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The Czech approach to outdoor adventure and experiential education: the influence of Jaroslav Foglar's work

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ABSTRACT

While key personalities often connected with the roots of outdoor education and experiential learning, like Dewey, Seton, Hahn or Naess, are well known internationally, Jaroslav Foglar, a Czech outdoor and experiential educator, is mostly unknown to the international audience. The article adds to the literature related to Czech outdoor experience and focuses on introducing Foglar, his personality and work to a wider audience. Foglar's principles of boyhood are taking risks, active lifestyle, honest behaviour and learning in nature with others in a small group. Foglar's specific outdoor adventure characteristics include timelessness, place, romance, mystery and challenge, and traditions with rituals. All these factors together point to Jaroslav Foglar being not only an important Czech writer and educator, but also potentially influencing the field of outdoor adventure and experiential education internationally.

KEYWORDS

History; outdoor education; Jaroslav Foglar; writer; boyhood; holistic approach

1. Background

Outdoor education theoretically encompasses particular potential educational resources, forms and methods that are based not on the transmission of information, but on mediating experiences. In various cultures, outdoor education carries specific features of local traditions. In Norway, it is particularly the use of nature in the tradition of *friluftsliv* (outdoor life) (Dahle, 2007; Faarlund, 2007), in the UK it is Outdoor Learning, an active, experiential approach to learning, open to all, that involves being outdoors as a central part of the experience (Institute for Outdoor Learning, n.d.), in the USA it is Experiential Education, challenge and experience followed by reflection leading to learning and growth (Association for Experiential Education, n.d.), in Germany it is *Erlebnispädagogik* (Becker, 2016; Ziegenspeck, 1996), etc.

Outdoor education translates in Czech to *výchova v přírodě* and adventure education to *dobrodružná výchova* (see Turčová, Martin, & Neuman, 2005). *Výchova v přírodě* has been translated recently to 'education in nature' (Martin, 2011; Martin, Turčová, & Neuman, 2016) involving *turistika* (active movement on foot, bikes, canoes or skies involving other outdoor and cultural activities, like learning about nature and local history, art, music and entertainment, mushroom and berry picking) to distinguish between the Czech approach and outdoor education. Another term used in the Czech Republic is *zážitková pedagogika* (Jirásek, 2004), often translated to experiential education. Recently, Jirásek (2014) has indicated the difference between *zážitková pedagogika* (experiential education/pedagogy) and holistic education (experiential learning)—see Figure 1.

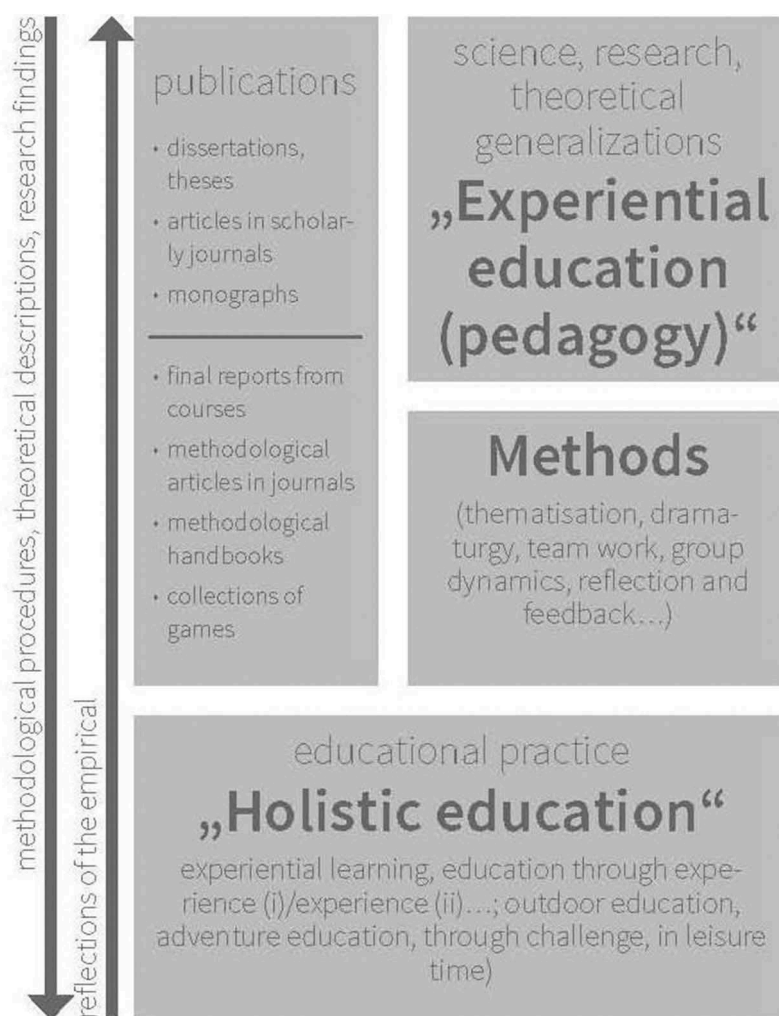


Figure 1. Association between holistic education and experiential education (pedagogy) (Jirásek, 2014, p. 14).

The Czech approach to outdoor adventure and experiential education is not entirely based on overcoming obstacles emerging from a sojourn in untamed surroundings during expeditions lasting several weeks or on adventurous and physically challenging situations as it is in other countries, but also makes use of games. Games and play are the symbol of the Czech form of outdoor adventure and experiential education. The motivational power of a legend, which indicates the character of programs, a kind of libretto, which creates a necessary and inviting atmosphere, has become a natural part of many games that are used in discourse about outdoor adventure and experiential education in the Czech Republic.

