

## **Laudatio zur Verleihung der GDCP-Ehrenmedaille an Prof. David F. Treagust**

Liebe Mitglieder der GDCP, liebe Anwesende,

ich freue mich, heute die Verleihung der GDCP-Ehrenmedaille moderieren und würdigen zu dürfen, eine Auszeichnung, die wir seit 2021 nicht mehr vergeben haben – viele Anwesende hier im Hörsaal werden sie also vielleicht gar nicht kennen. Daher möchte ich ein paar Worte zu dieser Auszeichnung und auch zur Besonderheit in diesem Jahr vorwegnehmen, bevor der Preisträger bekanntgegeben und persönlich gewürdigt wird.

Die GDCP-Ehrenmedaille wurde erstmals 2008 an Reinders Duit und danach insgesamt 10 weitere Male verliehen. „*Ausgezeichnet werden [ich zitiere die Satzung] Persönlichkeiten, die zur Profilierung der Physik- oder Chemiedidaktik und zur chemie- oder physikdidaktischen Forschung und Entwicklung maßgeblich beigetragen haben.*“

In diesem Jahr hat uns als Vorstand die Verleihung der Ehrenmedaille bzw. der dafür eingereichte Vorschlag erst einmal etwas verunsichert, weil er schlicht nicht konventionell war. Wir mussten die Satzung zur Verleihung der Ehrenmedaille noch einmal genau lesen. Unsere Fragen waren: *Ist eine GDCP-Mitgliedschaft Voraussetzung für eine Verleihung? Müssen die Preisträger aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum kommen?*

Nach erneuter Lektüre war unsere Schlussfolgerung klar: Die ausgezeichneten Persönlichkeiten müssen nicht unbedingt aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum kommen und auch nicht unbedingt Mitglied der GDCP sein, sollten aber ganz unbedingt zur Profilierung der chemie- oder physikdidaktischen Forschung und Entwicklung [im deutschsprachigen Raum] maßgeblich beigetragen haben. Wir zeichnen also insbesondere Persönlichkeiten aus, die einen offensichtlichen Verdienst an unserer eigenen Community geleistet haben.

Nach dieser Erkenntnis war der Rest Kür: Die Jury wurde auf einer außerordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung gewählt, in unserem Jury-Treffen wurden konkrete Kriterien diskutiert und dokumentiert und ein sehr eindeutiges Votum im Namen des Vorgeschlagenen verfasst.

Unser Preisträger wollte heute hier anwesend sein, konnte aber aus gesundheitlichen Gründen kurzfristig nicht über eine Distanz von knapp 14.000 km reisen. Er ist aber – soviel kann ich schon sagen – bereits in unserem ZOOM-Raum und wird nach einigen weiteren Sätzen dann endlich auch zu sehen sein.

Lieber Preisträger, dear awardee,

we are honored to have you with us today - although 14.000 kilometers separate us at the moment and it is 10 p.m. where you are – a time most would consider inconvenient for a ZOOM meeting – not for you.

We are proud you were nominated as a recipient of our prestigious award and it was an extraordinary honor for us to select you to be this year's awardee:

The 2024 GDCP Medal of Honor for outstanding contributions to our community is awarded to **Prof. David F. Treagust**, Curtin University, Western Australia – Congratulations, David!

Dear David, dear members of the GDCP, dear guests,

Today, we celebrate an exceptional colleague whose impact on science education has crossed borders and inspired many of us. It is a privilege and honor for me to give this speech which I will structure along the line of criteria that made us decide you are among the outstanding personalities who shaped our community – even though you are neither German-speaking nor a member of the GDCP [yet].

Our criteria were your general excellence, your contribution to make GDCP members visible and renowned within the international setting, your broad and long-lasting connections and support of GDCP members, your mentorship to early career researchers and your personality as a scholar. And I will underline the reasoning with personal accounts from people I talked to – it was a convenience sample but as all remarks were highly consistent, they reached saturation quite early.

But first, back to our criteria and to state the obvious:

A medal of honor is awarded to researchers with an outstanding track record. You have one: You are the researcher – the name – in the international science education community that comes to our mind when we think about students' conceptions of science and how these relate to conceptual change and multiple representations. The name we think of when we construct a two-tier instrument. You have without any doubt set new standard in this field.

And: This is not your first award, you are also the holder of fellowships from the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Royal Society of Biology, AERA, Academy of Social Sciences Australia. You serve as editor of four research journals with the *International Journal of Science Education* among them, an author of more than 350 publications in major international journals and book series. Your publications are highly cited with an h-index (google scholar) of 102 representing over 40.000 citations.

