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Historical and Contemporary Context of Primary School Teacher Training

Introduction

Preparation, supervision, organization and the results of the educational process are significantly dependent on a qualified pedagogical worker, a teacher. The authors of this paper present a historical and contemporary context of training primary education teachers, which will be documented by a comparison of selected study plans. The authors also deal with significant changes which have taken place in the professional training of future teachers in Slovakia (and the Czech Republic) recently.

1. Who is a teacher?

A teacher is a key category in education. It is a person who provides direct instruction in a school environment and s/he is one of the basic agents of the educational process. Teaching is often labelled a profession, nevertheless, there are some disputes as to whether it possesses all the attributes necessary to be called a profession.

The process of professionalization includes extensive teacher training, i.e. specific knowledge (in the chosen field of study), followed by a professional-quality performance based on the awareness of pupils' knowledge and competence. G.D. Fenstermacher (1990) pointed out the differences between the teaching profession and other professions, and he characterized three specific areas of the teaching profession:

1. area of knowledge – one of the specifics of the teaching profession is its permanent transmission of knowledge,
2. area of relationships between a professional and a client (teacher and pupil),
3. reciprocity of effort – the teacher's work success is determined by the pupils' effort to satisfy the requirements set for them.

There are various characteristics of teachers in pedagogical theory. According to the authors the most essential are:

➔ **Teacher requirements** focused on particular areas of a teacher's activity which can be found in older pedagogical and psychological literature. They represent an enumeration of what a teacher is expected to do in the professional area, including a teacher's personal qualities or patterns of his/her desired behaviour. These requirements can paint a picture of an ideal which can, on the one hand, increase the prestige of the teaching profession, while on the other hand, can become a source of frustration for the teacher and society.

➔ **Description of a teacher's professional career**, in which, in accordance with J. Průcha (2007), we distinguish the following stages:

- choice of the teaching profession (motivation to study education),
- professional start (entrance to profession),
- professional adaptation (first steps towards profession),
- professional growth (career),
- professional stabilization or professional migration,
- professional burnout,
- professional conservatism.

The abovementioned requirements are often reduced into these three stages:

- student of education,
- junior teacher,
- experienced teacher (expert).

→ **Teacher competences** represent “a set of professional competences and dispositions a teacher should be endowed with to be able to perform his job effectively” (Průcha – Walterová – Mareš 1998, p. 110). Today, there are various attempts of authors to define teacher competencies, all of which try to bring them closer to the content of the training and education of newly qualified teachers (Z. Helus, Ch. Kyriacou, J. Mareš, E. Petlák, J. Slavík, V. Spilková, V. Švec, I. Turek and others). B. Kasáčová’s (2006) competency profile divides teacher competencies into three broadly formulated dimensions . The dimensions are:

- competencies aimed at pupils, their basic characteristics and conditions of development;
- competencies aimed at the educational process, further divided into:
 - competencies needed to mediate the content of education, its didactic transformation for the needs of teaching and learning,
 - competencies related to create the conditions of education,
 - competencies related to influence pupils’ personal development;
- competencies aimed at a teacher’s personal development.

2. Primary education teacher

Compared to teachers at other school levels primary education teachers have a specific position. J. Průcha (2002, p. 23) classifies them as a group of “universalists, i.e. teaching all subjects at the given stage of school”. However, we presume that today this is not completely true (it does not have to be true in the teaching of foreign languages, religion, ethics, or sometimes, education-oriented subjects).

The professional activity of an elementary school teacher fulfils the aims of primary education, which is regarded to be the cornerstone of the gradual development of pupils’ key competencies. According to current laws, the basic aims of primary schools are formulated as follows:

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- to offer pupils rich opportunities for guided knowledge of their closest cultural and natural environment, to enrich their imagination, creativity, and interest in their surroundings,
 - to enable pupils to explore their own abilities and possibilities of development, and to enable the acquisition of basic abilities to learn and understand themselves,
 - to support pupils' cognitive processes and critical and creative thinking competences through the acquisition of their own cognitive experience and through active problem solving,
 - to develop pupils' ability to communicate and understand each other in a balanced way, to evaluate (choose and decide) and also act initiatively with self-control and self-reflection,
 - to support pupils' development of intrapersonal and interpersonal competences, especially to enter social relationships openly, cooperate effectively, develop social perceptivity and empathy towards classmates, teachers, parents, other citizens and their cultural and natural surroundings,
 - to encourage pupils to tolerate and accept other people and their spiritual and cultural values,
 - to teach pupils to assert their rights and, at the same time, perform their duties, and be responsible for their health by protecting and strengthening it.

