The role of evaluation and examinations within Waldorf education within the different age groups;

This working paper deals with the question of examinations but first it is necessary to place the subject in the wider context of pedagogical examination.

1.0 What is evaluation?

Evaluation means knowing, establishing, making visible, comparing and assessing the value of something. These are quite different activities. Knowing means seeking the essential quality of something in its context. Establishing the value of something requires an analysis that identifies the relevant aspects since not all aspects are equally important even when we try to look at it in a holistic way. We set priorities in the form of value-systems. Assessing implies weighing the value of something, comparing it with other similar objects and at the same time valuing it- that is appreciating its unique qualities. In order to know the essence of something we must approach it with well-intentioned, loving interest. Well-meaning interest is the starting point of any real evaluation.

Evaluation also has to do with testing. We are constantly being tested by life. In all social situations we are constantly being tested and questioned. In the past each culture had its own form of ritual testing. The essential phases of life were marked by various forms of trial. At puberty and later on reaching adult maturity young people were admitted into their society as full adults by way of ceremonies and initiations trials. Today we have mostly only bourgeois remainders of these rituals. They have been replaced by school exams. The need that young people have to be challenged and tested is not met through forms. Rather they seek their trials through all manner of risk-taking activities.

1.1 Waldorf Education and exams

Waldorf education has largely distanced itself from the general examination culture (at least in theory). Waldorf school are usually cited as classic examples of schools without grades and testing. " Waldorf schools counter this culture of selection with that of support," wrote Christoph Lindenberg in his best seller[15] on Waldorf Education. In public exams the key element is that of selection and this assumes competition. Education becomes competitive. Fear and ambition are effective means of educating but n Waldorf these elements are countered through co-operation and interest. Instead of competition we cultivate co-operation, instead of selection we have inclusiveness.

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15 Ch. Lindenberg, Waldorfschulen: angstfrei lernen, selbstbewusst handeln

1.2 Is one allowed to evaluate in the Waldorf school?

This inclusive approach has sometimes led to a total ban on evaluation and thus the baby is thrown out with the grubby bathwater. Paradoxically this attitude has often lived side by (uncomfortable) side with an ambivalent attitude to public exams. One would quite like to abolish them or seek alternatives, yet there is considerable willingness to serve this bourgeois symbol ("at least it shows that our pupils are normal"). It is perhaps not as crass as the German magazine Spiegel recently reported, "already in the first class the parents fear that their children won't pass their exams", though this attitude is not unknown. In uncertain times, in which all forms of social security are being progressively withdrawn or undermined, the pressure from parents and pupils to quickly and efficiently gain the security of a passport to the next round of qualifications grows apace. Waldorf principles are one thing but good grades in the exams have to be gained, whatever the pedagogical cost. Pedagogically the worst case scenario is when a Waldorf school has no other evaluation culture than the state exams. These exams generate such insecurity that in works to undermine the education right down into the Lower School, years before any heed need be paid to the actual requirements of the exams. Their psychological effect is much greater than their actual relevance. Where one is used to working with meaningful forms of pedagogical evaluation throughout the school in age appropriate ways, external exams play a much less significant role in the minds of pupils and parents (and even teachers).

Waldorf education has always had many formal and informal forms of evaluation such as written school reports, child studies, diagnostic studies (such school readiness studies, the Class 2 study etc.), many forms of assessment (class tests, evaluation of main lesson books, dictations and vocabulary or maths tests within lessons) and many informal forms in which pupils receive feedback on their work and development.

1.3 Evaluation means having aims

When we evaluate we test whether something is right, whether it is ripe and to what extent it meets our expectation. That means we evaluate according to certain criteria. In the process of evaluation a judgement is formed in relation to aims that are set. A central question for Waldorf education is: what are our pedagogical aims for the various ages and subjects? Secondly, we have to ask ourselves continuously, how can we support each child's development?

