

A photograph of a forest floor with several stone cairns (stacks of stones) in the foreground. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and dense green foliage. The title 'Steiner Education' is overlaid in large yellow letters at the top.

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**SE Interview with
Trevor Mepham**

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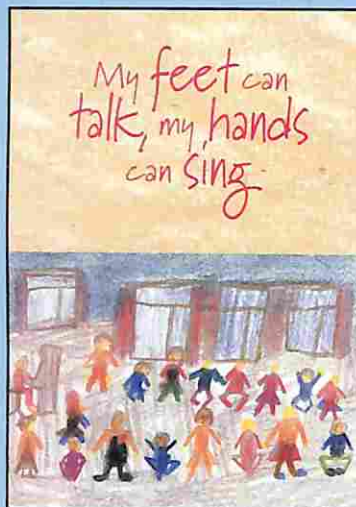
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SE Editorial



Steiner Education has a new look and a new team, though it resisted the temptation to adopt the prefix 'New' to its title. The changes we have undertaken to the form of *Steiner Education* were not made because the previous journal was deemed in some way inadequate. We made changes because *SE* has a new role. Our aim is to be more accessible, have a wider distribution and to include several new sections as well as incorporating the *SWSF Newsletter* (though not in this pilot number). *SE* will now also include designated sections for The Alliance for Childhood and for The Friends of the Art of Education. This new content, the need to appear more frequently and the corresponding economics led us to a magazine format.

As editor I would like to thank Dr. Brien Masters and the other members of the old *SE* team for their many years of work. It would be fair to say that the change was not easy for any of us involved, but it was necessary. I have asked Brien to contribute to 'new' *SE*, not least because he is one of the most experienced international Waldorf practitioners but also because he has always been a good writer.

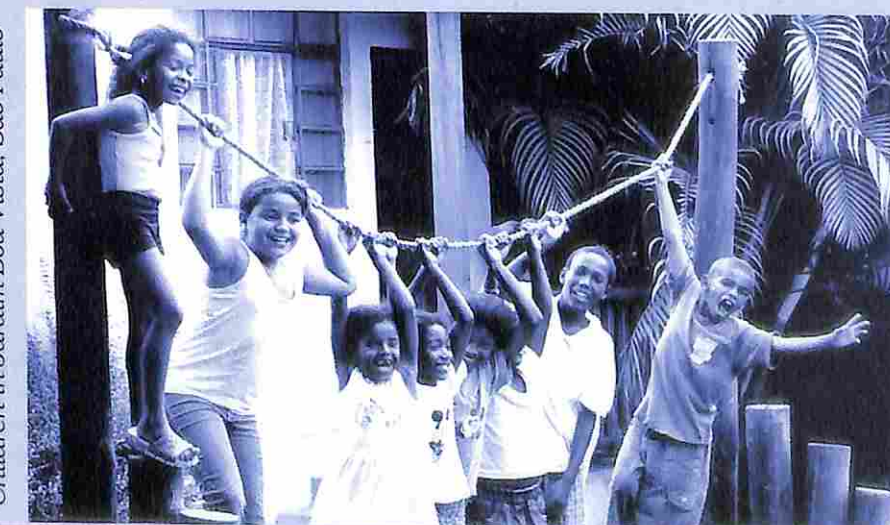
This first number is a gamble at many levels. I hope that it will find its feet (form and content) quickly. I hope that it will feel able to go on taking risks in the interests of dialogue and facing up to the real issues within education in our times. We will not court controversy but I am sure that not all of what we print will reflect everyone's views. That is why our first number contains a thoughtfully provocative appeal to Waldorf education to go on changing to meet the needs of the children in our times.

I've had some great professional help in getting this magazine launched and I would particularly like to thank Anne McNicol of Imprint, Omaid Hiwaizi and Theresa Kral.

I would like to conclude by inviting readers to offer us feedback on this first new form *Steiner Education*. Please write to us or e-mail your views.

Martyn Rawson, Editor

Children in Jardim Boa Vista, São Paulo



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 Shannoh Kandoh – page 21.



Sieving compost at Michael Hall

New educational landscapes

by Thomas Stöckli¹

The world is changing faster than ever before. The pressures on children and education are as intense as they are unfamiliar. There can be no doubt that we are confronting new challenges that require radical new approaches. This article describes what a new educational landscape could look like

The ever-expanding Waldorf schools' movement has often proved to be a fertile *biotope* for innovation. Some of the innovative forms that have developed within Waldorf education show us what the future of education could look like *beyond* the biotope, in the wider educational environment. Where Waldorf is at its most effective, it is responding to the real needs of today's children and thus

can reveal the direction education needs to develop.

A universal approach

One of the reasons for the long-term success of Waldorf education is that it possesses a timeless core: its orientation around the being of the child. This holistic approach is more relevant than ever because our inner life is becoming increasingly fragmented and actually detached from reality. Waldorf

seeks to integrate the biological and spiritual natures of the human being. In doing so it links the intellectual and artistic faculties to practical experience and relates these in concrete ways to the world beyond school. How this occurs will become clearer through the examples cited in this article.

Waldorf education may be innovative but it is continuously challenged to justify the forms it takes. It is always a question whether the people who translate this educational initiative into practice are acting out of the spirit of the times or whether they are content to remain attached to inherited traditions. What is good and meaningful for one generation may not be for the next. It is implicit in the very

idea of Waldorf education that it is continuously renewing itself and inspiring itself out of its spiritual sources, that it is continuously developing new forms that grow from its original roots. I would go so far as to say that everything that stands still, every convention or tradition that is not facing the future, that is not meeting the demands of the times or being inwardly renewed, is no longer Waldorf.

In what follows I give some examples of innovative ideas that will be increasingly important in the future.

The first seven years and the Lower School

Today our chief task is to create a healthy balance in response to a push-button society. Many young children, even those who attend Waldorf kindergartens, live in a world largely devoid of work processes they can understand. Furthermore they live in environments mostly insulated from the natural world and only experience a child-friendly environment for a few hours a day. This means children have little opportunity to meet the primal world of nature with its multiple, changing and subtle properties.

Today we have to cultivate the *lower or will-senses* in a much more direct way. This involves strengthening the sense of touch, the sense of life and the senses of self-movement and balance. It is no longer enough for young children to spend

Today our chief task is to create a healthy balance in response to a push-button society

a few hours in a beautiful Waldorf kindergarten and imitate meaningful activities, such as sowing seeds or washing, only in action rhymes or in stories because

these activities are no longer part of the child's environment. They need *real* activities

The older generation is a wonderful resource of skills and experience and above all they often have the time

to imitate. There is little point making reference to them artistically if the children have no direct experience of them. They need to participate in real tasks.

The healing forces of nature

The same is true of the children's direct experience of nature. Children need a much stronger experience of nature than is usually available to



Pupils' garden at Michael Hall

them in most urban and suburban environments. They may in fact need two days a week in the outdoors, in the woods, in the fields or on the beach to balance the rest of the week. They need to be surrounded by nature so that they can absorb its healing forces. This is not always

possible, but even in the city there is always the weather. We should let the children experience the full range of weather conditions outdoors, suitably clothed of course.

We can build shelters where they can play outdoors in all weathers. Many modern

children do not develop the ability to acclimatize their bodily resistance because they spend so much time in artificial environments, dressed in synthetic materials.

New communities

Since our traditional family and community structures (based on the village or small town) have mostly disappeared, children (and their parents) are often isolated. Children need to meet older people. Too often they have to make do with grandmother on the phone, or worse the electronic grandmother we call TV. Real grandparents often live far away or have little time. Why not invite grandparents and retired people into the kindergarten? The older generation is a wonderful resource of skills and experience and above all often has the time.

We can then take the children, on the bus if necessary, to visit the farm and join in with the work (don't wait until Class 3). Today there are many craftspeople at work (often parents at the school) one can visit. Children can learn so much simply watching people at work and absorbing their gestures and movements.

Creating new child-friendly environments

The culture of eating together is becoming lost in our hectic society. Waldorf children tend to go home before lunch. Perhaps we need more than just snack-time to re-experience a meal together.

"I was not brought up by parents but rather by higher, hidden and secret powers, luckily like most children, I learned most of the most important things for life before I went to school, lessons from apple trees, from rain and sun, river and forest, bees and beetles, lessons from the god Pan, lessons from dancing dust particles in grandfather's room. I knew about the world, I moved without fear among animals and stars, I knew my way around in the orchard and in water with the fish and I could already sing a good lot of songs. I could also do magic, a skill which I sadly lost too early and only as a very old man re-learned and I possessed the whole magical knowledge of children."