The main programme aims of primary education are the development of key competences (as a combination of knowledge, competences, experience and attitudes) of pupils on a personally achievable level.

During the course of primary education, the key competences are: communication competences (skills), mathematical literacy, literacy in natural sciences and technologies, competences in the field of digital literacy, ability to learn how to learn and solve problems, personal, social and civil competences, and cultural competences.

3. Beginnings of shaping the teaching profession

The teaching profession is one of the oldest professions in mankind's cultural history. Its beginning can probably be traced to ancient times when schools as institutions for education (in ancient Egypt, India, China, and later in Greece and Rome) required professionally skilled teachers. There is, for example, a preserved writing from ancient Rome *Institutio-nis Oratoriae Libri* by M. Fabi Quintiliani (1985) recording the experience of Greek and Roman school practice. It says that, even in ancient times, teachers specialized in teaching particular subjects, taking into consideration the differences among pupils regarding their abilities, and the stimulating effect of evaluation.

Teachers in medieval schools were priests and "the teaching profession was part of church education, i.e. teaching took place in cathedral or monastery schools and served as the preparation of clergy" (Průcha, 2002, p. 10). Teachers in medieval town schools participated in spreading elementary knowledge and the "secularisation" of the school system, but the negative side of those schools was life in very modest social conditions.

The appearance of European universities (since the second half of the 12th century) brought not only the spread of knowledge, but also the training of professional educators – university teachers with the degree "Master" (Oxford in 1168, Bologna in 1224, Prague in 1384).

Then, pedagogical theories of distinguished pedagogues appeared (J.A. Comenius, J.J. Rousseau, J. Locke, J. H. Pestalozzi, L.N. Tolstoy and others) and their opinions influenced changes in the understanding of the teaching profession. Several changes influencing the professionalization of the teaching profession have been dated to Comenius' time, some of which continue to exist. Comenius, in his work *Didactica Magna* (*The Great Didactic*), recommended entrusting children to the care and proper training of selected "persons conspicuous for their knowledge of affairs and their soberness of morals. To such instructors of the young, the name of preceptor, master, schoolmaster, or professor has been applied, while the places destined for this common instruction have been

named schools, elementary schools, lecture-rooms, colleges, public schools, and universities" (Comenius, 1907, p. 62). In chapter XXIX, called *Sketch of the Vernacular School*, he suggests further professionalization of the teaching profession based on time and spatial determination of its realisation with a concept of position of teacher.

Theresian educational reforms can be understood as the next important milestone which required changes in teacher training. So-called *Preparandia* (for teachers, established in 1775) offered pedagogical and didactical training in a three-month course. After its completion and a year-long training practice in schools, it was possible to take an exam which guaranteed one's teaching competence. Teacher training in *Preparandia* can be regarded as the beginning of systematic training for the teaching which had the effect of improving the quality of teachers. The length of the courses later extended to two years and the practical part of the training of future teachers became an integral part of the courses.

4. Historical context of university teacher training

University training and education has undergone a long and difficult development, which was completed after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic (1918). From 1921, the training continued in the form of courses, run as an extension of institutes for teachers. The first private faculty of education dedicated to training teachers originated in Prague in 1929. It was a four-year study program primarily focused on the pedagogical and psychological training of 1st grade primary school teachers. In 1930, state pedagogical academies with quality theoretical courses for future teachers appeared. It was also a period of disputes over the necessity of university education for teachers.

The situation changed after World War II, when faculties of education became a part of university studies. The university teacher qualification for teachers of all levels of the Czechoslovak Educational System was issued in the Decree of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic on

Education of Teachers No. 132/1945 Coll. on October 27, 1945. A year later (April 9, 1946), a decree establishing faculties of education concerning their status and particular tasks took effect. The Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague was founded in the same year. The further development of university education in Czechoslovakia was affected by complicated long-term processes and changes brought about by the country's socio-political situation.