However we are concerned with more than merely assessing or making learning outcomes visible. Our task is at the same time to strengthen the learning process through evaluation. It is part of our education task to value the learning process itself as an outcome. Educational evaluation can not only make many-sided achievements and the development of abilities visible and if necessary provable, but can also support the learning process itself. It is not just a question

of demonstrating subject competence but also a whole raft of personal and interpersonal abilities, as well as problem solving competence, transfer skills, moral abilities and creativity – qualities that can actually only be demonstrated in real life situations.

1.4 In summary we can say that evaluation can:

- **compare and assess abilities, competences, achievements in relation to standards, or self-determined goals;**
- **be a diagnostic tool in accompanying the learning process;**
- **in the form of self-evaluation enable the development of self-knowledge and learning competence.**

2.0 Learning and testing in context

One must not lose sight of the relationship between learning and testing. What does this mean for evaluation? Does it help me to understand the pupils better? It is worth bearing the following basic principles in mind in order to have a basis for our practice. When I examine the child's learning and development, they reveal certain stages and transitions which the child has to go through in the process of acquiring competences.

3.0 Key competences, standards and Waldorf Education

Today we are aware that the central aim of education is to facilitate the acquisition of competences the individual needs for life-long learning. Many forms of competence are described from basic skills such as reading and writing and basic mathematical abilities to social skills, inter-cultural competence, the ability to manage situations, dealing with information, learning skills, citizenship and personal competences include moral and ethical behaviour. In Waldorf education we tend to speak of skills and abilities but no one would deny that all these competences are irrelevant (even if the terminology is unsympathetic).

A colleague, Klaus-Michael Maurer from Hamburg and I (as part of a research project into new forms of examinations within Waldorf schools) recently compared the Waldorf approach to understanding the learning process and the requirements of the state in terms of key competences or standards. These standards are usually presented in three basic stages that correspond to certain steps in learning; level A= reproduction, level B= application, level C = transfer (which implies the ability to apply skills acquired in one field to another). Applied to the whole of Waldorf education we can see that level A generally corresponds to the learning mode of the lower school, level B to the middle school (including Class 9) and level C to the upper classes (11 and 12), though it is clear that though the phases are successive, they are integrated. Therefore the upper school approach

could be described as A+B+C. The levels of reproduction and application are almost always either explicitly or implicitly present in level C, transfer.

If we recognise the primary learning mode in the lower school as corresponding with level A reproduction (which naturally is not as mechanical as it sounds and includes imitation but also following what the teacher instructs) then it becomes clear that the primary skill required is the ability to perceive, to take in, to be receptive and open and that these qualities depend on the child being able to direct, focus and maintain her attention. In terms of the pedagogical observation, it is interesting to note when a primary ability (or more likely abilities) crystallises into a specific skill (e.g. motor control, hand eye-eye coordination, balance, ability to form mental pictures, focused listening etc provide a platform for the acquisition of the skills we know as reading and writing). Equally important is the observation how and when skills transform into complex abilities or competences at the next higher level (e.g. basic writing ability leads to the ability to compose original pieces of writing or reading skills enable the learner to work with literature). There are many stages of learning to observe, each one of which can be evaluated and diagnosed and where necessary supported.

One can draw up the following table to show the relation between the different concepts described above. We have added to the scheme, the concepts used by Dr. Peter Loebell[16] to describe basic learning phenomena.

Level	Loebell	Steiner, Study of Man lecture 9)	Ability/ competence	State educational standards
A	Awareness/ noticing	Conclusion (willing)	Awareness, powers of perception	Reproduction
B	Commitment	Judgement (feeling)	Ability to apply what one has learned	Application
C	Evidential experience	Concept (thinking)	Ability to abstract	Transfer

4.0 Evaluation in the various age groups

When looking at the different age groups we need to bear in mind the two primary functions of evaluation:

- Diagnostic monitoring of development
- Evaluation(including self-evaluation) of attainment

To the typical diagnostic evaluations belong:

16 Loebell, P, 2004 , Ich Bin, Der Ich Werde, Stuttgart, Verlag freies Geistesleben

4.1. School admissions study.

The study carried out to determine whether a child is ready to make the transition from kindergarten to school is an important evaluation. Here a series of criteria have been identified to determine whether a child is ready for school. Essentially these criteria require the observation and judgement of the extent to which the formative forces have transformed to the extent that a part of them have become emancipated from their primary function of forming organic and rhythmic processes and become available for the forming of mental images and structuring inner experience- which are the preconditions for formal learning.

