



You have downloaded a document from
RE-BUŚ
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice

Title: Image of an Early School Education Teacher in the Eyes of the Third Grade Pupils – Research Report

Author: Barbara Grabowska, Mirosława Parlak

Citation style: Grabowska Barbara, Parlak Mirosława. (2018). Image of an Early School Education Teacher in the Eyes of the Third Grade Pupils – Research Report. “Kultura i Edukacja” (No 4 (2018), s. 136-146), doi 10.15804/kie.2018.04.08



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Bez utworów zależnych Polska - Licencja ta zezwala na rozpowszechnianie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych oraz pod warunkiem zachowania go w oryginalnej postaci (nie tworzenia utworów zależnych).



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

BARBARA GRABOWSKA¹
MIROŚŁAWA PARLAK²

Image of an Early School Education Teacher in the Eyes of the Third Grade Pupils – Research Report

ABSTRACT

The article presents findings on the image of a teacher in primary school described by the 3rd grade pupils. The research analysis clearly indicates that according to the children, in early education the image of a teacher is positive. The majority of the test children group indicate favourable features, like kindness, calm, pleasant behaviour, goodness, justice, wisdom, intelligence. First of all, the children recognize the advantages of a teacher, although smart and sensible children – the ones that the 3rd grade pupils definitely are – can also notice negative features, disadvantages, for instance: loudness, nervousness, injustice. The children can recognize personal, didactic, and educational features, as well as intellectual and external ones. Many of the feature groups mentioned above are listed. The pupils declare that the issue which was the core of the research is very important for them.

Keywords:

teacher of early school education, pupils of early years of primary school, teacher's features

¹ Department of General Pedagogy and Research Methodology, Faculty of Ethnology and Education, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.

E-MAIL: barbara.grabowsk@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0003-2558-0294

² Department of Early Education, Institute of School Education, The Faculty of Education and Arts, Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland.

E-MAIL: miroszlawa.parlak@ujk.edu.pl ORCID: 0000-0002-5177-6728

INTRODUCTION

Teachers, through their duties, considerably influence their pupils. They have regular, daily contact with them, and this is the reason for their relations to be significant, direct, especially since they pertain to both cognitive and social spheres. The problem of the greatest meaning for organizing the school educational process is contact between a teacher and a pupil with other students in attendance or in the background. The teacher and the pupils observe each other, they communicate, and constantly interact. Moreover, it is important that the teacher meets not only a single student in situations of isolation, but more often, in the presence of the whole group. The interaction's purpose is to cause certain pedagogical and educational effects.

A teacher is a significant person, their profile has a significant influence on a pupil, therefore certain ethical assets are expected from them. As Frykowski said, "a teacher should not only be a person who mastered their field of expertise and possessed great pedagogical and psychological knowledge, but also someone with broadly developed personality and deeply humanistic system of values. This way, teacher's moral responsibility for using all the possibilities for the desired influence on the student includes the responsibility for their own moral level, for personal spiritual profile" (Frykowski, 1993, pp. 149–150).

Moral features take special meaning in the conditions of new educational philosophy. They are considered to be factors building teacher's authority. According to Henryka Kwiatkowska (1991), teacher's responsibility is to fulfil the needs and expectations of existential nature. Moreover, there are areas of teacher's activities, whose effects depend on moral attitude. It should be noted as well that evaluation of teacher's work is not quantifiable, therefore the moral responsibility in this profession cannot be overestimated.

The question of teachers' competences and of shaping them is given a priority in pedagogy, therefore the interest in communicational competences is understandable, as they have undisputable meaning for the quality of relations between the parties in education.

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATION

The problem of the quality of communication on the teacher-student and student-teacher level is underestimated in the modern school, while it is significant in relations between those parties. Mutual relations affect the image of an adult,

particularly in the eyes of a very young pupil. Early years of schooling is the time of shaping personality of a young person, hence the great influence of attitude of adults on the behaviour of children in mutual relations.

Adults do not always recognise children as partners in mutual interactions, which is disadvantageous from the point of view of a child's individual needs, it is also not favourable for family upbringing, nor for integration within a peer's group, which is a school class. Good relations enhance conviction of adults that knowledge which children operate is interesting and beautiful, noteworthy as well is child's empathy, a wonderful ability of small children to sympathise with others' state of mind (Wilgocka-Okoń, 1994).