Some of the main personalities of twentieth-century outdoor education and experiential learning are John Dewey or Ernest Thompson Seton from the USA, Baden-Powell from the United Kingdom, Kurt Hahn from Germany or Arne Naess from Norway. All recognized for their innovative and progressive methods and their influence on other outdoor educators (Ogilvie, 2013; Smith & Knapp, 2011). However, Jaroslav Foglar (1907–1999), the writer and educator, has influenced Czech outdoor adventure and experiential education. He has influenced many scout leaders and other educators, as well as the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in this central European country.

An encyclopaedic entry would state about him: over a period of 60 years (a total of 800+ boys) with one scout troop, with meetings twice a week and every weekend, he prepared and lead youth summer tent camps for many years (1925–1984); as a writer he published 27 volumes of collected works (3.2 million copies) and 60 volumes of chronicles (15,000 hand written pages); he prepared scripts for 315 episodes of a comics about a 5 boys club; he worked as an editor of the top-selling Czech weekly magazine (with more than 200,000 copies sold); he initiated and implemented the idea of ‘readers clubs’ and simultaneously influenced tens of thousands of young people at one moment through the information published in his journal; he shared a whole range of ideas and thoughts dealing with club or troop activities, as well as with individual self-education, and he was also an author of a large number of games, including games played over the whole-year (stage games); there are 270 boxes of archival material about him in the Museum of National Literature (*Památník národního písemnictví*) in Prague.

2. Literature review

The indigenous nature of the Czech *turistika* activities and the dramaturgy methods of creative course design has attracted recent attention (Bartůněk, Neuman, & Martin, 2008; Kudláček, Bocarro, Jirásek, & Hanuš, 2009; Leberman & Martin, 2004, 2005; Martin, 2001a, 2001b, 2011; Martin, Leberman, & Neill, 2002; Neuman, 2001a, 2001b; Turčová, Neuman, & Martin, 2003, 2004). Of particular interest is the research-based text Outdoor and Experiential Learning (Martin, Franc, & Zounková, 2004), which describes the dramaturgical methods and activities in more detail. Czech outdoor terminology is discussed in the paper by Turčová et al. (2005) and Czech research in outdoor experiential education in the paper by Neuman, Turčová, and Martin (2013).

There is not much written about Jaroslav Foglar in English. There is a short article with basic information about games and play in Foglar’s works (Jirásek, Martin, & Turčová, 2009), or research results dealing with the reading of Foglar’s books and carrying out physical activity (Jirásek, 2008), or information about motivation towards an active lifestyle which problematize the boundary between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Jirásek, 2012). Foglar is also mentioned in chapters by Martin, Turčová, and Neuman (2007) in *Nature First: outdoor life the friluftsliv way* (Henderson & Vikander, 2007) and Martin et al. (2016) in the *International Handbook of Outdoor Studies* (Humberstone, Prince, & Henderson, 2016).

There are quite a lot of biographies about Foglar in Czech, for example, the authors’ autobiography (Foglar, 2005), examinations of all of Foglar’s books and other works (Nosek-Windy, 1999), memories and stories of his colleagues and friends (Hojer & Černý, 2000; Polák, 2003; Raba, 2005), special books evaluating his life and work, especially those published for the 100th anniversary of his birth (Jirásek, 2007; Zachariáš, 2007; Zapletal, 2007). His collected works (novels, handbooks, a selection of his chronicles, journals articles, games, theatre plays, etc.) count 27 volumes. There is a collection of his comic strips (two big books) and other secondary literature. These are not the only indicators of the influence of this personality in Czech culture. Some lines from his comics and books have become popular sayings and show a specific Czech humour. However, these are hard to transfer to different social and historical conditions.

Jaroslav Foglar (1907–1999), through his work as a long-term scouting leader and writer, is recognized as having influenced through his stories of adventure at least three generations in their relationship to nature, camping and scouting (Jirásek, 2007). He led the development and chronicled the history of *Junák*—the Czech Scout (scouting) in Czechoslovakia for more than 60 years, specifically summer youth camps from 1925–1985. Scouting summer camps (*tábory*) involved children and young adults spending two to three weeks living in nature, playing games and learning outdoor skills (i.e. *turistika*, physical/sport, creative arts and environment activities) (Frainšic, Turčová, & Martin, 2016; Neuman et al., 2013). His book *Boys from the Beavers’ River* [*Hoši od Bobří řeky*] (Foglar, 1937) was about friendship through exploring and having adventures in nature. In 1938, Foglar started his cartoon serial, ‘Swift Arrows’ [*Rychlé šípy*], which most Czech children and adults have read. His educational

methods were progressive, but often clashed with traditional scouting, which often got Foglar into trouble with other Scout leaders (Jirásek et al., 2009).

The aim of this article is to present information about Jaroslav Foglar who influenced the Czech outdoor adventure and experiential education to the international audience interested in the history of outdoor education and its ideological influences. In order to provide a full understanding, it is necessary to present some biographical details, so the first part of the article deals with social, cultural and personal aspects of twentieth-century life. Then Foglar's values and pedagogical intentions are presented along with specific approaches the writer and educator took to young people in utilizing deep experience and education in nature. The last part of this article examines contemporary outdoor adventure and experiential education in the Czech Republic, which looks to the ideas of Jaroslav Foglar as one of its inspirations.

