family, work”
“We work for money, family support, education”
“Being smart, money”
“You have to work to have money, to eat and not to be homeless”
“Money and not to be bored”
“For a man to achieve something”

**Source:** own study.

Noticing a chance for a happy life at work proves that the students correctly understand the purpose and meaning of work (we work for pleasure, work gives us studies to achieve something, to be wise, to have a family). On the other hand, the material aspect of professional work that appears in the responses proves the rational perception of the surrounding world by the students (thanks to work you can support your family, buy food, clothes, not be homeless, buy a house).

Third grade students were asked to do an artwork showing the work of people in various professions. The students chose such professions as: veterinarian, athlete, journalist, dancer, footballer, painter, cook, policeman, firefighter and others.



**Figure 1.** Artworks of third grade students (from the top, from the left): a veterinarian, painter, dancer, journalist, football player

**Source:** own research.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The ideas about the professions of early childhood education students are shaped by the family, teachers, television, high technologies and specialists. The conducted research shows that the ideas about the professions of 9–10 year old children are very general. The students have problems with making long statements about working in a given profession. They most often mention the professions known and discussed in preschool and during lessons. It is difficult for them to specify their own interests. They do not always correctly associate professions with the objects used at work. The statements of children are dominated by words with a superior meaning (e.g. a doctor) and not a minor one (dermatologist, orthopedist, anesthesiologist, neurologist, gastroenterologist). Many concepts are not yet known to the students. The curriculum content implemented in grades 1–3 allows students to play various roles in play, learn the importance of work in human life, recognize and develop interests, justify the need for learning, use various sources of knowledge, organize their own development and make educational and professional decisions. The stage of shaping professional orientation in grades 1–3 is a time to arouse curiosity and light a spark that will turn into a big fire in the future.

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