Hermann Hesse from Childhood of a Magician

Young children can help prepare the meals and clear up afterwards. One need only organize and build the appropriate facilities. Today both parents usually have to work all day. We should offer all day care for the pre-school age children, not reluctantly out of necessity but as a positive step to create a child-friendly community setting. Where else would many of them get that? The village green or the farmyard, even the streets, used to provide a place of community for children with many play opportunities, work to observe and older people to keep an eye on things. But these are gone. A child-care centre can do much to replace it.

Animals too have their place, however limited the space. Caring for animals can become a pedagogical project, not least one that involves children of different ages. Chickens, ducks, sheep, goats, rabbits, even fish in an aquarium are better than nothing. Learning how to care for animals can be a vital step to social competence, since children learn the gestures and habits of caring.

Such suggestions are by no means new and some schools and kindergartens have been doing this for years. The point I am making is, shouldn't this become basic to all?

Rhythm and time to re-create

Children need movement and artistic activities. The concept of the 'rhythmical part' of the lesson is actually nonsense. All school lessons should be structured in a rhythmical way based on the inner rhythms of the heart. This is something the teacher has to recreate within his or her own soul. The teacher has to find his/her own inner rhythm and find time every day to recharge energy. This can be done by walking in nature, gardening or working with animals. The argument

that we have too little time is simply a question of effective personal and institutional time management.

Pedagogical outposts in nature

Not all schools have green acres of grounds. Most schools are limited in what they can offer in terms of an experience of nature. Wouldn't it be possible on a regional basis to develop outdoor *pedagogical outposts* where children can go to engage with nature? This is especially the case for those with behavioural problems but equally important for teachers to find a healthy space to restore creative energies. Schools lucky enough to have such facilities could make their grounds available to other schools and their local community. These could be farms or nature parks, places where older students, parents and teachers can work together to create and care for pedagogical spaces. Such spaces can become oases of nature. One day per week could be an 'oasis' day, a day for an outing in nature.

Classes 5-8 and the transition to the Upper School; social learning

A central motif of the Middle School is social learning. Here it becomes important to learn how to learn and work in groups, how to be able to contribute to the form and content of lessons and how to work and practice independently. Thus children acquire the ability to help and correct each other in a healthy way. It is often the case that the Lower School principle of strong teacher authority is retained for too long and the children do not learn to work independently or in teams.

Mixed-age group teaching and learning, in which important social abilities are schooled, also belongs in the Middle School. 'Pupil-schools', in which pupils teach each other for whole lessons or even for

whole projects, are one of the most positive educational innovations in the new culture of learning. Naturally the pupils need the mediation and role model of the adult teacher as an example of someone who is open to the world.

The abilities related to self-evaluation are crucial to independent working and learning and the basics need to be introduced in the Middle School. More traditional forms of school report writing can be fruitfully complemented by simple procedures of self-reflection by the pupils. It is important today to include a wide range of inclusive assessment procedures for work and attainment. The key concept is process-orientated assessment methods, that is, evaluation that supports the learning process and motivates the learner.

It is often the case that the Lower School principle of strong teacher authority is retained for too long and the children do not learn to work independently or in teams

The older the students are, the more important project days become. These are days in which the teachers work together in interdisciplinary teams on certain themes. Days devoted to helping the Third World, helping elderly people in the neighbourhood, helping those in need or even days given over to joint artistic projects, are examples of what can bring pupils and teachers together.

Much of this is about being open to the world beyond school. Teachers also need to understand something of the modern global economy. Even though economics is actually in the curriculum from Class 6 onwards, it often takes a back seat to journeys through the geography of other continents. Central to this geography, however, are the economic factors that influence local

Kitchen scene at Michaelmas, Michael Hall



economies and especially their global relationships.

The lower Upper School

Class 9 is the age of 'earth maturity'. For this reason a farming practical, or similar

project, in which the students are each dispersed on different farms, is very helpful. An initiative to establish a network of farms would also contribute to supporting the farmers, especially those who are trying to survive as small businesses using ecological methods. Why don't we carry out these practicals as an opportunity to show public solidarity with such farmers and establish a real network of collaboration? At any rate the work must be real and part of a real economic context – that means work that has to be done anyway.

The older the students are, the more important it is that the teachers work as a team

Further work experience opportunities include forestry or work placements in small businesses. Sometimes groups

of Class 10 students can take on work projects such as running a hotel or a restaurant for two weeks, or supporting refugees in a refugee centre, or cleaning a school building for a term or building a workshop for handicapped people.² The key aspect of work experience is that it has to be reflected upon and contextualised so that the youngsters can form a meaningful relationship to the world of work.

Bridges to the world of work

We need to build bridges to the modern world of work, especially for students above the age of 16. This must be done alongside biographic and career counselling. The point is not to channel young people into the workplace too quickly but for them to discover what competencies they need to develop to be able to contribute creatively to the world of work.

Schools can also become meeting places, rather than just places where lessons are taught. They can be centres of social and intellectual life out of school hours, in which the students can be responsible for the programme of events, even for the catering and publicity. Teachers have

The rising generation is the only one that can really change our social, political and economic climate! To do so it needs to be well prepared inwardly, with both idealism and the skills to translate ideas into creative deeds

a new role in this. They are no longer the masters but the facilitators and supporters, in order that the young people can take hold of the reins of their own biographical development.

Furthermore intensive contact with the real day-to-day problems and challenges of the workplace provides a rich learning environment for life skills, especially when complemented by equally intensive study in schools of the arts and sciences. Many students acquire a kind of passivity in school, consuming all the teachers can offer. Engaging with the world stimulates a vibrant questioning in young people that engages their will and interest for the higher questions of meaning that the main lesson programme can address. There is a very different level of motivation to gain insight, once the individual has grasped how important it is to have an inner orientation.

It is often said that Waldorf pupils need many years to find their path in life. Is this such a good thing? Why should they not explore the options when they are 17 or 18 and then go off to study or further training? Having a sense of what the world needs and demands is not a bad background to have before travelling the world or taking up study at university. Why leave all these things until they are in their mid-twenties?

Waldorf colleges?

It has long been the ideal of every Waldorf school, even small schools, to have its own Upper School. Would it not be more meaningful to create a network of Upper Schools, in which students can freely choose which school they wish to attend.³ This would

allow a diversity of styles and specialisms to flourish whilst establishing the principle and practice of exchange. Many youngsters benefit from a change of scene yet wish to remain in touch with Waldorf education.

More self-directed learning

In Class 12 artistic work should culminate in a 'master piece' in which each individual chooses a project in a subject of his/her choice. This individual work is as important as the collective 'master pieces' the class as a whole produces in the theatre or concert hall.

Alongside work placements and artistic work, the Upper School also has to attend to acquiring the knowledge and skills to sit whatever exams are necessary to ensure access to higher and further education. However there should be adequate space for the exploration of the important questions of life. These important experiences should

portfolios. The portfolio is not only a means of collecting work that has been done. It should reveal something of the process, something of the individual abilities and competencies. Above all it should express what that individual wishes to present to the world of themselves.

A vision for the future could include what Mathias Riepe called "*the school of the future with an open system, a diversity of provision, validation of modules and units, without a rigid timetable and curriculum*".⁴ Students could choose from different modules and courses than were running for Classes 11 or 12 in different schools. A school portfolio, involving units taken at various schools and validated by commonly agreed equivalence agreements, would replace the usual school qualifications and exams. It will not be long before portfolios are established at European level as equivalents to conventional exams.

A question of application

There is obviously no shortage of new ideals or ideas. The question that always poses itself is: how can they be



Class 12 work placement in Switzerland

become more visible through portfolios. Alongside the usual reports on the student's attainments and exam results, the students can also present their personal statements and reflections about their biographies and intentions in their

realized? My belief is that the first thing that has to be clarified is our own attitude and what our ideals actually mean to us. Without the courage to make the many small steps, to sow the seeds and nurture the little shoots

of promise, nothing can be achieved. Therefore we need a conscious and cultivated optimism that can recognize even small opportunities for progress and is not overwhelmed by the impossibilities that arise to wither or trample new shoots.

What is needed is a kind of artistic way of dealing with the resistance and problems that everyday life brings with it. It is about going right into

groups, with the trust and confidence of the rest of the teachers to manage the school. The key things in mandating are: clarity of policy and purpose, defined terms of reference, open consultation and transparency of outcomes.