The term 'school readiness' is no longer much in use outside of Waldorf education and has been replaced by the concept of learning competence or willingness. One judges whether a child is willing and able to start formal learning, whether the inner processes or maturation are complete or not. We know from experience that if we apply the same criteria to judging school readiness today as were used 20 years ago, we would find that most children of school age are not as ready as they were.[17]

This recognition has led to many endeavours both within the kindergarten and in the lower school (e.g. the moving classroom or Bochum Model) to restructure the child's learning experiences to enhance readiness by nurturing the lower senses. Here is not the place to discuss such developments. However it important to note that if there is a marked dissociation of the maturation processes then we need a detailed diagnostic study of the developmental process and the monitoring of children in the transition from kindergarten to school to know what is really happening and what children's needs really are.

Furthermore, if new concepts of structuring this transition are implemented, we need clear criteria to evaluate their effectiveness in terms of supporting children's development which can thus provide a basis for evaluation.

4.2 The Class 2 Study

Developed by the Dutch Waldorf Schools advisory service, this diagnostic test is widely used to monitor and assess children's development and identify needs for specific learning support. A series of observations are made regarding unresolved reflexes, bodily coordination (including eye-hand-foot dominance), fine and gross motor skills, proprioception (balance, sense of movement etc), symmetry, sense of time, language competence, numerical skills etc.

Some schools such as Michael Hall School in the UK carry out class screening throughout the lower school to identify children with learning support needs and individual education plans are drawn up with strategies and review sched-

17 see the ICRGs report, Guidelines for School Readiness, published 2004 by the Pedagogical Section in Dornach

ules. That doesn't mean every problem gets solved but is does mean that we generally know that the problem hasn't been solved!

4.3 Child studies

Child studies are a frequent activity within the teachers meetings in all age groups. Individual children are the focus for closer study and discussion. Such child studies are usually structured around focused observations, for which there are many criteria reflecting various theoretical perspectives, including:

- Characterological typology based on the anthroposophical understanding of the developing human being (e.g. gender, temperament, planetary types, large and small headedness, cosmic and earthly polarities, constitutional types)
- Various aspects of dyslexia
- Developmental phases and thresholds (e.g. Rubicon, puberty)
- Learning differences
- Social development and behaviour
- Biographical aspects

Often these aspects are more implicit in the characterisations, though child studies can focus specifically on one or other aspects.

The aim of a child study is to gain as comprehensive picture as possible of the child's being and development. Often the study goes a step further and identifies strategies to help and support the child. In many countries something along the lines of an individual education plans is drawn up involving teachers, therapists, school doctor and even occasionally parents in drawing up a diagnosis and therapy and establishing a timeframe for monitoring developments.

4.4 Monitoring and testing

Monitoring means the regular documentation of observations made of the learning and developmental processes of pupils, for examples in areas such as reading and writing, in artistic work or in the development of social abilities. It may be relevant to record when and how a child achieved a certain level of competence, when a child did something for the first time or indeed any other significant moments. Monitoring, and the judgement implicit in it- we don't and can't record everything- requires that we have developmental milestones or thresholds in mind, expectations that tell us that children usually reach this stage of development around this time or in certain sequence.

Testing on the other hand requires that we construct a specific situation in order to test whether certain skills have been learned, e.g. through a vocabulary test or a written assignment under certain conditions. If monitoring is passive observation of that which unfolds, testing is active. Monitoring belongs to pedagogical support; testing is evaluation in the narrower sense.

