

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF WALDORF EDUCATION AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR OR BEARING ON ASSESSMENT

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RESUMEN

En este artículo se desarrollan conceptos tan relevantes como la motivación en el marco de la educación, la evaluación del proceso de enseñanza como un todo, o el rol de alumnos, profesores y padres durante todo el proceso educativo a la luz de la Pedagogía Waldorf. En este sentido se exponen algunos de los ejes centrales de este sistema educativo basado en las teorías del pensador Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), tales como la importancia del cultivo de las artes plásticas y la música, la enseñanza globalizada no desligada del cultivo de los valores personales, el descubrimiento de las ciencias como enriquecimiento integral de la persona, etc.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía Waldorf, evaluación, motivación.

ABSTRACT

In this paper, relevant concepts in an educational context such as motivation, assessment in the teaching process or pupils, teachers and parents' roles are presented from a Waldorf Pedagogy perspective. Some of the main ideas of this educational system are developed taking Steiner's (1861-1925) theories as a starting point: Arts and crafts and music play an essential role in the Waldorf approach to teaching, closely linked to the development of personal values and the discovery of science.

Key words: Waldorf Pedagogy, assessment, motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION: ASSESSMENT-WHY BOTHER?

In an educational context, assessment (as distinct from self-assessment or peer-assessment) is primarily thought of as something imposed on the pupils. Its aim could be described as getting the pupil to acquire self-knowledge in such a way that progress is prompted, spurred on by personal endeavour. At the same time, it has become customary to associate the concept of assessment with some sort of *measurement*—measurement that is presumed to be an indication of the extent to which the aim is being achieved—.

This is not the occasion to get embroiled in the question of what are worthy aims; or to what extent aims stipulated by an examination board as worthy possess any intrinsic value. For the time being, they constitute the *status quo*, and it should be recognised as such—neither more nor less—.

Yet if one asks how people such as Columbus, Michael Faraday, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Michelangelo, Florence Nightingale, Schubert, Tolkien, Wilberforce and a host of others achieved the aims for which they are acclaimed, one cannot but acknowledge that life presents mirrors for self-knowledge, golden opportunities, spurs for action, challenges, climacteric moments, vital turning points, significant meetings... i.e. almost everything *but assessment*, that on hindsight prove to have been the real stepping-stones of one's biography. Moreover, such examples could be multiplied a thousandfold, whether considering prominent personalities or the ordinary person in the street. In view of this, one might well ask why the whole of the Western world—including its academic outreach into developing countries—has not only become blinkered to this 'fact of life', but allowed the pendulum of assessment to swing education so far in a direction that seems opposite to that in which those stepping-stones lead, which life itself affords so abundantly? Is it that trust in 'life' has arrived at an all-time low, so that only external motivation inspires confidence? Or, to look at the reverse of the same coin, is it that society has lost all faith in inner motivation, in the value of introspection and in the power and effectiveness of inner resolve?

One might press further: are not such forms of self-knowledge more long-lasting than the 'carrot' of the sought after/ feared/ anticipated assessment exam result? After all, while a carrot once eaten is gone, discovering the means of cultivating carrots will surely be more productive and the harvest of life be the better for it.

A well known example of such a harvest (from literature), provides the entire dramatic momentum for Shakespeare's last play. Prospero, in *The Tempest*, in an introspective moment near the beginning of the play, realises that as Duke

of Milan —his status before we meet him on the island where the action is mostly set— he was too much taken up with studying his books and thus too little concerned with outer affairs of State. It is this flaw in Prospero’s personality —seemingly rather innocent— which has opened the gates to his brother’s duplicity. Not that in Prospero we are presented with a character wracked with self-reproach. Nevertheless, his vision of the past has obviously become unclouded through the introspection that he has had the opportunity to pursue during his c.12 years’ sojourn on the island. A melodrama could have been written, no doubt, about such realisation, with the usurper’s malicious schemes culminating in the evil act of bundling Prospero into a “rotten carcass of a boat”, with his distressing cry —all too late— of poignant self-censure as he tragically drowns together with his heir, his only daughter Miranda. Shakespeare takes a different line: he unfolds the action that Prospero takes, with the help of his ‘other worldly’ minions, after his moment of self-examination, self-knowledge, self-assessment, in order to rectify his error - and, by so doing, with the aid of ‘magic’, to bring restitution to the evil that has come streaming into the vacuum, created by his original sin of omission.