Pedagogical research

Another important mandated function is that of co-ordinating and facilitating educational research.⁵ Without research change is

These suggestions make it clear that Waldorf schools are not finished in their development but rather have endless potential for growing. The time has come for individual and group research projects to be much braver and more open, to be inspired by artistic practice, informed by well-founded study of the basics, emboldened by social learning and stimulated by exchange and encounter with other school types and educational models. The educational landscape changes through small steps taken in individual schools.

Innovation is infectious and spreads through activity and contact far more effectively than being steered from the centre, imposed from without or provoked by exhortation. It is not only Waldorf teachers who don't like being told what to do (or what not to do) by people who no longer do it themselves. However if teachers see something that works, they will be attracted like bees to flowers.

When and where can we start?

It is possible to start today. According to Joseph Beuys, the first institution I can change is myself. One starts with one's own 'I', one begins by clarifying one's own ideals, one's own attitudes. One begins with an inner gesture of research, with an optimistic eye trained to spot the smallest germinating seeds of new initiative, and one begins to take small steps

towards incarnating ideals. We are talking about the incarnation of a new education on earth. The art is to proceed by small steps and this requires great patience.

Translated by Martyn Rawson

Waldorf pupil designs Swatch watch



things without allowing the emotions to ensnare one, but remaining independent of them, practising social learning and not giving up on what one has once recognized to be right.

My belief is that the first thing that has to be clarified is our own attitude and what our ideals actually mean to us

Mandating

Perhaps the most important point gets underestimated, namely the need to have time; time to research, time for reflection, time for planning and organization. This requires new forms in schools; not least in the way teachers' meetings are structured. Many people still believe that all the full-time teachers should be involved in all administrative and management decisions (often in so-called administration meetings or in College meetings). We could also consider finding our way back to the original model that Rudolf Steiner suggested, that there should be mandate

impulsive and subjective. Not everyone has to do everything; in fact small groups are far more effective than larger ones. What is important

is transparency, access and networking. Such research groups need to be bedded into a culture of conscious quality and educational development, with regular reviews and self-evaluations.

These are only a few suggestions as to how to liberate energies in matters of school organization and away from monotonous and marathon meetings and towards freeing up energy and initiative for pedagogical research and mandate groups.

Footnotes

- 1 This article is taken from the report *Work and Learning*, edited by Martyn Rawson and Thomas Stöckli, published 2002 by SSF Publications in the UK. The report arose out of a three-year research project of the Pedagogical Section in Dornach. This article has also appeared in the weekly *Goetheanum* magazine.
- 2 All of which have been done by students in the Regional Upper School in Solothurn, CH.
- 3 This has indeed been achieved by the Upper Schools in Switzerland.
- 4 See *Work and Learning* report quoted above, section 8.0.
- 5 Michael Hall School in England has supported this for the past 7 years.



The author: Thomas Stöckli is a founding teacher at the Regionale Oberstufe (Regional Upper School) Jurasüdfuss, in Solothurn, Switzerland and a founder of IPF, an initiative supporting practice-based research and educational development. He is also course leader of the teacher training seminar *Höhere Fachschule für Anthroposophische Pädagogik* in Dornach. He has published several books in German on adolescence and education.

Examples of innovation

Nøkken Waldorf child-care centre in Copenhagen has children from toddlers to 7 year olds in a day-care setting for up to 6 hours a day. The centre resembles an extended family and is designed to be like a traditional Danish home with garden. There is a strong emphasis on domestic work, cooking, washing, gardening and making things. The children spend most of the day outside, whatever the weather. They even have shelters in which the children can sleep outside. They find that their children are very healthy; they develop very good practical and social skills.

City-as-School. Based on the long running model in New York currently with 1,600 students, Berlin has had a project Stadt als Schule since 1992. Aimed at young people who have 'lost their way' in school, this project helps each student develop an individual learning plan using the city's extensive public resources (libraries, museums, theatres, concert halls, public transport, social services etc.) both as work experience and learning opportunity. Group and individual tutorials are held and each student builds up a portfolio. The basic concept involves learning in real situations for about half the week. The programme runs over two years. At present there are about 140 pupils of Class 9 and 10 age.

The Alfa Project, East Clare, Ireland addresses the lack of educational opportunity for 13-16 year olds in a rural area. Set against a background of social deprivation and a lack of facilities for young people, a three-year programme based on the Waldorf Curriculum has been developed using project work as a tool for interdisciplinary learning. Interaction with the wider community is an important element. This includes engaging the co-operation of local craftspeople and tradesmen, farmers and a local doctor as contributors and tutors. The project is housed in a log cabin with no running water or electricity. The project had to start by developing compost toilets and wind generation of power.

Expo 2002, a large international trade fair open for 3 months, hosted this year by Switzerland, has a Waldorf crèche for visitors who can leave their children while they visit the fair. The children are being looked after by Class 11 and 12 Waldorf students on day-long shifts as part of their work placements. The students come from the Regional Upper School in Solothurn.

OCN. Like a number of other UK Waldorf schools, Michael Hall has introduced Open College Network accreditation for many aspects of the curriculum, such as crafts, drama, sport and design. OCN is a state recognised accreditation system that provides an assessment regime for different levels of learning and is especially suited to project work and self-directed learning. Now the school is developing OCN units in Organisational Development and Business Studies, in partnership with several business partners. This complements the Spirit of the Times programme which offers students a framework for accredited research in the field of citizenship, civil and human rights.

Schule und Beruf ('School and Work') is a Waldorf Upper School project in Basel in Switzerland that takes Class 10 to Class 12 students. The project takes students from several local Waldorf schools. They claim to employ only teachers who are not "demotivated and set in their ways", willing to work with their students to develop the form and content of the education. There is little frontal teaching and a collegial working atmosphere between students and teachers. They find that such an approach enhances the development of social competence and responsibility taking. There is considerable emphasis on self-directed learning and students taking active responsibility for their learning. Projects form a large part of the work. The groups consist of a mix of abilities and levels of engagement. The students are often away, either on work placements or abroad (e.g. 3-4 weeks in Romania on social projects). The students themselves are naturally responsible for all planning and arrangements for such trips.

The Waldkindergarten movement is rapidly growing in Scandinavia, Germany and Switzerland. These, mostly non-Waldorf early years settings, place great emphasis on the children being outdoors most of the time (though not necessarily literally in the forest as the name suggests). They are often attached to farms and traditional craft activities.

Perpetuum Novile 'continuous renewal' is the name of a charitable trust set up in Germany to provide a structure for projects involving schools, businesses and other organisations to work together to carry out real work contracts. The basic concept is that real tasks, such as the planning, design, building and associated business plan, for a new creamery on a biodynamic farm will be undertaken by a partnership of various schools, professional consultants and contractors together with the client. The initiative, essentially inaugurated and carried by Rüdiger Iwan, a Waldorf Upper School teacher at the Schwäbisch Hall School in Southern Germany (and core member of the Work & Learning research group), is designed to enable youngsters to develop real competencies through real tasks in the world. The tasks undertaken are to be genuine economic needs and there should be a conscious focus on the development of individual skills and maturity. This initiative seeks to build a bridge between school and world and which provides a wealth of new learning environments. It has already run several projects and is gaining support from business and interestingly, sponsorship by a regional bank.

For further documentation of these projects, see *Work and Learning in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenge of Lifelong Learning in School and in the Workplace*, edited by Rawson and Stöckli.

Regionale Oberstufe Jurasüdfuss, Soloturn, CH. The Regional Upper School takes students of Class 11 and 12 age and combines the Waldorf Curriculum with continuous professional work placements either 2 or 3 whole days a week. In their school time (7.40 am – 6 pm) students follow the Waldorf curriculum, with a strong emphasis on self-directed learning. Working in a wide range of businesses (e.g. industry, craft workshops, service industries, communications and media, social institutions) not only provides the young people with a real experience of the challenges of the modern world of work but also a motivation to orientate themselves in the important questions of life, which they bring back with energy into school. Their recognition of the importance of the higher ideals in Waldorf education is enhanced by their encounter with the real world. In many other respects the students learn a wide range of social, personal and presentational skills. The ROJ has also pioneered a portfolio system accredited through the Swiss national qualifications authority.

Waldorf College, Stroud in England is dedicated to learning through experience. It is aimed at 16 to 19 year olds and draws on key elements of the Waldorf curriculum though offered in a college style environment. The College has stepped away from the restraints of the British exam system by offering a more laterally integrated curriculum, though all units are accredited through the Open College Network (see p. 9). The College draws on a wide range of tutors from the local community but also internationally who are willing to abandon their assumptions about how to teach their subject and are prepared to enter into dialogue with the students. The course is spread over two years and is structured around thematic, multi-disciplinary projects. There is a strong emphasis on craftsmanship as well as artistic exploration.

