

Inspiration from abroad

AUSTRIAN INSPIRATION

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Czech version/Česká verze 

Czech-Austrian inspiration

Lenka Gulová

In 2010, the Department of Social Pedagogy of the PdF MU was joined by Eva Muroňová and Cyril Tomáš Havel, both post-graduates under the guidance of prof. Martin Jäggle, then dean of the Theological Faculty of Vienna University. In the environment of the Pedagogic Faculty, they searched for potential partners for cooperation with a broad Austrian initiative “LEBENSWERTECHULE” that had existed in Austria since 2008, founded by the very same professor Martin Jäggle. We accepted the offer and it was one of our best professional decisions, because the cooperation and friendship between the Czech and Austrian colleagues enabled us to penetrate deeply into all that inclusion of the school and society involves. We had the opportunity to attend many meetings, stormy discussions, friendly experience sharing, and joint organizing of professional seminars, conferences, and taking part in a very interesting work on several Action projects named The School Where I am a Human Being. This example demonstrates how important it is not to miss a chance that is available for the taking. This cooperation which was thematically focused on inclusion led us to further initiatives related to inclusion, some in the form of new research projects, e.g., GAČR and TAČR, or projects in the Ukraine or own pedagogic activities in the area of teaching, accreditation of study programs and general understanding of the fact that inclusion brings benefits both to individuals and the society. Another Austrian partner that was with us from the beginning of our meetings is the Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule in Vienna/Krems, which became a strategic partner of the Pedagogic Faculty of the Masaryk University in 2019.

In order to complement the description of the context as a whole, let us briefly recall some of the milestones of this unique Czech-Austrian partnership. At the initial meeting in 2010, we organized the first professional seminar which was thematically focused on dealing with otherness in the school environment. Already in 2011, the meeting had the form of a conference attended by a large number of speakers and listeners. The Austrian guests presented there, *inter alia*, a project of school development that concentrated on values and perception (WWSE), as a model of school self-evaluation. Thereupon, the Czech team attended an international congress entitled “The Culture of Recognition: Participation – Dignity – Justice”, held May 3 – 4, 2012 at the Viennese university; in 2013, both teams, Czech and Austrian, began to prepare a joint project named The School Where I am a Human Being, which continued until 2017.

Regular workshops of both teams were organized since 2014 in Brno and Vienna, alternately. In the course of the year, we met at least four times and visited together various schools of the inclusion type in Brno, around Brno and in Vienna. The team consisted of pedagogues, post-graduates, and academic workers from several institutions. On the Austrian side, there were colleagues from the Vienna University and the Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Vienna/Krems. On the Czech side, the team consisted of colleagues from the Theological Faculty of the South-Bohemian University in České Budějovice and the VOŠP Svatojánská Kolej, Svatý Jan pod Skalou. Let me also mention a few other names, e.g., Thomas Krobath, the vice-chancellor of the KPH Vienna/Krems; Lída Muchová of the South-Bohemian University, Radim Šíp, Denisa Denglerová, Martina Kurowski, Markéta Sedláková, Markéta Rácova, and František Trapl of the Pedagogic Faculty; and Kataryna Buchko, Doris Lindner, Helen Stockinger of the Viennese University; and the already mentioned Eva Muroňová, Tomáš Cyril Havel, and many other post-graduates and pedagogues who took turns in the project.

Through joint observations in schools and sharing of experiences we collected our reflections of the current situation in the area of inclusion in both countries which opened up various additional themes arising from the roles and professions in the school environment. The cogent themes that we have

been working with to this day include the culture of recognition in the school environment, handling of otherness, spirituality in the school environment, approach to human dignity, and many other themes. A number of questions emerged, such as what a school should look like in the 21st century and, in this context, what kind of education should teachers and the new professional specialists have to qualify for teaching at inclusive schools. The research themes began to emerge gradually, followed by the idea of a joint publication. In November 2015, a very successful three-day conference was organized in the environment of the Pedagogic Faculty of the Masaryk University, which was built on the project's outputs. Since 2017, the cooperation continues in the form of a bilingual publication under the title *The School on Its Way to the 21st Century*, to be published at the beginning of 2020.