Attention to the essence of relations of a teacher and a child is paid by Eugenia Rostańska: "The question about relations of a child with an adult is mainly about what is perceived by the child. For the child, these are personal experiences, individual ones, and like with this type of relations – impossible to be considered as non-individual. They can be presented only in the form of description. It is an experience that is unique in its form, time, and dynamics" (Rostańska, 2012, p. 17).

In their contacts with adults, children may experience interpersonal communication of one-sided, two-sided, and relational character. One-sidedness is a flow of communication restricted to passing a thought without a comment, with the assumption that what is said by the message giver – the adult – has an executive power and is to be done immediately. Stefan Frydrychowicz gives as an example for this type of relation the situation of giving a child an order, without waiting for a reaction or a comment (Frydrychowicz, 2005). In the two-sided communication, alternating sending and receiving comments by sender and receiver takes place together with reactions on both sides – feedback is received. It is not, however, the most favourable form for correct relations, as the cause of recipient's reaction might be unclear, whether the reaction is adequate to the stimulus that was immediately prior to it, or it is relevant to some previous stimuli. The most favourable for mutual relations is relational communication. It considers subjectivity, gives real possibility for exchanging meanings between sender and receiver of a message, and offers support to the other person and cognitive and emotional openness (Frydrychowicz, 2005).

In perceiving the teacher by the students, the personality of the teacher is also important. An extensive research on this topic was conducted by Czesław Banach, who lists a set of personality characteristics of a teacher-mentor. According to the Author, the most desired personal characteristics and attitudes are: "knowledge and professional training, fairness and objectivity, partner and honest attitude

towards youth, discipline, dutifulness and consistency, diligence and scrupulousness, tolerance” (Banach, 2001a, p. 148). Among the negative characteristics, the Author lists: “lack of knowledge and incompetence, unfairness and lack of objectivity, lack of understanding and time for students, lack of discipline and responsibility, conflictuality and malice, lack of consistency in teacher’s doings, lack of tolerance and personal culture” (Banach, 2001a, p. 149). Besides the professional and socio-moral qualifications, Czesław Banach distinguished also physical and health qualifications (characteristics) (2001b).

It is undeniable that a teacher should be aware of how their characteristics are perceived by their students. It is one of the basic conditions for successful upbringing and educating.

FACTORS DIFFERENTIATING WAYS OF PERCEIVING A TEACHER BY STUDENTS

A teacher’s image in students’ eyes is influenced by variety of factors. Of particularly great importance is authority. In pedagogical, psychological, and sociological literature, the idea of teacher’s authority is explained in different ways. The definitions vary in content and extent, depending on placing them in a context of phenomenon, characteristic, or relation (Jazukiewicz, 2003). In the contemporary pedagogy, authority is understood as respect, trust, and esteem for the teacher as a scientific expert, an advisor, a guide during difficulties, and a source of pedagogical influence. The situation of perceiving the teacher as a model of personality that students can identify with is described as well. Teacher’s authority is indicated to be dependent on the abilities of transforming relations with a student in direction of autonomy in the atmosphere of dialogue and common search (Jazukiewicz, 2003).

Authority – in psychological sense – is understood as “social respect and esteem, given to a person, social group, or institution. A source for authority can be skills and knowledge, personal characteristics, methods of operating, acting in accordance to universally esteemed values, as well as social status or position” (Stach, 1998, p. 27). According to the above description, three basic kinds of authority can be distinguished: substantive, moral, and formal. Substantive authority is linked with high social evaluation of knowledge or skills pertaining specific field of science, and also life wisdom pertaining many aspects of individual and social life (Stach, 1998). Moral authority is attributed to people or institutions, whose actions are in accordance with generally esteemed in the given society ethical val-

ues. Formal authority is the result of entrusting a social function. In order to allow those people to be effective, it would be preferable for their attitude to combine all three kinds of authority. A person with authority may function socially as a role model. This way of authority's functioning is particularly important in the process of upbringing and educating children and youth (Stach, 1998). It is undeniable that out of concern for the high quality of education, teachers should care about authority in all aspects, as they are models of personality for their students, which is, however, not always realised by them.