The Windrathertal School located in a farming valley near Wuppertal in the industrial heart of Germany has pioneered a new kind of Waldorf school. Each class has 2 class teachers. The classes contain some children with various disabilities. Each morning the day begins with practical activities in mixed age groups. In the Lower School there is no timetable but rather flexible teamwork between the class teachers and subject teachers. They are now developing an Upper School.

Parenting in the new millennium

by Paula Moraine¹

This talk was advertised with the title 'Star Children' or 'Indigo Children'. Although I understand the interest these new labels have generated, I will not be speaking about these labels specifically. I will be speaking about 'our children'

There are labels attached to modern children because many believe that there are traits or characteristics manifesting in children that are new, unique, different and maybe even important. What are they? After reading a great deal of the information that has recently been published about Indigo Children, Star Children, the New Children, I began to notice some patterns. I found this literature interesting but, as a teacher and a parent, I am not entirely convinced that the various conclusions drawn by the authors writing about the 'new children' are either accurate or even helpful. So what are they describing? For my own clarification, I ordered it into three categories.

Spiritual Characteristics

These 'new' children:

- ☆ Respond with creative thought
- ☆ Remember specifics of their past lives
- ☆ Require respect
- ☆ Require truth
- ☆ Expect integrity
- ☆ Are bearers of formidable spiritual impulses
- ☆ Have an abundance of vital and spiritual energy
- ☆ Speak openly about spiritual experiences

Social and Behavioural Characteristics

- ☆ Have a feeling of nobility
- ☆ Feel themselves to be alone, separate
- ☆ Are not automatically aware of the needs of others
- ☆ Have difficulty with authority
- ☆ Are frustrated with ritual-oriented systems
- ☆ Are systems busters
- ☆ Are socially isolated and feel misunderstood
- ☆ Are not shy in letting you know what they need
- ☆ Need to be the decision maker
- ☆ Have trouble staying focused
- ☆ Are easily bored and restless, are often labelled ADHD
- ☆ Have advanced aptitude profiles
- ☆ The mechanical, computer world comes naturally and easily to them

Moral Characteristics

- ☆ Feel that they deserve to be here
- ☆ Don't connect with the idea of 'original sin'
- ☆ Have strong experience of self-worth
- ☆ Do not respond to guilt, shame/blame punishment
- ☆ Seek to enlighten and enhance relationships
- ☆ Are troubled by others not being guided by love
- ☆ Are born leaders

Is this collection of qualities a picture of something new and unique or is it a compilation of observations that are not really very new at all? Some of these characteristics are just natural to childhood, and seem to have always been part of the growing up process. Others are more common now, whereas 50 years ago there may have only been some children who were like this. No single child has all of these qualities but rather interesting, unique mixtures of qualities. It is a fair question to ask if these children are bearers of a new, unique spiritual impulse. At the same time, it is true that each

No single child has all of these qualities but rather interesting, unique mixtures of qualities

human being bears a unique spiritual impulse and this must not be forgotten in our momentary fascination with the descriptions of children today. If I can recognize the special, individual quality inherent in my own child, then surely I should/could do the same of others, no matter how old they are.

Why is this?

Parents want to do the best for their children. Most parents want to learn, to improve at being parents, to understand their children better. A friend introduced me to the concept of 'Indigo Children'

Children' because a counselor told her that her son was an 'Indigo Child'. Fortunately, my friend wasn't looking for a label to explain her son, she was looking for insight. We have had hours of conversations about her son, discovering ways to learn his language in order to hear what he had to say to her. Out of those conversations I tried to put into words for my friend what it sounded like her son, and others like him, are saying to us.

1. **Recognize me** – I am not 'just' a six-year old, or a nine-year old. I might have to break all the rules to get your attention. I will do what it takes. (This will reveal to you if you are an adult that relies on rules. The child you work with will recognize your need for rules as a weak spot and go directly for it). Recognize me as the special individual that I am, and know that I can't behave well just to make you look good. I can only behave well because it is the right thing for me.

2. **Bring me your understanding as a gift** – I can't give you much in return yet,

We are being challenged by children today. It is easy to feel confronted by their behaviour, challenged by their way of perceiving the world and inadequate in meeting their needs

but the gift of standing by me and translating the world will be intensely valuable and appreciated by me. I cannot pay for it. It will only be helpful if it is freely given to me.

3. **Give me safe boundaries** – but please don't ridicule me or shame me into accepting them. I will recognize fair boundaries and will accept them. So, even if I test you, it is only to ascertain that you mean what you say, and say what you mean.

4. **Trust the gifts I bring with me** – I am not sure how to use them yet, so don't challenge me too hard right at the beginning. I will learn to use my gifts well, but not if they become corrupted by too much attention from you.

5. **Believe in my path or destiny** – I am aware of it, but I am too young to put it to full use. Give me time to grow into it, but please keep the faith on my behalf.

6. **Make yourself a good example for me** – To make sure I can use all my gifts, I need you to demonstrate how to be an integrated, confident adult. I've got lots of spirit, lots of will, and deep feelings. I need you to show me how to put it all together and use it well.

7. **Have joy in me** – I can't do anything with your fear. It just makes me ill. Show me how to be happy. Show me how to have enthusiasm even when facing difficult tasks. Show me that I can recover from my failures.

If we practice these seven suggestions, our children will become more secure in life.

These are activities that remove hindrances from our children and allow them to grow in a guided and safe manner. It is not always easy to admit that some primary hindrances in our children's lives are not always the usual foes such as media, violence, and the speed of modern society, but our own attitudes toward them. And yet, we as parents love our children more than anyone else can! What can we do to improve our relationship with our children? What can we do to support them?

Some effective tools could include:

Rhythm

Children need an ordered, rhythmical life, with fewer high-strung activities. Even a daily mealtime can be healing. Rhythm in each day, rhythm in the weekly and monthly activities, and rhythm in the celebrating of the yearly festivals gives a child confidence in the future. What children know and can expect to happen gives them a secure sense of self based on an ordered world.

Time

Children need time to be alone, time to adapt to new situations and to accept change. In our society it is difficult to find times and places where it is safe to allow our children to play alone. As a child grows older it changes from a need for dreamy play to a need for time to get to know oneself as an individual, separate from others.

Remove shame/blame – rewards/punishment

Children do not respond positively to shame. It makes them angry, resentful, and hurt. It does not inspire them to try harder. Blaming them for their mistakes also does not teach them how to improve, to avoid the mistake next time. The rewards – punishment pendulum is one that polarizes, but it usually doesn't teach them much. Children have a strong sense of truth, and they know exactly when praise for what they have done well is accurate. Using praise as a means to get the child to like us is disastrous. Punishment tends to hurt the child rather than help toward changing behaviour.

Boundaries

Children respond well to clearly articulated boundaries for their behaviour. Boundaries can be set without getting emotional or excited; just simply setting them is enough.

Ideals

All children need to see that adults have ideals and are willing to work to achieve them. Focusing on objective ideals prevents us from becoming too self-absorbed. We can demonstrate for our children that being interested in the world and people around us is wonderful and enlivens us.

Inspire

Using inspiration as a tool may sound odd at first, yet it is one of the most valuable tools we have. We all want to inspire our children toward good thoughts, words and deeds. We all want our children to have integrity, but we will be more effective if we inspire integrity rather than trying to teach it.

If I had to choose the one most important thing for a parent to change, I would say change the pattern of reaction to one of response

I have spoken about what our children are saying to us, and what tools we have at our disposal for meeting their needs. Becoming better parents is not easy. When we are confronted with changing ourselves, with the demand for self-knowledge, we can get a little overwhelmed. None of us can change our patterns overnight. We can't do it, and the children certainly can't do it. But we do have the possibility to change one thing at a time. If I had to choose the one most important thing for a parent to change, I would say change the pattern of reaction to one of response.

Reaction to Response

When we have a reaction to something that has happened, usually what we call bad behaviour in a child, then we can go through a simple three-question process.

Focus – Who is this about? Is it about me or is it about the child? Who is the focus? What is the focus?

Need – Whose needs have been manifesting? Whose needs am I reacting to? Have I noticed both my needs and those of the child? Do I value one more than the other?

Goal – What is the goal of my reaction? What do I want to achieve?

These 3 steps will lead us to a response that is informed by the information gathered in this process. A response is a more measured way of approaching a problem. In most reactions there is an unconscious element of power that drives the reaction. In simple terms, many reactions of parents come from fear of losing control, losing power over the situation. Children

Have I noticed both my needs and those of the child? Do I value one more than the other?