Inspired by this example, one might well argue that qualitative means of assessment are preferable to quantitative, since it would seem, by definition, that the qualitative depends on and therefore guarantees *inner* motivation, while the quantitative —a handy ‘carrot’, though not necessarily one to inspire industry from within— might, at its worst, prevent genuine motivation all together.

The aim here is to show how Waldorf does what it does do, in order to achieve, by another route, what quantitative assessment purports to achieve. Or, in other words: to show what Waldorf has at its disposal for nurturing inner motivation in the ordinary course of the school day, the school week, and the school year, to the end that the education arrives at its destination?

2. DOES WALDORF’S EMPHASIS AND RELIANCE UPON INNER MOTIVATION WORK?

The few research papers on Waldorf education that do exist may not be enough to convince the sceptic that it should/does work. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that a body of supportive research has been building up during the past two decades. (It might also be pointed out that those in power during the Nazi regime apparently did not need a large dossier of research for them to decide on the effectiveness of the Waldorf schools: they systematically closed them down as a threat, presumably, to the totalitarian State, seeing the education as one which cultivated independent thought and strong individuality.)

But regarding the effectiveness of Waldorf, as a matter of common-sense it might first be well to glance briefly at possible external pointers indicating whether a Waldorf school is being seen to 'achieve' its aims. Amongst these are: its roll call (parents 'voting with their feet', in this case voting *in*), the flow of applications/ 'early' school leavers, teacher turnover, external exam results (where applicable), the sheer willingness of children to attend school, old scholars' achievements at university, its performance in (e.g.) sporting events against other schools, its participation in national '6th form debates', the vigour of participants at youth conferences, its Upper School work experience at various levels, the interest/attainments of old scholars and so on. However, while these are important, they do not necessarily distinguish a Waldorf school from other types of school - unless one begins to look beneath the surface. (E.g. is the basketball score the result of a specially picked and coached 'school team' that practises fiendishly or is it a single, mixed-ability class who simply play regularly, say, once per week? And if so, *how do they do it?*).

That neither key-stage testing nor other forms of internal examinations are practised in Waldorf education is common knowledge. At the same time, it is self-evident that the achievements of Waldorf pupils in A levels, Scottish Highers, Matriculation, Abitur and similar school leaving exams across the world would not be possible without sustained *effort and achievement* throughout the child's school career. The truth of this is borne home all the more when one realises that only some half/three-quarters of the school day is given over to exam syllabi, the remainder being spent on various components of the actual Waldorf curriculum. It is, however, the intention here to take a deeper look, not so much at the 'effort and achievement' referred to above, but rather the pedagogy and cumulative psychology that it implies.

Three immediate and connected questions devolve from Waldorf's success in the field of school leaving examinations.

- How are the results that Waldorf achieves possible on such a reduced schedule?
- What was Steiner's attitude towards exams?
- What motivation arising from self-knowledge does Waldorf contain that is the equivalent of and —judging by results— clearly serves the same purpose as the kind of quantitative assessment that grades and examination marks provide?

3. HOW ARE THE RESULTS THAT WALDORF ACHIEVES POSSIBLE ON SUCH A REDUCED SCHEDULE?

A full answer to this question could only be given if one explained Steiner's understanding of child development - with its threefold acquisition and assimilation of knowledge, as pursued in Kindergarten, Lower School and Upper School pedagogy. The considerations here (see 7 below) will confine themselves to those components in Waldorf education which have bearing on the process of learning normally thought of in conjunction with the precept of assessment.

4. WHAT WAS STEINER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS EXAMS?

This is a complex issue. Statements by Steiner made in teachers' meetings on the subject of exams have been collated and, for the sake of completeness, appear as an appendix to this paper. From these it can be seen how Steiner, discussing examinations with the teachers of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, made his expectations of Waldorf education clear: (see especially 10 May 1922). However, in that the *aims* of Waldorf could be achieved without the passing of exams—and possibly better achieved without the loss of time spent on exam preparation—it becomes abundantly clear that an alternative to exam-type assessment must have been for him an imperative.

