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Complexness and Integrity of the Faculty of Education

The Faculty of Education at the University of Prešov is a unique institution in that its profile is exclusively connected with pre-school, primary and special education. For decades, such a unique profile has provided the researching, outlining, striving and confirming of new trends in educating the youngest and the most vulnerable. The new and innovative trends fostered by the Faculty of Education have for a long time been connected with research teams of the Department of Communicative and Literary Education and the Department of Children's Language and Culture.

The activity of the research team members is focused on the issues of the efficient methodology of the Slovak language in primary education, and at designing a complex and interactive textbook for tertiary education. The effort succeeded, following the excellent completion of two grant scheme projects which aimed, in the first case, at exploring the possibilities of developing literary-communicative and subject specific competences of prospective teachers in pre-school and elementary stages through electronic education (2006–2009) and, in the second case, at integrated didactics (curriculum and instruction) of the Slovak Language and Literature for primary education (2009–2011).

The research team was led by Assoc Prof. Ľ. Liptáková, and drew from multiple resources in working on their innovative conception. On the one hand, there were urgent demands of pedagogical practice as the new school reform brought a request for publications that would be instrumental in teacher training within the reformed educational conception. The national curriculum for primary schools, on the other hand, similarly brought a need to develop subject specific and didactical competences

of future teachers in their teaching of the Slovak Language and Literature. When working on the project of integrated didactics, the research team also followed up on their previous lingual-didactic and literary-didactic research, as well as on their own experiences in preparing prospective primary school teachers, which has a complex and integrated character.

The main research outcome was the publication of an already successful textbook for teacher trainees *Integrovaná didaktika slovenského jazyka a literatúry pre primárne vzdelávanie* [*Integrated Didactics of the Slovak Language and Literature for Primary Education*] (2011). The book is the product of several years of incubation, joint creative effort, pedagogical work and research in the field of the Slovak Language and Literature for primary education. It is a thought-out and coherent conception presenting the integration of linguistic, literary and communicative-productive elements in educating pupils at the elementary stage of schooling. The textbook applies an interactive approach combining printed passages with online webpage support (www.indi.pf.unipo.sk). The webpage contains interactive and multimedia applications with a hyperlink connection to other important resources. Multimedia files offer concrete methodological solutions to integrated teaching units.

New trends in education are also reflected in some other related activities of the Faculty of Education. One of the most important events held in recent times was an international scientific conference organised at the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the University of Prešov. The Faculty of Education, as one of the founding faculties of the University of Prešov, organised the international scientific conference under the heading **Complexness and Integrity in Pre-school, Primary and Special Education** which was held on 20th–21st September 2012. The conference in which the whole faculty actively and enthusiastically participated was a follow-up event in the tradition of organising conferences oriented at the issues of training teachers for pre-elementary and elementary stages of education.

The international conference succeeded in gluing together the research elite of theoretical and didactic thinking in the domain of pre-school, elementary and special education. The conference theme, which

encompassed broadly conceived notions of complexness and integrity, as well as the large number of participants (130) from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland, had indicated that in order to achieve a fully-fledged discourse governed by the two notions covering graduates' competence and the fields' didactics, a timeframe of a minimum of two days would be optimum.

The conference was opened in the name of the rector by the vice-rector of the University of Prešov, Prof. M. Portik. The vice-rector's opening address was followed by the dean of the Faculty of Education, Assoc Prof. J. Burgerová, who opened the plenary session with her paper (Selected Aspects of the Quality of Education in the University of Prešov). The session continued with the report of Prof. M. Portik (Teacher in the Context of the Quality of Education), followed by Prof. H. Lukášová (Holistic Conception of Pupils' Development and its Implications for Primary Education) and Prof. A. Klim/Klimaszewska (Implementation of Pre-school Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Poland). The keynote papers have tackled three educational aspects of teacher training which were outlined in the conference title.

Within the time-frame of two days, seven sections were created in which – respecting the complexness and integrity even when dividing participants according to their expertise into the sections – many specialists in the areas of pedagogy, psychology, language, literature, artistic expression, mathematics, technical disciplines, special education and health education met and engaged in relevant disputes about professional competences of pre-school, primary and special education graduates.

On the one hand it can be stated that the quantitative indicators by which the conference can be described are impressive; on the other hand, many participants, in their sincere formulations, did not restrict themselves solely to quantitative assessment. And it is just such a warm humane assessment, brought about by the conference climate as well as informal personal discussions, multiplied by the ancient university spirit of human knowledge present in the premises of the Faculty of Education, which all of those who organisationally contributed to the successful scientific and social event value the most. The undisputed benefit of all

didactics textbooks and meetings of experts is in the quality of education from its earliest stages. The key principles are, however, the complexity and integrity which respect to the development of cognitive abilities of a pupil sitting behind the desk.