

Jan Průcha and His Outstanding Contribution to Educational Research in the Czech Republic

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Professor Jan Průcha (27 November 1934), whose significant anniversary is celebrated this year, is an author of numerous specialised publications, encountered undoubtedly by everyone taking a deeper interest in the field. His works constitute a goldmine of Czech educational science. Since there is not enough space to outline all of Průcha's important papers in a short summary of his work, we will only focus on the main areas Průcha has turned his attention to.

While studying philology at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, Průcha was already interested in interdisciplinary relations and related fields. Having returned from his research fellowship in Moscow, he translated L.S Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*, and published papers on psycholinguistics. During his career at the Institute of the Czech Language, he had an opportunity to concentrate on mathematical linguistics; however, he was more and more drawn towards pedagogy and psychology as manifested, for example, in his *Research into Children's Speech* (1974) and *Language Education, Analysis and Prospects of the System* (1978). After going over to the J. A. Komenský Institute of Pedagogy of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, he focused on educational psychology and educational science.

Surveying Průcha's work chronologically is rather challenging, because he tends to elaborate and build on his previous papers over the course of time, and therefore they are often published in further editions. These extended issues serve as evidence of widespread interest in his work, which serves as a source of required information. Průcha's focus on current issues of educational science grew when he moved to the Faculty of Education Charles University, where he later became a head of the Institute of Educational and Psychological Research, until becoming an independent expert and consultant.

Textbooks and learning materials are an area Průcha aims his long-lasting focus on, and publishes his papers on (see his paper in this issue of *Orbis Scholae* journal). Over the course of several years, many a paper and book by Průcha has been published, the most prominent ones being his *Learning from Text and Instructional Information* (1987) and *Textbook: Theory and Analysis of Educational Medium* (1998). The subtitle of the book is *A Handbook for Students, Teachers, Textbook Authors and Researchers*. This way, Průcha highlights his mission to pass on and transform the research results to practice in the form of know how. This approach is elaborated on in another one of his publications: *Educational Research*

102 *and Educational Policies – Building up Bridges* (1997). This aim is also implicit in his *Introduction to Educational Science*, which serves as a sought-after source of information for future teachers.

Since he endeavours to convey scientific knowledge to as many readers as possible, Průcha aims to publish comprehensive compendiums, as well as dictionaries, for example his *Educational Dictionary*, developed together with E. Walterová and J. Mareš, which has already been published in seven editions. Amongst other publications in this area, there is the *Educational Encyclopaedia* (2009), as the most comprehensive one. Over a hundred co-writers were invited to contribute to this publication. It is a considerable piece of writing, which Průcha worked on for several years, as he himself admits, and its quality easily complies with international standards.

Over the course of his professional career, Průcha has never lost his focus on educational research. On the one hand, most of his papers are based on research. In addition, he is interested in the theory of research, which he tackled in several papers and monographs, such as *Educational Research: Introduction to Theory and Practice* (1995) and *Educational Politics and Educational Research* (1997). A comprehensive chapter on the state and perspectives of educational research is also a part of his *Modern Educational Science* (1997), which has been published in five editions. He emphasises the importance of research-based knowledge and the research results projected to reality as the basis of the approach to educational phenomena, as opposed to a normative approach. Jan Průcha bolstered Czech educational research in terms of its organisation as well, because he founded the *Czech Educational Research Association (CERA)*, and integrated it into the European context. Průcha summarised the 20 years of *Czech Educational Research Association's* existence and work in the field of educational science in his paper published in *Pedagogická Orientace* 6/2013 journal.¹

Even though this overview of Průcha's work in the field of educational science claims to be rather concise, we must not omit a group of his publications focusing on specific areas of educational reality. For example, *Evaluation in Education* (1996), *Alternative Schools* (1996), *Multicultural Education* (1996), *Comparative Educational Science* (2006), *Intercultural Psychology* (2007), *Intercultural Communication* (2010), *Dictionary of Adult Education* (with Veteška, 2012), *Pedagogy of Pre-School Age* (together with Koťátková, 2013), *Adult Education Research* (2014), and others. These titles often provide an insight into parallel fields of educational science, as well as serve as valuable sources of information on the fields less covered by literature so far.

This overview of professor Průcha's work is an attempt to outline the areas of his main focus during his lifetime. Certainly not all his work enriching educational science and serving as a gold pool for educational theorists as well as practitioners has been mentioned. We have predominantly concentrated on the main areas of Průcha's

¹ Available from http://www.ped.muni.cz/pedor/archiv/2013/pedor13_6_p848_20years_prucha.pdf.

work, and attempted to highlight the most important publications. This profile only aims to emphasise the great contribution the author has made to educational theory and practice, as his work lives on and aids in increasing the quality of education. What's left is to wish professor Průcha good health and a creative mindset for the years to follow.

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