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“A Teacher in Times of Change and Instability” – a Report on the 4th International Scientific Symposium, May 29, 2023, Lublin

„Nauczyciel w czasach przemian i niestabilności” – sprawozdanie z IV Międzynarodowego Sympozjum Naukowego, 29 maja 2023 r., Lublin

On May 29, 2023, the fourth edition of the International Scientific Symposium was held, organized by the Department of Didactics of the Institute of Pedagogy of UMCS. This time, responding to the challenges of modern times, attention was paid to “The Teacher in Times of Change and Instability”. The event was held under the patronage of: His Magnificence Rector of UMCS, Prof. Radosław Dobrowolski; Chairwoman of the Pedagogical Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Prof. Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska; The Mayor of Lublin, Krzysztof Żuk and the Lublin Education Superintendent, Teresa Misiuk. The symposium took place online and was attended by the representatives of universities from Norway, Canada, Italy, Portugal and Poland, as well as a large group of teachers from schools at various levels.

The event was officially opened by the Director of the Institute of Pedagogy, Prof. Stanisława Byra. The welcome speeches were delivered by: Chairwoman of the Pedagogical Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Prof. Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska and the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Prof. Andrzej Różański. The introductory word, which defined the reasons for organizing the Symposium and the scope of its issues, was presented by the Head of the Department of Didactics, Prof. Teresa Parczewska.

The meeting included three plenary parts. The first of them, moderated by Dr Justyna Sala-Suszyńska, was opened by a lecture delivered by Prof. Joanna Madalińska-Michalak (University of Warsaw) on “The instability of the teachers’ working conditions”. The speech analyzed the factors that build the context of a teacher’s work, including: the requirements of the changing school environment, the legal basis regulating the teacher’s work and the functioning of the school, relationships at work, and the organizational structure and culture of the school. The conclusion, which marked the area for further discussions, was the observation that the multi-faceted instability experienced by teachers translates into the quality of education offered to students in Polish schools.

Next, Prof. Ana Paula Alves from Fernando Pessoa University in Portugal, focused on “Teacher’s work in a changing world”. She described the teaching profession as directly linked to the interaction space between the school, the training, the teacher, and the educational communities. The speaker, taking as her starting point the assumption of the intersection of different perspectives: modernity, the virtual world and everyday experience, explained that currently, this interaction is specifically marked by provocation, asking questions and evolution.

This session was closed with a speech by Prof. Joanna Maria Garbula (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn) regarding “Characteristics of teachers of the 20th century – a narrative perspective taken from diaries”. The content of the lecture, supported by numerous references to source materials, focused on recreating/creating the image of the teacher emerging from diary narratives.

In the second part of the meeting, only foreign guests presented their speeches: Prof. Barbara Pytka and Prof. Terry Kelly (Seneca College, Toronto, Canada), Prof. Maria Gabriela Pediconi (University of Urbino, Italy), as well as Prof. Dalila Lino (Higher School of Education, Lisbon Polytechnic, Portugal). Canadian researchers raised the issue of professional development of teachers after the COVID-19 pandemic (“Professional development in post-COVID-19: Lessons learned from virtual projects designed for early childhood educators in Ontario”). They shared their experiences conducting several professional educational series related to the teaching practices of early childhood educators in Ontario. They pointed out how technology, popularly used in education during the COVID-19 pandemic, has changed the way we think, engage and imagine the possibilities of professional learning.

The second lecture was devoted to changes in teaching and learning after COVID-19 in the context of the mood at school (“Feelings at school after pandemic. Post-COVID-19 changes in teaching and learning”). The speaker appreciated the role of educational technologies as a means that enabled both educational entities using their own potential to continue teaching and learning during the pandemic. However, she emphasized that the online mode does not allow for full-time

education, and socialization mediated by the school experience definitely supports the return to ordinary life after the pandemic.

Another speech was devoted to globalization as a challenge in the education of early childhood teachers. According to Prof. Lino, within the framework of education, globalization refers to the growing mobility of teachers and students and requires the former to be more flexible, open and able to adapt to the constantly changing and new world. The author justifies the changes necessary in the education of this professional group so that its members are able to adequately respond to current and future challenges they will encounter in their own practice. This part of the meeting was led by Prof. Urszula Oszwa.

In the last part of the Symposium, moderated by Dr Ewa Sosnowska-Bielicz, we had the opportunity to listen to two speeches. Prof. Marius Wahl Gran (Rudolf Steiner University in Oslo, Norway) in a lecture entitled “Art as a pedagogy” sought answers to the following questions: How can we support pupils so they want to exist in a responsible way? How to describe the pedagogical gesture and ambition by working with aesthetical methods in didactics? Dr Judyta Popiołek (XIX High School in Lublin) analyzed the issue of “The effectiveness of kynotherapy in developing social competences of students starting school”.

During the Symposium, a question and answer session as well as a panel discussion were also planned and successfully conducted. The whole thing was completed by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to Prof. dr hab. Maria Cackowska, an outstanding educational start teacher.

The meeting ended with a summary and an invitation to the next Symposium in 2025 by Prof. Teresa Parczewska.