The way a contemporary teacher is perceived is decided by many factors, which can be divided into internal and external. The internal ones are: care about one's health and appearance, professional qualifications, sense of teacher success, vulnerability to stress and neuroses, level of contentment with occupation, sensible use of free time, self-knowledge and self-control, shaping personality, family problems. External factors are: the country's political situation, educational system, working conditions, financial conditions, lack of time for sufficient forms of rest (Aleksander, Panek, & Topa, 1999).

A teacher should be aware of the influence of those factors on the way they are perceived by important people in their surroundings, which means mainly students and their parents. They may significantly enhance the meaning of the desired factors, or lessen the influence of those unfavourable.

IMAGE OF AN EARLY EDUCATION TEACHER IN THE EYES OF THE 3RD GRADE STUDENTS – RESEARCH RESULTS

Relations between parties in education are among things being the evidence for the quality of contemporary schooling. It is particularly important in the case of a teacher's role in early education, as the subject of actions is a child of yet underdeveloped personality, who is sensitive to all actions of adults coming from their closest surroundings. This awareness should accompany the teacher at every step of professional development. According to Magdalena Grochowalska, "[...] becoming a teacher, taking up and fulfilling the role of a teacher, is a difficult process versatily conditioned, and most of all – long-lasting, non-identical with getting a diploma formally stating professional qualifications. It is a dynamic process, which occurs not only while gaining scientific knowledge, perfecting skills in practice, and developing personal qualities in pedagogical experience. It pertains as well, and maybe mainly, educating one's self, one's identity and the perspective of perceiving and interpreting the world" (Grochowalska, 2014, p. 28).

Because of the timelessness of the problem of shaping personal qualities of a teacher, it is worth asking questions about how students perceive them.

The theoretical reflections allowed to formulate methodological assumptions, including research questions:

- Which characteristics of a teacher are perceived by students as the most important ones?
- Which characteristics and attitudes of a teacher are preferable by the questioned students?
- How do students perceive the personal, intellectual, didactic (praxeologically-pedagogical), educational, external qualities (features)?

The research used projectional technique, as well as estimated scale of socio-metric techniques, and 80 students of the 3rd grade primary school took part in it.

The research results show that the students finishing the early school education level are sharp-witted observers and they notice variety of characteristics of their teacher. The results were organised by categories suggested by Czesław Banach (Chart 1). The greatest meaning is given by student to personal characteristics, which is over a half of all the features mentioned by them. Next groups in order of frequency are educational and didactic features. The last of the mentioned groups is a discriminant of the didactic competences, which are in fact still perceived by the surveyed to no small extent, despite the fact that it was students of early education classes who were surveyed. It would seem that the youngest students do not pay attention to the above aspects of a teacher's profession. For children, also important are educational features. Next, the students mentioned intellectual features, evaluation of which is not easy for them. The last place was taken by the external features – those which would seem important in early education. The surveyed, however, do not focus on them, contrary to the popular belief (Chart 1).

Among personal features of a teacher listed by the 3rd grade students, there are both positive and negative features, however, there are definitely more of the former (Chart 2).

Particularly important for children is that the teacher is “*nice*” and “*pleasant*”, and “*cool*” and “*cheerful*”. These are the characteristics particularly desired in social contacts, and therefore, important and noticed by children as well. Among the negatives, the students name mostly blatancy and rudeness, which bother children in relations with the teacher, which attests negatively about the teacher's professional competences.

