

Emergency Pedagogy Intervention after the Earthquake in China

On the morning of April 20th, 2013 a severe earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter scale shook the earth close to the city of Lushan in the region of Sichuan. More than 200 people died, over 10.000 were injured and dozens of buildings collapsed or were damaged to the point of no repair. In the light of the 2008 'Wenchuan Quake', which occurred only 200 kilometers away, this natural catastrophe was particularly grave because the region was still in the process of recovery.

In the wake of the 2008 quake, which had caused even more damage and the death of over 70.000 people, the Friends of Waldorf Education had dispatched an emergency pedagogic team to China, which now returned to the afflicted region. From a psycho-traumatological point of view, a new earthquake in the same region could cause a previous mono-trauma to develop into sequential-traumata, which in turn would have an even graver and more complex impact on the survivors.

From June 15th to June 29th 2013, the emergency pedagogic department of the Friends of Waldorf Education sent a team of pedagogues to China who offered their help to the affected people and provided guidance on how to cope with the psychological consequences of the catastrophe. A team of seven, consisting of pedagogues and therapists traveled to the region of Sichuan where the assignment was carried out with the help of the "Guangdong Shanhaiyuan Charity Foundation" and the psychological institute of the „Chinese Association of Science“. Both organizations supported the Friends with the administrative preparation and with their work on site.

The „Guangdong Shanhaiyuan Charity Foundation“ is the first anthroposophic foundation on the Chinese mainland. The foundation's main goals are the support of the anthroposophic movement in China, the training of Waldorf educators and the promotion of school education in rural regions. Due to the recent earthquake, the foundation has plans to establish a project for the psycho-social stabilization of traumatized children in the region of Sichuan. This project is scheduled to carry on until 2016. Due to the contacts the Friends made during their 2008 assignment, the „Guangdong Shanhaiyuan Charity Foundation“ was established as cooperation partner within few days after the 2013 quake. Because they have similar aims, the foundation's project and the Friend's emergency-pedagogic mission, were a good opportunity for an exchange between both partners: Friend's know-how on the subject of trauma-pedagogic work and the foundation's knowledge about local problems and issues was paired in an optimal way.

The main goal of this emergency pedagogic assignment widely differed from previous ones: The focus was not on the work with affected children and adolescents, but on the preparation of the work which the foundation's volunteers will carry out over the next years. To reach this goal the work on site was divided up into two phases: During the first week a 7-day intensive seminar on the subject of emergency pedagogy was held in the city of Ya'an. About 130 participants attended this seminar. Apart from the foundations' volunteers many more teachers, social care workers, and other interested people, who will be working with traumatized people in the affected area, attended this seminar.

The Seminar was based on presentations on the subject matter, such as basics of psycho-traumatology and emergency pedagogic instruments, as well as on the value and effect of psychological-interventions in different phases of the traumatic progress. The presentations were

supplemented by workshops on relevant emergency pedagogic topics and instruments (e. g. psychotherapy, eurhythmy, artistic therapy, experiential education/pedagogy), as well as discussion groups in which the acquired skills could be internalized. Regular plenary discussions offered the additional option of adding relevant subjects and topics to the seminar and to answer questions. During the seminar's progress particularly uplifting news reached the Friends, which proved the sustainability of their work: In order to reopen kindergartens in the region, teachers from the Shifang region were recruited; namely those young teachers who had been trained by the Friends after the 2008 earthquake. This news did not only motivate the Friends' team, but also the participants in the seminar.

This first week proved that the earthquake, which in Western media only was a closing note, lives on in the people's heads and also how great the sorrows of the affected people are. On the first day of the seminar a participant formulated a thought that was to be echoed repeatedly: "My feet and my head feel as though the earth was still shaking." The adults, especially teachers, felt extremely pressured, as a part of them had to return to work the very next day after the quake; therefore they had hardly any time to care for their families or to tend to their destroyed houses and most of them resided in tents. These living situations additionally burdened the precarious prospects for the future, as many were indebted through the quake five years ago and now stand before the ruins of their houses, once again. Adding up, the problems which teachers now have to face in class, pose a huge challenge for the teachers: Many reports on a changing conduct of their pupils and novel problems since the quake, as well as a pedagogic helplessness in facing those changes reached the Friends' team. Due to this fact there was a greater need for discussion groups and that the participation in those sessions was intensified.