5. RETAINING TRADITIONAL TERMINOLOGY

Notwithstanding the above, and even though Waldorf's approach to motivation is to stimulate that which is inner rather than what has been presented above as outer, for the sake of comparison, traditional terminology has been retained in what follows in connection with assessment. Also, although assessment is normally understood to mean the assessment of *pupils*, for the sake of completeness a brief consideration of teacher assessment will be touched on. This is based on the manifest principle that learning which produces 'results' is highly dependent upon effective teaching. Teaching and learning form a partnership.

Pupil assessment as such will be considered under four main headings: self assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment (of the pupil) and parent assessment. Assessment of the teacher will be considered under three headings: self assessment, collegial assessment and external assessment. In each case, however, we will be looking into those distinctive features of Waldorf that have bearing on the theme.

6. WHAT MOTIVATION ARISING FROM SELF-KNOWLEDGE DOES WALDORF CONTAIN, IMPLICITLY AND EXPLICITLY, THAT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF AND —JUDGING BY RESULTS— CLEARLY ACCOMPLISHES AND SUPERSEDES THE PURPOSE OF THE KIND OF ASSESSMENT THAT GRADES AND EXAMINATION MARKS PROVIDE?

After the above introduction, and the perspective on assessment that Waldorf education has to offer, we can now embark on the interrogation of Waldorf's distinctive features, one by one —sometimes under more than one heading— so that as fully comprehensive an impression as possible can be gained of Waldorf educational theory, to inspire confidence in its rigour, its achievability and its practicality through clearly identifying the sources of its effectiveness.

7. PUPIL ASSESSMENT

7.1. Pupil Assessment - Self-Assessment

7.1.1. Year Opening and Year Closing

At the beginning and end of each year it is commonplace in Waldorf schools for the whole school to be assembled and for each class, in the presence of the full assembly, to be addressed 'from the platform' by a teacher (the class teacher in the case of the Lower School and, often, the class guardian or main-lesson teacher in the case of the Upper School). About 3-5 minutes per class is the usual time allocation for this. At year opening, a preview of the year ahead is given; at year closing, the achievement of the class as a whole during the year is broadly evaluated. On both occasions a form and style are given to each mini-address, suited to the age and consciousness of the pupils, but in a manner that is suited to a 'public' occasion, while at the same time conveying a clear message to the class in question. Each pupil therefore has the opportunity to individualise what is being said in such a way that resolves for the future are stimulated by both preview and review. Such resolves, of course, only have value if they *are* individualised and they will need affirming in the months ahead. Nevertheless, they promote the health and stability and thus the progress of the individual within the totality of the class.

7.1.2. “... that strength and grace and skill, for learning and work, in me may live and grow.”

These are words that occur in the so-called morning verse which Steiner composed to be spoken in speech chorus at the beginning of each day (- though in the lower classes there are other words, albeit with a very similar concept lying behind them: “... that I with all my might may love to work and learn...”). In the fourth lecture of the *Practical Course for Teachers*, where Steiner is giving advice for the very first lesson in Class 1, he suggests that the children’s attention be drawn to their hands as the media by which that which is learnt in school lessons is made manifest in the world. The morning verses may be taken as indicators that the pupils’ awareness of the reason for being at school is raised on a regular, daily basis, likewise the inner resolves referred to in 7.1.1 above. This in turn presupposes that awareness in children is a significantly operative factor in *self-motivation* - as distinct from what traditional assessment aims to achieve *from without*.

Through this, it could be said, Waldorf places confidence on emphasising through reiteration, and in the context of ‘school rituals’, the *aims* of education at the beginning of each day, rather than running the risk of the pupil gaining no conception of any purpose in education outside the exams that can so easily become the focal point of traditional assessment.

7.1.3. Main-Lesson Books

The practice in Waldorf schools of the pupils making their own text books day by day, containing summaries in written and illustrated form of the content of all lessons, means that each child is constantly aware of what it is absorbing of the lessons as well as of the developing skills needed to make such regular entries. Such main-lesson books thus become a source of self-esteem, confidence and motivation, all vital ingredients in pupil achievement via self-assessment.