The author: Paula Moraine is a mother of three children (all went K-12 in Waldorf schools around the world). She has been a class teacher and has taught in Waldorf teacher training. She has led numerous workshops on parenting and child development. She is currently the administrator of the BA in Curative Education, Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools and University of Aberdeen.

don't recognize this need for power as a healthy form of authority. A measured response is usually perceived by the child as a natural form of authority that they will willingly listen to. Ultimately, when we arrive at a response rather than a reaction, we are in a more truthful space.

In my experience, a common characteristic among children today is their need for honesty. We don't have to tell them inappropriate bits of information in the name of honesty, but we do have to be honest with ourselves, we have to have enough self-knowledge to acknowledge who we are and what we are really feeling. Then we can bring this honesty to our relationship with children and they will feel respect for it.

Ultimately, these children are asking for us to be integrated, healthy adults. They are asking us to be authentic.

1 Excerpts from a talk given for parents at Michael Hall, May 2002.

BOOK REVIEW

Kevin Avison reviews

Teaching Children Handwriting by Audrey McAllen

Back in the seventies, when I began my Waldorf teaching, materials were in short supply, unless one read German. Audrey McAllen's *Teaching Children to Write* (published in 1977 by Rudolf Steiner Press), with its combination of sound, practical advice, widely informed research and Anthroposophical study, was among these sparse treasures and, for me, the most valuable. Some new teachers, starting out with a Class 1, have said that the book was their "career-saver". So the republication of Miss McAllen's work in new format, augmented and improved as *Teaching Children Handwriting* (Rudolf Steiner College Press) is doubly welcome, not only because of the continuing relevance of its subject-matter, but because the decline of handwriting has proceeded apace since the publication of the original.

Those who know the original book well will find many similarities between this and the new one. But Audrey McAllen is not content to rest on her laurels; the research work has developed, including, for example, a much-augmented description of the development of children's drawing as a path to understanding how the process of incarnation expresses itself in these scribbles and scrawls. Through this a compelling case is made for beginning with the will-feeling activity of drawing in order to prepare for the activity of writing. The new book also includes reference to the work of Rhoda Kellog, Susan Greenfield, Rosemary Sassoon, Jane

Field and others, indicating the striking convergence over recent years in the findings of some "conventional" research and the insights of spiritual science. This new edition is an even better example than the previous one of how to meet the challenge of ensuring that Waldorf education does not become concreted in a set of traditions but continues to be contemporary. There can be few better illustrations of managing the fourth golden rule for the teacher ("Discussion with Teachers", closing words), "The teacher must never get stale or grow sour".

The question of children's handwriting is an important one. Many teachers, while recognising the importance of approaching reading via

writing route, lack the means to articulate the reasons for this method. In many classrooms one can observe a certain disjunction, once reading has started, between this activity and that of handwriting. *Teaching Children Handwriting* provides a coherent framework, not only for handwriting, but has much to say about its connection to reading and spelling. Specific handwriting indications in chapters 4 and 5 seem even more relevant now than when the original was published and it is significant that, in addition to giving the correct formation for Roman capitals, the movements for more of the digits and the rhythmic flow of the cursive forms have been added. All this is very welcome, although this reviewer would like to see a more detailed



examination of different styles of foundation hand. The cursive "f" shown, for example, is correct, of course, but there is no reference to the principle that informs some of the recent "dyslexia-friendly" scripts that avoid upper loops and follow a consistent use of clockwise loops for the descenders. The form suggested for the letter x also leads away from the corresponding objective of giving children a script that enables them to complete each word without lifting the pencil from the paper (except, of course, dotting i's and crossing t's).

While the earlier book gave relatively sketchy suggestions for continuing the handwriting curriculum after Class 1 and 2, the new one expands this guidance and continues the overview to Class 5.

In a number of schools, some introduction to calligraphy is now given as an artistic subject in its own right. The lack of coherence of approach to this might well benefit from some further study, since the aim of these lessons can sometimes be hazy. One would hope that in the course of time the handwriting curriculum can be completed to include Class 6 and upwards, especially because the possibility of raising the activity of handwriting to a conscious participation becomes all the harder during puberty. If good "use of self" in handwriting has not been established before this time, it can be nearly impossible to effect a change at this stage. The range of fonts and the principles of design that inform them would seem to be a topic that must come to fore in an age when an almost infinite number of permutations are available via a PC at the click of a mouse. *Teaching Children Handwriting* will have made a vital contribution to the art of

education if it encourages more teachers to look to and explore their own hand.

The sections of the book concerned with reading and spelling are less expanded. One particular point is worth emphasising here, however. Audrey McAllen's suggestion for the teaching of English vowels provides a sure guide for teachers working in this language. If this lesson were heeded it would do much to avoid the confusion that can so be sown by simply trying to apply Rudolf Steiner's indications for these sounds to a phonic system to which they do not apply. That said, the good advice given to help teachers develop an informed and thorough approach to all the literacy skills, still awaits further research. This book, however, makes a valuable contribution to this, both through the practical indications and by raising the question of different learning styles, specifically visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. The warning that the love of collecting is shortlived in the child and that "banging-on" with rote learning can easily become counter-productive is well made, but the section that follows it, "Other Approaches to Spelling", could have done with further elaboration.

Teaching Children Handwriting will surely become a Waldorf classic. Better still, it is a book that could be placed before a mainstream educationalist without embarrassment (something that is still quite rare). The book is attractively designed and well edited, with clear sections for ease of reference, a generous bibliography that could be the basis for a self-initiated "in-service education" and (a real advance since 1977!) an index. It ought to be on the reading list of every teacher-training course and

compulsory reading for new Class 1 teachers.

Experienced teachers too will surely be grateful to Audrey McAllen for going through with the painful process of revision and up-dating of this book. One hopes that issues raised by re-reading it will ignite a further spirit of research among Waldorf educators. That would be to pay this book the compliment it deserves, that of emulating the vitality of enquiry Audrey McAllen herself exemplifies.

Teaching Children Handwriting is available from SSF Publications.

Kevin Avison:

- works for the SWSF, co-ordinating the Educational Advisory Service and supports new initiatives
- is the author of *A Handbook for Waldorf Class Teachers*

The Friends of the Art of Education

Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners – literally 'friends of the art of Rudolf Steiner education' are universally known as *die Freunde*. In English we shall simply call them *the Friends*.

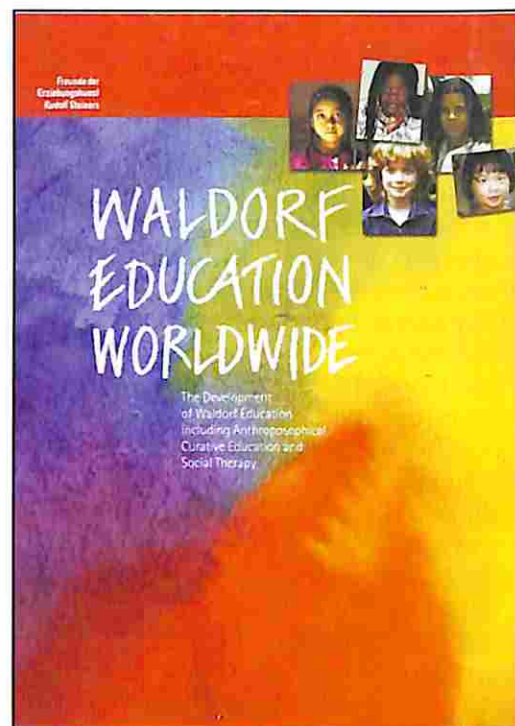
Established 30 years ago, this charitable foundation has raised funds to support pedagogical initiatives around the world, especially those countries in which there is no state support for Waldorf education. The Friends support schools, kindergartens and teacher training but also curative education and projects caring for children in need in all kinds of contexts. By 2000 they were receiving and donating around 7 million DM

(£2.7 million) a year.

In recent years the Friends have become an internationally recognised NGO and have formed a co-operations partnership with UNESCO.

In 1994 UNESCO honoured the Friends with a major exhibition at their headquarters in Geneva. This exhibition (the catalogue has been translated into 15 languages) has travelled throughout Europe, India, Thailand, the Philippines and Korea.

M.R.



To celebrate 30 years of the Friends a wonderful book *Waldorf Education World-wide* (full colour 208pp) has been produced and translated into English. This can be ordered via the SSF Publications website www.steinerschoolbooks.com or direct from the Fellowship at £15.



