

Prof. PhDr. Jiří Mareš, CSc.
On the Occasion of His Jubilee Celebrations

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Dear Professor, it is hard to believe that you are celebrating another of life's major anniversaries. In this message of congratulation, we would like to look back over selected milestones in that long part of your life's journey on which we have had the honour to meet you, ask you for interviews or even for advice.

At our very first meetings we dealt with the interesting research topic of the microanalysis of teaching from the perspective of teacher-pupil interaction and communication. At that time, it was a question of the microanalysis of teaching, the results of which were incorporated in research work that you completed and defended at the Jan Comenius Pedagogical Institute at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

The results of this research emerged in an interesting research team with whom you collaborated (Tollingerová, Helus, Křivohlavý, Gavora, Kulič, Š. Švec and many other specialists). Every member of the team focused on questions relating to the analyses of teacher-pupil or teacher-student communication and interaction in teaching from a different perspective. All tried to find methods what would facilitate the description of the reality of teacher in school practice and contribute research findings to support future changes. In the 1970s this was an entirely unique methodology in an otherwise normatively conceived approach to questions of school. A series of microanalytical approaches to pedagogical and psychological research have revealed that pedagogical communication in primary school teaching has a number of reserves. The proceedings of a 1981 conference that were prepared under your editorship with the title Teacher-Pupil/Teacher-Student Interaction provided very rich inspiration for changes in pedagogy as a science in the search of a new quality of pedagogical theory and practice

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and its reflections in research. Tomáš Svatoš recalls about this period: ‘With the arrival and methodology of Jiří Mareš much began to change; inspired by an emerging activity- and experience-based approach and with the substantial support of technical equipment, future teachers encountered procedures like micro-teaching, professional role-play or methods of socially communicative training based on reflection and self-reflection. Does this sound “modern” to you? I expect so, but in fact I am writing about the start of the 1970s. When I read about research on the basis of video-study or read news about video-training in teaching, I know that “this is old hat” here and that today’s methods were foreshadowed by the work of Jiří Mareš (and his peers) from more than 45 years ago’ (2012).

Publications entitled *Social and Pedagogical Communication* (1998) and *Communication in School* (1995), which were published in collaboration with Professor J. Krivohlavý, became a very valuable asset in the search for new possibilities and quality in the development of general didactics, which took as their starting point a new conception of didactic interaction and communication in primary school teaching. They also contain new sources of inspiration for those seeking to develop teaching training methods. A previously unheard-of body of work emerged; on the one hand, it presented the necessary theory and broad development of the subject, but at the same time the publications also had an applied dimension, and this in an entirely new way lay in concrete examples and instances that immeasurably contributed to the reader’s understanding of the material.

Another team of collaborators that you led was the Grant-Awarding Agency of the Czech Republic. In the working party for pedagogy and psychology No.406 (between 1996 and 2002) we were able to observe closely your conscientious approach to checking the bases for decision-making about the allocation of financial support for projects that developed research in both scientific fields. An alert and responsible approach was the key to overseeing the quality of research activity in pedagogical and psychological disciplines and concentrated on the quality of their development for future teacher-training.

From 2001 the opportunity also arose to work with the man celebrating today in a working party for pedagogy, psychology and kinanthropology which you led as a member of the Accreditation Committee of the Government of the Czech Republic. Professor Mareš’s rigorous and critical assessment was always delivered with great respect and kindness to all participants. In every evaluation, there were always recommendations that led to a change or correction to the accreditation plans proposed. The recommendations always sought to attain the kind of quality of accreditation plans that would ensure that the new programmes of study were approved by the committee.

Between 2001 and 2004, Professor Mareš, you acted as advisor to the research theme entitled *New Possibilities for Educating Teachers, Trainers and Pupils for a Learning Society in the Twenty-First Century*. The annual assessments and analysis of the results of individual stages over the five years of the research theme were always a clear and critical source for the internal evaluation of research results in the research team. Professor Mareš similarly helped with a whole series of other new pedagogical topics: it is worth recalling, for example, topics entering pedagogical contexts for the first time, like the climate of the school and classroom, social support, quality of life, teacher attitudes to professional development or, newest of all, low morale among teachers.

From 2004 he prepared another research project for a Grant-awarding Agency of the Czech Republic task entitled *The Quality of Life of Children and Adolescents*, which was launched in 2006. The first edited volume, published under the same title, shows that the question of a person's quality of life, which had underlain all topics and activities in the preceding years, had become a central research question. In the edited volumes showing the results of research the extent of your contribution as author is clear at all levels (general, methodological and empirical). The examination of preconceptions and conceptions of the quality of life of children in primary-school pupils brought entirely new impulses for the study of preconceptions for teacher-training students and new impulses for their training and other education.

In subsequent years the number of completely fundamental publications for the development of health pedagogy and psychology (see, for example, *The Child and Pain*, *The Patient's Conception of Illness*, *Social Support*, and others), and another publication, *Pedagogical Psychology* in 2013, which brought a whole series of impulses for the further development of sciences of learning and teaching and for teaching practice. Professor Mareš also devoted great attention to the conception of the meaning of teacher training for all levels of school and consistently built trust in this profession.

Dear professor, we thank you for your encouragement to embark on a research career. We thank you for the chance to learn from your patience, love for the field, tenacity in the search for new possibilities in the development of pedagogical and psychological science. We also thank you for providing great hope and unending support and help when we were looking for ways out of situations that sometimes seemed like blind alleys.

It is an honour for us that we can express in this place our great admiration for your extraordinary life and give brief testimony about some research and professional milestones that we have shared together.

We would also like to express our respect for you as a person who, with his extraordinary humanity, intervened in the lives of many people and many areas of pedagogical and psychological scientific development. We would like to express thanks on behalf of all whom you so willingly helped when they were most in need.

We wish you many reasons for happiness in the days to come. We also wish you good health and the motivation for further research from which we too (immodestly speaking) will benefit.