Our partnership now lives its own life. We have become part of something extraordinary that is beneficial for our professional career. We have realized what it means to be united in otherness and what potential transformations of the society offer in the area of inclusion itself.

Professor Martin Jäggle

Vienna University, Austria

Martin Jäggle is a man who is not afraid of diversity, because he knows where he is at home and he would not feel at home in a place where diversity is missing.

Cyril Tomáš Havel

The cooperation on the Action Project, in which the Catholic Theological Faculty is represented by Prof. M. Jäggle, was for me an inspiration in the sense of broader concept of inclusive thinking in the upbringing and education of students, not merely in terms of the attitude to people with a physical, mental or social handicap, but also in terms of the diversity of cultures and worldviews.

Ludmila Muchová

Questions are more precious than answers, but even more valuable are questions that instigate more questions and provoke encounters with the diversity of questions.

Eva Muroňová

To me, Prof. Martin Jäggle is the new era's Foucault, because he has made me perceptive to the theme of power and the exclusion/inclusion in the school environment. I am grateful to him for his human and professional dimensions that he has opened up for me, so that I can view inclusive education with a more respectful and spiritual comprehension.

Markéta Sedláková

During the cooperation with the professor, I realized how much time we spend at the school as children and, consequently, how much the school environment impacts on our life, not only during our childhood, but also later in life on the formation of our self-awareness, identity, and career in the future. I began to understand social pedagogy like essentially associate with the school environment (so that it is, in fact, a pity that we only address this issue "after school" to correct the mistakes incurred while we were still school children. Moreover, I realized that it is necessary to go directly to the point of action and to draw the school into the overall social dialogue, etc.). Perhaps, it was not the cooperation with the professor alone, but it did come at the right time to emphasize the theme as such and its effect on man. Besides, in addition to being enthusiastic about the professor for what he is, I also admire him for his patience and endeavor to devote everybody as much time as it takes.

Denisa Denglerová

Martin Jäggle was born in 1948 in Vienna. He studies and philosophy, physics, mathematics, and Catholic theology at the universities in Vienna and Innsbruck. In 1992, he received his PhD in theology.

In the years of 1971-1975, he taught religion at several elementary and secondary schools. Since 1996, he gives lectures in religious pedagogy to future teachers of religion. In the years of 2003-2013, he was professor of religious education and Catechism at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Vienna University, where he was the dean from 2008 until 2012. He is a recognized author of scientific publications, study books, and children books published in 12 languages. He lectures and holds seminars at colleges and universities in 11 European countries. He is *inter alia* president of the Coordination Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation and member of the HIKMA Scientific Council, a periodical for Islamic theology and religious pedagogy. He is involved in various projects, *inter alia*, in the broad platform of “LEBENSWERTE SCHULE”. Furthermore, he represents the publisher of Südwind-Magazin for international politics, culture, and development.

Recorded fragments of a conversation with Martin Jäggle (June 2019)

Ad project

MJ: I grew up in the shade of the (Stephans) Dome and in the light of the synagogue. Those who had begun to build the Stephans Dome, knew that they would not live to see its completion. It is like with our Czech-Austrian School Project, where I am the man who is not going to live long enough to see it finished. Just like them, many generations too are going to work on this project.

Ad Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems

MJ: KPH is an extraordinary institution that had joined our project from the beginning – a project like no other in the whole world. I see the extraordinary nature of the project in the fact that the basis of this school is religious and cultural diversity. Diverse religions meet under this roof, as this religious school has been from its very beginning designated to furthering the professionalism of the teachers of all denominations in Austria, be it the Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Old-Catholics, etc. Thus, the KPH has become a center for the education of teachers of all denominations, including Islam, Judaism, and other religions. For many societies today, it is unimaginable that a school would exist in the world where religious diversity is a potential for common education, rather than a problem. By dealing with diversity face-to-face, we get to know one another.