3. Method

Document analysis of primary and secondary sources reflects a qualitative (interpretative, ethnographic) approach and classifies our research as a descriptive approach (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). It is a qualitative type of research or interpretative because the data analysis is qualitative. Qualitative research in educational sciences aims at a holistic view on learners and educators and tries to understand which meanings learners and educators attribute to different phenomena (Hendl, 1999, 2000). Philosophical background of these aims is grounded in phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics and some developmental lines of pragmatism. (Hendl, 2000). Our study can also be classified as a historical research as it deals with data that already exist. Sources of data in historical research are primary and secondary sources (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Primary sources included Foglar's writings, manuscripts, letters, memoirs, biography and magazines; secondary sources were books and reviewing research on Foglar and his work, and encyclopaedias. Evaluation of historical data and information is often referred to as historical criticism. The collected data were categorized into more general groups—the method of data reduction into themes and categories. A disadvantage of content analysis is the problem of hidden meanings, reading between lines. There is a certain subjectivity of interpretation. Based on reviewing research on Foglar (Jirásek, 2008, 2012; Jirásek et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2007, 2016) and his own books, the following themes have been identified: Foglar's life and work, his personality, his values and educational principles and methods, specific outdoor adventure characteristics. These categories were further categorized into sub-categories, like boyhood, courage, healthy lifestyle, interest in nature, romance, mystery, timelessness, etc. During the process of categorization, nodes were often branched, joined and changed. Then the text was coded and searched for patterns and relationships, and by the method of continual comparison and analytical induction, we reached the final interpretation of texts—the process of synthesis (Cohen et al., 2000).

4. Findings

4.1. Social and historical context

Foglar's life and work have gone through the historical changes and political turnabouts. Foglar spent his childhood in the First Republic in Czechoslovakia (the common state of Czechs and Slovaks founded in 1918 at the end of the WWI. This territory had been part of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Empire for 300 years). Till 1938, Czechoslovakia was a democratic state. At the beginning of WWII, Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany and divided into the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia (under direct German occupation), and the Slovak state (under German domination). After WWII in 1945, Czechoslovakia as a democratic state again, however, in 1948 the communist regime was implemented under the Soviet influence. After the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989, democracy was re-established in Czechoslovakia, and in 1993, the state peacefully separated

into two smaller independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. All these political changes had a direct influence on Foglar's life and the opportunities he had for his work and publishing.

Foglar encountered *Junák* (scouting) in 1920 and started to participate in scouting activities regularly since 1924. In 1923, he published his first story, and in 1934, his first book manuscript won the first prize as the best book for young people. Since 1938, he worked as the journal editor of *Mladý Hlasatel* (Young Announcer), as the writer publishing books for boys, and as the author of the weekly comic strip *Rychlé šípy* (Swift Arrows) (Foglar, 1998). The Nazi regime banned this journal in 1941 and Foglar worked during the war as the technical editor. After WWII, he worked again as the editor of *Junák* (Scout) magazine and later *Vpřed* (Ahead) magazine. However, they were stopped publishing for political reasons in 1948. There were moments through the communist period when Foglar found it possible to publish (in the 1960s and late 1980s). Otherwise, he was forced into inactivity (it was impossible for him to publish, even though there was no written ban). His books have been published since 1934 (e.g. Foglar, 1934, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1970, 1986) and some of his novels have been re-written into comics recently. His novels have been translated into Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, German and Esperanto; however, none of his books has been translated into English yet.

4. 2. Foglar's personality

4.2.1. Women, boys and sexuality

Foglar grew up with his older brother and mother (his father died when he was 4) and this relationship was very strong even into his later years (and this is probably the cause of his complicated relationship with women in general). Nonetheless, there are a few indications that he did fall in love with girls on several occasions—his infatuation with a theatre actress when he was 11, or a platonic relationship with the sister of one member of his scout troop (Foglar, 2005). It is possible he was considering a deeper relationship or even marriage (Malinský, in Hojer & Černý, 2000) in those two different cases (Sýs, 1987). However, it seems his mother dissuaded him from deeper relationships. It is also pointed to possible indications of hidden homosexuality in his writings (Kuběna, 2007; Stern, 2005). Without seeking the right answer, it is certain that his ability to fully concentrate on his pedagogical efforts and writing career was possible precisely thanks to his bachelor lifestyle.

There is little space in his work dedicated to girls. Protagonists of his novels, stories and comics are nearly exclusively boys. Girls seem 'annoying' or 'malicious' to him (Foglar, 2005, p. 30). Surprisingly, this one-sided concentration on boys has not distracted girls from reading his books. Research on popularity of his books does not show any difference between the sexes (Urbanová & Matýsková, 1992). In addition, several surveys show very high and stable popularity among readers over time (Jírek, 1964; Mrva, 1990; Pírek, 1990; Sohr, 1968; Uherková & Úlovcová, 1993).

4.2.2. Boyhood

A very important dimension visible in Foglar's career is his lifelong focus on boys, young males in the period between childhood and adolescence (15–18), a sensitive period in boys' physical, emotional and moral maturation. The author repeated many times his desire to remain a boy. This focus on boyhood is connected with his understanding of boy's needs in all dimensions of their lives. Also, the consideration of the symbol of spring in its both meanings, in the sense of spring time and as a chance to engage in scouting activities more actively in the outdoors, as well as an appreciation the 'April' of human life.

Anyone who is not able to read his books with the eyes of a young person cannot fully understand their message. The reader may find his works as 'writings of poorer linguistic and stylistic quality, with various unfinished and frequently unbelievable tales, which correspond to the author's education (he attended a secondary business academy) and spending his time in the

intellectually uninspiring environment of teenage clubs' (Komárek, 2003, p. 105). Foglar's books are intended to speak to young people, in the age the author himself had decided to remain for his whole life. 'The originality and the somewhat quirky genius of Jaroslav Foglar lay in the fact that he could write the way a thirteen year-old boy would if he knew how to write' (Halas in Hojer & Černý, 2000, p. 127). The mixture of realism and romanticism, which Foglar produces in his work indeed, corresponds with the boy's mentality and desire to find knowledge, explore the world and reveal its secrets. His work fully engages and evokes the imagination, fantasy, illusion and desire for ideals. 'It is a world which reflects an infantile psyche unencumbered by the empirical facts of life' (Vacke, 1988, p. 1).

