

Obituary: Ilana Elkad-Lehman

There is a voice missing in the ARLE community: Our distinguished colleague Ilana Elkad-Lehman, friend to many of us, passed away in January 2024. Ilana, who served as a professor at Levinsky College of Education in Tel Aviv, Israel, was a committed teacher and researcher particularly in the field of literature and literature education. She had been with the International Association for the Improvement of Mother Tongue Education (IAIMTE) since the 1990ies before she became founding member of the ARLE when the association was founded in Germany in 2014. Her contribution to our international community had many facets: Of course, we were grateful when she agreed in serving as the treasurer of the ARLE for the first turns of the young association. Ilana saw to both short and to-the-point reports on money matters for our biannual meetings, paid bills and helped with tax declarations. However, she will be remembered much more for her strong contributions to international cooperation in teacher development and research with regard to literature education. Ilana was an active member of the SIG ROLE (Research on Literature Education) from the beginning and took responsibility as a coordinator later on. She invited the IAIMTE to a seminar in Israel in 2012 which she hosted together with Yael Poyas. Many of us still remember the occasion as an opportunity not only to share our research interests, but also to learn about the complex societal, political and thus educational situation of Israel at the time. The contested notion of the canon became alive as a hot topic of the present when we dealt with the issue of textbooks for learners from the various communities in Israel. The contribution of literature and literature communication to multicultural understanding was a key notion of Ilana's academic work. Together with her colleagues, she followed up on this theme also with regard to projects in multicultural Israeli schools. For her, literature

communication was a space for empathizing with others across all possible boundaries and for listening to their stories. Another key theme was memory culture in literature education: Having been born in Warsaw in 1950 as the daughter of Holocaust survivors, the nexus of literature and memory was a both personal and intellectual endeavour for her. In our international cooperation we developed cooperative seminars between teachers-to-be at Hildesheim University and Levinsky College on memory literature from both Israel and Germany which made room for many in-depth-encounters between participants. A broader audience tackled the theme in an online seminar at Åbo Academy in Finland that Heidi Höglund hosted in May 2021. Ilana had reached out to Israeli artists who enriched discussions tremendously. As a warm hearted and open-minded person, Ilana loved building contact and connecting people from research, teacher education, classroom practice and the arts. She was a great host and would have loved to invite the ARLE community for a conference in Israel. It is one of the sad realities that this has not been in reach for quite some time. Rather, latest developments brought about new challenges to the project of understanding through literature Ilana has been striving for in various ways throughout her academic live. However, we will remember her voice as strong and passionate.

Irene Pieper, February 2024