Ad role of the school

MJ: If we want to create or support something new, we have to get rid of the old. In the school environment, we are often encouraged to work on new tasks, but simultaneously the new tasks are burdened with what the school has been doing for years. The notion “I have to do more and more” only leads to trouble and does not allow new things to happen. It is important to straighten out the priorities. Even in pedagogy, less can be more. Today, people want to educate themselves on their own. The school is merely a space where education can take place. Institutions as such provoke resentment. However, if an institution provides a living space, room for development, sense of effectiveness, and encouragement, man has other options. At the time of authoritative society, schools are conceived as compulsory. In a democratic society, however, no school should be authoritative. In a democratic society, a school can only be legitimate to the extent where it functions as a democratic establishment. A democratic school “feeds on dignity”, common decision-making, where the law and the right of education are important elements. And one more note – schools and politics are mutually intertwined, hence in all school project we always have to consider the current political situation and support.

Ad removal of the old

MJ: Quite simply, experience shows that things cannot go on like this anymore, as it is not beneficial to all the parties involved. Hence, I have to abandon what I see is not moving us ahead and does not help the situation. Such are only my priorities based on a constant struggle with others, so that I eventually have to stop and ask: “Well, and what actually do children and adolescents need right now? How do we bring into motion? Children now?” And then the “new” comes step-by-step. Every school has a story and history to tell and changing it will take time. Just like the Dome (Stephanusdom). We ought to acknowledge that “schools change slower than churches”. If a man has a vision, he needs persistence to realize it. Halting at the beginning is the first step to something new. The idea that one has to do constantly more and more is a great preparation for a burnout. I ask myself questions: What is it about now; what are the priorities; what has preference and what do students prefer and what do they need and what options do they have, etc. It does not help to look back and say that past generations used to do it this and that way, so it must be good enough for today’s generation.

Another issue is that teachers often complain about children and lose their relationship with the children. They view children as something troublesome, not like living human beings. It is like in the Bible: your rhetoric will tell on you. It is essential to abandon the notion of an ideal teacher who knows everything perfectly, as everybody has certain limits in his competences. Schools require diverse competences that are not available to a single man, but we all can have them together. This leads to the concept of a school that we all create together. Schools are under the influence of the society and family, but also the influence of reactions, because schools structurally “violate” students. Due to its own deficits, schools “torture and denigrate students”, see nothing but their deficits, not their potential, chances and needs. The fiction of homogeneity and routine that are associated with this concept claims that all children are identical, all children know only this much, all children have the same way of thinking and I, the teacher, have to conceive the class in a certain way, because all children are identical, etc. This fiction has to end, because it is nothing but a fiction.

I experienced one of the strongest moments in the school environment in a village school near Brno, where the children who had finished their assignment looked around the classroom which of their classmates need help. Community or nation is a common phenomenon, not the principle of competition. Something like this cannot be staged for visitors of the school who occasionally come to the school – it has to be present at the school every day. As to the overall context, that school got its impulse to change because of a newly enrolled autistic child. It was a gifted child, but it had a mental handicap. The school approached the situation in a forthcoming manner. The school had a chance to do it and used the opportunity for a change, they learned to handle otherness. The fascinating aspect of that school was when I walked up to the first floor where the school had an arts workshop – not the awards that the school had earned in the past, as they were stored in the basement next to the changing room. This village school had rather ordinary teacher (and a great principal), yet thanks to its approach it became a fair school, literally, as it won the Fair School Certificate from the League of Human Rights for its achievements. To me, this is the strength of the Czech Republic, where non-profit organizations can make a dynamic difference.

Ad Vienna

MJ: First of all, Vienna is a young city. For 20 years, Vienna had been the oldest federal state, in terms of its population. Today, it is the youngest federal state. Nowadays, the city is brighter, compared to the post-war smoky Vienna, where I grew up. I could never imagine how bright Vienna would become. Vienna is a city where public transportation plays an important role. The city has a huge number of social housing and many facilities of assistance and support for the needy. Vienna’s great advantage is cultural diversity ranging from music to museums. It is diversified and dynamic city – from classical music to traditional Viennese songs. But I also know Vienna’s dark sides. One of them is the FPÖ political party.

