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Motivational and demotivational factors in the teaching profession: Perspectives of teachers considering and not considering attrition

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of the study is to examine whether there are differences between working teachers considering a career change and those who are not in terms of the motivation accompanying teachers at different stages of their careers.

Research methods: The study involved 513 Polish preschool and primary school teachers, of whom approximately 35% declared their willingness to leave the profession. The study was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire, and the data were analyzed statistically (chi-square test, Fisher's test).

Process of argumentation: The observed phenomenon of leaving the profession exacerbates the shortage of staff in educational institutions, negatively affects the quality of education, and increases the workload of other teachers. Therefore, this phenomenon should be studied in greater depth.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The findings indicate that internal and altruistic motives

are the main drivers for entering and practicing the teaching profession, regardless of career plans. Teachers considering a career change report declining motivation more often due to external and organizational factors and cite habit, fear of change, and limited job alternatives as reasons for staying. Those not considering leaving report higher job satisfaction and professional fulfillment, despite criticizing bureaucracy and frequent reforms. Younger teachers and those working in preschools are more likely to consider leaving the profession.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Limiting the outflow of teachers requires not only improving salaries but also systemic actions, such as improving working conditions, providing organizational and emotional support, and creating conditions for maintaining internal motivation and a sense of meaning in teaching work.

Introduction

The phenomenon of teachers leaving the profession has been observed for several years in many highly developed countries with democratic, market-based economies. In the 2022/23 school year, an average of 6.5% of fully qualified teachers across all levels of education resigned from their jobs in 19 OECD countries (OECD, 2025). This rate varied from country to country, ranging from around 3% (France, Greece, Ireland, Israel) to over 10% (Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania). In Poland, the rate exceeds 4%.

The data on preschool education is particularly worrying; as many as 7.3% of teachers resigned from their jobs, and this trend is on the rise. In primary schools, this rate was 5.8%, while in secondary schools it was 5.9%. Importantly, data from seven countries (Austria, Estonia, Israel, Slovakia, Sweden, Denmark and Poland) show that in five countries at least 30% of teachers who resigned had served for less than five years.

Data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS) indicate that despite the relative stability in the number of jobs, more and more teachers are deciding to change their career path or give up working in education altogether (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2024). An analysis of GUS data from 2020–2025 also shows a systematic decline in the number of children, teachers, and educational institutions

themselves (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020, 2025). The largest decline in employment in preschool education was recorded in the 2024/25 school year (11.92%). Such a significant increase in the number of teachers who resigned coincided with growing uncertainty caused by planned legislative changes allowing the employment of people without teaching qualifications.

Teacher shortages are becoming a serious problem that requires systemic solutions. In this context, it is worth considering the motivational factors that sustain and weaken the desire to work as a teacher. This motivation manifests itself across three time horizons: the past (motivation accompanying the career choice), the present (motivation accompanying daily work), and the future (motivation related to the decision to continue working in the profession).

An OECD report published in 2005 found that the primary motivation for choosing the teaching profession was the desire to teach and work with children (OECD, 2005). Intrinsic motivation, related to the joy of working with children, a sense of intellectual fulfillment, and contributing to the good of society, appears to be the dominant element in the attractiveness of a teaching career. A meta-analysis of studies conducted worldwide demonstrated the dominance of intrinsic and altruistic motivation among those beginning their teaching careers (See et al., 2022). Polish studies have yielded similar conclusions (Dróżka & Madańska-Michalak, 2016; Szczyrba-Poroszewska, 2023).

Dobkowska et al. (2024) indicate that teachers are most motivated in their daily work by contact with children and young people and the visible results of their work. According to teachers, contact with children is a source of joy, pleasure, and “positive energy”; it provides them with the opportunity to help and shape others and to experience satisfaction from work and student success. The most frequently cited demotivating factors in daily work included salary, difficulties in collaborating with parents, and the conditions and organization of work in the institution. As Hornyák (2025) points out, a lack of motivation significantly impacts teaching effectiveness, increases burnout, and leads to more frequent job losses. Teachers with low motivation are less likely to use innovative

methods, demonstrate less sensitivity to student needs, and often contribute to poorer academic performance. Low motivation limits collaboration between teachers and limits the school's ability to adapt to external changes.