Boyhood with all its manifestations and problems is the very embodiment of boyish desires. It is adventures with all its attributes, mystery and mystique, battles and fights, attacks and escapes, wandering and persecution, expeditions into the unknown in the city and beyond, an exaggerated imagination and feeling for an atmosphere. 'It is a different world, inhabited mainly by boys, fights and competitions. Adults are mostly props' (Sadecký, 1964, p. 106). This boys' world (with the illusive possibility of staying in it forever) is built on boyhood as a separate and specific category which serves as a measure of all actions. It is a world where adults serve more as a backdrop, unless they are a symbol of perfection, worthy models and leaders (personal qualities that boys admire).

The emphasis on boyhood is neither the end in itself nor purely the result of personal preferences. The effort to influence young people in this very sensitive age seems to be the only completely appropriate one. An adult reader can easily laugh at the problems, mysteries and enigmas Foglar's heroes have to solve. However, the reader who discovers the magic of Foglar's work at the right age can embark on the path of self-education which may continue even after the person ceases reading the books or reaches adulthood. It often remains a stimulus for personal self-development throughout life. The ideal of boyhood thus remains preserved in its pure form before reaching the age of erotic awakening, which is focused on comparison and competition with members of a peer group. Foglar was able to take full advantage of this self-knowledge and personal development potential present in games, exercises, camping and other activities.

Our observations of contemporary Czech youth magazines indicate their insufficient respect to the physical and erotic life, considering the options appropriate for the particular age. This fact appears also in other areas, including sport (Guttmann, 1996; Jirásek, Kohe, & Hurych, 2013; Weaving, 2014). It is related to the loss of distance when looking at a naked human body (as can be found in ubiquitous pornography), and with the explicit instructions for erotic practices in magazines intended for prepubescent girls. A premature focus on these questions impairs personal maturation in other areas, and may be one of the causes of emotional numbness and an inability to experience certain facets of life deeply and fully, including the consequent rampant promiscuity and the unwillingness to overcome any difficulties in relationships. Foglar managed in a very appropriate way to deflect early attention from the erotic to the possibilities of physical, mental and moral development through experiences in the wilderness and with groups of boys. It is discussed whether he took sufficient note that not everyone wants to stay a boy forever. Since the end of boyhood and beginning of adolescence boys pass into a period of sexual (as well as mental) maturation, and the contact with girls is no longer limited to either deliberately ignoring or teasing them. On contrary, one's relationship to the opposite sex becomes a centrepiece of personal growth, manifestations of puberty become a touchstone of interest in the troop and its activities. It is the end of boyhood and preadolescence, which is filled with other types of relationships as well as various interests and kinds of experience. This fact Foglar does not sufficiently openly accept in his advocacy of boyhood. It is evident in the lack of a female element in his books while 'they are filled with the boyish adolescent psyche' (Vacke, 1988, p. 3).

Literary critics (Toman, 2008) have repeatedly admonished Foglar's stories for their schematization. However, those still going through boyhood are not yet ready to unravel the complex and intricate meaning of symbols with multi-layered characters and their interpretation. The subject being considered cannot lead to searching hidden meanings, and therefore on contrary, these

critical rebukes can be looked at as an indication of how appropriate the works are for the age group concerned. 'While they know that reality is something more than what is revealed by its external face, they are not adequately prepared to accept what lies behind it. They are able to penetrate into these depths, however, preferably when illuminated as a clearly defined image' (Nezkusil, 1991, p. 159). This is the importance, meaning and significance of Foglar's much criticized schematization. Complex issues (not only ethical or moral) cannot be disclosed in all their complexity, because they would remain completely unintelligible. Boyhood varies from one country to another, and it is entirely appropriate that Foglar's heroes appear as clear types with distinct modes of behaviour. That help in clarifying one's own position in life and social relationships and in assessing one's prism of good and evil, even if it is exaggeratedly detached from reality. An adult reader who has come to recognize the complexity of reality and of the process of discovery is able to understand the complex business of reason, and thus may judge such reading to be flat, schematic and detached from reality.

4.2.3. *The courage to take reasonable risks*

The courage to accept risks and responsibilities is both a feature of personal maturity and one of the aims of outdoor adventure. The willingness to cross personal borders, venture into uncharted areas and not to be afraid of difficulties that always accompany such a step. A phenomenon, which paradigmatic example is the challenge posed to Abraham to 'leave his home, and journey to the 'promised land', is an approach to challenges Foglar often accepted and even sought for. Therefore, he used the slogan 'Alvarez needs only the brave and the strong!' (Foglar, 1989) (the motto of a long-term game taking place over several months and culminating at a summer camp) and demanded it from boys in the troop. It is a motto the author himself lived by. Next to many other examples, it is sufficient to point to the courage of an 18-year-old man who decided to take the leading role in organizing a tent camp without ever having been to such a camp. 'I did not know what such a camp looks like, how to build it, how to lead it, what you need, in short, nothing' (Foglar, 2005, p. 52). The same courage is required for deciding to build a camp in the unknown wilds of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia (west of Ukraine) or organizing a camp despite Nazi prohibitions. In addition, the decision to buy a decommissioned steamer and anchor it on the Vltava River in Prague in order to rebuild it into a clubhouse. Foglar was willing to try the untested, whether it was to publish books, lead a scouting group, organize reading clubs, announce national competitions, promise to deliver a comics story every week, create new attractive programmes, tutorials, games, and promote them in magazines. He continually took on more challenges and was willing to try new ways of engaging the public, not only through magazines and books, but also through experimenting with phonograph records, theatre, and radio. These are clearly features of a strong personality and courage.