Vienna has always been Jewish town, but also an anti-Semitic one. It has a dark history of expulsion and liquidation of Jews. Since 1420, when 300 Jews were burned at stake, there was no Jewish community in Vienna for 200 years. When I was working at the theological faculty, I founded a coordination committee for cooperation of Christians and Jews. On June 9, 1419, i.e., exactly 600 years ago, the faculty was consulted whether Jews would form an association with Christians. There exists a record of it and I was wondering why the faculty has to deal with it even after 600 years.

Back to Vienna itself – the city rejuvenated thanks to immigration, because immigrants have children, so that the population of Vienna grows by 20 thousand annually.

Ad theological faculty

MJ: The theological faculty has a department Catholic theology and Protestant theology. It also has the institute of Islamic studies, because the university is conceived as an institution of religious studies. Furthermore, it has a research center for religion and its transformation in European societies. Recently, students may enroll in master programs as well as Orthodox religious pedagogy/theology. One could say that the university and faculty aim to see a potential in diversity. This was the inspiration for our project, launched in 2004, jointly with Thomas Korbath. We organized a number of seminars named “The Theory and Practice in the Development of Schools and Religion“ for students of teaching all subjects. The seminar is being taught to this day and led to our initiative Lebens.werte.schule. Cardinal Schönbrunn had to agree that a Protestant theologian teach at a Catholic faculty. In 2006, Islamic religious pedagogy was added. Today, the faculty is a house of religions from the library in the basement up to the attic, excepting one part that belongs to the law department. I think it is no coincidence that the Catholic theological faculty has students from 45 countries and half the students in the graduate program are from abroad. It may well be the Catholic faculty with the largest diversity. This was not primarily determined by the faculty’s decision, it is the consequence of the fact that the faculty is located in Vienna. Similarly, many other schools did not make such a decision – it simply is the result of natural development and they merely used the opportunity to make the relevant change.

Ad the office as dean of the theological faculty

MJ: From 1966, with a one-year pause, I have been a member of the university. Initially as a student, then a teacher, then a professor, and then quite unexpectedly a dean for 5 years. Even today in my retirement, I still am a member of the university. Not just me, the university is aging, too. In the beginning, the university was tiny. Today, it has an enrollment of 90 thousand students, not counting the medical faculty. At the beginning, it was a rather provincial institution. Today, it is international, partly thanks to the Catholic Theological Faculty. In the past, there used to be the so-called Siegfriedskopf (a monument to Siegfried who symbolizes German nationalism), but the university managed to get rid of the monument. Today, the foyer features an inscription with a slogan stating that science is not possible without respect for human rights. The university organizes 250 academic events a year, it is a living mechanism.

The best prerequisite for the office of a dean were my nine semesters as representative of the students and member of the relevant committees, and then 4 years as member of the appellate commission. What is important? As a dean, one must not be afraid of conflicts, as they are quite productive. It is important to bring out conflicts into the daylight, not keep them secret, even if it should mean that I could no longer be a dean. Does the dean represent the interests of his profession or those of the faculty? Without a doubt, as a dean I represented the faculty. The challenge was how to create a faculty with 65 scientists. There exists merely one theology, but the faculty focuses on individual specializations, whereas theology is only one specialization. Similarly, the same applies to pedagogy and other faculties. There can exist but one pedagogy as a science, yet all who participate in it have concrete specializations. The summary of the specializations does not equal pedagogy as such. Moreover, there are highly appreciated specializations, but also less respected specializations, e.g., social pedagogy that does not have a long tradition, yet a considerable potential for the future, which

however is often overlooked. The situation is similar in the field of religious pedagogy at the theological faculty.

Conflicts is another aspect of the matter, but one has to watch out not to see just problems alone, as that begins to affect one psychologically. I had noticed what it was doing to me, because I was dealing with conflicts constantly. Eventually, I decided to keep record of the solutions that were good and successful during the given day, including solutions of certain conflicts. Unless we do this, we might lose the positive in the quantity of the negative.

