

Editorial

Welcome to this special English edition of *Utbildning & Demokrati* (Education & Democracy) occasioned by the international conference at Örebro University, 6–8 October 2004, on the topic *The multicultural foreign language classroom: an arena for democratic experiences*. The conference was arranged by the Department of Education at Örebro University and by this journal.*

In line with the general goal of the journal, i.e., to contribute to the analysis of education at the intersection of philosophy and social science, relating the concept of education to democracy and to its role as a public sphere, the overall aim of the conference was to connect issues of foreign language teaching and learning to questions of communication and the construction of meaning in the perspective of intersubjectivity and difference, and of the foreign language classroom as a potential arena for democratic experiences in real time. Another aim was to bring together Swedish and other Scandinavian foreign language practitioners, teacher educators and researchers by providing a platform for discussion and cross-cultural exchange of experiences.

A number of prominent researchers from different parts of the world were invited as keynote speakers, together with two researchers from the Department of Education at Örebro University. All keynote contributions are introduced in the next section and then included in full in this issue.

Sadly, one of the invited keynote speakers, Professor Hans Eberhard Piepho from Germany, died on 11 September 2004. For more than 40 years Professor Piepho was one of the most influential innovators of foreign language pedagogy in Europe and a source of inspiration to colleagues and students all over the world. His planned contribution, *Scenarios as tasks to investigate self and culture and as an equation of discursive opportunities*, would not only have fitted well into the theme of the conference but would also have given it that personal touch that was his hallmark. He leaves a great void, not easy to be filled, behind him.

Language pedagogy research is undergoing a process of change with respect to the traditional focus on questions concerning *how* language acquisition may be brought about. This will be obvious from all the keynote contributions to this issue of *Utbildning & Demokrati*. It is therefore a great honour for the editors of this journal to be able to partake in the formulation of a new agenda for research into foreign language education.

The editors

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