Brazil – a piece of land, a piece of a dream

The Associação Comunitária Micael was founded to support the children and adults who live in the poor Jardim Boa Vista quarter of São Paulo

The Jardim Boa Vista area lies on the edge of the vast sprawling city of São Paulo and has grown up since the mid-seventies. It is characterised by a high density of population crammed into the smallest possible space. Initially, low-income families were drawn there because of the cheap land prices in pursuit of a dream to possess their own piece of land. This is the dream of every family father in our land.

The Colégio Waldorf Micael de São Paulo was also founded there at that time. Behind the school the slum developed. What we have to say is that it is necessary to dream and that dreams often come true.

The quarter

In the 70's poor inhabitants of the quarter built homes at the back of their plots without any kind of planning, since each one had the dream of building their own house. There were no playgrounds or other leisure facilities. Children had only the dust roads or building sites to play on.

At the beginning of the 80's a Kindergarten and primary school were founded. Through the great efforts of the inhabitants themselves sanitation was introduced, streets tarmac-ed and the building plots legalised. In time the population grew and the original plots had ever more houses built on them until there were no more gardens or courtyards.

The favela

Since one can only become a landowner through purchase, many families are forced to build on public land and exist there precariously without any kind of infrastructure that could ensure their dignity. One calls the accumulation of all these pieces of dreams, *favela* or slum. Jardim Boa Vista is one such slum with tiny houses; many perched directly on open sewers flowing from the city. The inhabitants are primarily migrants from other, even poorer regions of Brazil searching for a more worthwhile life. They often leave relatives and dependents behind waiting for them to find a better place to live and work.

The Waldorf School

Colégio Waldorf Micael was founded in the midst of this reality. Since the school was independent, initially none of the inhabitants of Jardim Boa Vista could attend the school.

All the pupils came from other parts of the city where the parents could pay for the education. Many parents of the school, conscious of the social gulf between themselves and the favela inhabitants, took steps to support their neighbours in the harsh environment behind the school. Out of this initiative the Associação Comunitária Micael was born.



The Associação Comunitária Micael

Many years passed before the flame of this impulse to help the poor and underprivileged could be properly kindled though many smaller, local activities were carried out. On 22nd April 2002 parents and former parents from Colégio Micael, together with friends and inhabitants of the favela, founded the Association. Their aim is to build a worthy future together. At present 329 people including adults, children and young people are being cared for; 300 from Jardim Boa Vista and 29 from other nearby slums. We offer many activities in the realm of education, health care, culture and the arts. These activities are supported by many volunteer workers.

Our dreams

Even the Associação Comunitária Micael dreams of owning its own piece of land. At present they share space with the Colégio Micael but this is insufficient to meet our growing needs and the critical social conditions.

We are preparing to realise some of our dreams, one of which is a Kindergarten for favela children, which is run by volunteers. These

children live in a harsh world with no place to play and be children. They are surrounded by violence and are fed a violent diet of television. These children need daily care.

A few examples of our successes:

- Learning support is provided on a one-to-one basis in an appropriate setting for some of the many children with severe learning difficulties. Some of these children are now able to return to school.
- Sculpture: a weekly activity led by qualified teachers enables young people to work artistically with wood and stone, thus providing them with a meaningful activity.
- Weaving: a weaving workshop was one of the first Associação activities. Both practical professional and therapeutic support can be given. Many participants have derived great personal and social development through this programme.
- Theatre: young people can learn social behaviour through role-play and improvisation to tackle the problems of violence and general aggression and loss of motivation in school.

- Health and therapy: doctors and therapists can advise intervals in their personal development. We have already noticed significant progress in many individuals we have been able to help.

We have continuously strived to improve the quality of our work. We are dependent on the contributions of our members and the donations from friends and well-wishers.

Alex Menezes
Ute Weitbrecht



to being open and spontaneous, proud of their progress. The children work a lot on their own and are good at helping each other. The most important thing is that they enjoy going to school! This fact is a source of amazement for parents and the many visitors to the school and as a result the school is enjoying increasing attention.

The teachers are becoming more experienced and have formed a college. The parents are becoming more and more involved in the school, helping in many practical ways and with fundraising. The parents are asked to contribute a monthly payment of 120 Rand (12.50 euro / £6). This is within the range of most parents and, with full classes, provides enough to support a teacher (around 400 Rand monthly). The school is hoping to get half of their budget from the

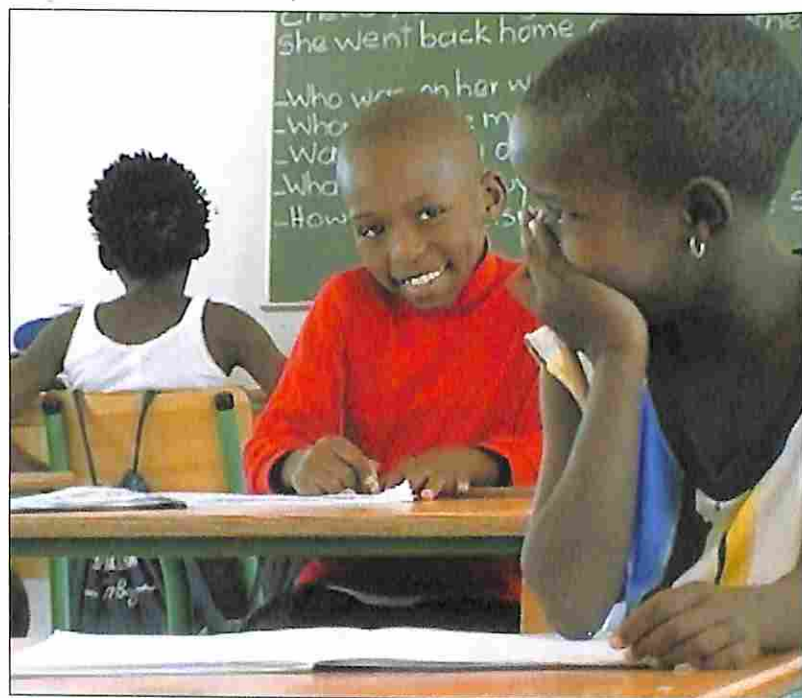
budgets (a Waldorf specialism!). In Khayelitsha there is high unemployment. There is a lack of respect for rules and this is linked to the high levels of violence. Many of the parents of the Zenzeleni School are inspired by the love and skills of the teachers and are themselves teachers.

Khayelitsha – education in a township

The townships in South Africa continue to be centres of human violence. There seems to be hardly any way of breaking the vicious circle. Waldorf is one such way. Khayelitsha is an example that gives hope.

In 1999 the Centre for Creative Education in Cape Town founded the Zenzeleni School at the request of the Khayelitsha community. 'Zenzeleni' is Xhosa for 'acting with self-responsibility'. Founded with only 16 children the school soon grew. During the first 2 years the school shared the rooms with a local day care centre and Kindergarten. Since then, 3 new classrooms have been built and there are currently 84 children in Classes 1 to 4.

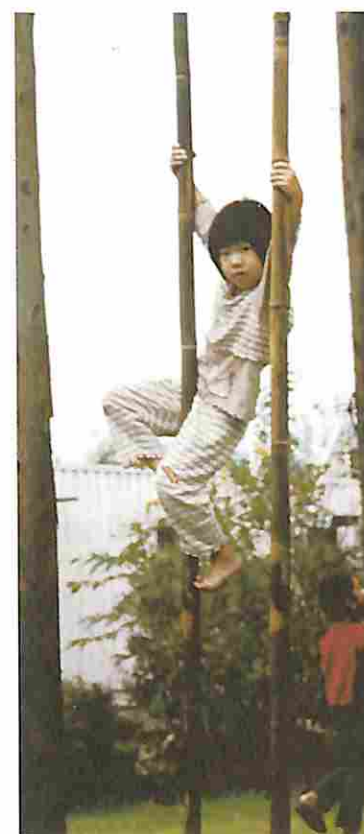
The Zenzeleni School wants to become a 'demonstration centre' for teachers at other township schools to inspire them and show that one can offer effective and quality education on very low



Frequently children with learning difficulties come from other schools where they are not coping and most quickly change from being closed children

government once they have successfully registered. Donations are required to provide classrooms.

Willem van der Velden



Small beginnings in Taiwan

In the Far East there is a growing awareness of Waldorf education. The tradition of rote learning stands in stark opposition to the developing child's needs. For some years now Waldorf Kindergartens have been offering a way out of the treadmill.