The most frequently cited motives for leaving the teaching profession in the literature on the subject are a decline in the attractiveness and prestige of the profession, low salaries, excessive workload (including administrative duties), growing diversity in qualification levels, demographic pressure, and the increasing average age of teachers (Dobkowska et al., 2024; Łukasik et al., 2023). The aging of the teaching staff and the lack of effective generational replacements are deepening this crisis, and the forecasts for the coming years are not optimistic (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, 2024).

The phenomenon of leaving the profession not only exacerbates the shortage of staff in educational institutions but also negatively affects the quality of education and increases the workload of remaining teachers. Awareness of these consequences must be linked to an in-depth diagnosis of the causes, which has already been partially undertaken in studies by research teams from the University of Warsaw (Dobkowska et al., 2024) and the University of Agriculture in Krakow (Łukasik et al., 2023).

In the present research, we focus on the factors that motivate teachers to pursue or leave teaching. We want to examine whether there are differences in this regard between working teachers who are considering a career change and those who are not. The aim of this research is therefore to understand the relationship between the desire to remain in or leave the profession and the motivation that accompanies teachers at different stages of their careers.

Methodology

Research problems

The research problems were formulated in the form of three questions:

1. What are the differences, if any, between active teachers considering and not considering a career change in terms of factors motivating them to work in the teaching profession?
2. What are the differences, if any, between active teachers considering and not considering a career change in terms of factors demotivating them to work in the teaching profession?
3. Are socio-demographic variables related to teachers' declared willingness to change professions?

Study participants

The study involved 513 Polish teachers (97% women) aged 24 to 70. Most teachers in the group were aged 36–45 (33.53%), 46–55 (20.27%), and 30–35 (17.35%). Most respondents worked in preschools (59.65%), followed by grades 1–3 (27.10%) and grades 4–8 (33.14%). (The percentages do not add up to 100% as the question was multiple-choice.) Most teachers had 6–10 years of experience (20.27%), followed by 11–15 years (13.06%) and over 30 years (12.48%). Young teachers with up to 5 years of experience accounted for 29.83% of the respondents. Among the participants in the study, 33.53% were certified teachers, 24.17% were appointed teachers, 13.06% were contract teachers, and 19.88% were novice teachers. Nearly 10% of respondents had no professional advancement.

Tools

The study used a questionnaire that included questions about demographic data, such as gender, age, place of residence, and distance from home to work, as well as information related to their job, including type of institution, educational level, length of service in the profession, and degree of professional advancement. Subsequent questions concerned factors that motivate and demotivate teachers to remain in the profession. Most of them were closed questions with a prepared set of answers. Respondents were asked to indicate at least five factors in each question. This research tool was developed based on the results of research conducted by Dobkowska et al.(2024).

Statistical analyses

The comparison of qualitative variables between groups was performed using the chi-square test (with Yates' correction for 2x2 tables) or Fisher's exact test when the chi-square test assumptions regarding the so-called expected frequencies were not met. The analysis employed a significance level of 0.05; thus, all p-values below 0.05 were interpreted as indicating significant relationships. The analysis was performed using R software, version 4.5.1.

Research procedure

The study was conducted between March and June 2025. Invitations to participate were distributed through announcements in selected educational institutions and via the authors' social media. A purposive sampling strategy was used, as eligibility to participate required employment in a preschool or primary school. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Prior to taking part, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided their informed consent. The study was approved by the University Committee for Scientific Research Ethics at Ignatianum University in Krakow (No. 11/2025).

Results

1) Motivating factors in a teacher's work

One question in the questionnaire asked respondents whether they were considering leaving their profession. Based on their responses, the group was divided into two subgroups. Of the 513 teachers surveyed, 177 (34.5%) reported that they are considering leaving the teaching profession.

To answer the first research question about the motivating factors for working as a teacher, the respondents were asked to indicate why they chose the teaching profession (Table 1), what motivates them in their daily work (Table 2), and why they work in their profession (Table 3). The results presented below show the aggregate responses (513 respondents) and according to whether teachers are considering a change of profession (177 respondents) or not (336 respondents).

Table 1 shows the differences between active teachers considering and not considering a career change in terms of motives for choosing the teaching profession.