To no small amount, students pay attention to teacher's educational features, which are placed as second important in the listed characteristics (Chart 1). Among educational features, the most important for children is teaching the right behav-

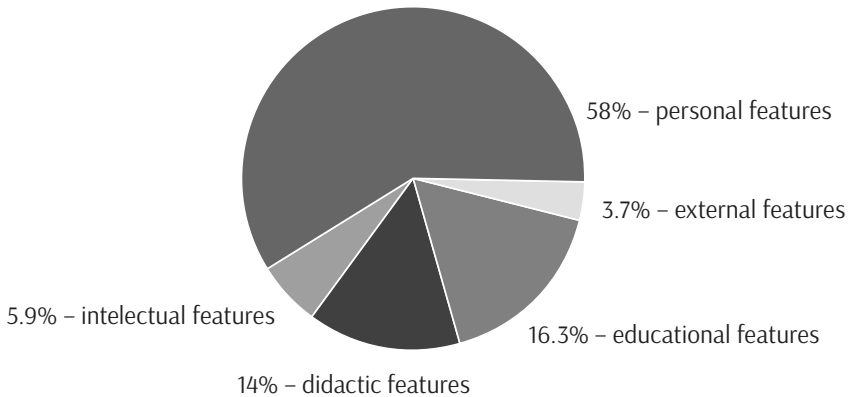


Chart 1. Students' opinion on teachers' characteristics

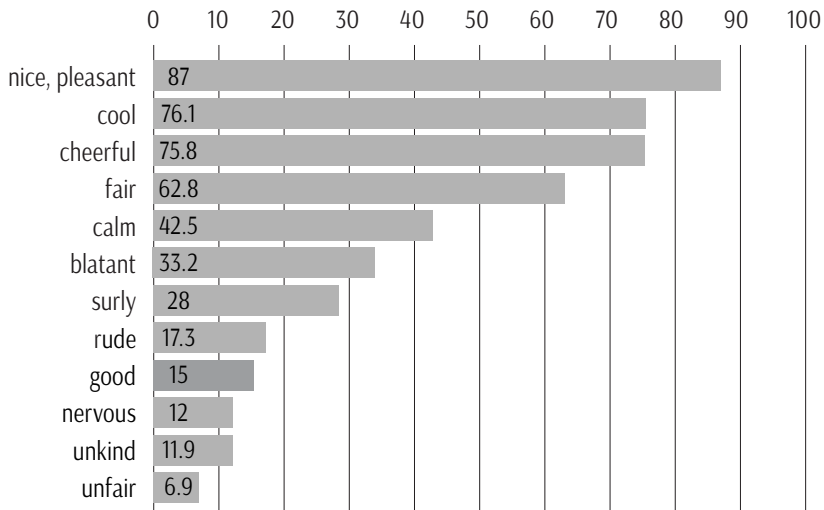


Chart 2. Personal features of a teacher, perceived by the surveyed students

our and fairness (Chart 2), and so, as in the case of personal characteristics, at the front, there are positive features; there are much fewer negative ones. Among those at the other end, there are the features connected to the personal ones but perceived by the surveyed in different situations – having pedagogical reference.

In the group of pedagogical features, there is a positive one, but having a hidden meaning – children notice that „*pani jest dobra, bo nie bije*” [The lady

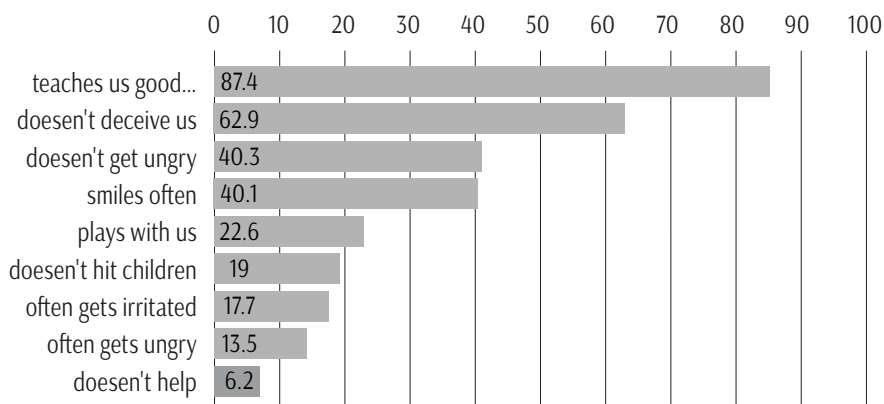


Chart 3. Teacher's pedagogical features in opinions of the surveyed children

is nice because she doesn't hit]). This kind of response suggests that students have already been in the situation of experiencing or witnessing some teacher's violent behaviour. This kind of children's statements are highly disturbing and indicate the need for further investigation into the problem of rewards and punishments given by a teacher.

