The Graz Conference – grown up - standing alone?!

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When we started “Die Grazer Konferenz” in 1995 it was not just because of our being interested in medical education, but we were convinced that Austria should not stay behind and be denied the developments from around the world, or more precisely, in Germany. We also were dedicated to changing the Austrian medical curriculum which had been unchanged for a century in writing, but had of course at each university – Graz, Vienna and Innsbruck – a totally different “hidden” curriculum. Moreover we had the chance to legally design a new curriculum for dentistry due to European law enforcing Austrian authorities to do so.

Therefore we started very blue-eyed with our friends from those “modern” countries with “modern” curricula and theoretically we came up with all their ideas and tried to form our own “Austrian curriculum” out of them!

Pretty soon we perceived the major Austrian obstacle – the legal frame work with unlimited access of students to whatever curriculum chosen.

Anyway over the years we then – thanks to “federalism” and “new liberal university legislation” - designed our three different curricula for the three public universities. Overall almost all elements of modern teaching and learning methods as well as evaluation and examination systems can be found, not in one but ... yes throughout those three different curricula.

Fortunately we were able to spread the information and ideas and put the “virus” of permanent curriculum discussion into our faculties and the understanding that curriculum design is an ongoing process – which it always has been also in the time when no changes had been written down!

Now 20 years later having reached the 19th conference – we are legally grown up and the process over the years has broadened not only our own mind but also the basis of the conference. Like students we had our exchange programme visiting neighbouring countries and incorporating them, and we also learned that a broader perspective does need a broader ground to stand on and therefore the cooperation with possible associations in this field was tried on a personal and invitational base and if institutionalised will bring a new step to further development of both – the “Graz Conference” and medical education!