Table 1. Motives for choosing the teaching profession

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Opportunity to work with children/young people	364 (70,96%)	119 (67,23%)	245 (72,92%)	p=0,213
Interests and professional aptitudes	358 (69,79%)	116 (65,54%)	242 (72,02%)	p=0,156
Love for children	229 (44,64%)	79 (44,63%)	150 (44,64%)	p=1
Opportunity to work for the benefit of society and shape future generations	156 (30,41%)	65 (36,72%)	91 (27,08%)	p=0,031*
Job stability	108 (21,05%)	30 (16,95%)	78 (23,21%)	p=0,123
Many days off during the school year	91 (17,74%)	32 (18,08%)	59 (17,56%)	p=0,98
Work organization allowing for additional classes/work	89 (17,35%)	31 (17,51%)	58 (17,26%)	p=1
By chance	50 (9,75%)	17 (9,60%)	33 (9,82%)	p=1
Opportunity to work in various types of educational institutions	47 (9,16%)	14 (7,91%)	33 (9,82%)	p=0,581
Continuation of family traditions	46 (8,97%)	15 (8,47%)	31 (9,23%)	p=0,904
Opportunity for promotion and professional development	42 (8,19%)	16 (9,04%)	26 (7,74%)	p=0,733
Salary – stability of earnings	38 (7,41%)	8 (4,52%)	30 (8,93%)	p=0,102
Ease of finding a job	29 (5,65%)	9 (5,08%)	20 (5,95%)	p=0,839
Prestige of the profession, social authority	26 (5,07%)	13 (7,34%)	13 (3,87%)	p=0,135
Other	16 (3,12%)	6 (3,39%)	10 (2,98%)	p=1
Easy studies	15 (2,92%)	9 (5,08%)	6 (1,79%)	p=0,067
Preferences and expectations of family/relatives/friends	13 (2,53%)	5 (2,82%)	8 (2,38%)	p=0,773
Salary – level of earnings	4 (0,78%)	0 (0,00%)	4 (1,19%)	p=0,304

Note: Teachers could select multiple answers; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

p – chi-square test or Fisher's exact test.

* statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

The three most important motivations for taking up a teaching profession are the opportunity to work with children and young people (70.96%), professional interests and aptitudes (69.79%), and a love for children (44.64%). A significant difference between the groups concerns the motive of working for the benefit of society and shaping future generations, which is expressed more often by teachers considering leaving the profession.

Table 2 shows the differences between active teachers considering and not considering a career change in terms of factors motivating them to work on a daily basis.

Table 2. Factors motivating teachers to work in their profession on a daily basis

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Contact with children/young people	394 (76,80%)	122 (68,93%)	272 (80,95%)	p=0,003*
Work effects	241 (46,98%)	74 (41,81%)	167 (49,70%)	p=0,107
Work atmosphere	224 (43,66%)	68 (38,42%)	156 (46,43%)	p=0,1
Working hours	172 (33,53%)	60 (33,90%)	112 (33,33%)	p=0,976
Cooperation with teachers	84 (16,37%)	27 (15,25%)	57 (16,96%)	p=0,71
Working conditions	72 (14,04%)	17 (9,60%)	55 (16,37%)	p=0,05*
Opportunities for professional development	67 (13,06%)	19 (10,73%)	48 (14,29%)	p=0,319
Cooperation with the principal	63 (12,28%)	17 (9,60%)	46 (13,69%)	p=0,231
Salary	58 (11,31%)	23 (12,99%)	35 (10,42%)	p=0,466
Organization of work at school/kindergarten	44 (8,58%)	12 (6,78%)	32 (9,52%)	p=0,374
School/kindergarten management	35 (6,82%)	11 (6,21%)	24 (7,14%)	p=0,832
Cooperation with parents	33 (6,43%)	10 (5,65%)	23 (6,85%)	p=0,737
Other	23 (4,48%)	9 (5,08%)	14 (4,17%)	p=0,8

Note: Teachers could select multiple answers; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

p – chi-square test or Fisher's exact test.

* statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

Teachers' daily motivation is based primarily on contact with children and young people (76.80%), a sense of the effects of their work (46.98%), and a positive atmosphere in the workplace (43.66%). For 33.53% of respondents, working hours are also important. Teachers who are not considering leaving the profession more often cited contact with children/young people and a positive assessment of working conditions as motivating factors.

Table 3 shows the differences between active teachers considering and not considering a career change in terms of general reasons for working as a teacher.