In 1950, the training of national school teachers moved out of universities and the quality was relegated to secondary school level. Teachers in state schools, as well as teachers of kindergarten, were educated in pedagogical gymnasia beginning in 1950/1951. In 1953, teachers of the 1st stage of primary school were educated at pedagogical schools of secondary school level (again together with kindergarten teachers). In the same year, there appeared two-year higher pedagogical schools for teachers of the 2nd stage of primary schools. Pedagogical institutes (operating in regions) which trained teachers for the 1st and 2nd stage of primary schools were established by the Government regulation No. 57/1959. During that time, the 1st stage was composed of 5 years of primary education and it required a three-year programme for teachers; the 2nd stage was composed of the years 6 – 9 and the programme for teachers took four years. An interesting fact is that the programme in the first two years of both stages of primary school was the same. Pedagogical institutes as such did not have a long lifespan, they ceased to exist after three years, and were replaced by university institutes (in 1962). There was a new possibility to study teaching at the 1st stage of primary school in combination with one more subject taught at the 2nd stage of primary school. This model of teacher training prevailed until the school year 1970/1971.

The year 1964 brought the transformation of pedagogical institutes into faculties of education, which were established either as independent universities (in Czech Republic: Ceske Budejovice, Plzen, Usti nad Labem, Hradec Kralove, Ostrava; in Slovakia: Nitra, Banska Bystrica) or as a part (or branch) of universities (in Czech Republic: Prague, Brno, Olomouc; in Slovakia: Trnava and Presov). University teacher training for the 1st stage

of primary school was lengthened to a four-year full-time course of study, combined with one subject taught at the 2nd stage. This possibility was cancelled in 1971/1972, when a single major for teachers of the 1st stage of primary school was introduced. Starting from 1973, it was possible to extend the four-year programme at faculties of education and add a specialization. Students could choose one from the following subjects: Music Education, Visual Art Education, or Physical Education. Starting at the same time, it was possible to study education for the 1st stage of primary school in a five-year extramural form of study. This model prevailed in Slovakia, with minor modifications, until 1989.

Significant changes at faculties of education in Slovakia have been introduced since 1989, and the word limits of this paper do not allow us to systematically analyse the transformation of primary school teacher training in Slovakia in general. Thus, we are going to narrow the topic to primary education teacher training at the Faculty of Education of the University of Presov in Presov.

5. Training of primary school teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Presov in Presov (FE UP)

The formation of the University of Presov in Presov, and its separate faculties, has reflected many changes in the modern history of Slovakia. The Faculty of Education, with its 65-year long tradition, has undergone several fundamental changes. FE UP was founded in its contemporary form in 1997, when it became one of eight independent faculties at UP. It is the only faculty of education (in the context of Czech and Slovak universities) that specializes exclusively in complex teacher training for kindergartens, 1st grade of primary schools and special education schools. The faculty is eligible to award all bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in all three study programmes and further education.

The analysis of contexts of training teachers of elementary education at FE UP requires a basic axiom: a good teacher is one of the most important factors in creating a well-educated pupil. In connection with teacher

training, the authors consider it important to deal with the factors which represent a basic part of the training. Reviewing the structure of study programmes throughout the existence of our faculty is interesting and inspiring. However, knowledge of the subjects of study shows only the framework of the fields of knowledge. Understanding the real quality and effectiveness of teachers' work requires a deeper immersion into the specific work of teachers. We assume that it is one of the most demanding tasks which has not been realized yet. To some extent it is substituted for with the fact that we know the qualification structure of teachers, their scientific orientation and publication activities. We also have feedback, in the form of questionnaires, from our students which say something about us, the programme, and the subjects we teach. If we want to think about the quality of our graduates, it is necessary to pay attention to students from their arrival at faculty, through their university education, up to the information received on how they are perceived by their employers in real teaching practice. Another important aspect is the cooperation between FE UP and other faculties and institutions, both in Slovakia and abroad.

To be able to specify the suggested areas it is useful to start with some brief information about the character and function of the 1st stage of primary school, for which our students are trained. Based on the above-mentioned historical context, it is possible to trace four basic aspects: 1) National character which was also reflected by the school attributes: elementary school, people's school, and in 1948 also state school. It was presented by the effort to lead children towards respect for mother tongue, nation, its culture and history. 2) Orientation towards children, respecting their developmental distinctiveness, adapting education contents and methods to their age-related abilities, potential, and their natural point of view. 3) Close interconnection between teachers' teaching and education in family and preschool education. 4) The influence of Europeanization is the consequence of globalisation tendencies in economy and it is significantly projected into socio-cultural sphere. Education towards European dimension is based on knowledge of different cultures, understanding coexistence and diversity which is closely connected with education of children in foreign languages.