Class teachers are well advised to monitor and document the developmental stages the children in their care go through.[18]

4.5 School Reports and developmental profiles

In the Waldorf school report the attempt is made to formulate a picture of the child's being and to formulate future tasks or emphases. In theory the Waldorf Report contains both diagnostic and evaluative elements. On the one hand a picture is given of the pupil's whole development and on the other; the various subjects report and evaluate the pupils' attainments in those specific areas, identifying strengths and weaknesses. The criticisms levelled at Waldorf reports (worst case scenarios) are that it is not clear to whom they are addressed (pupil or parent), to what extent an accurate picture is given, the degree to which indications are given as to how the weaknesses can be overcome, or simply that they contain generalised formulations that year for year indicate no development or change. At best Waldorf Reports have the potential to be highly sensitive instruments of evaluation and motivation.

In student or pupil Profiles (the Dutch speak of pupil success systems) s series of developmental stages are noted and commented upon by both the teacher and the pupil (usually from the middle school upwards). In the self-evaluation the pupil can reflect on their learning, on their strengths and weakness, what they enjoy, what goals they set themselves. The pupils can focus on school work, behaviour, attitudes and their own competences.

5.0 Forms of learning and appropriate methods of assessment

The different modalities of learning require quite different forms of assessment. The following table, though much over-simplified, makes this clear. It should be noted that good teaching usually involves a blend of various forms of learning and therefore requires differentiated forms of assessment.

Whilst these learning stages reveal a vertical and age-determined progression they can also be found at differentiated levels within a given age range. This table can of course be extended.

5.1 Forms of examination

Exams naturally have an element of challenge. This is their best quality. It is an opportunity to say to a pupil, show me what you can do. As soon as we comment on a child's contribution with the words, " you have done that well" (assuming that is a true assessment and not simply a hollow phrase) we are applying criteria for assessment. In Waldorf education we draw these criteria from the subject matter itself. The children learn from class 1 onwards to recognise and value the colours, tones and forms in their qualities. They learn that a line is ei-

Different learning forms need different forms of evaluation

Learning mode	Characterisation of the learning mode	Possible form of evaluation
1. Imitation	Imitation presumes the presence of competent role models. Learning through participation, copying, repeating later what one has witnessed or been deliberately shown. Some imitation can be explicit. Preconditions include interest, awareness, certain level of relaxation and sense of well-being. (sound emotional and physiological basis needed)	Documented observation e.g. in profiles
2. Learning through explicit teaching and instruction	Usually through planned deliberate showing, demonstrating, describing or exemplifying of the stages and steps of specific processes. Best done in context. Preconditions include willingness and ability to concentrate for given time span, sound visual, auditative, motor abilities (relaxed awareness –). It is necessary that the learner is stimulated in his feelings and can identify with the content and learning process (i.e. feels that it is relevant and important)	Through recall, through specific questioning of detail by the teacher of the learner; through verbal of written recall and through application in problem-solving
3. Repetition	Learning through repeating of activities, processes (ideas and words) what has been experienced. Needs variation and focus to maintain interest and momentum. Preconditions; rhythm, routine, artistic structure or content, relevance and ability to apply what has been learned to specific contexts.	Activity can be witnessed and documented
4. Learning through story-telling	The teacher (or pupil) presents complex contents in narrative form verbally. Preconditions, listening, empathising skills (both story teller and listener)	In verbal or written recall, in creativity inspired by the story telling

