

## The Czech Pedagogical Society in 2015

The Czech Pedagogical Society (CPS) is a Czech academic association bringing together academics, teachers, and others with a professional interest in pedagogy and its related disciplines. The Czech Pedagogical Society has been active for 51 years. It is a member of the Council of Scientific Societies of the Czech Republic (a part of The Czech Academy of Sciences) and is also active in the international context. CPS section for comparative education is a member of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. Recently, a section for leisure time education has been created under the CPS.

The CPS significance for academic educational community has not diminished despite the many twists and turns in its history. The society has withstood both the pressures to become an accepted organization during the totalitarian regime and the major changes after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. However, its role in relation to its members has changed significantly. In the past, the CPS created opportunities for experts to meet and hold discussions about complex issues related to education. Nowadays, the membership of CPS is about the members' motivation to be a part of a community of educators, to meet and to self-educate. As the number of active members has been steadily growing (by the end of 2015 our association had 226 members), it is especially the interest of young educators and emerging academics that is very important for the society.

For CPS, the year 2015 brought a variety of interesting events and challenges for its next activity. The society acts both on the national level organizing international conferences and expert activities and on the regional level of its subsidiaries situated in the university cities – Prague, Brno, Olomouc, Ostrava, Zlín, České Budějovice, Liberec, and Hradec Králové. These subsidiaries usually organize a wide range of specialized events, such as conferences, lectures or discussions about current topics with specialists.

Recently, sixteen groups of experts have been formed by the Czech Pedagogical Society. The experts may be assigned to draw up a statement about a particular topic. Another significant achievement is the establishment of the edition *Sborníky České pedagogické společnosti (Proceedings of the Czech Pedagogical Society)*. The proceedings include high-quality thematic contributions from annual conferences that reflect knowledge valued both in research and in practice.

Publication of *Pedagogická orientace* (*Journal of the Czech Pedagogical Society*), in cooperation with the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, is still one of the core activities. The journal has earned a leading position among the academic journals in the Czech Republic and, thanks to the inclusion into several prestigious databases and publication of an English issue, the journal has reached the international audience, too.

The aim of the Czech Pedagogical Society is to maintain the high quality of the journal and to offer opportunities for introducing new empirical findings which will initiate valuable academic discussions, either through presentation in the journal or at the conferences and other professional meetings organized by the society.

We would also like to connect with postgraduate students and young educators and present the Czech Pedagogical Society as a mediator of further self-education and development of the interest in education as a science. A better presentation of the society, primarily in the virtual world, is related to this aim.

The key activity of the society in 2015 was the international conference *Škola a její křižovatky* (*School and Its Crossroads*). The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual conference (March 26–27 2015) was organized by the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Faculty of Education of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

The conference provided opportunities for discussing issues affecting the lives of contemporary schools in the pedagogical, psychological, and social context. The conference theme suggested considering school an institution that stands at the crossroads which opens up many directions and inspiring incentives. The focus of the individual sections derived from levels that characterize the school as an institution, as a place of didactical innovation, as a place for development of the teaching profession, as a place for discovering child with his or her health, social, cultural, and other characteristics.

The conference plenary presentations introduced topics that became a subject matter of many subsequent discussions and have resonated in the society up till now. The basic theses of the plenary talks became part of the conference proceedings. The plenary presentations mapped the issues of school reform, its impacts and variations in the Czech and international context.

The ideas of Christine Winter from the University of Sheffield (UK) were introduced to the discourse of the Czech educational science. She presented one of the plenary talks *Becoming and belonging: Just curriculum knowledge for the global classroom*. She introduced the current approach to the curriculum of global citizenship which is based on the Western traditions of thinking. Nowadays, during the time of deepening global tensions which are increasing with migration, religious conflicts and economic recession, the authors' contribution is highly relevant.

The individual sessions were divided into four themes. The first section, *School and its Institutional Crossroads*, was focused on finding ways to understand the directions in which the school as an institution may be oriented in today's "liquid times". The contributions described the situation of the school which stands at the crossroads of reforms and social pressures, social demands, and contrasting social expectations. Contributions concerning school evaluation and pedagogical interactions, and presentations focusing on the subject-specific didactics of psychology, science, geography, health education, and media education, were presented in the second section, *School and its Didactical Crossroads*. The third section *School and its People at the Crossroads* was divided into two subsections. The first subsection dealt with teachers and their practice, the second one aimed at the student teachers. The contributions of the experts from Russian Federation raised an interesting discussion about the issues of teacher education in Russia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In the second subsection aimed at the student teachers, a wide spectrum of contributions was presented. The contributions concerned three key topics – pupil, teacher and teacher education. The fourth section *School and its Integration Crossroads* focused on finding ways to understand a child with his or her health, social, cultural and other characteristics, and also ways to work with pupils from diverse environments. Multicultural issues, pupils' diversity, attitudes toward pupils with special educational needs, bilingualism and problems of pupils with a different mother tongue were the prevailing topics of the contributions.

Currently, the preparations for the 2016 conference are underway. It will be held from March 17<sup>th</sup> to March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016 at the Pedagogical Faculty, University of Ostrava and focus on the *Perspectives of Education in the Contemporary World Conditions*.

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