The above-mentioned bases have been significantly portrayed in school documents (study plans, programmes, textbooks, curriculum) for this type of school. The last concept change, coming after the Education Act of 2008 was established, has created a two-tiered participative frame model for governing schools by implementing a state educational programme and a school educational programme. This change shows the main principles and aims of state education policy as well as the democratic and humanistic values on which national education is based.

The suggested concept and content bases of the 1st stage of primary school have been crucial for the education and training of future primary school teachers.

6. Study programmes in the context of primary school teacher training

Graduates of teacher training programmes are expected to be real professionals in educational practice. It is typical for the teaching profession (Kosová, 2009) that a professional should act autonomously and that s/he should be an expert in what s/he is doing. Do graduates fulfil these criteria? Were they, and are they, ready for this level of professionalism?

Through the presentation of study programmes (since the establishment of the Faculty of Education in Presov) the authors are going to try to present the strategy of equipping future teachers with important knowledge, competences and overall orientation in their professionalization.

The study programmes (Tables 1 – 5) present an overview of groups of subjects relating to particular fields of knowledge (General Basics, Pedagogy and Psychology, Biology and Paediatrics, Specialized Subjects, Practical Training, Courses, etc.) with associated subjects and the percentage of these fields of knowledge of the total.

Table 1. Study plan of teacher training for the 1st stage of primary schools – four semesters. Academic year 1946/1947

Group of Subjects	Subjects	% of Total
General Basics Ideological-Political Subjects	Philosophy, History of Philosophy, State Science and Political Education, Czechoslovak and Slavonic History	16
Pedagogy and Psychology	History of Pedagogy, General Pedagogy, General Didactics, General Psychology, Social and Sociological Pedagogy, Pedagogy of the 1st Grade (of People's School), Didactics of the 1st Grade, Psychology of the 1st Grade, Pedopathology of Pupils of the 1st Grade, Citizenship Education	33
Biology and Paediatrics	School Hygiene, Issues in Children's Medicine, Biology of Pupils of the 1st Grade	9
Specialized Subjects	Slovak Language and Literature, Literature for Youth, Russian Language and Literature, Natural Science, Music Education, Visual Art Education, Physical Education, Housework (female students only), Methodology of Elementary Classroom, Special Methodologies, Administration	34
Practical Training	Practice in Schools	8

Source: Uhlířová, 2013

Table 2. Study plan of teacher training for the 1st stage of primary schools combined with English Language, French Language, German Language, Physical Education, Music Education, Visual Arts Education, Geography, Natural Science, Mathematics or Slovak Language – four years. Academic year 1967/1968

Group of Subjects	Subjects	% of Total
Political-Educational or Ideologically "Cultivating" Subjects	History of the International Workers' Movement and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, Political Economy, Scientific Communism, Logic	15
Pedagogy and Psychology	Introduction to Pedagogy, Theory of Teaching, Theory of Education with Educational Work Methodology, Selected Issues in History of Pedagogy, School Regulations, Introduction to Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Special Education	23
Biology and Paediatrics	Biology of a Child, School Hygiene	2

Specialized Subjects	Slovak Language, Mother Tongue with Methodology, Language, Mother Tongue with Methodology for 1st–5th Year of Primary School, Theory of Teaching Writing, Czech Language, Russian Language Methodology, Mathematics with Theory of Teaching, Mathematics with Theory of Figures, Mathematics with Methodology for 1st–5th Year of Primary School, National History with Methodology, Music Education with Methodology, Musical Instrument Practice, Visual Art and Methodology of Writing, Methodology of Physical Education, Methodology of Work Education	40
Pedagogical Practice	Pedagogical Practice (1st Year – 1 week, Orientation Practice), Continuous Practice (2nd Year -/2; 3rd Year -/2; Continual Pedagogical Practice (4th Year – 6 weeks, Pedagogical Practice w. Summer Young Pioneer Camps (2nd Year -/3), Pedagogical Practice in School and Educational Institutions (3rdYear/3)	10
Socially Beneficial and Manufacturing Practical Training	Socially Beneficial Practice, Continuous Manufacturing Practice in Agriculture or Industry	6
Courses	Course of Teaching Techniques, Ski Course, Ice Skating Course, Hiking Course	4