Next group, considering frequency of choices made by the students, pertains didactical features (Chart 4).

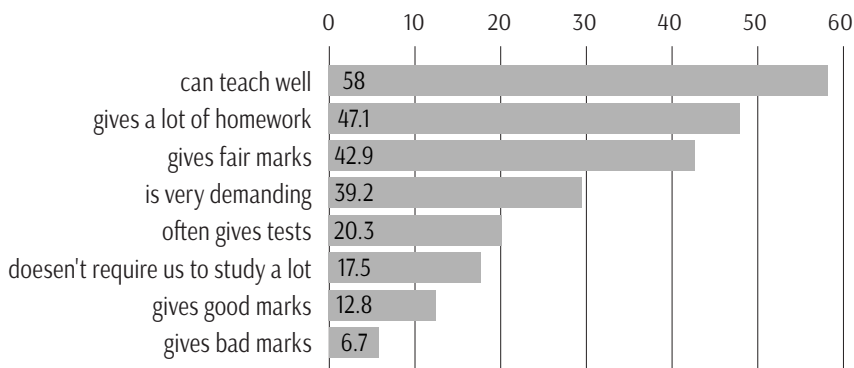


Chart 4. Teachers' didactical features in children's answers

In this group, the most important for the children was that the teacher “*can teach well*”, “*gives a lot of homework*”, “*gives fair marks*”. There were also conflicting answers, as for example, some children claimed that the teacher “*is very demanding*”, and some said that she “*doesn't require us to study a lot*”; some stated

that she “*gives good marks*” and “*gives bad marks*”. According to the Authors, children’s marks depend on the individual situation of each student. Definitely further study should be done with the usage of qualitative methods, which will allow to present the context of the given opinions and their conditioning.

The next group of features that students pay attention to are intellectual features (Chart 5). Among the teacher’s qualities listed by the students, they are a small and not very diverse group, because of the difficulty in judgement of this aspect by children of early schooling age. In the children’s statements, there were mainly two features: wisdom and intelligence. It is interesting that children separate them, which is an important reason for continuing the research with the usage of qualitative methods. The teacher – according to a big number of children – “*knows everything*” and is “*talented*”. However, the opinions about knowledge and skills that the teacher lacks but which are possessed by children, are interesting, and most probably they concern modern technologies, which children tend to be more familiar with than adults. This is another idea requiring further research.

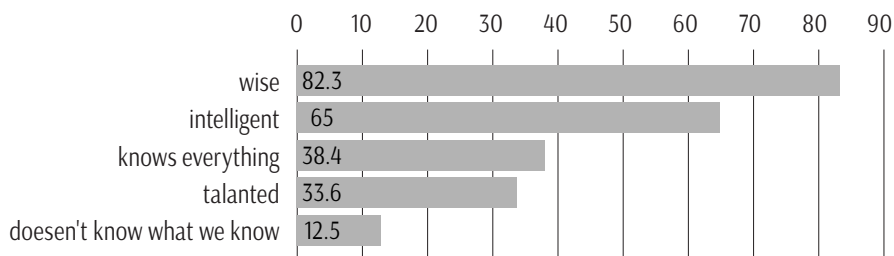


Chart 5. Intellectual characteristics of teachers’ in students’ responses

The last group – according to the frequency of indications – presents the external features (appearance) of the teacher (Chart 6).

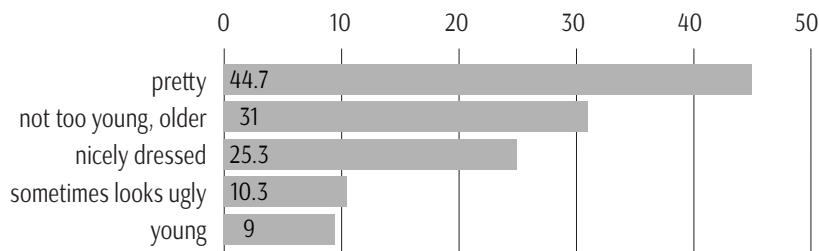


Chart 6. External features (appearance) of teachers considered by students

The considered features are not as important for the children finishing the early schooling stage as the adults would think. Students' opinions vary. The most important feature is that the teacher is "pretty", but also "not too young, older". It appears more often that the teacher is "nicely dressed" and less often that "sometimes looks ugly". Children's opinions on teacher's looks are uncritical, though it is not the external features that are most important to them.