Is it me and my students or we and our school? Me and my department or we and our faculty? I launched the process of the faculty's development and started many projects that were indispensable for what we were trying to achieve. *Alone, we would not have been able to cross the swamp.* I, as a single person, am unable to change the faculty and people's way of thinking. I cannot implement any measures, as it takes changes in the process as a whole to change one's way of thinking and to find other cooperation options. However, this does not concern the faculty innerly, it concerns the faculty as a part of the university. In the beginning of my office as a dean, there only existed one research platform in which the faculty was participating. At the end of my term in office there were 5 interdisciplinary research platforms, in which the faculty was participating, and one of them even in a managing position. If applied to schools, in general, we can say that schools need a certain inner structure and culture for cooperation, but also a network that function beyond the school's premises. Such a network can be formed by a university or other institutions whose approach to the school varies. It may also include other schools that can participate in the form of mutual visits and exchange of experiences. For instance: I am going to visit your school and I am inviting you to visit my school, etc. The reason is that the view from outside is simply different and irreplaceable. It enables me to view things from outside, through the perspective of somebody else's eyes. This way I can see my own potential and realize what I have to learn. In other words, the things that had brought into motion as a dean opened up certain options around us. Finally, what the faculty or the school needs is a vision about its objectives and its stance to social, political, and especially clerical-political issues. Its position must be discernable, because has to assume a position to something, not against something, as an antagonist position merely defers the possibility to achieve the objective, whereas a positive approach facilitates progress and helps us to move forwards and take others along with us.

Ad orientation on schools

MJ: I don't know how to put it, but when began to teach, I had no experience at all. I was seeking someone who would explain to me how a school functions. I made some attempts. For instance, I started to attend classes in mathematics where students worked in small groups. Four of the best math students worked in groups together, whereas the teacher took the weakest students to form a group that he worked with himself. Thus, we were forced to work in our respective groups, which brought certain dynamics into the learning process. To learn means to study together. I was not afraid of math as a subject. I even used to tutor math when in secondary school. I did not tell "my students" how to solve the problem – instead, I asked them to explain the problem to me. Through this they realized what the problem was about and found a way to resolving it.

Then, in 1971, I started to teach and decided to apply the method of working in teams to my religion classes. I wanted to form capable teams. So I prepared a sociogram of the class. I asked the students: Whom would you elect to be the speaker of the class? Whom would you like to work on your homework? Whom would you invite to your birthday party? The questions in the sociogram were supposed to reveal the potential for leading, cooperation and furthering of relations. Thanks to this differentiation of the students I was able to balance out the three key aspects of teamwork. After that the student received their assignments and had to work on them and learn together.

The question of participation has always interested me. Not what I can teach others, whereas what people themselves are able to learn. There is a difference between working with 30 students or 5 groups of students. Dividing students into groups is something entirely different than changing the

seating order. Sometimes, it happened that children wanted to be in the former group, but that was not possible, because I always insisted on separating them according to the sociogram to ensure that they work effectively. In order to convince the children, I had to explain why they have to be in this or that group, e.g., because the place in a certain group is important for each particular student.

I dream

of a school as a place where students live and learn, where respect to others has priority over performance, where it is possible to be and become a human being.

I dream

of a school that helps children bear their fears and awakens their unanticipated abilities, a school that supports cooperation and does not need competitiveness, a school that encourages inquisitiveness and is not afraid of questions and provides a room for discovery.

I dream

of a school where there is a balance between work and play, activity and resting, the everyday and festive activities, where there is a room for conflicts, a school that is open-minded to mistakes and no ambition for perfection, a school that is aware of its limitations and recognize its limits, a school one does not live for, but is able to live with for a certain part of the day, because a school is life itself and cannot be "the only" aim in life, nor does it have the right to control anyone's life.

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For areas of research and overview of events at the Masaryk University in Brno Department of Social Pedagogy, go to <https://ksop.ped.muni.cz/projects>.