Source: Uhlířová, 2013

Table 3. Study plan of teacher training for the 1st stage of primary schools (single major) – four years. Academic year 1980/1981

Group of Subjects	Subjects	% of Total
Ideological-Political or Ideological Subjects	History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Marxist Philosophy, Political Economy, Scientific Atheism, Scientific Communism	16
Pedagogy and Psychology	Pedagogy and History of Pedagogy, School Organisation and Administration, Special Education, General and Developmental Psychology, Pedagogical and Social Psychology	14
Biology and Paediatrics	Biology of a Child and School Medicine, Biology of a Child, School Paediatrics, Hygiene and Parenthood Education	5
Specialized Subjects	Mother Tongue, Didactics of the Mother Tongue, Culture of Speech and Spoken Discourse, Literature for Youth with Didactics of Literary Education, Czech Language, Russian Language, Foundations of Elementary Mathematics, Foundations of Elementary Geometry, Didactics of Mathematics with Practice, Didactics of Basic Education about Sciences, National History and a Natural Science, Methodology of Elementary Writing and Reading, Didactical Technique, Foundations of Cybernetics and Programming, Traffic Education, Music Education, Visual Art Education, Physical Education, National Defence Education	40

Optional Specializations	Music Education, Visual Art Education, Physical Education, Work Education	8
Practical Training	Introductory Pedagogical Practice, Continuous Pedagogical Practice, Pedagogical Practice in the 1st Year of Primary School, Practice in Summer Young Pioneer Camps, Social-Political Practice	10
Courses	Course in Gardening and Technical Work, Winter Course in Physical Education, Ice Skating Course, Summer Course in Physical Education, Course in National Defence Education	7

Source: Uhlířová, 2013

**Table 4. Study plan of teacher training for the 1st stage of primary schools (Faculty of Education, Presov).
Academic year 1998/1999**

Group of Subjects	Subjects	% of Total
General Basics	Foundations of Philosophy and Ethics, Ecology, Introduction to Law, Information Technology, Diploma Seminar	7
Pedagogy and Psychology	General Pedagogy, History of Pedagogy, Didactics, Theory of Education, Creative Drama, Foundations of Preschool Pedagogy, Special Education, Pedagogical Communication, General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Pedagogical Psychology, Social Psychology (+ elective subjects)	15
Biology and Paediatrics	Biology of a Child and Drug Prevention	1
Specialized and Methodological Subjects	Slovak Language, Didactics of Slovak Language, Theory of Literature, Literature for Children and Youth, Didactics of Literature, Repetition of Secondary School Mathematics, Elementary Arithmetic, Foundations of Algebra, Elementary Geometry, Didactics of Mathematics, Selected Issues in Mathematics, Introduction to the Study of Music Education, Vocal Intonation and Rhythm, Music Education, Playing Musical Instrument, Didactics of Music Education, Pedagogical Interpretation of Musical Works of Art, Didactics of Reading and Writing, Drawing, Painting, Plastic a Spatial Works, Didactics of Visual Arts Education, Introduction to Visual Arts Education, Graphics and Graphic Design, Theory and Practice of Swimming, Theory and Practice of Athletics, Foundations of Sport Sciences, Theory and Practice of Gymnastics, Theory and Practice of Games, Didactics of Physical Education, Anthropomotorics, Rhythmical Gymnastics and Dance, Basic Education about Sciences with Didactics, Natural Science with Didactics, National History with Didactics, Technical Work, Didactics of Technical Work, Gardening Work, Didactics of Gardening Work (+ 28 elective subjects)	68

Practical Training	Introductory Pedagogical Practice (2 days); 2nd Year – 1 week; 3rd Year – 5 days in the 1st Year of Primary School; 3rd Year – Continuous Pedagogical Practice – 3 weeks; 4th Year – Continuous Pedagogical Practice – 3 weeks; 4th Year – Continual Pedagogical Practice – 80 days	9
Courses	Winter Course in Physical Education (6 days), Summer Course in Physical Education (8 days); Course in National History and Natural Sciences (5 days), Course in Landscape Painting (5 days)	9