5. Learning through deliberate observations, including focused and focusing questions	Observational tasks are given either with or without specific focusing questions to a specific area of experience (e.g. text, series of problems, specific material, setting etc.). Preconditions; meaningful context, interest and identification(e.g. also relevance), good observational skills	Set tasks and assignments with clear instructions, tools (both techniques and technology), written or verbal (usually with a spectrum of possible correct answers)
6. Learning through discovery	Outcome-open exploration of phenomena. No predetermined outcome. Emphasis of self-formulation and reflection of experiences. Also learning through doing in practical contexts, where the outcome is specific (a task that needs doing) but the experience is open. It is also open what forms are used by the learners to give expression to their discoveries. Preconditions; confidence, good basic skills (conceptual, literate and oral, organisational), motivation	Self chosen method of reflection and reporting, diaries, portfolios, short talks, exhibitions etc. competence profing
7. Self-directed learning with support	The learner chooses the topic/theme and carries out the work alone (or in a team) and receives support on request from the teacher. Preconditions; (as above) plus the ability to know what kind of help to ask for and how to ask (or seek)	Portfolio, presentations, dialogue, competence profiling
8. Independent working	The learner asks their own questions, sets their tasks, chooses their own methods and motivation Preconditions: al the above!	Portfolio, presentations, dialogue, competence portfolio

ther straight or not, whether the form in eurythmy has been moved successfully or not. Activities are judged in their context, e.g. whether the bread we have baked tastes good or whether it was in the oven too long or is too salty. Life, with a little help from the teachers, usually makes it apparent whether the qualities are right or not. When not, the questions immediately arise, "why not and what can we do to make it right?" We are committed in Waldorf education to creating a positive culture of learning from mistakes rather than punishing them. We can learn from mistakes and we want to learn, is the basic principle that sometimes gets lost in translation.

It is first in the fifth class that one can begin to talk openly about the learning process itself with the pupils. We can discuss what helps and what hinders the

learning process in the class. From this age onwards the children can begin to reflect on their own feelings and their own learning process. How many new words can I learn in French and how do I do it? They can begin to be interested in how different people are and how people learn differently, things they have intuitively known before but can now begin to observe. In class 6 the question of learning gains a new dimension with the awakening of new faculties that make causal thinking possible ("how do I learn something, what do I have to learn and what have I actually learned?").

Testing what has been learned is an important element in the learning process from this age onwards. Correcting and learning from mistakes is particularly important from now on, not least because of the awakening critical faculties but because of the interest in the learning process it generates. (These processes are well attested in the existing Waldorf Curriculum content.) The pupils can learn at this age how work can be corrected and how one can discuss it. The social processes that are involved are also very important parts of the learning process. Helping each other begins to take on a new character, one that has more consciousness and awareness of individual differences and qualities. Team work is not achieved through authority at this age but rather out of mutual recognition and through the joy of meeting challenges and is closely related to the ability to learn and work independently- the best team player is the one is also self-reliant. Challenge also involves friendly rivalry and competition between equal groups of mixed ability. The team ethos is, "we will mange it", with the emphasis on we.

In areas of non-academic and informal learning are just as important to evaluate. The task is to awaken an awareness for the relevant criteria – why are we doing it? How should it be? What is expected from us? What are the limits of our skills? These kinds of evaluation can apply to organising a stand at the Christmas market, performing in a school festival or climbing a mountain. Pupils are quite capable of identifying their own relevant criteria and goals and assessing their own achievements.

5.2 Portfolios

In portfolios students choose examples of their work (in a range of different media and not just on paper) which they document and comment on. This allows for a much more individual presentation of attainment in which the strengths and weakness of the individual in a varied and multi-facetted form that is far more concrete in its quality of expression that formal marking or grades. Portfolios tell s us far more about the learning process and development of the individual that tests or other forms of traditional exams.

Many Waldorf schools around the world are now working with portfolios because they offer many more opportunities to present the values that Waldorf hold important within the learning process and also because Waldorf anyway has a strong artistic streak. In many cases these portfolios are accredited as con-

tributions to public exam systems (and not only in art, where portfolios have long been used).

Working with portfolios assumes that certain basic competences have already been acquired by the pupils and therefore if the work is to be fruitful, there need to be many preparatory stages of introduction, particularly in regard to pupils working independently and in groups. The limitations of portfolio work become apparent in schools where these preconditions have not been met or where the teachers are not aware of the extent to which their teaching approach has to change to allow more creativity and self-determination on the part of the pupils.