The city of Taichung is reckoned to be the cultural centre of Taiwan. In 1994 June Lin began a Waldorf Kindergarten with 35 children and 9 co-workers. This gifted Kindergarten teacher has created a warm and loving mood. June Lin is regularly asked to advise other Kindergartens and to give lectures.

After four teachers completed their Waldorf training in Australia and New Zealand, they began a Class 1 in September 2001. In July 2002 they managed to rent a building with 5000 sq. metres of space at a very

reasonable price, which is a wonder in a crowded city of skyscrapers. Soon afterwards they began a 3-year part time teacher training with 16 students who have begun their work with enthusiasm, joy and energy. The openness for Waldorf education is remarkable.

In Taiwan there is a growing need for such an education. In state schools the children suffer an unmitigated regime of rote learning. Many children visit so-called 'cram schools' in the evenings and holidays to make their grades. One can only hope that the Waldorf school can make its contribution to a rethinking of educational policy in the city, through example.

Much work is needed to renovate the building and establish a child-friendly

play space. If any Class 12 wants to come to Taiwan and help with this work they would be heartily welcome. One can also do a social practical in the Kindergarten.

A further initiative was founded in Lo-Tung and already has three classes. The Friends of the Art of Education have twice funded four teachers to attend teacher development courses in Australia. The initiative in Lo-Tung is even being partly financed by the state authorities, which shows that there is some openness for educational renewal. In this particular case, two local politicians had the opportunity to visit the Waldorf School in Stuttgart and were so convinced they gave the initiative their support.

Horst Hellmann



Alliance for Childhood



What is the Alliance?

The Alliance for Childhood is a partnership of individuals or organisations who work together out of respect for childhood in a worldwide effort to improve children's lives. They align themselves with the following:

Aims and Objectives

- ◆ To fight poverty and neglect in all forms.
- ◆ To work for better child health, physical and emotional.
- ◆ To prevent exploitative commercialism aimed at children.
- ◆ To reduce children's growing dependence on electronic media.
- ◆ To improve childcare facilities.
- ◆ To promote a play-based Early Years curriculum.
- ◆ To strengthen family life.

How does the Alliance work?

The Alliance for Childhood strives to create a focal point for reflection and action by people with vision and devotion who place child education and care within a larger social context through sharing research, mutual support and the Alliance website.

Website

For more information see the website:
www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk

Action for Child Protection – Sierra Leone

The Organisation 'Action for Child Protection – Sierra Leone' (ACP-SL) is a voluntary, non-political and independent action-group which strives for the protection of the basic human rights of children in Sierra Leone. It was formed in 1997 and initially named 'Friends of Waldorf in Sierra Leone' by concerned teachers and students. This was during a period of absolute terror and national chaos wherein children were abandoned, frightened, abducted and conscripted into the fighting forces.

As an action group, ACP-SL is involved in working with street children directly usually by initial contact on the street through volunteer street educators who meet the children and provide organised recreational activities, basic medical attention, advice and referrals, sometimes food and used clothes. We have been encouraging permanent street kids to visit drop-in centres run by other child protection agencies where they can eat, wash and receive medical care and counselling services from trained staff. We recognise this outreach approach as an initial attempt to love, care for and help them and we have sought placements in their transition from street life and its negative influences.



ACP-SL's most successful project is the establishment of a primary school in the Allen Town Community, Freetown. This initiative started in 1997 out of the socio-political chaos that ground all educational activities to a halt for more than a year. Fortunately, this impulse, which grew out of our sense of moral responsibility to those children, continues to flourish and has translated itself into a community school. It is the vision of the care-group to work with the community and facilitate the evolution of the school into a Steiner School – thanks to the *UNESCO Publication on Steiner Education* which reinforced our aspirations. The school has a current enrolment of 82 children (classes 1-3) and 4 community volunteers serving as teachers.

Our work is demanding and needs support to help us maintain our outreach programme with street children, lend support to child-focused community projects, such as the school, and meet our running costs. This project has been supported by the Friends of the Art of Education.

Shannoh Kandoh, Co-ordinator, Action for Child Protection-SL
C/o National Forum For Human Rights
29 Big Waterloo Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa
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From a School Doctor...

This regular column will address health issues in the context of Steiner Waldorf education

Introducing Dr Bettina Lohn



Education is health

Associating education with health can be puzzling, but one of the most essential ideas in Steiner Waldorf education is the "health-enhancing" nature of the education itself. This relates to all aspects of school life, but especially to the curriculum. The curriculum is the teacher's "tool", presenting the child with age-appropriate challenges. Teachers and doctors work out of the same background, an anthroposophical understanding of the human being, and in this context "health" is meant in a broad sense, including prevention and long-term effects.

The doctor and therapists "lend the teacher a hand". This can for instance concern developmental issues, constitutional tendencies or illness dispositions. The aim is to accompany the child and work together out of a common picture, involving parents, teachers, the school doctor and therapists. This wide-ranging and future-orientated field is still in need of development and further research. It is interesting that the first Waldorf School back in 1919/20 already had a school doctor, indicating how seriously the idea was taken. Nevertheless, despite these early beginnings the role of the school doctor is still evolving.

Readers to raise issues

As one of the school doctors working in Steiner Waldorf Schools in Britain I have been asked to write for and co-ordinate this column. As a new feature it will need to develop and find its own form. Although some interesting issues have already been identified, I would like to invite readers to make suggestions for themes or questions you would like to be considered. Please address these to the editor. I am sure you will appreciate that the issues will be addressed in a general way and that it will not be possible to consider specific, personal situations in this context.

My background

As part of this introduction I would like to include a note about my own professional background. As a former Steiner Waldorf school pupil I had first-hand experience of a Waldorf school doctor. Following medical studies in Germany I moved to Britain and completed the training in General Practice. This was followed by several years of working at Park Attwood Clinic, an anthroposophical residential clinic in Worcestershire. This, in addition to seminars, was essential for my anthroposophical medical training. My long-standing relationship with anthroposophy, and growing interest in child development, led me

to become increasingly involved in school doctoring. There is no official training for this as such (neither in the conventional nor the anthroposophical sector), but post-graduate courses, conferences and collegial mentoring are available and ongoing. Currently I am pursuing courses in Anthroposophical Paediatrics (in Germany) and an MSc in Community Paediatrics at Warwick University. My present work is divided between three Steiner Waldorf Schools and a local NHS Community Child Health Department, involving work in state schools, developmental clinics etc.

Wherever I work, close to my heart is the good and open working relationship between parents, teachers, school doctors and other health professionals, who all have the *healthy* development of the child at heart.

I sincerely hope to be able to address issues of interest to you in the future and look forward to a fruitful dialogue.

*Dr Bettina Lohn
School Doctor*

Editor's note

Suggestions to Dr Lohn can be sent to the SE editor.

SE Interview

SE asks Trevor Mepham

SE: Do you think that Waldorf education is compatible with the criteria for the state's maintained sector?

In his writing and talking about education, Steiner was very clear that if education is anything, it's an art. In our times there has been more and more of a tendency to see education as a commodity or product; as a formula, or some sort of checklist of skills; as a bag of subjects, or a batch of information. This is a very quantitative sort of picture and therefore, severely limited in outlook. One idea that Steiner promoted very clearly is that it is the task of the teacher to bring enthusiasm, vitality and humanity into the art of education. This is a very important message for those who work in teacher education.

One of the difficulties we face in the current educational climate is the apparent call to comply with uniform standards, which are mostly described in statistical, quantitative terms. This poses a challenge and an opportunity for Steiner Waldorf education, because coming from a starting point of creativity and vitality, we are then faced with these rather dead, prescriptive terms and conditions. I think it's really important that we avoid being dragged from one polarity to the other. This is where the question of accountability comes in because sometimes Waldorf education is perceived

as fostering free artistic expression, and creativity, with insufficient attention to form, focus and outcome. I think this is misplaced and inaccurate, but perhaps in the application of the educational ideas, there is a grain of truth in there somewhere.

SE: Can state-funded Waldorf education work?

I think if we could see a way of making ourselves – and here I am talking about the schools and the teachers – more outwardly accountable, even more present in the world this would be a means by which we could stand with strength in the world and say, "We are here to contribute; we are not here to comply. We are here to offer something distinctive, not something that you can get in all places at all times: the same size, the same colour, the 'one model fits all' sort of idea." I think that it is possible and even necessary that we find our place in the public domain where we can figure with increasing vigour and confidence. In other words, to provide an education which is founded on the idea that teaching (and learning) is an artistic process, a living process, and a process that will only flourish if there is a

genuine recognition of diversity – diversity of means and diversity of participants.

SE: What is at stake?