Table 3. Reasons for working as a teacher

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Interests and professional aptitudes	319 (62,18%)	104 (58,76%)	215 (63,99%)	p=0,287
Opportunity to work with children/young people	292 (56,92%)	91 (51,41%)	201 (59,82%)	p=0,083
Good atmosphere at work	175 (34,11%)	55 (31,07%)	120 (35,71%)	p=0,339
Job stability	153 (29,82%)	55 (31,07%)	98 (29,17%)	p=0,728
Satisfaction with work and professional achievements	141 (27,49%)	26 (14,69%)	115 (34,23%)	p<0,001*
Opportunity to work for the benefit of society and shape future generations	121 (23,59%)	42 (23,73%)	79 (23,51%)	p=1
Work organization allowing for additional activities/work	111 (21,64%)	39 (22,03%)	72 (21,43%)	p=0,964
Habit	103 (20,08%)	48 (27,12%)	55 (16,37%)	p=0,006*
Many days off during the school year	100 (19,49%)	29 (16,38%)	71 (21,13%)	p=0,241
Salary – stability of earnings	79 (15,40%)	24 (13,56%)	55 (16,37%)	p=0,478
Fear of changing job	74 (14,42%)	51 (28,81%)	23 (6,85%)	p<0,001*
Difficulties in finding a new job in another profession	48 (9,36%)	24 (13,56%)	24 (7,14%)	p=0,027*
Feeling of influence on the functioning of the school/kindergarten	40 (7,80%)	11 (6,21%)	29 (8,63%)	p=0,425
Cooperation in the school team	40 (7,80%)	9 (5,08%)	31 (9,23%)	p=0,136
Opportunity to work in different types of educational institutions	31 (6,04%)	8 (4,52%)	23 (6,85%)	p=0,392

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Ease of finding a job	29 (5,65%)	14 (7,91%)	15 (4,46%)	p=0,16
Feeling appreciated by the principal	29 (5,65%)	8 (4,52%)	21 (6,25%)	p=0,545
Continuing family traditions	21 (4,09%)	3 (1,69%)	18 (5,36%)	p=0,079
Opportunity to receive support and training at school and other institutions	16 (3,12%)	4 (2,26%)	12 (3,57%)	p=0,586
Salary – level of earnings	14 (2,73%)	6 (3,39%)	8 (2,38%)	p=0,572
Opportunity for promotion and professional development	10 (1,95%)	3 (1,69%)	7 (2,08%)	p=1
Other	6 (1,17%)	0 (0,00%)	6 (1,79%)	p=0,098
Prestige of the profession, social authority	5 (0,97%)	3 (1,69%)	2 (0,60%)	p=0,346

Note: Teachers could select multiple answers; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

p – chi-square test or Fisher's exact test.

* statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

The dominant reasons why respondents remain in the teaching profession are professional interests and aptitudes (62.18%), the opportunity to work with children and young people (56.92%), and a positive working atmosphere (34.11%). Teachers considering a career change were significantly more likely to cite habit, fear of changing jobs, and difficulties in finding a new job in another profession as reasons for remaining in the profession. Teachers who were not considering a change were more likely to declare satisfaction with their work and professional achievements.

2) Demotivating factors

In order to identify the factors that discourage teachers from remaining in the profession, respondents answered two questions. The first question focused on the factors that discourage them from their daily work (Table 4), while the second asked them to indicate the five main reasons why teachers leave the profession (Table 5).

Table 4. Factors discouraging teachers from working in their profession on a daily basis

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Bureaucracy	263 (51,27%)	75 (42,37%)	188 (55,95%)	p=0,005*
Taking on too much responsibility	251 (48,93%)	112 (63,28%)	139 (41,37%)	p<0,001*
Difficulties in cooperating with parents	244 (47,56%)	90 (50,85%)	154 (45,83%)	p=0,323
Constant changes related to education reform	228 (44,44%)	65 (36,72%)	163 (48,51%)	p=0,014*
Physical fatigue	222 (43,27%)	86 (48,59%)	136 (40,48%)	p=0,095
Salary	222 (43,27%)	97 (54,80%)	125 (37,20%)	p<0,001*
Working conditions	107 (20,86%)	54 (30,51%)	53 (15,77%)	p<0,001*
Organization of work at school/preschool	92 (17,93%)	45 (25,42%)	47 (13,99%)	p=0,002*
Work atmosphere	72 (14,04%)	32 (18,08%)	40 (11,90%)	p=0,075
Difficulties in cooperating with the principal	62 (12,09%)	25 (14,12%)	37 (11,01%)	p=0,376
Little or no results from work	52 (10,14%)	22 (12,43%)	30 (8,93%)	p=0,273
Difficulties in cooperating with other teachers	46 (8,97%)	20 (11,30%)	26 (7,74%)	p=0,238
School/preschool management	40 (7,80%)	20 (11,30%)	20 (5,95%)	p=0,048*
Other	28 (5,46%)	10 (5,65%)	18 (5,36%)	p=1
Limited opportunities for professional development	20 (3,90%)	7 (3,95%)	13 (3,87%)	p=1
Working hours	15 (2,92%)	7 (3,95%)	8 (2,38%)	p=0,465
Contact with children/young people	6 (1,17%)	4 (2,26%)	2 (0,60%)	p=0,189

Note: Teachers could select multiple answers; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

p – chi-square test or Fisher’s exact test.

* statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

Factors that discourage people from working in their profession on a daily basis include bureaucracy (51.27%), taking on too much responsibility (48.93%), and difficulties in cooperating with parents (47.56%). Other significant reasons include constant changes related to education reform, salary, and physical fatigue.

There are many differences between the groups in terms of demotivating factors. Bureaucracy and constant changes related to education reform are more likely to discourage teachers who are not considering changing professions. In contrast, those considering leaving the profession more often point to excessive responsibility, problems with work organization, working conditions, salary, and school management as significant sources of dissatisfaction.

Table 5. Reasons for teachers leaving the profession

	Total (n=513)	Considering a career change (n=177)	Not considering a career change (n=336)	p
Salary	370 (72,12%)	129 (72,88%)	241 (71,73%)	p=0,862
Difficulties in cooperating with parents	350 (68,23%)	124 (70,06%)	226 (67,26%)	p=0,585
Increasing disciplinary problems	295 (57,50%)	107 (60,45%)	188 (55,95%)	p=0,376
The education system	224 (43,66%)	77 (43,50%)	147 (43,75%)	p=1
Working conditions	221 (43,08%)	86 (48,59%)	135 (40,18%)	p=0,083
Bureaucracy	193 (37,62%)	61 (34,46%)	132 (39,29%)	p=0,329
Lack of support in working with children with special needs	166 (32,36%)	72 (40,68%)	94 (27,98%)	p=0,005*
Organization of work in preschool/school	141 (27,49%)	63 (35,59%)	78 (23,21%)	p=0,004*
Difficulties in cooperating with the management	87 (16,96%)	33 (18,64%)	54 (16,07%)	p=0,539
Current reform	69 (13,45%)	22 (12,43%)	47 (13,99%)	p=0,722
Difficulties in cooperating with other teachers	57 (11,11%)	24 (13,56%)	33 (9,82%)	p=0,257
Political situation	35 (6,82%)	11 (6,21%)	24 (7,14%)	p=0,832
Other	24 (4,68%)	8 (4,52%)	16 (4,76%)	p=1
Lack of support in working with children with migration experience	11 (2,14%)	4 (2,26%)	7 (2,08%)	p=1

Note: Teachers could select multiple answers; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

p – chi-square test or Fisher's exact test.

* statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

The main reasons given by teachers for considering leaving the profession were low salary (72.12%), difficulties in cooperating with parents (68.23%), and increasing disciplinary problems (57.50%). The education system, working conditions, and bureaucracy are also frequently cited as reasons for leaving the profession. Lack of support in working with children with special needs and problems related to the organization of work in preschool or school were mentioned more often by teachers considering a career change.

3) Demographic and social variables differentiating the respondents' decisions to change profession

Of the demographic variables studied, only age distinguishes between the groups ($p < 0.001^*$): younger teachers were more likely to consider leaving the profession than older ones. Several social variables are also related to the desire to change profession: educational level (preschool teachers were more likely to consider leaving the profession than primary school teachers, $p = 0.024^*$), length of service in the profession (teachers with shorter service consider leaving the profession more often than teachers with longer service, $p < 0.001^*$), and degree of professional advancement (contract and appointed teachers are more likely to consider a change than certified teachers, $p < 0.001^*$).

Conclusions

This research aimed to examine whether there are differences between active teachers considering a change of profession and those who are not in terms of motivation accompanying teachers at different stages of their careers. All the teachers we surveyed chose this career path and find daily motivation to work in this profession thanks to the sense of purpose they derive from working with children and young people and the conviction that they are fulfilling their own interests and professional aptitudes. This result is confirmed by numerous studies conducted worldwide (Fray & Gore, 2018), including in Poland (Dobkowska et al., 2024). The decision to enter

the teaching profession is therefore invariably linked mainly to internal, often altruistic motivations. From the perspective of human resource management in education, this means that activities that support the development of personal competences and maintain a positive atmosphere in the workplace can significantly influence the motivation and retention of teachers.

