

HABILITATION BOARD DECISION ON THE NOMINATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Education
Procedure field	Pedagogy
Applicant	Mgr. Jana Obrovská, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Department of Education, Faculty of Education MU
Habilitation thesis	Addressing Student Diversity in Education

Board members

Chair

prof. PhDr. Tomáš JANÍK, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Faculty of Education, Masaryk University

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Faculty of Education, Charles University
prof. Mgr. Klára ŠEĎOVÁ, Ph.D.
Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University

Evaluation of the applicant's scholarly qualifications

Mgr. Jana Obrovská, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, is applying for the habilitation procedure. The candidate completed her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies in Sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. From the very beginning of her academic trajectory, her work has been primarily oriented towards educational topics, situated at the intersections of disciplines and firmly anchored in qualitative research, particularly school-based ethnography.

The core research activities of Jana Obrovská focus on the role of ethnicity and social disadvantage in education, educational inequalities, and inclusive education. She has addressed these topics in several projects funded by the Czech Science Foundation, in an international Horizon 2020 project, and as a member of the National Institute for Research on Socioeconomic Impacts of Diseases and Systemic Risks (SYRI).

Within the project *Educational Strategies of Migrant Children and Children from Ethnic Minorities* (GAP404/12/1487, 2012–2014, principal investigator Prof. Mareš), she collaborated on ethnographic research conducted in several ethnically mixed classrooms. Her primary interest focused on the dynamics of ethnicity in a desegregated classroom with the presence of Roma pupils. This research resulted in a number of studies as well as the scholarly monograph *Roma Identity and Ritual in the Classroom: The Institutional Embeddedness of Ethnicity*, published by the prestigious publisher Palgrave Macmillan.

Between 2017 and 2019, she continued her research as part of the project *Inclusive Education and Social Support to Tackle Inequality in Society (ISOTIS)* (Horizon 2020; principal investigator at Masaryk University Prof. Pančocha), collaborating with colleagues from a consortium of seventeen universities and research institutions across various European countries. The research outcomes were based on a comparative approach to data on selected ethnic groups within different European education systems and were subsequently translated into recommendations for European education policymakers.

In the following two Czech Science Foundation projects, Jana Obrovská acted as the principal investigator herself, reflecting her established research experience. These included the project *Ethnography of Diversity in Pre-Service Teacher Education* (2019–2021) and *Addressing the Individual Educational Needs of All Students: Ethnography of Lower Secondary Classrooms* (2023–2025). The research focused on monitoring pre-service teachers' preparation for working with diverse pupil populations (both within university-based instruction and teaching practica) as well as on inclusive practices employed by experienced teachers in addressing the individual educational needs of diverse pupils in heterogeneous classrooms. In collaboration with Prof. Umesh Sharma from Monash University, a leading international expert in inclusive education, an article presenting a new framework of inclusive practices and key teacher strategies was developed. The article *Teachers' Inclusive Core Practices and All Students' Perspectives* was published in the prestigious journal *Teaching and Teacher Education*, ranked in the first decile of the most cited journals in the field according to Web of Science.

Through her involvement in the National Institute for Research on the Socioeconomic Impacts of Diseases and Systemic Risks (SYRI, 2022–2025), Jana Obrovská conducted research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the influx of Ukrainian refugees into Czech schools. Here, too, her research focused on recipients of support from socially disadvantaged groups as well as on the social adaptation of Ukrainian students in Czech schools and the role of ethnicity.

Throughout her professional career, the applicant has established collaborations with a number of renowned experts from leading European universities, including Lyudmila Nurse (University of Oxford), Paul Leseman and Pauline Slot (Utrecht University), Cecilia Aguiar (University of Lisbon), and Umesh Sharma (Monash University, Melbourne).

The published outputs and related activities of Jana Obrovská may be summarised as follows:

- 18 papers in peer-reviewed journals indexed in the Web of Science database and 6 papers indexed in Scopus,
- 2 scholarly books (one authored solely by the candidate and indexed in Scopus),
- 3 chapters in scholarly books (one indexed in Web of Science),
- 10 conference proceedings papers,
- 2 editorial roles,
- 5 invited lectures (four of them abroad),
- 27 conference presentations (sixteen abroad),
- 4 research reports.

The candidate's scholarly and pedagogical work has received substantial citation attention: out of a total of 155 citations, 88 are recorded in international databases Web of Science and Scopus.