For the summary of personal traits, which contributed to the extraordinary expressiveness of Foglar's works for young readers, see [Table 1](#).

4.3. *Foglar's values and educational principles and methods*

4.3.1. *Healthy lifestyle*

In the blossoming of spring and boyhood, life and human strength are directly connected with the admiration for a healthy lifestyle and the appreciation of physical strength, flexibility and agility. It is hard to decide whether the emphasis on beauty of boys' bodies is an aesthetic or ethic interest (although it seems that originally it was beauty that would be appreciated). However, both these levels are expressed by highlighting the tanned skin, muscularity and strength, and physical exercise as one of the basic tools of outdoor programmes. From the point of values, Foglar placed exercise and healthy lifestyle at the side of good, while the lack of interest in own body, smoking and alcohol placed on the side of evil.

Table 1. Foglar's personal traits.

Deep experience	Refusal to be satisfied with any shallowness and boredom in existence ('to break it down to the depths of one's soul')
Interest in nature	Colours and smells of nature (drawings and descriptions of sunsets, rocks, trees, moonlit nights ...)
Admirably accurate <i>perception of details</i> through all the senses	Their meticulous memorization, and later inclusion in his works (numbers, names, people and their characters, situations, moods, events, smells and colours)
<i>Amazing memory</i>	
Exceptional imagination	Drawing inspiration from the surrounding environment or legends supplying a narrative for various new games and programmes
Intense romantic sensibility	Romantic conceptions, perceiving and bringing awareness to romantic locations, creating romantic stories and incidents
Monochromatic <i>judgements</i> appropriate for boyhood	Good is good, evil is evil, no intermediate levels exist (e.g. a clear moral judgement of an individual based on his 'polite speech')
Courage and willingness to take reasonable risks	Crossing the boundaries of one's personal comfort zone
Extraordinary creativity	Transformed into clear instructions for youth about how to behave
Narrative talent	The ability to draw attention to a story, punchline, joke, dramatic situation or bizarre circumstances
Ability to use a variety of means to communicate his ideas and stories	Writing and drawings in books and magazines, theatrical performances, radio, phonograph records, photographs

4.3.2. *Interest in nature*

Foglar was deeply interested in nature since his school years. Observing nature and perceiving it with all senses is not evoked by the values of discovery (in the sense of natural sciences), however, by aesthetic values again. Values, like beauty of colours, shapes and events, stand as a solid foundation for the lifelong application of education in nature. Accurate descriptions of the striking enchantment of nature are always guided by the desire to convey the experience of beauty.

(...) I painted a fiery red sunset, I looked up at the starry sky, the moonlight night excited me so much one night that I secretly got out of bed and looked through the window into the yard of the apartment building onto the silent roofs and copings under the glare of the moon, and I wrote poems about those white nights. I was almost fourteen. The departure of ice in the sparkling glow of February sunshine, babbling brooks, screeching seagulls above the river, catkins, the smell of spring in the air and the earth, and the new grass, blooming meadows, colourful clouds looking out over the ponds, sunrises, panoramic view of the countryside—and again then autumnal mood with the scent of the fading foliage—all that enchanted me and beautified all my boyhood. And it has stayed in me unfading and undiminished, down to the present day (Foglar, 2005, p. 40).

The reader is lead down the path of own observations, noticing details, being aware of nature and the changeability of nature and the wealth which comes to us through all our senses. Experiencing nature is not only through visual beauty, but also through captivating smells, a direct physical contact, and through the most intense presence of aesthetic values.

4.3.3. *Being honourable in own actions*

Although the interest in ethical values can be enhanced or inspired by aesthetic perception as indicated earlier, it does not mean that ethical behaviour has been pushed to the side in Foglar's educational programmes. Exactly the opposite is true—the moral content of stories, books and troop activities is entirely pure and clear. Some would consider a comic insistence on eradicating 'dirty' words from the vocabulary of youth to deep values of honour, friendship, truth and goodness.

These constant warnings about the need to distinguish between good and evil are certainly simplistic, black and white and, therefore, inadequate for dealing with the complexity of the world. However, the target group for Foglar's texts is not the adult population who is well versed in evaluating the distinction between good and evil. Readers and group members are young people who are not able to make such a distinction for the time being. Therefore, it is necessary to indicate

through clear examples approximately where the boundary between ethically correct and problematic behavioural lies.

Foglar was able to achieve his dream of becoming a youth leader in a short period of time when maturing. Despite all the remarks of literary critics about the schematism, lifelessness and idealization of his heroes, there is no doubt that the challenge to try to live honestly, fairly and truthfully has remained singularly appealing. At least, while reading Foglar's books, hundreds of thousands of young people have made an attempt to live up to and by these values. Perhaps it was some naiveté, an unwillingness to take into account the reality of the majority of the population. Or a bet on the belief that man is inherently good and it is enough to just show him how to do good, that lies behind his success in the large-scale hunt for good deeds and the effort to avoid foul speech.

4.3.4. *Group cohesion*

Participating in the life of a small group helps individuals to self-understanding and a sharing values lead to activities which are fulfilling to group members. However, what is indisputable in Foglar's work is that the division between the 'good' and 'evil' side produces antithetical archetypes of behaviour (Swift Arrows have their foil in the Brotherhood of the Cat's Paw). It is possible to communicate and collaborate on exposing secrets with the own gang, on contrary, with enemy gangs there is a threat of constant conflict and tension.

