

IN MEMORY OF JAN DUNIN-BORKOWSKI

Elzbieta Kawecka



Dr Jan Dunin-Borkowski died on 1st February 2007. In the last years he worked in the Centre for Informatics and Technology in Education (OEIiZK) in Warsaw (Poland), an in-service teachers training institution specialising in computer science and ICT. He was the head of the Centre of the Technology of Teaching (CTN). He was a very respected person thanks to his tremendous knowledge and pedagogical experience, fully devoted to the matters of the teaching of Physics, ICT and teacher training. He was an active member of the International Research Group on Physics Teaching (GIREP). He took part in several international conferences presenting results of CTN activities. He was also a member of the Forum of Education of European Physical Society. He was an outstanding physicist, a marvellous teacher and the man of great heart and soul.

He started his scientific work as an academic teacher in the Institute of Physics at Warsaw Technical University in 1954. He led lectures and practices parallel to his scientific work in optical physics. He obtained a doctorate in technical science.

His interests moved gradually towards the matters of teaching physics, which was his beloved domain. He would say that ‘the physics is a foundation of our culture’, giving bases of understanding our world, delivering answers to the basic matters i.e. structure of matter, properties of materials, the birth and life of the Universe, the beginning of life or the creation of the planets.

Since 1967 he participated in the creation of the television physics course within Television Technical University, later on he led television physics lessons for elementary school. Since 1972 he worked on modernisation of teaching physics at elementary school as the head of Department of Physics in the Institute of the School Curricula. The physics curriculum for secondary profiled schools and the implementation experiments were carried out under his leadership.

In Warsaw he taught courses for teachers in Didactics for physics students at High School and led experimental physics school lessons at XIV Secondary School (a famous scientific Polish school). He organised the newest physics laboratory based on the Nuffield Physics Course, where he also led courses for physics teachers. He prepared many methodical elaborations and designs of experiments and school instruments at this time.

From 1975 to 1985 he worked as a head of department of the physics teacher training in the Teacher Training Institute. He organised and led courses for teachers and teacher trainers. He started studies and comparative works on teacher training and educational systems in different countries. The results of these he presented at the working groups and teachers meetings, seminars and conferences. He became a member of boards of very important Polish teacher training institutions in Warsaw. He was asked by

International Commission of Teaching Physics to become a member of the Conference Organising Committee on the theme of training physics teachers, which was held in Trieste in 1980.

From 1975 to 1997 he worked at the Department of the Didactics of Physics at Warsaw University. He led different types of activities: lectures, laboratories and master seminars. He supervised many theses for masters degrees.

He was an active member of GIREP. He was interested in the influence of natural history on the development of societies and nations. As a result of his interests he was asked to participate in the International Conference Organising Committee 'Teaching Science and Future Humanity Needs'. The theme of this conference, which was held in Bangalore (India) in 1985, was regarded by UNESCO as one of the most important world educational problems.

Since 1983 during his courses for teachers and physics lessons for students he explored methodologies for using computers in teaching. From the beginning he was involved in the work on preparing the curriculum of computer science education as the member of the Computer Science Advisory Group set up by the Polish Ministry of Education. In 1985 he was asked to organise the Department of Applying Computers at the Institute of Pedagogical Investigations. The software and methodological elaborations, the result of the department's work, were presented during special seminars KODY (Computers in Didactics) and Polish and international conferences. He was also a scientific head of the Polish annual conference 'Computer Science at School'.

From 1987 to 1992 he was the head of the Department of Computer Education in the Centre of Research and Investigation of Educational Teaching Aids and Equipment. In 1989 Polish government started the research programme 'Computer Science for Education'. The co-ordination of it and creation of educational software and methodological elaborations became the most important goal of Dunin-Borkowski's department. In 1989 he submitted to the Ministry of Education a project of systematic and organised training 'the teachers of teachers'.

In 1991 he organised the Centre of the Technology of Teaching within Social Educational Association. It was supposed to be a teacher training centre using new techniques and methods of teaching. The main themes of training and study were modelling, Microcomputers Based Laboratory, Telematics and Multimedia. He continued these activities within the OEIiZK.

Thanks to his personal contacts and scientific-didactic co-operation with famous Polish and international centres and universities, the lectures and seminars were held by such well known specialists as Jon Ogborn, Robert Taylor, Dean Zollman, Alain Bron and Ton Ellermeijer. The biggest event was the seminar with a Nobel Prize winner professor Kenneth Wilson.

He was the author of more than 60 didactic studies, published in books, newspapers and conference materials. He translated from English into Polish the UNESCO source book 'Teaching School Physics' (Polish edition: Nauczanie fizyki, PWN, Warszawa 1984).

In acknowledgement of his didactic and educational achievements he was awarded the Ministry of Education Prize, the Commission of National Education Medal and the Warsaw Educational Department Prize. He was also awarded the Cross of Merit in gold.

He was always very careful and inquiring. Till his last moment, painstakingly fulfilling his obligations as the co-ordinator of the project, pursuing perfection in spite of the serious illness. Till his last days he kept a passion. He loved solving difficult physics problems and testing his knowledge and experiments in practice.

As a result of his involvement, professional and personal contacts with international scientific centres, our institution (OEIiZK) became a co-ordinator of the Socrates Comenius Project (Action 2.1-Training

of School Education Staff) *IT for US - Information Technology for Understanding Science* in 2004. Till the last moment he was involved in realisation of the project. He cared for its development and perfection.

He had a great sense of humour, often interrupting his lectures by telling jokes. He was very good in singing and telling interesting stories. We have lost a marvellous colleague, teacher and scientist.

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