7.1.4. Public Occasions

An important maxim in Waldorf education is that of teaching the whole group but at the same time ensuring that each individual within that group has absorbed whatever he or she is capable of. The opportunity for self-assessment is obvious in the latter case. Steiner also inaugurated so-called ‘monthly festivals’

—these are festivals in which educational achievements are shared— in which class after class comes before the whole school and ‘performs’ some item arising from the lessons (reciting a poem or a mathematics table, singing a song, moving an item of eurythmy or gymnastics, performing a play, displaying works of art etc.). Having to appear before the whole school has several virtues. Here it is a matter of looking at the assessment value. On such public occasions, the individual, albeit supported by the group, is placed in the position of representing the class. This strengthens the individualisation process, putting each pupil on his or her mettle. Not that the aim is to polish each presentation to the standard of what is customarily considered a ‘public performance’: the presentation should be *representative* of what the class is achieving with each month-long main-lesson, as well as in other branches of the work. It is an occasion when being on collective show helps the learning process become *consolidated more deeply* than would otherwise be the case.

7.1.5. Reports

Waldorf reports tend to be lengthy documents and are written once a year in the Lower School - more frequently in the Upper School. Steiner’s advice with regard to the way the pupil receives the content of the report has been characterised as follows. While the parent reads the report aloud, it is as if the pupil listens ‘over the parent’s shoulder’. (The reading of the report might also take place, of course, in the extended family circle in some cases.) Hearing the report in this way has the effect of elevating the pupil’s consciousness towards that of the parent’s. And although the event occurs usually only once a year (though it is in the parent’s gift to repeat the reading of the report once or twice, say, during the ensuing holidays, or at the outset of the new school year), the anticipation of such occasions lives throughout the preceding year, affecting motivation from within.

7.1.6. Pupil Feedback

The practice of asking pupils, say from age 11/12 upwards, on the last page of their main-lesson book, to express what the main-lesson has meant for them, enhances each pupil’s self-awareness during the writing of such a piece. And, again, the anticipation of doing this during the main-lesson (sub-conscious though it may be), means that the student inwardly accompanies his or her own progress through the main-lesson more attentively and purposefully.

7.1.7. Individual Projects

Though there is a multitude of occasions when the individual work of the pupil is given space to come to expression, at a certain point during their development—say from age 12 onwards, the age, in this case, depending on the school rather than any indication deriving from Steiner—each pupil will be required to produce a personal project, usually related to the subject of the main-lesson. The culmination of this practice in many Waldorf schools across the world is the Class 12 project, prepared over the course of a whole academic year, and presented in written or some other visual form (where appropriate) as well as through a verbal presentation to some section of the wider school community. The latter will include the fielding of questions related to the project from the floor, requiring similar background and skill to that involved in a *viva voce* exam. However, the procedure is not one of examination but stems from real life interest - the interest of one human being in the work of another. Or, it might be said, the interest is concrete rather than theoretical.

7.1.8. Upper School Tutor/Counsellor

While the class teacher in a Waldorf school provides pastoral care during the years c.7-14, in the Upper School this role is taken on by someone else. The four years spent in the Upper School may embrace a series of Upper School teachers who assume this responsibility in turn. However, the nature of the adolescent being what it is, it is recognised that though the pastoral care of the class as a whole may be adequately covered collectively, it may not follow that each pupil's more personal educational needs will be met in this way. Therefore, it has become customary for each Upper School pupil (certainly, from Class 10 onwards) to choose a personal tutor. Conversations with the tutor may involve some counselling from time to time, though the main point of focus will be to assess verbally the student's progress. This most conscious of all means of assessment—a dialogue rather than a curt remark, or still curter mark at the end of a piece of work—is a vital factor in helping the pupil maintain a degree of progressive continuity in the natural 'ups and downs' of adolescence.

7.1.9. School Leaving Profile

At the end of Class 12 (or 13) the pupil's effort and achievement in relation to each subject taken is recorded in a document which also summarises the curriculum content, supplying what is in essence an open character reference.

Through this document, the footprints of the pupil's journey through school—particularly the Upper School— become visible. Knowledge of that forthcoming visibility carries something of value for the one making the journey - the pupil. Notwithstanding that the designed value is future-oriented, the profile, as a formal document, is part of the built-in assessment infrastructure of a Waldorf school.

7.2. Pupil Assessment - Peer Assessment

7.2.1. Class Ethos / Class Spirit / Class 'climate'

Through chronological grouping, Steiner would maintain, and through whole class teaching (see also 7.2.3) for most of the day—the main exceptions being subjects where space constrictions dictate small groups—an ideal basis is provided for peer assessment, which will range from the most subtle to the out and out direct. Such a class ethos engenders an atmosphere not of competition (exam papers, percentage scores and 'league' positions in class) but of mutual concern. The positive aspect of attainment is emphasised (- Where have you succeeded?) rather than what can easily become a negative aspect (- Where did I fail?).