Informal groups can be friends from a school class, children groups in youth organizations, friends living in the same neighbourhood or local community, but also clubs inspired by Foglar's magazines. Foglar's ideas had been first tested in 'his' own magazine and later republished in other journals where he was working at the time—and group members always followed his writing. As a charismatic person, he not only organized the Young Herald clubs, but also the Proper Boy club, the Ahead reading clubs—known as the Foglar Reading Clubs. However, what was most important, his style of education trusted children in collectives, founded on their independence and activity, it was simply 'education for independence through trust' (Hykisch, 1964, p. 247).

4.3.5. *Holistic impact*

Foglar was always interested in the holistic effects on personal development. The individual activities (13 Beavers, Blue Life, guidance literature, etc.) never address merely physical or moral training, but have the influence on the whole personality. For example, the book *The Beaver River Boys*, first published in 1937 (it has 17 editions, the last one was published as a comics in 2013), and probably his most popular work (with more than half a million copies sold), constitutes a call for self-knowledge and a test of strength through the story of boys from the city getting to know nature in their first tent camp. The reader witnesses how (under the guidance of their camp leader) chronically bored city boys become honest and decent young men while being encouraged to do their own independent activity, which is the transformation of what they read into their own activities. The insertion of a romantic story based on a legend from the far north into the narration (about the Beaver River and a boy who decided to hunt a beaver for each of 13 rusty nails driven into a beam) is used as a motivation to find a way to implement the values of the story in today's society (each of the beavers is presented as a task symbolizing demands on the boy doing the hunting). The complexity of the autodidactic self-regulatory initiative lies in the literary presentation of romantic legends and tests, but it is entirely up to the reader whether to take up the task. Each 'beaver' (task) is focused on a different component of one's character and is assigned a different colour (a boy who has caught a particular 'beaver' can wear a badge sewn on his shirt sleeve). The individual personal qualities being strengthened by the tasks are expressed in the names assigned to the individual beavers (see Table 2).

The above tasks help to improve physical fitness, to train willpower, self-control, concentration and patience, to improve motor skills and the ability to guess correctly. They also aim at learning about surroundings and landscape, technical skills, learning to connect with and protect the environment, and at cultivating personal responsibility for their social group and society.

Table 2. ‘Beavers’ (tasks).

Agility	Running, high jump and long jump
Target	Throwing on target
Rescue	First aid kit, first aid rules
Swimming	To swim 60 meters
Good deeds	To do 100 good deeds
Courage	To overcome fear and show fearlessness
Flowers	To identify 50 plants
Silence	To go 24 hours without speaking in the company of other people
Solo	To stay an extended period totally alone
Dexterity	To make a useful product
Strength	To do five pull-ups
Hunger	To go 24 hours without eating while drinking only water
Nobility	To go without using bad words, never be rude, be honest, tell the truth, be good to everyone and help

4.4 Outdoor adventure characteristics

Foglar’s specific outdoor adventure characteristics include timelessness, place, romance, mystery and challenge, and traditions with rituals.

4.4.1. Timelessness

It is possible to identify certain characteristics in the way time is dealt with in Foglar’s works, especially his particular cyclical time conception as forever repeating. Like in all agrarian societies, time passes in the natural cycle of spring—summer—autumn—winter, and each season is marked by specific activities. In Foglar’s works and activities time is also cyclical, however, it is marked by the school year, which determines and regulates the time dedicated to group and club activities. A number of Foglar’s novels and guidance manuals begin in September at the beginning of the school year. It is the time for new beginnings, new starts and new adventures. Moving from autumn through winter and Christmas time, time then swings across to the most important season—spring. Spring offers the promise of a long-term game, the awakening of nature and its careful observation through weekend trips. In spring, the excitement about summer becomes evident in expectation of the ‘enterprise for the whole man’. A summer camp normally concludes the cycle with several weeks spent living in tents.

Another feature of Foglar’s temporality is a certain vagueness. His stories are not always set in the periods of the First Republic, German occupation or socialism and characters are not characterized by the attributes of these periods. Identifiable features are referred to by other names (e.g. Nazi Germany is identified only as the Enemy). The historical context radiates from the experience of the individuals and clubs or troops to a certain extent. Historical events are possible to identify from illustrations of clothing, means of transport and other characteristics (most noticeable changes of time are visible in the change of police and security uniforms in *Swift Arrows*). However, the political and wider social situation is irrelevant to the behaviour, actions, activities and boys’ adventures. They are seemingly timeless and can emerge from and be experienced in almost any social arrangement. Therefore, cooperation with the army, police or security forces of all political systems is not only conceivable, but even explicitly described in some stories (indicating a *de facto* loyalty to their legality). Foglar’s literary stories are timeless and his heroes are unbound by temporality.

4.4.2. Space, place and landscape

The location of his stories, real expeditions and camps is typically a totally unknown and deserted wilderness area, far from the city. The second possible setting is a mysterious, winding and confusing city. These are two fundamental features of Foglar’s spatiality, which are neither in irreconcilable conflict nor in opposition. On the contrary, they complement and need each other. Whether it is an urban environment (mysterious corners, alleyways and courtyards of old

houses, churches and roofs capes) or a natural one (meadows, woods, rocks, ponds, streams), it is always a space that allows one to be carried away in mystery and adventure. None are ordinary locations on a map. They represent specific dimensionalities, which activate the creative energy of the group. They are not ordinary places, their reality is not important, but their symbolic character is.