In 2023, she received the MUNI Scientist Award, granted for outstanding research achievements at Masaryk University, for her article *Promises and Challenges of Differentiated Instruction as Pre-Service Teachers Learn to Address Pupil Diversity*, published in the *Journal of Education for Teaching*. This was her second academic award; the first was the Innocence

Arnošt Bláha Award for Outstanding Bachelor's Theses, which she received in 2009 for the bachelor thesis *The Spiritual Dimension of Waldorf Education through the Lens of Reflexive Modernity*.

Among her professional activities outside the university, Jana Obrovská has served as an evaluator of selected research outputs within the Methodology 2017+ framework in the years 2022–2025. She is also a regular reviewer for numerous international journals (*International Journal of Educational Research, Ethnography and Education, Cogent Education, Social Inclusion, Sociologia*) as well as Czech journals (*Sociological Review, Studia paedagogica, Social Studies, Orbis Scholae*).

Conclusion: The applicant's scholarly capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Pedagogy.

Evaluation of the applicant's pedagogical experience

The pedagogical career of Jana Obrovská began during her doctoral studies, when she taught seminars entitled *Introduction to Sociology, Ethnography and Fieldwork*, and *Introduction to Atlas.ti Software* at the Faculty of Social Studies, MU. From the academic year 2015/2016 onwards, she has been teaching at the Faculty of Education, MU, primarily courses in *Methodology, Research in Educational Practice, Basics of Educational Assessment, and Educational and Psychological Assessment in Teaching Practice*. In this context, she has also contributed to the development of the curricula of these courses, successfully shaping them into modern and practice-relevant subjects that prepare teachers for current challenges in educational practice.

She has led several methodological workshops for doctoral students, focusing mainly on qualitative data analysis. She has also been involved in the activities of the (Post)Doctoral School of the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, where her willingness and professional competence in consulting doctoral students on research data processing and analysis were evaluated very positively.

During her teaching career, she has supervised seven successfully defended bachelor's theses and two successfully defended master's theses; she is currently supervising three final theses.

She is a regular member of state final examination committees in the *Pedagogy* programme. She has contributed to the development of study materials for educational diagnostics as well as educational materials addressing discrimination against socially disadvantaged groups.

Beyond her academic duties, she has also engaged in voluntary activities, including teaching at the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, where she provided tutoring to Roma children.

Within the public lecture held on 14 April 2026 at the Faculty of Education, she demonstrated her ability to articulate a research question, structure her presentation, and engage the audience. During the discussion, she was able to link her findings and conclusions to the theoretical framework and demonstrated a high level of critical thinking.

Conclusion: The applicant's pedagogical capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Pedagogy.

Habilitation thesis evaluation

The topic of the candidate's habilitation thesis is addressing student diversity in education. The thesis takes the form of a collection of previously published scholarly works with commentary, specifically six peer-reviewed scholarly studies published between 2016 and 2025 in academic journals.

The reviewers of the habilitation thesis appreciate that it is, *"the only work in the domestic context that situates the topic of "inclusiveness" within the broader framework of addressing student diversity—that is, the increasing heterogeneity of school classrooms."* (from the review by Prof. Štech).

Furthermore, Prof. Štech states in his review: *"I consider the author's conceptual distinction of the otherwise vague notion of 'diversity' into a pedagogical conception and a special-pedagogical or categorical-compensatory conception to be an important contribution to pedagogical theory. The former results from the democratization of access to education for all pupils. The latter identifies, selects, and labels groups of pupils according to their special needs defined by disability or socio-economic/cultural disadvantage or giftedness... The candidate rejects a disjunctive approach (one or the other) and argues for the complementarity of both."*

In addition to this theoretical contribution, the reviewer also values the thesis for its *"methodological challenge of how to construct research samples by including all relevant actors—all pupils as well as their parents—and capturing their perspectives, particularly by 'giving voice' to those previously marginalised... The candidate also demonstrated the importance of supplementing interviews and questionnaires with in-situ observations—hundreds of hours of classroom observation in her case."*

Prof. Schwab also positively evaluates the methodological dimension of the habilitation thesis: *"The methodology section is clearly articulated, offering a coherent overview of the designs and samples across Studies 1 to 6, including ethnographic, biographical, and case study approaches, alongside detailed descriptions of field notes, video recordings, semi-structured and focus group interviews, and questionnaires... The candidate convincingly justifies the central role of ethnography, showing how sustained classroom observation enabled an analysis of inclusive teaching practices and students' responses in everyday instruction, and the substantial effort required for such resource-intensive data collection is evident and commendable."*