On a broad educational level, we have to ask ourselves, is there a place where we can participate, or must we stand apart? Is this a time in which we can walk forwards to 'approved independence', or must we shuffle into a private side street? If we are allowed to take part, and if we allow ourselves, then we can surely take heart that we are carrying water into a dusty desert. And what can we contribute? Ideally, we offer much, since our ideals are high. As the saying goes, we have great potential.

SE: But can we do it?

Humanly, pragmatically, we can make a start. Even small steps in fostering the imagination, caring for quality, taking interest in the emerging, developing human being are of great worth and potency. To take these steps with artistic and professional integrity and to walk upright – humanly accountable and publicly accountable – now that is a path that calls out for the treading.

Trevor in sunny SE office



SE: What do you see as some of the key issues in Waldorf teacher education?

There are at least three aspects to this question.

1. appropriate forms of recognition for Waldorf teacher education programmes
2. the development and improvement of programme resources, both human and material
3. maintaining the quality of the programmes, and researching the important questions of education in a way that takes into account the conditions and the context in which we find ourselves?

One of the questions we are currently looking at, in addition to our own 'internal' forms of approval and recognition, is whether to go down the path of having our training programmes publicly recognized and accredited. However, it is the case that the Fellowship does not have the resources that are needed to assume the role and responsibility of a fully-fledged awarding body, in the sense that that is understood in the wider social context.

SE: Are you suggesting that Steiner teacher education programmes should move towards recognition by the mainstream educational community in a way that would make them accountable to the state?

Recognition and accountability are closely linked. Accountability is high on the current political agenda, particularly in the sphere of education. Back in May of this year, Tony Blair was quoted in *The Independent* as saying: "If a service can be accountable for what it achieves we need worry far less about how it achieves it". This question of external accountability is new territory

for us and we first need to develop an understanding of what is meant by accountability. My own understanding of it is that it provides a means or facility by which you can stand for what you are doing – stand for it in the face of oneself, one's colleagues and the wider world also. So, if we understand accountability in the sense of embracing a self-regulating culture then I think our work in teacher education could proceed to have wider acceptance and professional recognition by both the public authorities and our partners and colleagues in what is known as the 'mainstream sector'.

SE: So, are you suggesting that Steiner teachers should have a state training?

In looking at the question of teacher qualifications, there are certain generic skills, attributes and abilities, which teachers demonstrate, or work towards. These, what might be termed, 'aspirational' qualities apply to teachers working with children and students the world over. It is recognition and validation of these attributes and skills that we are seeking. We don't wish our teachers to become recognized as national curriculum teachers, or mainstream teachers, or teachers who teach in a particular way according to governmental directives. When we start getting into this area then I think we are talking more about uniform qualities, standards and requirements rather than universal ones. We are certainly not looking to join up with a narrow, rigid, prescriptive approach to either teaching or learning. In particular, we will not bind ourselves to the current assessment and testing regime which accompanies the national curriculum.

Having made these comments, it is nonetheless true that

teaching, by its very nature, is not a private pursuit. Teachers are not hidden away, working on their own, in isolation. Steiner schools function in the independent schools sector yet they are not disconnected from the rest of the educational community. As well as holding inner responsibilities Steiner schools need to meet outer requirements, such as registering with government departments and other official agencies. So, in this sense, Steiner Schools are not simply different or alternative. They are already located in a pluralist educational community and offer something distinctive, original and fresh as a cultural contribution.

SE: Trevor, we thank you for this interview.

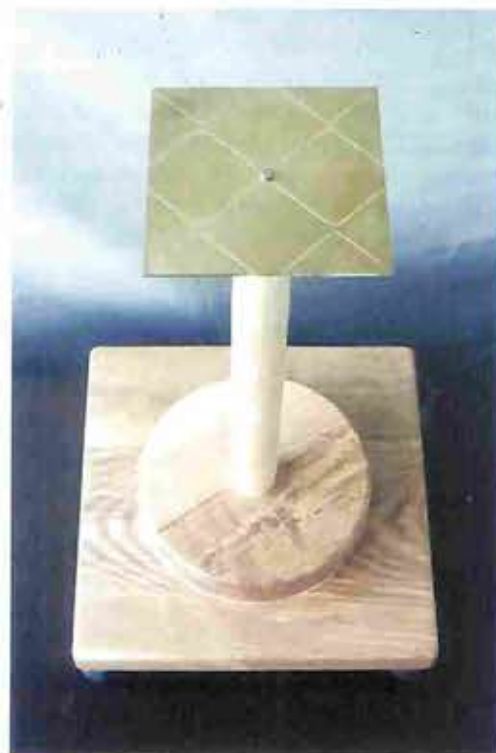
Trevor Mepham:

- works for the SWSF in teacher education
- is a tutor on the Steiner BA programme at the University of Plymouth
- works as an educational advisor in Waldorf schools
- did work as a class teacher at the South Devon Rudolf Steiner School
- lives in Devon with his wife Helen and four children

Editor's comment

A report by Trevor on progress in discussions about recognition and accreditation of Steiner programmes was published in the Autumn SWSF Newsletter.

experience of experimenting



A complete high quality kit is offered for experimenting with Chladni figures. The kit contains:

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From Acoustics bulletin • Institute of Acoustics



Malin John Starrett's new business, **experience of experimenting**, aims to provide quality equipment and instructions to help people call forth natural phenomena.

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Three Chladni figures on small plate

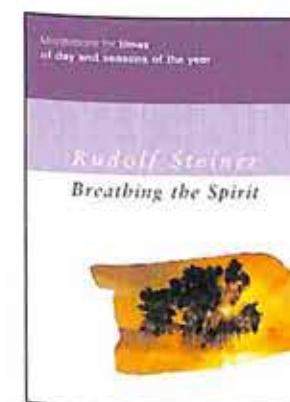


Malin J. Starrett is an Upper School teacher at Holywood Rudolf Steiner School, N. Ireland

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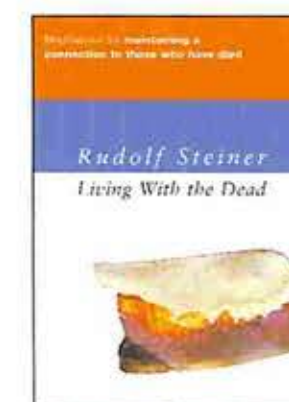
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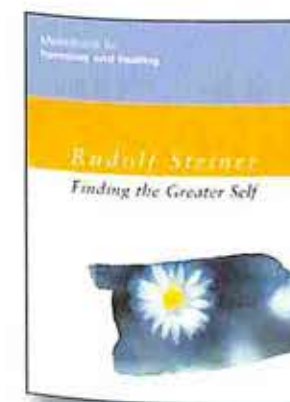
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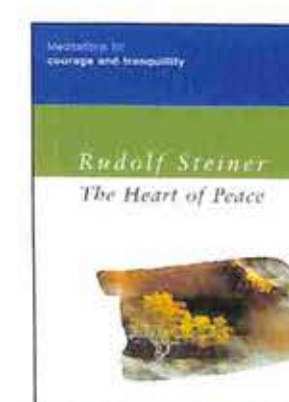
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SWSF Council Meeting. Michael Hall, Forest Row 7th – 8th February

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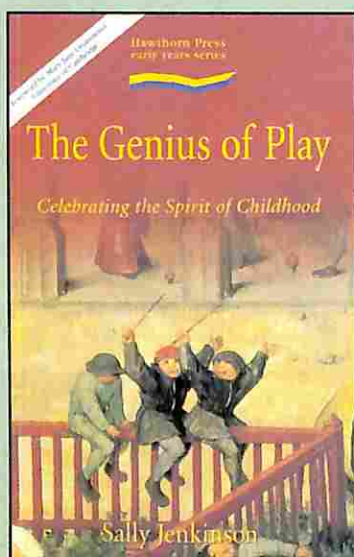
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Hawthorn Press ISBN 1-403458-04-8. £11.99

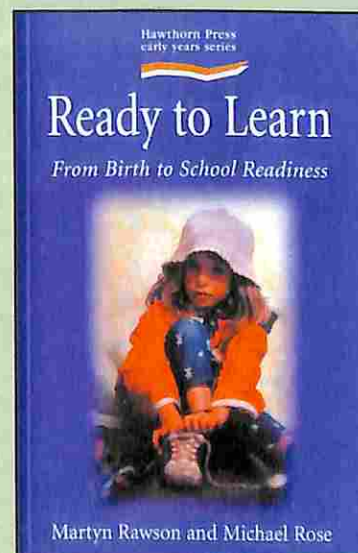
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