7.2.2. Human Centred

One of the maxims of Waldorf is to relate as much subject matter as practicable, within the context of the lesson, to the human being. It follows that an atmosphere will prevail that is permeated by human interest. What more effective or more naturally provided starting point for putting this into practice could there be than a group of peers cultivating and being helped to cultivate interest in one another? The formal ties with family and with teachers do not hold sway over such relationships. The child's natural disposition—something that peers are notorious for 'rubbing corners off'— is something that plays a part in the relationship *outside* of the learning process. Within the learning process it is possible to nurture, through the human-centred nature of Waldorf, an appropriate peer assessment that will not need to bring into expression the rubbing off of corners but which will have in it something of the quality of 'in the same boat' together. This supports self-esteem without erring towards the egotistical.

7.2.3. Whole Class Teaching

The value of whole class teaching could be questioned if thereby the individual student were overlooked or neglected. Steiner was emphatic about avoiding this pitfall. But he also saw advantages. The enthusiasm of one pupil or a group of pupils (for example, all those with a choleric nature) can be contagious. More: the understanding of those more gifted in the subject being 'studied' can assist the others through the peer group dynamic that builds up over the years.

7.2.4. Public Occasions

These are mainly mentioned here (in addition to 7.1.4) for completeness' sake. Nevertheless, because each pupil is more in the public eye than normally vis-à-vis his or her school attainment, such appearances do bring out traits that would otherwise perhaps remain obscure or veiled. The processes of peer assessment mentioned above (7.2.1 and 7.2.2) therefore become equally applicable here in these 'extra routine' circumstances.

7.3. Pupil Assessment - Teacher Assessment

7.3.1. Equal Responsibility and Transitions

A point often celebrated in Waldorf's favour is its integrated curriculum. Integration in Waldorf is strengthened further through the fact that teachers of all ages meet regularly together once a week. Thus, although the Kindergarten, Lower School and Upper School teachers often have separate pedagogical meetings in which teachers can work as a specialist research cluster concentrating on their own age groups, the transition from one department to another is made smooth by handover reports being given on each child. Also, such complete gatherings of teachers means that comment from former teachers (even right back in Kindergarten days) when assessing pupils' progress is permanently available.

7.3.2. No Text Books

That Waldorf schools are, in the main, text-book-free zones has already been referred to (7.1.3). It is self-evident that the day by day work done by

pupils in main-lesson (and other) exercise books provides the teacher with immediate port-holes which look out a) onto their ability to assimilate and individualise the lesson content presented in class, and b) onto the pupil's power of fantasy, creative writing and other skills in its re-presentation.

7.3.3. Check List

Standard check lists of pupils' achievements as distilled from the broad-ranging Waldorf curriculum can give a kind of cross-section assessment picture of where each pupil stands at any given point, though it has to be borne in mind that many significant components within the pupil's nature cannot be quantified in this way. Important though such 'check list' snap-shots of the pupil may be, the Waldorf approach will not mistake such details as appear in them for anything other than symptoms of the pupil's deeper nature.

7.3.4. The Teacher's Preparation

Part of Steiner's advice to the teacher preparing lessons is to picture each pupil that is going to be taught the following day. This 'exercise' can be done in a variety of ways: by considering the class photograph, by recalling current behaviour or recent incidents that have cropped up in lessons, by working alphabetically down the register and so on. Whatever technical aid is preferred, however, the aim is the same: that in course of time a sufficiently in-depth impression of each pupil be developed for the teaching to be relevant, direct, efficient, supportive of the learning process and of fundamental value in the realm of assessment.

7.3.5. Child Study

Study of individual children is a regular item on the agenda of faculty meetings. It is conducted in various ways, with those present having recourse to photographs of the pupil (profile, facial, full length, 'in action'...), samples of the pupil's work (writing, drawing, painting, mathematics, modelling, handwork...), descriptions by teachers (the child's nature, family background, movement in eurythmy and gymnastics, sport, behaviour in class, relationship with other children) and some medical history by the school doctor (salient features of the pupil's physiology, diagnosis of weaknesses, medication and/or prescribed learning support or therapy... where relevant). When this 'exercise' has been

completed, discussion can then take place with the aim of finding ways of corporately supporting the pupil in the next stage of his or her development, through the different pedagogical approaches available subject by subject.

