



Steinar Kvale (1938 - 2008)



Steinar Kvale, Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Aarhus, Denmark, passed away on the 12th of March 2008. He was 70 years old, having been born on 5 February 1938.

Steinar Kvale was a researcher based in Scandinavia but with an international outlook. He was born in Norway and was educated at the University of Oslo. In 1974, he came to the University of Aarhus and became a full professor there in 1982. He held numerous posts on the editorial boards of different journals, and he was a visiting professor at a number of different universities. In addition, he was Doctor Honoris Causa at the University of Gothenburg.

Steinar left his mark on the world of psychology, both professionally and personally. As a researcher, he was the driving force behind the Center of Qualitative Research, which was established at the University of Aarhus in 1988. Throughout the years, many leading qualitative researchers from around the world have visited the Center, where cutting-edge discussions always took place. Steinar was no doubt best known for his book *InterViews*, an international bestseller that was translated into many languages, and which has greatly helped to establish qualitative interview research as an important and legitimate approach in the social sciences.

Steinar was a Professor of Educational Psychology, and he had a deep interest in non-scholastic forms of learning, for example through apprenticeship. This was not just reflected in his scholarly publications, but also in the way he – as a master of the research craft – related to his research apprentices. He was also one of the first psychologists to thematize the psychological implications of postmodern thought. There was a profound respect for concrete human experience in his work, and a suspicion towards abstract systems and theories.

Personally, Steinar was a very kind and giving person. He helped and inspired numerous students and younger colleagues, and he was always generous in sharing his good ideas and often unconventional perspectives with others. Often, a single piece of advice from Steinar would be the key for a young researcher that would help him or her with the first publication. He was capable of seeing a problem from many different angles, and he had the rare ability to pose questions that were kind and critical at the same time, which benefited countless other researchers, not least those attending one of the many research courses he conducted throughout his career. When Steinar taught, he was always careful to point out what he learned from his students, and he had a unique interest in other people and a continuing wish to learn from others.

Although Steinar became ill, he kept up his high spirits and his zest for work. He had conversations about psychology and qualitative methods with colleagues until a few days before his death. He managed to finish the manuscript for the second edition of *InterViews* with a younger colleague, and there is no doubt that his work will live on for many years. Steinar leaves a wife, Tone Saugstad, and two sons, Niels Kristian and Lars Mathias. He will be greatly missed.



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Source: Adapted from obituary penned by

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