More than any specific geography, it is the conversion of the space into a symbol of an active lifestyle and their pedagogical impact that is important. The ruggedness of the terrain, the call to overcome obstacles, the atmospheric features creating a particular mood (sometimes of competition, sometimes of silent meditation), old neighbourhoods and grassy playgrounds and 'bits of the world' seem to be created with the sole aim of energizing the story. The location is always a useful part of the program which encourages, or at least allows, for rich and attractive activities. The above-mentioned capacity to have a deep perception of nature on the basis of its aesthetic qualities and then use its manifestations for the atmosphere of intense experience underlines the fact that expeditions to a particular places are not undertaken randomly but quite deliberately. 'He knew quite well when each place was the nicest, most charming. For example, that in one place all the thyme had turned light purple, while in another Carthusian pink gave the camp a fiery reddish appearance' (Raba, 2005, p. 74).

But this also defies the ordinary and everydayness, at least the necessity of renaming or naming. None of the places in Foglar's stories or activities deserves ordinary geographical names. Each of them is the site of an event which is remarkable for the story or the understanding of the atmosphere and which is worth remembering for the future of the group. Sometimes, names draw attention to a certain deed or event, it can be an interesting natural feature that is reminiscent of something else, or an atmosphere which is tasted only once but forever remembered at least by its chosen name.

The uniqueness of Foglar's world lies in this mythicized (or schematized) form. A world where there is room for good and clarity, as well as a place for evil and mystique. A world where adults play an insignificant role and stand far from the centre of attention and deeds of boys, and where a game and a quest for boyhood secrets hides higher meaning and depth. The symbolic duality enables the mystery of work, even in an intimately familiar environment.

4.4.3. *Romance, mystery and challenge*

Longing for romance and adventure is an integral part of boyhood that the author draws upon masterfully and also evokes and deliberately creates. A legend is the fundamental element that contributes to the deep interest in the activity and enables boys to imbue their own activities with an atmosphere of mystery. Long-term (whole year) games, as well as shorter games, use legends to motivate participants. Whether the context is Indian life, golden Mexico, the builders of railroads, the Wild West, or uncharted territory, in his adventure stories 'mystery always objectively exists beforehand and is a hidden, dark part of history, which left some traces (physical monuments or texts) but has to be discovered and decrypted' (Hybler, 1999, p. 42).

The secret was always based on incomplete information. Foglar's ability to escalate and then interrupt the excitement while simultaneously enhancing the reader's experience by highlighting the question of what comes next is amazing. For example, in one of his whole year games, boys on an expedition received a card with drawings and clues to complete the game. Clues were clear, but unintelligible, they lacked context. In 1942, the scoring for the most famous game, Alvarez, started with the following text written on a diploma awarding points for February: '... and on the bloodiest day in the west we came to the river Tuehtaclan without knowing our lives were hanging by a thread! Alvarez is coming!' (Foglar, 2005, p. 146). The important fact was not only indication of action itself, but also the silence around it. No further information, no context, no deeper understanding. The most important thing about its impact was not the tagline itself, but the silence that surrounded it. The unspoken message was just as important as the unspoken one, because room was left for speculation, guesses, own imagination and the desire to learn. This interconnection

between romance and mystery calling to be revealed has been criticized as something cheap and unworthy. However, for boys, there is probably no greater motivation than the desire to discover the unknown, if possible by means of engaging all of their curiosity and using all their strength and skills. Both the game itself and the thrill associated with it become a means of self-knowledge, as they establish the boundaries of success and understanding as well as the strengths and weaknesses of one's personality. The game is not only a means of passing one's free time, but is the major accomplishment, in the form of a struggle or of a test to pass.

The feeling of romance is very noticeable in Foglar. The connection between the atmosphere, the environment and the words is fundamental. It is not possible to tell stories (or sing songs) joylessly if the mood is ruined by constant wisecracks from boys. Sometimes it is possible to evoke a mood of adventure, in other cases ghost stories may work. However, the strongest effects come from romantic moments which engage the emotions of boys on moonlight nights, through grandiose words exalting the power of boyhood, through values of friendship and loyalty, and through the collective nature of mutual experience. To whip up the atmosphere to the point of kitsch, and still not get distracted from the value of a moral way of life, lead young people to own decisions, and cap that off by actually signing an oath of loyalty, that is an art that is not afforded to everyone. Romanticism successfully obscures the morality and the fictionalization of a romantic stay in the wilderness, romantic Indian customs, or Robinson Crusoe style romantic adventures help boys to identify themselves with the ethical values contained in the story.

4.4.5. Traditions, rituals and ceremonies

The creation of troop traditions was probably determined by an exceptionally strong interest in writing down all experiences, including collective experiences the troop lived through. These traditions include naming each camp according to certain events (the weather, whole year games or another memorable fact) to make it easier to remember and connect it with specific stories which themselves create traditions. Such legends circulated in the troop, and some of the stories created heroic role models through constant repetition. Simple objects took on more mystery and by being included among things continuously used in a particular way changed in fixed rituals. By repeating such rituals, particular objects acquired a certain aura of sanctity or taboo.

Rituals and ceremonies were supported by concrete signs expressing clearly achieved results. Scoring almost all activities, tests demonstrating the personal qualities, rewards clearly defined models of what everyone should have reached. Diplomas, cards, patches, or badges for attendance, for winning small games, and evaluations of month activities, for tidiness or for extraordinary performance, all sustain the motivation for more active participation and satisfy the need to involve oneself in the team and the desire to excel within it. Understandably, these rituals can be seen as an echo of initiation ceremonies practised in all societies.