7.3.6. Public Occasions

Public occasions have been mentioned twice before (7.14, 7.2.4) as a significant element in Waldorf assessment. Most of what has already been said applies in the present context, too, though there is naturally a further dimension for the teacher whose initiative it has been to present the item for performance, in that he or she will from time to time have assigned a special role to a pupil or pupils. With such ‘inside knowledge’, the pupil’s ‘performance’ will have greater significance for that teacher than for anyone else, in that he or she will be able to assess to what extent the pupil is measuring up to or exceeding expectations.

7.3.7. Reports

It has often been observed that the writing of reports is as much an exercise in self-knowledge for the teacher as it is an assessment of the pupil. Assuming there is truth in this, here it is a matter of seeing how much such an exercise can help the assessment process and thereby —precisely *because* of the enhanced awareness of the teacher both of self and pupil— contribute to the pupil’s greater motivation.

7.3.8. Learning Support

In theory, through the depth of knowledge of children which is cultivated in Waldorf (see 7.3.5), teachers in the school should be in a good position to identify children’s special educational needs. It goes without saying that the school has also to be well equipped staff-wise to put into effect any early intervention. Because of Waldorf’s professed wide-ability range, teachers should be especially au fait with special educational needs. Moreover, through teachers having to be alert to the potential need for learning support, the assessment of *all* pupils is likely to be the more accurate.

7.3.9. Report Verses

A vital task of the teacher according to Steiner was to ‘remove obstacles’ to learning. Such obstacles, of course, are peculiar to each child. Some weaknesses are very deep-seated. There are many means within the run-of-the-mill classroom setting for tackling this task.

In collaboration with a teacher from Hamburg, Steiner pioneered a new approach to this problem: the writing of a verse for each child to speak once a week. The verse contains elements —images, rhythms, sequences of sound etc., not totally dissimilar to what might be done in speech therapy— deemed to be of assistance in the task of ‘removing obstacles’. The teacher’s responsibility is a) the writing of the verse (based on diagnosis of obstacles that can be helped in this way); and b) the direction of the child’s articulation whenever the verse is being ‘formally’ spoken.

7.3.10. Nurturing the Whole Child

Waldorf seeks to nurture the *whole* child - its physical nature, its temperament, its threefold psychological nature, its spiritual nature and its motorial, emotional and rational intelligences. The complexity of human nature with which the teacher is thus confronted, necessitates a systematic approach to assessing the proportionate strengths and weaknesses of each pupil. It should be added that though this takes time, not least through the collegial collaboration required, the broader-based pyramid of knowledge of the child that results, pays dividends in the matter of assessment as well as being continually beneficial in the minutiae of teaching.

7.3.11. Arts and Crafts

The prominence given to arts and crafts in Waldorf —they are not subjects that have suffered marginalisation, as in much educational practice in the West— ensures that they feature effectively in the overall picture gained of the child. The value of this is seen particularly when forming an overall picture of and evaluating each pupil’s ‘multiple intelligences’ (the so-called G-factor).

7.3.12. 3-Day Rhythm

With the intellect being only one strand in the process of learning, it behoves the teacher to be able to tap into other intelligences and 'skills'. A method built into the Waldorf main-lesson 'rhythm' from its inception is that of taking an item of study over the course of three days. This has two connected advantages. There is the more obvious one of continuity, deepened by (broadly) appealing to head, heart and hand in turn. Equally important, according to Steiner, is the continued work that goes on in the human psyche (albeit unconsciously) during the hours of sleep, followed the next morning by the 'Socratic' questioning and other forms of class discussion which the teacher can instigate. Through all the above, the teacher's insight into the pupil's assimilation of the subject is enhanced.