Are there any differences in this regard between teachers considering a career change and those who are not? The first difference is related to the motives for choosing this profession, which were recognized retrospectively. The group of teachers who consider a career change was significantly more likely to believe that the teaching profession involves working for the benefit of society and shaping future generations. Recalling the beginnings of scientific reflection on burnout, Schaufeli notes that its basic component is “frustrated idealism” (2017).

Another difference is the stronger role of habit, fear of job change, and difficulties in finding alternative employment among those considering a career change, confirming earlier findings (Dobkowska et al., 2024). This group more often experiences shifts in motivation over time – from internal to external – which may be linked to burnout. As Maslach notes (cited in Mańkowska, 2018), burnout stems primarily from organizational conditions rather than the nature of the work itself, allowing teachers to value their profession while experiencing stress and fatigue.

This is confirmed by the differences in the factors that reduce motivation to work in the profession by teachers considering a career change and those who are not. The first group points to a significantly greater number of external/organizational factors that reduce motivation to work in the profession than the second group (problems with work organization, working conditions, school management, etc.). However, it is worth noting that issues such as low salaries and bureaucracy are important factors for both groups. Similar results were obtained by Dobkowska et al. (2024), and similar complaints are also reported by teachers in other countries (Steiner et al. 2025).

What is interesting, however, is the lack of difference between teachers who are thinking about leaving the profession and those who are not in areas related to cooperation with parents and educational problems. Both groups assess these phenomena similarly: as highly demotivating.

The demotivating factors that were cited more frequently by teachers considering a career change were a lack of support in working with children with special needs and organizational difficulties. These results may indicate an overload of responsibilities and insufficient institutional preparation for working in a diverse educational environment. On the other hand, teachers who declared their willingness to remain in the profession more often pointed to institutional factors such as bureaucracy and constant changes resulting from education reforms. This may suggest that they feel frustrated with systemic imperfections. For teachers considering leaving, working conditions, school management, and salary were also significant demotivators, which is consistent with the broader context of research on job satisfaction in education (Ingersoll, 2001).

These differences may indicate a need for more individualized support for teachers, both emotionally and structurally. Research shows that factors such as work overload, lack of a sense of effectiveness, and the structure of school goals have a significant impact on teachers' motivation to remain in or leave the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Analyses also show that in many countries, up to 25% of novice teachers leave the profession within the first 3–5 years (Łukasik et al., 2023), with national studies indicating a similarly worrying situation in Poland (Dobkowska et al., 2024). Nearly half of young teachers declared that they are considering a career change, while one-third of all respondents are contemplating leaving teaching. These tendencies are significantly stronger among younger teachers, which can be explained by human capital theory: lower accumulated investment in the profession makes early-career teachers more likely to leave, whereas each additional year of work reduces this likelihood (Łukasik et al., 2023).

Such declarations may reflect a broader generational trend. Data indicate that 31% of Generation Z plan to change employers within two years, compared to 17% of Millennials (Deloitte, 2025). This tendency is interpreted as a conscious strategy aimed at achieving greater stability, work–life balance, and development, leading young people to challenge traditional career models.

We are aware that the method of sample selection and the number of respondents make it impossible to draw clear conclusions about the entire

population of teachers in Poland. Nevertheless, the results reveal certain general trends worth considering in future analyses of the phenomenon of leaving the teaching profession.

Pedagogical implications

By analyzing the responses of the study participants, it is possible to identify risk factors and factors that increase the likelihood of remaining in the teaching profession. Protective factors include job satisfaction and a positive assessment of working conditions and the atmosphere at work. Risk factors, on the other hand, include the accumulation of negative experiences related to organizational factors and the clash between teachers' initially idealistic beliefs and the realities of school life.

In view of the changing attitudes toward professional careers among young people, including teachers, it would be advisable to strengthen them in the areas they identify as priorities in order to retain them in the profession. These include financial benefits and improved working conditions, providing them with a sense of security, support, and stability.

Salary increases or organizational changes (...), which are relatively easy to implement, will certainly have a positive effect, but they will not provide sufficient motivation to stem the outflow of teachers from the profession, nor will they encourage young people to choose teacher training. (Dobkowska et al., 2024, p. 59)

Therefore, it also seems important to create opportunities for teachers to experience a sense of meaning in their work and to maintain internal motivation to perform it.

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