Born in the UK, you have lived in different English-speaking countries: You hold a PhD and a MSc from the University of Iowa in the US, a BSc from the University of Western Australia, and a Certificate of Education from the University of Birmingham, England. You also used to work as a high school chemistry teacher for more than 10 years which also shaped the way you perceive science education and the relations between theory and practice.

This is your general excellence – we admire it sincerely.

But today, we would like to highlight who you are for us – the GDCP.

In our view, you contributed highly to make the GDCP visible and renowned in international communities. So, your general excellence is not the only reason why we are here: it is primarily your support of German colleagues and the GDCP community.

We need to go back to the 1980s to see how it all started. It was dark times in terms of digital media use at the workplace but high time for – or let's say the advent of – science education. For all the younger ones in the room: it was a different time to work in science education. On the one hand: No internet, no email – huge effort to stay in contact – with writing letters that might take a week from Europe to Australia – just imagine. On the other hand: the discipline was shaping itself and innovative ideas – especially research on students' conceptions and how to get an empirical basis – were hotly debated – there was a lot of movement – maybe comparable to the current excitement about the introduction of AI to education.

But for you, David, the connection to Germany was even more personal: Your wife, Gisela, was of German origin and you decided to broaden your horizons abroad – when you were already working at the WA institute of technology. You heard about the IPN in Kiel, Germany – a prestigious institute – and got into contact. Having written textbooks on solar energy for high school and primary school students you were soon strongly advised to talk to a guy who was at that time working on his habilitation on the energy concept – Reinders Duit.

Reinders became probably your most prominent German colleague and friend since the 1980s. You share about 15 international publications on students' conceptions. I checked your most cited publication published in the IJSE authoring R Duit and DF Treagust on "*Conceptual change: A powerful framework for improving science teaching and learning*".

One colleague from ESERA called you and Reinders the "iconic duo" – the two who were furthering the discipline together but also became close friends. The connection to the IPN is still on-going with the chemistry and physics education groups of Ilka Parchmann & Knut Neumann.

But: The connections to our community are also broader – not only tied to the IPN – which we also see as an outstanding contribution. You visited research groups in Bremen, Berlin, Dortmund, Essen and invited many German researchers to Perth – Helmut Fischler was one of the first to visit Australia in the early 1990s. For German circumstances, you crossed borders by identifying yourself as a science educator with a chemistry background and an interdisciplinary scope.

As a next point, you receive the award because of your mentorship to GDCEP early career researchers. You not only supervised about 100 PhDs in Australia and the US so far – people say you have a talent in supervision and motivating students – you also had close contact to the graduate school *nwu* in Essen around Hans Fischer and Elke Sumfleth and invited PhD students to your institute (SMEC). You said Hans got the idea that early career researchers should travel and have one publication with an international scholar - so the two of you set up a program and let about 12 youngsters – not only from Essen but different groups – take part in the exchange.

It is only a small sample but I find it remarkable that a considerable number of those who visited you more than 10 years ago are still in the room: Alexander Kauertz, Christoph Kulgemeyer, Kai Niebert [from biology education – not in the room but still there], and myself.

Summing up the reasons that I mentioned so far in physical and metaphorical terminology: We highly appreciate the energy transformation you initiated between you and the German community.

But we have another strong reason to award you with our medal:

It's who you are as a person.

When I spoke to colleagues from our community – and also internationally – they all agree on your excellence and contribution to science education [...] but none of them stopped talking there. Most of them continued: *What I find even more remarkable about David is his personality and the way he connects with people.*

They perceive you ...

... as a thoughtful listener and deep thinker.

... as a person incredibly open to any kind of conversation with anyone.

... someone who engages in debates meaningfully and as someone...

... who is genuinely interested in knowledge seeking rather than his own track record and h-index.

Colleagues admire you...

...for your appreciative manner.

...for your openness to any kind of controversial discussions, which almost always end in consensus. Hans said – and I need to quote this in German: „Wir haben uns manchmal gefetzt... aber eigentlich nie gestritten.“ [translation: “We sometimes had heated arguments – but never really had a fight”]

And last but not least they admire your...

...sense of humor that makes meeting and working with you a truly enjoyable experience.

David,

we strongly hope to meet you next year at the GDCP conference 2025 in Frankfurt – conveniently close to a large international airport – and then we will certainly offer you to become a member of the GDCP and sign the papers.

We thank you...

...for taking the step in the 1980s to consider Germany as a country worth debating trends and issues in science education and for making meaningful connections.

...for guiding colleagues and young researchers on their way for such a long time – about 40 years now.

...for making conferences, visits and meetings more enjoyable because of who you are.

We – as the GDCP – have benefitted highly from you and appreciate it deeply.

David – Thank you.