7.3.13. Phenomenological Approach to Science

While science taught as hypotheses proved by experiment is learnt by experiences and memorising, Waldorf science education purports to be more active insofar as its phenomenological approach, beginning by being concerned with the phenomenon, continues (on the second day, following the recall of the 'experiment') by getting the students themselves to find what 'laws' are at work in the phenomenon. This they do through their own power of thought. This exercise is done verbally in class, enabling the teacher to assess the readiness with which each pupil enters into and is engaged in this vital part of science education. Such a method contrasts strongly with, say, the assessment of whether a pupil can recall (reproduce on demand) chemical formulae: for it enables the teacher to assess the pupil's power and accuracy of observation, his ability to penetrate the phenomena through the development of autonomous thought, and his power to sustain a lively interest in the phenomena presented by the world as well as what those phenomena might be the expression of.

7.3.14. Integrated Curriculum

Due to the integrated curriculum in a Steiner school, the class teacher will have the advantage of being able to identify the student's strong points, connecting to them on occasion so that weaker points can be supplemented or strengthened (what is referred to as left and right brain thinking, for example) as well as supporting the pupil's self-esteem by 'soft-peddalling' sensitive areas or high-lighting achievement - whatever is most appropriate to the occasion.

Specialist teachers will not have such a broad perspective: nevertheless, at regular teachers' meetings (apart from everyday staffroom contact) there are ample opportunities of keying into the class teacher's knowledge in order that a full assessment of the pupil can be achieved.

7.3.15. Tutor/Counselling

As already mentioned (7.1.8), in keeping with Steiner's emphasis upon being aware of and meeting the needs of each individual pupil from Class 10 (age 15/16), it is customary for each pupil to choose a personal mentor from among the teaching staff. Scheduled conversations with tutor/mentor and pupil enable the former to gain an overall picture of the pupil's development as well as keeping in touch with the pupil's more personal needs - supplementing the necessarily limited perspective gained by each individual specialist. The tutor hence acquires a deeper insight into where each pupil 'is at' at any given moment in his/her journey through the school. While it would be totally counter-productive if confidentiality assumed in such a relationship were breached, this arrangement obviously results in the personal tutor/mentor being in a strong position to advise in any staff discussion about the tutee.

7.3.16. Profile

All that has been said regarding reports (7.3.7) can be reiterated here. The profile calls for the highest degree of assessment and the ability to express succinctly those salient characteristics of the pupil's nature that will be helpful, for example, to prospective employees.

7.4. Pupil Assessment - Parent Assessment

7.4.1. Spirito Psycho Somatic

Because Steiner conceives of the child as not only having a psycho-somatic dimension but also a spiritual one, it is essential to gain as many insights as possible into the full nature of the child, in order to assess how development is progressing on all three fronts. Though the teacher has continuous opportunity in the classroom of doing this, regular contact with parents is a strong, if ancillary, element of Waldorf education.

7.4.2. No Text Books

The child's own 'textbooks' (see 7.3.2 above) provide what is probably the most intimate and direct way that a Waldorf school has of assessing work in progress. Habits are established early in school, so that children complete work at home - albeit work of the kind that is more time-consuming in the early years as opposed to cognitively demanding (drawing pictures, colouring geometrical constructions, collecting items for class projects, drawing maps, making copies of historical facsimiles etc.). Nevertheless, the opportunity is also there for the parents to keep themselves informed of their child's progress.

7.4.3. Public Occasions

Little more need be added to this point. Parents, in any case, tend to be less critical (and if anything somewhat doting, particularly with younger children) on these occasions. Nevertheless, the parent's is a different perspective and it would be an omission not to recognise the fact in garnering a full concept of Waldorf assessment.

7.4.4. Parents' Evenings

Regular parents' evenings (two or three p.a.) ensure that parents not only have opportunity of seeing the 'written work' that pupils bring home, but also of seeing all their work as each year proceeds and of assessing progress through comparison with other pupils' work that is on show on these occasions. Opportunity for sharing impressions is also there through the more informal conversational part of such evenings.

8. TEACHER ASSESSMENT

8.1. Teacher Assessment - Self-Assessment

8.1.1. Self-Knowledge

The gaining of teacher self-knowledge is a vital factor in Waldorf methodology, professionally acquired through various means.

8.1.2. Preparation

Steiner set great store upon the teacher fully preparing lessons. Knowledge of the teacher's own boundaries, knowledge of the pupils to be taught (individuals and group), aspects of the subject that are particularly relevant to these pupils, methods of teaching that will get the subject across, as well as common-or-garden classroom management, are likely to be included in such preparation.