Prof. Schwab also positively evaluates the overall structure of the habilitation thesis: *"I appreciate that the candidate structured the implications by separating theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions into distinct sections, which enhances clarity and facilitates uptake by different audiences."* She considers the greatest contribution of the thesis to be *"the insistence that students' perspectives be captured more frequently in inclusive education research, with a persuasive case for biographical approaches to elicit children's experiential knowledge."*

Prof. Stuchlíková appreciates the close alignment of the theoretical foundations of the habilitation thesis with international scholarly discourse and the adaptation of theoretical frameworks to the Czech context:

"When, in the introduction to her habilitation thesis, the author summarises the theoretical foundations and situates the individual studies within them, a close connection to established international discourses in this research field becomes apparent... These parts of the thesis are, however, elaborated with great precision and a deep understanding of the topic. Their contribution lies primarily in the thoughtful adaptation of existing theoretical frameworks to the

Czech context and in their connection with rich empirical material. In this way, the author develops and contextualises existing approaches in a manner that is highly valuable for domestic educational research."

Prof. Stuchlíková also considers „*the model of inclusive core practices, which is based on a systematisation of key inclusive teaching practices observed in heterogeneous classrooms*“, to be another very valuable contribution of the candidate with relevance for both research and teacher education. She notes that “*Her findings can be applied both to the development of teacher education curricula and the refinement of teachers’ competencies in working with diversity (see, for example, Studies No. 1, 2, and 4), and, from a methodological perspective, to the planning of research in marginalised communities and the further development of participatory and ethnographic research methods (e.g. Studies No. 5 and 6.*”

The reviewers’ reports also include several critical comments on the habilitation thesis:

For example, Prof. Štech reflects on the position of differentiated instruction with respect to its potential to reduce inequalities among students. He states: „*The issue of what critical sociology calls “indifference to differences” (Bourdieu) is proposed to be addressed through differentiated instruction. However, according to some authors... this practice is exposed to the risk of so called active differentiation (i.e., it does not reduce the initial inequalities between pupils). Graduated tasks, activating forms of pupil engagement, or cooperation with a teaching assistant may ultimately result in cognitively undemanding — albeit “motivating” or rather entertaining — activities for pupils with weaker initial prerequisites.*”

Prof. Stuchlíková draws attention to certain conceptual tensions and inconsistencies in research on diversity and inclusion, where a broad conception of inclusion is declared, yet in practice research often focuses only on narrower groups of students.

Prof. Schwab’s critical comments concern primarily the introductory chapter of the habilitation thesis and point to insufficient clarification of certain approaches, insufficient justification of some conclusions, and, in some cases, the absence of a critical analysis of the mechanisms described in the individual studies: „*...the chapter lists key approaches but does not explicate their core assumptions, mechanisms, or relevance to the subsequent empirical work. Briefly situating each framework and clarifying its operational implications would improve coherence and better justify the chosen conceptual lens for the studies that follow.*”

Prof. Schwab further states, among other points: „*...while the selection of differentiated instruction is defensible, the rationale for privileging this framework over other widely used approaches, such as Universal Design for Learning, is not sufficiently articulated. A short justification, addressing theoretical fit, empirical support, or alignment with the study’s methodological constraints, would strengthen the argument.*”

The candidate submitted a written response addressing the comments raised in Prof. Schwab’s review, which has been made available to all participants in the habilitation procedure and which the habilitation board takes into consideration in this opinion.

In this context, the candidate showed her ability to engage constructively with critical feedback and to make effective use of suggestions in further developing her research agenda. The habilitation committee finds that the structure of the habilitation thesis, as well as the depth and breadth of its introductory section, are fully in line with the requirements set by Masaryk University.

Conclusion: The applicant’s habilitation thesis **meets** the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Pedagogy.

Secret ballot results

Number of board members	5
Number of votes cast	5
Number of votes in favour	5

Board decision

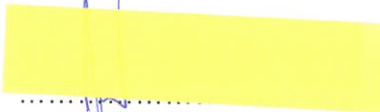
Based on the outcome of the secret vote and following an evaluation of the applicant's scholarly or artistic qualifications, pedagogical experience and habilitation thesis, the board hereby submits a proposal to the scientific board of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University to

appoint the applicant associate professor of Pedagogy.

terminate the procedure.

Date: 14. 4. 2026

prof. PhDr. Tomáš Janík, Ph.D., M.Ed.


signature