The second phase of the emergency pedagogic assignment focused on the work at Lushan-Xian Middle School. 1500 students of grades 11 to 13 attend this school. Because it is the only Middle School in the area, students travel a great distance to attend classes and some even stay as boarders. Though the earthquake happened on a Saturday, many students were in their classes, preparing for their exams. Due to this fact the earthquake is intrinsically tied to the school, which intensifies the problematic behavior in classes. During the second week the Friends worked with 500 pupils and 50 teachers of Lushan-Xian Middle School. At first, the Friends' team took the lead while the foundation's volunteers, who had been trained the previous week, gradually took over more and more tasks. In this way they were able to acquire first-hand knowledge on carrying out an emergency pedagogic intervention while having the profit from the team's guidance.

The Lushan-Xian Middle-School is located close to the earthquake's epicenter, and thus it was severely affected. Only half a year prior to the quake the school had been relocated to a new building which, compared to the previous one, provided more safety in case of an earthquake. Indeed, the amount of bodily harmed people was small; however, parts of the building were so severely damaged that they had to be closed down. At present, classes are being held in "temporary shelters". The external disarray was accompanied an internal confusion, which sets in after almost every catastrophe: In addition to external wounds the affected people carry wounds in their souls, which often carry on hurting them weeks and months after the event.

In order to accommodate the needs of students and teachers at "Lushan Middle-School", each group was offered a two-day workshop. The work with the students focused on establishing rhythms and had a clearly structured schedule. Such a definitive structure is important because it establishes an anti-pole to the chaos that was caused by the earthquake. At the same time, this was an example for the volunteers of the foundation of how they could structure their future emergency pedagogic work

in the region. As part of the workshop, courses in artistic fields such as eurhythmics and experiential pedagogy were offered, which the children attended with joy.

The teachers were offered two single-day seminars on the subject of emergency pedagogy. Within those seminars the participants had the opportunity to discuss personal and professional questions. The other part of the teachers' workshop consisted of practical advice on what kind of pedagogic instruments could be applied in reacting to the new demands in their scholarly practice. For the teachers the two short workshops were a great relief, as they could apply the discussed topics and instruments right after the workshop ended.

After two weeks a good foundation had been provided for the „Guangdong Shanhaiyuan Charity Foundation“ to continue their work. The further progress of the work was placed into the hands of the local people and the Friends will continue to accompany the project and counsel the foundation according to the demand. If necessary, a second team will travel to China. At the moment, however, the trained people have to fill the project with life and find a 'Chinese' way of implementing the emergency-pedagogic concept in the earthquake-region. The Friends wish the „Guangdong Shanhaiyuan Charity Foundation“ the best of luck and good results in their efforts.

As an added bonus, the project's successful progress facilitated new ideas for further cooperation: The „Chinese Association of Science“ was particularly interested in follow-up seminars on the subject of emergency- and trauma-pedagogy in China. All over the world children and adolescents are confronted with traumata and those experiences are not limited to disaster zones. Due to this fact, a competent approach to traumata is an important pedagogic qualification, which all people who work with children throughout the world should acquire. The Friends will be honored to further promote this competence in China.

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Malte Landgraff

*The **Friends of Waldorf Education** are worldwide sponsors of a free education system. Since 1971 they advocate Waldorf education and the freedom of education systems. Since 1993 the office in Karlsruhe organizes and supervises international volunteer services, worldwide. Since summer 2011 it is possible to fulfill a 12-month civil service in anthroposophic institutions through the association.*

Since 2006 the Friends of Waldorf Education are active in the area of emergency pedagogy. Following the outbreak of a war or a natural disaster, they worked with psychologically traumatized children and adolescents in Lebanon (2006), China (2008 and 2013); Gaza (2009-2013), Indonesia (2009), Haiti (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Japan (2011), and Kenya (2012-2013).

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