Source: Study Programme 1998/1999, Faculty of Education, Pavol Jozef Safarik University, Prešov

Table 5. Preschool and Elementary Pedagogy – (Faculty of Education, University of Presov). Academic year 2014/2015

Group of Subjects	Subjects	% of Total BA/MA
General Basics	Foundations of Philosophy and Ethics	3/0
Pedagogy and Psychology	BA: Preschool and Elementary Pedagogy and Psychology, Theory of Curricular and Extracurricular Education and Creative Drama, Pedagogical Communication and the Role of Games, Methodology of Extracurricular Education, Introduction to Special Pedagogy, Preschool and Elementary Methodology and Diagnostics, Developmental and Social Psychology MA: Didactic Practicum, Methodology of Pedagogical Research, Educational Psychology, Pedagogical Diagnostics in Primary School	24/16
Biology and Paediatrics	Biology of a Child, School Hygiene and Drug Prevention	3/0
Specialized and Methodological Subjects	BA: Development of Art Expression, Introduction to Literary Studies, Development of Musical Expression, Slovak Language, Formation of the Early Mathematical Concepts, Basic and Rhythmical Gymnastics, Mathematics and Leisure Activities, Dramatic Forms of Literature for Children and Youth, Music Instrument, Language and Literary Education Methodology, Methodology of Visual Arts in Kindergartens and School Clubs, Basics of Athletics, Movement Activities and Sport Games, Educology of Preschool and School Physical Education, Elementary Arithmetic and Algebra with Didactics, Methodology of Music Education in Kindergartens and School Clubs, Basics of Natural-Scientific and National- Historic Studies MA: Arithmetic and Algebra with Didactics, Theory and History of Literature for Children and Youth, Didactics of Elementary Reading and Writing, Didactics of Music Education, Didactics of Slovak Language and Literature, Geometry with Didactics, Multicultural Education, Natural Science with Didactics, IT Methodology in Primary School, Didactics of Physical Education, Didactics of Art Education, Methodology of Teaching Mathematics in Primary School, Craftwork Education with Didactics, National History with Didactics	41/66

Practical Training	BA: Introductory Pedagogical Practice, Practice in Kindergarten I, Practice in Kindergarten II, Practice in Primary School I, Practice in Kindergarten III, Practice in Primary School II, Practice in Kindergarten IV, Practice in Primary School III, MA: Practice I, Practice II, Pedagogical Practice in the 1st Grade of Primary School, Practice III	14/18
English Language combined with Preschool and Elementary Pedagogy	BA: English Communicative Skills I, II, III, IV; Practical English Grammar in Use I, II, III; English in Kindergarten; Classroom Language Seminar I, II; Very Early ESL Methodology I, II MA: English Language Methodology I, II, III; English Communicative Skills I, II, III; English in Primary School Curriculum	27/18

Source: Study Programme 2014/15, Faculty of Education, University of Presov

To highlight the variety and dynamism of changes in particular fields of knowledge in the structure of study programmes Table 6 offers an overview.

Table 6. Percentage of subjects according to the fields of knowledge. An overview of the fields of knowledge in particular academic years

Group of Subjects	1946/47	1967/68	1980/81	1998/99	2014/15 BA/MA
General Basics	16	16	16	7	3/0
Pedagogy and Psychology	33	24	15	15	24/16
Biology and Paediatrics	9	2	9	1	3/0
Specialized Subjects	34	42	40/10	68	41/66
Practical Training	8	16	10	9	14/18

There is an almost 70-year long period between the first and last study programme, and the subjects of study included there show the influence of the social-political situation not only on the value placed on subjects (mainly in the field of General Basics), but also on the approaches to the teaching profession and its professionalization. It is important to emphasize that this type of overview shows us what is implicit in relation

to the quality of the graduate, but the explicit remains “hidden” in the work of every single teacher of these subjects.

The last table (Table 7) offers a summary comparison of subjects and the number of hours of instruction at five faculties of education in Slovakia which train teachers for the 1st stage of primary schools. Below the table there are conclusions drawn from these analyses.