8.1.3. No Notes

Preparation having been carried out methodically, Steiner saw the use of notes as not merely being superfluous in teaching, but a hindrance to the teacher's observation of how the pupils react to the material being presented during the lesson unfolds.

8.1.4. Daily Review

Either as part of preparation, or at some other time, a systematic daily review of how lessons have gone forms part of the Waldorf method. This can be particularly effective if carried out in an 'overnight' way - i.e. before and immediately following the hours of sleep. Apart from other benefits, this discipline is seen as having a supportive, cumulative effect in the teacher's self-assessment.

8.1.5. Reports

The writing of Waldorf reports receives more than cursory attention. As well as plain achievement, something of the pupil's inner progress should find reflection in what is said. This can only be done if the teacher has accompanied that progress fairly intimately throughout the year. Report writing is thus not only 'part of the day's work', it is a particularly potent opportunity for the teacher's self-assessment.

8.1.6. Studying Steiner

Though Steiner would probably be the last person one would consider arrogant, he did on one occasion (in the *Konferenzen*) upbraid the teachers for

insufficient study of the basic educational lecture courses he had given prior to the school's opening. These, he maintained, gave the teacher - and this serves to underline the non-arrogance of his concern - self-sufficiency in teaching.

8.2. Teacher Assessment - Collegial Assessment

8.2.1. Faculty Meetings

In the weekly and often very extensive faculty meetings, space is regularly reserved for teachers to present their work (classroom or otherwise), followed by feedback from colleagues. Such feedback provides food for thought for the teacher and has the advantage —through being in the wider faculty with its degree of familiarity that builds up over long periods of collaboration— of coming both from experienced and relatively new teachers. The former can present views and points that help to 'save reinventing the wheel'; the latter can speak 'unhindered by experience' about how the presentation strikes them from a creative and possibly 'contemporary' point of view.

8.2.2 Study

The study, referred to above (8.1.6) was intended as private study. Equally valuable is study within a professional body of colleagues. There are various ways of doing this which do not need elaborating here.

8.2.3. Public Occasions

Following public occasions, already several times mentioned in this paper, a review in faculty meetings (as well as, perhaps, privately) can help the teacher gain a true perspective of how his or her work stands in relation to what is seen to be 'centre court' Waldorf. This must, of course, include comment on and draw on insight into whatever is innovative in the teacher's work.

8.2.4. Year Opening and Year Closing

In the review of these events at staff gatherings, similar reflection and therefore assessment can take place as in 8.2.3.

8.2.5. Waldorf Resources

The numerous books, articles, magazines and other study material produced by the Waldorf movement not only help the new teacher gain a firm footing relatively quickly, but assist all teachers in assessing how their own work stands in relation to how the “achieving of Waldorf” fares in the wider world. This is not a matter of leaning on parrot-like emulation —though many good ideas and ‘good practice’ will be stimulated by such resource material— but of being stimulated by ‘thinking through’ whatever is presented in written form by colleagues. Whether, after reading such material, the conclusion is positive or negative, and irrespective of the enjoyment gained from the reading, the value may be said to be in the inner questioning of and reflection upon the reader’s own pedagogical practice.

8.3. Teacher Assessment - External Assessment

8.3.1. Inspecting, Monitoring, Advising

From time to time, depending on regulations obtaining in any one country, the teacher may be visited officially as part of an inspection of the school. It may also happen that the school invites its own advisers who can perform a similar function, albeit and in all probability with a wider knowledge of Waldorf than an ‘external’ inspector is likely, by definition, to have. The value of all such visits will depend on both the observation skills and the communication skills of the ‘visitor’, as much as on the ‘hearing’ skills of the teacher in question and their willingness to take in what has to be offered as part of the ongoing process of self-assessment.

8.3.1. Autonomy

When an approach to education stands or falls on the autonomy of individual teachers, as is the case with Waldorf, it is vital in any form of external assessment of a teacher’s ‘performance’ that this be done in ways that strengthen and not undermine that autonomy. Though the school can assist any State inspectorate, it cannot influence the above factor. However, with those external assessors, advisers, monitors and evaluators that the school *invites* into the classroom, this factor does come within their jurisdiction to a certain extent. Such an assessment will strengthen the individual’s autonomy while at the same time, and equally, strengthening the school’s confidence that its trust in that autonomy is justifiably placed.