One of the key factors in portfolio work is reflection and self-evaluation. That has to be cultivated in stages from the middle school upwards if pupils in the upper school are to be able to do it meaningfully in relation to portfolio work which demands a high level of personal involvement and self-awareness on the part of the pupils. The danger without adequate self-awareness of criteria is that the portfolio just becomes a random accumulation of disconnected material.

5.3 Accreditation of learning

The international educational landscape has changed much in recent years and now provides many ways of accrediting pupil achievements other than through traditional exams. In some countries Waldorf schools already have external accreditation for various forms of learning attainments. The main advantage of such systems of accreditation is that no curriculum content is prescribed but rather learning levels.

If one takes the aspect of independence as a criterion to assess levels of learning, which is often done, then one can identify, for example four levels of learning:

- An entry level at which the learner makes a first acquaintance with the subject. Here the criteria have essentially to do with being receptive.
- At the next level a degree of practicing that which has been taught is evident. Little self-initiative is required and the pupils essentially follow instructions within a clearly defined structure. Assessment concerns checking that basic skills are masters and practiced adequately.
- At the third level a portion, approximately a third in terms of time, of the learning is self-directed or with minimal input from the teacher, who remains on hand to check, support and guide. The remainder of the time is teacher led. This is the level of most normal school teaching.
- At the highest level (within this framework) the learner is primarily responsible for the process, with a small degree of input from third parties in the form of advice or training (at the request of the learner and only as a result of the learner's initiative). This is the level of independent learning achieved by good class 12 projects.

Such a distinction of learning levels can run concurrently in upper school class. One could have pupils working on projects (practical, artistic or academic) or even in a main lesson at different levels of independent learning.

According to the criteria chosen, one can then determine the extent to which each learner has fulfilled them, in effect whether they have 'passed' or 'failed'. However such a system is geared to all learners passing, at their appropriate level because the task of the teacher is to ensure that the pupils have the appropriate techniques and materials and are working at the right level. With more or less guidance every individual, with good will and effort, can fulfil the criteria. This is the antithesis of the selective principle used in conventional exams, where sometimes even the quota of grades is pre-determined and a percentage is pre-programmed to fail.

5.4 Student journals

To portfolios often belong student journals in which the learning process itself is described and commented on by the student. There are particularly valuable in documenting experiences during work experience or other practical projects, including class plays. The techniques of journal writing need to be introduced but essentials the pupils have considerable scope for individual creativity. As a learning competence, journal writing is an extremely useful technique to master for many professions and obviously also for university studies. Such journals can also be included in assessment frameworks for the accreditation of informal learning.

Conclusions

What could a Waldorf Graduation Certificate that also met the requirements of access to higher education look like? The short answer is what the Norwegian Waldorf schools have. That means a certificate that demonstrates the fulfilment of the main educational aims of Waldorf education by a specific individual. It would show how this individual expressed those competences. It would be show a high degree of independence on the part of the individual learner and would give answers to the questions; Who is this person? What can they do? What do they want to do? After all that what an employer or the admissions officer of a college or university needs to know.

If we manage to achieve a deepened understanding of our pupils, if we manage to improve the quality of our educational provision through evaluation and quality development, then it will be possible in future to meet the requirements the state and indeed the times, makes on education. Evaluation has a role to play in making those undoubted values that Waldorf education nurtures not only visible but more effective.

(This article is an extract out of a forthcoming publication on Evaluation and Learning in Waldorf Education)
The original is to be ordered under the following e-mail address: rawson@waldorfschule.de

Martyn Rawson

Further reading

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Drummond, M-J. (2003), Assessing Children's Learning, second edition David Fulton Publishers

Black, PJ. & William, D. (1998) Inside the Black Box, Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment School of Education, King's College