**Table 7. An overview of subjects
offered by faculties of education in Slovakia**

Group of Subjects	Presov		Banska Bystrica		Nitra		Trnava		Bratislava	
	No. of subjects	No. of hours								
General Basics	6	14	5	12	3	7	7	17	9	13
Psychology	7	10	4	12	9	8	2	10	7	12
Pedagogy	19	17	17	19	18	19	12	21	17	34
Σ	32	41	26	43	30	34	21	48	33	59
Didactics of Reading and Writing	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	2	1	1
Slovak Language	10	21	6	24	7	24	6	27	7	24
Mathematics	10	23	5	20	8	20	5	20	4	16
Elementary Studies	7	16	9	19	8	17	6	10	5	14
Σ	28	64	21	68	24	65	18	59	17	55
Music Education	14	20	6	16	9	19	4	17	7	12
Physical Education	13	19	11	16	14	16	6	17	7	17
Visual Arts Education	12	18	8	16	8	16	3	14	5	9
Σ	39	57	25	48	31	51	13	48	19	38
Practical Training	6	17	7	20	6	15	3	10	4	17
Σ	105	179	79	179	91	165	55	165	73	169

Based on a comparative analysis of the study programmes at particular faculties, it is possible to point out the fact that the following tendencies can be seen:

- more significant proportionality between pedagogic-psychological and didactic training on one hand and specialized subjects on the other,
- integration of foreign language education,
- integration of dramatic education into study programmes,
- training in special education,
- strengthening the bond between theoretical and practical training,
- space for alternative pedagogy – pluralistic systems,
- introduction of obligatory and elective subjects – more space for self-study and pursuing individual interests,
- change in the way future teachers are trained: the problem is not in the content – what to teach them, but how and by what means to convey knowledge and educational contents; the way in which the student is prepared significantly influences his future understanding of teaching,
- tendency towards humanisation – if we want to achieve it, students must undergo the changes themselves: they should work in a particular cultural relationship teacher – pupil, or student, in a particular culture of cognitive processes, they should experience different learning environments, e.g. workroom, atelier or places where the creative process is present, where knowledge comes into existence, where critical thought, discussion, cooperation, self-evaluation, and evaluation of others are being taught; this means real methods of problem-solving, projects, learning through own activity, experience, cooperative form of teaching – in this sphere the authors observe considerable shortcomings,
- a big challenge for teachers has been the change from a conservative approach of verbal transmission of knowledge in ready-made form and direct instruction.

These aforementioned issues help to generate ideas for further modernisation of elementary education teacher training:

- The training of elementary education teachers is a complicated system of problems requiring dialogue, research, and analysis of findings from teaching practice: it is impossible to follow either a total unification or unlimited autonomy; freedom is a choice but is also a lot of responsibility for creation of various models, approaches, and processes,
- programme and concept openness, innovation, and perspective together with preservation science bases,
- plasticity of means (methods, forms) in teachers' education, familiarization with various alternative processes,
- humanisation of the process of education,
- scientific approach, interdisciplinarity, and integration in creation of study plans; the use of information technologies,
- realization of the great importance of practical training in the process of training future teachers,
- preparation of teachers for "Europeanization",
- preparation of teachers for schools of the future.

7. Instead of conclusion

Instead of a conclusion, we suggest some ideas which could form the basis of future research projects:

- we are a learning society and lifelong learning is our task,
- the quality of education is dependent on the quality of teachers (the quality of teachers directly influences the results of pupils),
- professionalism in the teaching profession,
- teacher's role – what is it and what should it be? – cultivator of pupil's potential, facilitator of pupil's development, professional in didactic transformation of curriculum, diagnostician and per-

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- former of appropriate interventions, able to reflect on one's own work, able to professionally discuss one's own educational processes, able to cooperate and communicate with colleagues and parents,
- emphasis on the expertise of the profession – teacher as a professional who eases learning and helps to develop pupil's personality,
 - model of the so-called "wide professionalism"
 - increasing financial investment in school systems and professional growth (further education) – how can we guarantee it?
 - reform of teachers' education – is it a real need or only a consequence of political turbulence?

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Abstract

The paper concentrates on the historical and contemporary context of the teaching profession. The authors focus on the history and present times of primary school teacher training in the former Czechoslovakia, and in Slovakia, particularly at the Faculty of Education, University of Presov in Presov. They detail important factors which influence the profession – especially socio-political situations, opinions of professionals (experts), the structure of study programmes and strategic planning. They point out that there have been significant changes in teacher training in recent years.

Keywords: teacher, primary education, study programmes, history, present prognoses.

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