Table 3 tries to summarize findings about Foglar's personality, his values and educational principles and methods, and his outdoor adventure characteristics.

Table 3. Summary of findings about Jaroslav Foglar and his work.

Personality	Women, boys, sexuality Boyhood Courage to take reasonable risks
Values and educational principles and methods	Healthy lifestyle Interest in nature Being honourable in own actions Group cohesion Holistic impact
Outdoor adventure characteristics	Timelessness Space, place, landscape Romance, mystery, challenge Traditions, rituals, ceremonies

5. Discussion

Jaroslav Foglar, the Czech outdoor and experiential educator, documented how the experiences acquired through games reinforce and strengthen personal development in an interesting way, without formality and coercion, naturally and effortlessly. Educational methods based on experiential situations, primarily in nature, can take advantage of the phenomenon of play across the full breadth of its manifestations.

The difficulty of the prepared programme, a call which demands the prompt release of all strength, the skilful articulation of the task's difficulty and participants' skills, what Csikszentmihalyi describes as a flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), a state in which we allow ourselves to become absorbed in our actions themselves and we are fully immersed in them (when the intensity is low we fall into boredom, when it is too high it results in stress), is an expression of instructor's maturity and the challenge for students that 'Alvarez needs a only the brave and the strong' (Foglar, 1989).

Another inspirational moment in Foglar's work is measuring oneself against other and competition, which has much in common with gambling (although not every game must necessarily be of a competitive nature). Competition is an opportunity to get to know oneself in a social context, to discover in what one is better or worse at than others, competition elevates the winners and teaches the art of losing. It is a principle Foglar was able to make ingenious use of, there is no need to worry about perceiving competitiveness as the direct opposite of cooperation. Rivalry and cooperation are not always in conflict and the various forms of individual and collective evaluation which the author made use of are graphically illustrative demonstrations of this.

Foglar's emphasis on physical exercise and fitness as one of the basic tools of outdoor programmes corresponds to Kurt Hahn philosophy of stressing physical fitness as an important part of outward bound programmes next to service to others, project and expedition. One can accomplish more when he is physically fit. Hahn believed bodily fitness augmented mental fitness (Stetson, n.d.).

Certainly, the possibility of an adventurous and mysterious use of a landscape for an outdoor programme is something that has unquestionably been transferred into Czech outdoor residential courses and contributed to the Czech form of outdoor adventure and experiential education (Martin et al., 2016). For example, the location of the old style camp schools and the many years of the Vacation school Lipnice—Outward Bound, placed in the environment of a flooded quarry surrounded by granite rocks, meadows, forests, bodies of water and forest and roadways—encouraged the creation of games and programmes that naturally incorporated the landscape. An understanding of the environment and an empathy with the particular message conveyed by the genius loci of the place is very carefully noted in Foglar's works.

The entire approach of treating free time as disposable time (i.e. the time that I have available for self-development) is a concept which can be traced back ideologically to the ideals of ancient Greece and its conception of 'scholē' as a noble pastime (Aristotelés, 2009). All Foglar's works warn how empty, worthless and dangerous it is to fall into idleness and doing nothing, and how advantageous and personally important it is to use own free time for activities which develop one's potential. Outdoor programmes and projects in Vacation School Lipnice were previously also called programmes in framework of 'intensive recreational regimes' and all the words describing this lead us to activity and rejection of passivity.

The ability to appreciate great performance, not only physical but also moral, and offering open and honest feedback is an art needed in our performance-based society more and more. Our consumer society primarily values results, not the efforts and the means required to obtain and achieve them. Measuring performance in modern sport regardless of the abuse of performance-enhancing agents is a phenomenon which points to a much wider problem. Nonetheless, the art of understanding and seeing the behaviour of others and reflecting upon the positions and values they hold according to their behaviour is not a very common art. It is not only entries in the diaries and chronicles which suggest that Foglar as an educator was able to use the right words at the right moment, to offer simple

feedback that lead, but do not offend. Open and honest feedback is used to evaluate programmes and to reward instructors for their actions; in this way they may also find an example worth following.

A focus on the good, which is characteristic of the philosophy of Plato, is a way of living and thinking which is now thought of as idealistic naïveté. This moment, this goal, which Foglar associates with Plato without the need to cite philosophical statements, may be the most important impulse which Foglar has to offer to the erudition of outdoor experiential education.

Perhaps, this is also connected with another philosophical impulse, namely Kant's categorical imperative (Kant, 2011), which tells us that a person (participant of our projects) should never be perceived as a tool for our unfulfilled ambitions, power lust and financial machinations, but always and only as the goal of our activity. A friendly, equal relationship based on trust rather than a formal hierarchy is an element that differentiates outdoor and experiential education projects from many a corporate or school environment.

6. Conclusions

The article adds to the literature related to Czech outdoor adventure education and experiential education. The life and work of the writer and educator of Jaroslav Foglar has greatly influenced the Czech approach to education in nature. Although there are no English translations of his novels or comic strips, by presenting here at least some of his techniques and approaches, it is possible to better understand not only the history of such educational activities in one country, but also contemporary forms and styles which have been passed down to the present as an integral and natural part of the country's cultural heritage.

Foglar's principles of boyhood are taking risks, active life, honest behaviour, learning in nature with others in a small group. His values and educational principles and methods include healthy lifestyle, interest in nature, honourable behaviour, group cohesion and holistic approach. Foglar's specific outdoor adventure characteristics include timelessness, place (landscape), romance, mystery and challenge, and traditions with rituals.

The objective of this text, which was to help to fill a blank space in the endeavour to explore the national characters which outdoor and experiential education take on in different countries, has been fulfilled.

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