CONCLUSION

Teacher's profile is a complex set of personal characteristics, where in the first place we should put the outgoing feature, which presents itself in the form of serenity and pedagogical optimism, and on the other hand, in friendly interest in each student and their problems. A positive relation of teacher-student is also important, as it is one of the particularly important factors motivating children to effective learning at early schooling level. As Tadeusz Lewowicki notices, education is to serve multi-sided development of personality, creating conditions for self-realisation, it is also supposed to help in understanding the world, in shaping the surrounding reality (2007, p. 98).

Summing up the results of the conducted research, it can be concluded that the image of a teacher of early schooling education, in the opinion of the surveyed students, is positive. In the vast majority of choices, the positive ones take leading positions. Children notice mainly the positive features of the teacher, however, as the third grade students are keen and aware observers, they do not miss the negatives. Children notice personal, educational, and didactic characteristics, as well as intellectual and external ones. Many various features from the above groups are listed.

It is undeniable that the presented results of the research do not exhaust the questions, as in the process of discussing the results, next questions arose. They bring further problems and ideas that require addressing with further study, including qualitative research.

References

- Aleksander, A., Panek, A., & Topa, D. (1999). Drogi i bezdroża, czyli słów kilka o autorytecie i kondycji nauczyciela w okresie przemian. *Edukacja Dorosłych*, 1, pp. 57–68.
- Banach, Cz. (2001a). *Polska szkoła i system edukacji – przemiany i perspektywy*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

- Banach, Cz. (2001b). Kierunki i metody modernizacji edukacji nauczycielskiej. *Kultura i Edukacja*, 1, pp. 50–61.
- Frydrychowicz, F. (2005). Sposoby i wymiary komunikowania interpersonalnego a rozwój człowieka. *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, 10(3), pp. 93–100.
- Frykowski, E. (1993). Etyka a rozum pedagogiczny – problemy moralne profesji nauczycielskiej. In: S. Sarnowski (Ed.), *Krytyka rozumu pedagogicznego* (pp. 73–83). Bydgoszcz: WSP.
- Grochowalska, M. (2014). Dylematy nowicjusza. Konteksty stawania się nauczycielem edukacji przedszkolnej. *Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce*, 1, pp. 27–40.
- Jazukiewicz, I. (2003). *Autorytet nauczyciela*. In: T. Pilch (Ed.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*. Vol. 1, A–F (pp. 254–260). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie “Żak”.
- Kwiatkowska, H. (1991). Przemiany funkcji zawodowych nauczyciela. In: J. Nowak (Ed.), *Przemiany zawodu nauczycielskiego*. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Wydawnictwo PAN.
- Lewowicki, T. (2007). *Problemy kształcenia i pracy nauczycieli*. Warszawa–Radom: Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy.
- Rostańska, E. (2012). Stałe w zmianach – relacje dziecka i dorosłego we wczesnej edukacji. In: I. Adamek & B. Pawlak (Eds.), *Doświadczenie poznawania świata przez dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym* (pp. 13–29). Kraków: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie, Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach, Wydawnictwo “Libron”.
- Stach, R. (1998). Autorytet i przywództwo. In: W. Szewczuk (Ed.), *Encyklopedia psychologii* (pp. 27–30). Warszawa: Fundacja Innowacja.
- Wilgocka-Okoń, B. (1994). Przesłanki pedagogiczne jakości życia w przedszkolu. In: *Jakość życia dziecka. Relacje pomiędzy dzieckiem, nauczycielem, rodzicami i szerszym środowiskiem społecznym. Materiały z Europejskiego Regionalnego Seminarium Światowej Organizacji Wychowania Przedszkolnego OMEP*. Warszawa, 13–15 maja 1993 (pp. 9–20). Warszawa: Polski Komitet Wychowania Przedszkolnego OMEP, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci.