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Authors	Lutzker, Peter
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University College Cork, Ireland
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Developing the artistry of the teacher in Steiner/Waldorf Education[1] (Part I)

This article examines different concepts underlying Steiner/Waldorf teacher education and how they are put into practice. It explains how teaching understood as an art can be seen as a leitmotif going through an entire course of studies. It elucidates the central role which pedagogical anthropology plays in Steiner/Waldorf teacher education and the specific contribution of Rudolf Steiner's understanding of Anthroposophy in this context. The prominent role which the study and practice of different arts plays in Steiner/Waldorf teacher education programs is explained and the reasons for the inclusion of artistic practice in teacher education are discussed. The understanding in Steiner/Waldorf teacher education programs of how teacher education is then transformed into a teacher's classroom practice is examined including its role in providing a basis for a teacher's pedagogical intuitions.

1 Introduction

There have been and continue to be courses in teacher education programs which aim to enable teachers to become artists in the field of education. Through the work of creative and dedicated individuals, different universities throughout the world continue to offer courses expressly designed to serve this purpose. What is perhaps unique about Waldorf teacher education is that viewing teaching as an art constitutes the foundation of an entire program. This follows from the fact that the founder of Waldorf education, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), viewed teaching as an art, an *Erziehungskunst*, as intrinsic to Waldorf pedagogy.

In this article, I will give a general overview of Waldorf teacher education for teachers of all subjects and also address the transition from pre-service teacher education to classroom practice. A second article in this issue focuses on the additional specific training for L2 teachers. The specific program I am referring to is offered at Freie Hochschule Stuttgart (Waldorf Teachers College), where I have been teaching full time since 2010, and which offers an accredited Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Waldorf Pedagogy. Although every Steiner/Waldorf college and seminar has its own particular context and approach, they also share much in common, so that there is a substantial overlap between institutions, particularly among those offering academic degrees.

[1] Parts of this article have appeared in other contexts both in English (Lutzker, 2021) and in German in a chapter that I co-authored (Jeuken & Lutzker, 2019).

2 Teaching as an art in the Waldorf teacher education curriculum

From the very beginnings of Waldorf education, a specific training for Waldorf teachers was considered to be necessary, as the pedagogical and methodological approaches called for were vastly different from what traditional teacher training courses offered at that time (Zdražil, 2019). The first courses were taught by Rudolf Steiner in Stuttgart. As the Waldorf movement grew, other teaching seminars were founded in Germany and in different countries including the UK, the Netherlands, the United States and Norway. Nowadays, there are Waldorf teacher education courses offered throughout the world including a broad range of accredited academic programs. The International Network of Academic Steiner Education (INASTE) is an organization in which educators representing these programs come from all over the world to confer regularly and also to organize international academic conferences (https://www.inaste-network.com/).

In the Waldorf teacher education curriculum, some courses appear directly related to developing the artistry of the teacher insofar as they call for the actual practicing of different arts. Other courses which, at first glance, may seem to bear no direct relation to learning the art of teaching, are, in fact, also very much intended to develop those capabilities which are intrinsic to this concept. This is particularly the case with respect to the central role which *pedagogical anthropology* plays in all Waldorf teaching seminars and university programs. An intensive study of the holistic development of the child and adolescent and its significance for educational practice provides the fundamental basis for Steiner/Waldorf education. Achieving artistry in teaching is thus seen as being rooted in a deep understanding of childhood and adolescence out of which a more comprehensive perception and understanding of individual children can be established (Rawson, 2021, pp. 36-45).

3 A threefold view of the human being: pedagogical anthropology, anthroposophy and artistry in teaching

At the heart of Waldorf pedagogy there lies an encompassing threefold view of the human being taking into account physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. In the context of teacher education, the course material thus draws on a wide range of academic disciplines. Together with the educational sciences and general pedagogical studies, there are also courses which include relevant aspects of philosophy, psychology, biology, neurology and the study of health (salutogenesis).

What is specific to Waldorf teacher education programs is the inclusion of the study of anthroposophy which provides a foundation for the pedagogical anthropology underlying Waldorf Education. Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner, can be understood as a

spiritual path to achieving knowledge based on both extensive meditative practice as well as on exact phenomenological observation and studies. Its subject is the study of the nature of the human being: "Anthroposophy is the consciousness of one's own humanity" (Steiner, 1986, p. 203).

Being conscious of one's humanity from an anthroposophical perspective implies a threefold view of the individual as an embodied, ensouled and spiritual being connected to a larger spiritual world encompassing nature and cosmos: "Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe" (Steiner, 1924, p. 13). This view of the human being implies considering one's relation to Self, to others and the natural world from this threefold perspective. Put in today's terms, it also implies an encompassing understanding of human responsibility for the world in our Anthropocene era. Bound up with this understanding of the human being are also related perspectives including the general study of correspondences such as microcosmos and macrocosmos; the concept of the earth as a living organism; the central role of images and pictures as modes of expression and the possibilities of transformative learning, often through forms of contemplative practice (Kiersch, 2008).

The study of anthroposophy in Waldorf teacher education is conducted as an open and discursive process in which critical discussions are very much encouraged. Such courses are designed to serve as heuristic models through which qualities of observation, perception and sensibility can be developed and become fruitful in teaching. Group discussions and individual meditative/contemplative studies provide different ways to deepen an understanding of anthroposophical texts (Rawson, 2021; Rittelmeyer, 2017; Zdražil, 2016).

In the context of teacher education, anthroposophy provides a basis for studies in Steiner's pedagogical anthropology. In particular, the initial series of lectures he gave before the opening of the first Waldorf School in 1919, "The Foundations of Human Experience" (Steiner, 1996), have continued to play a crucial role in Waldorf teacher education throughout the world for over a hundred years (Lutzker & Zdražil, 2019). Despite the radical social, political, and technological, changes which have taken place since those first courses and despite the diverse cultures and traditions in which Waldorf education is now practiced, the universal and holistic dimensions underlying this threefold view of the human being appear to have led to an understanding of child and adolescent development which different cultures and traditions throughout the world are able to embrace and develop within their own contexts (Kullak-Ublick & Zdražil, 2019, Rawson, 2021).

Intrinsic to the study of the pedagogical anthropology underlying Waldorf Education is its direct connection to pedagogical practice. The aim is to deepen a student's understanding of

child and adolescent development in such ways that their studies will enable them as future teachers to better perceive and address the specific needs and possibilities of each pupil. Such studies are not based on clearly defined types of knowledge that students are required to learn, but are designed to encourage students to actively reflect on the subject material in such ways that the processes of reflection and contemplation can lead to new insights into educational questions and practice. This requires an intellectual understanding of the content, but beyond that, emotional and volitional dimensions are called upon as well.

What Erich Schwebsch, a member of the faculty at the first Waldorf School, later wrote about those initial series of lectures which Steiner had given directly before the founding of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart in 1919, gives a clear insight into both the intentions of Steiner's pedagogical anthropology and the way it was meant to be studied and then realized in the practice of teaching.

> This is not a system that can be taught without the learner becoming active himself. Rudolf Steiner did not present a finished and refined picture of the nature of the human being, but rather he was immersed in life itself, showing us how to follow the metamorphoses going through the different phases of childhood. And whoever learns to understand the nature of these metamorphoses comes to experience in the course of time an artistic picture of the total individuality of each single child. (...) It isn't that a system is imposed on that picture, but an encompassing intuition begins to create a conscious and individual picture of that special, developing human being (Schwebsch, 1932, pp.77-78).[2]

In his discussion of the role of anthroposophy and Steiner's pedagogical anthropology in Waldorf teacher education, Peter Loebell describes a heuristic and phenomenological process through which teachers are given the chance to develop a reflective and living understanding of childhood development. He argues that it lies in the very nature of these processes that they enable these studies to become directly helpful for teachers:

> Anthroposophy taught in this manner is not dogmatic, but heuristic: its categories offer views of phenomena which enable one to connect scientific knowledge and living experience. Through such connections the distance between educational science and the actual practice of teaching can be overcome without sacrificing the necessary reflective qualities of university studies. Because in education it is not one's knowledge of educational research that will be decisive in teaching but rather the nature and qualities

[2] All translations from German texts, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

> of the work that one put into the pursuit of educational knowledge (Loebell, 2013, p. 224).

In Waldorf teacher education it thus becomes crucial that the way knowledge is acquired calls for a cognitive, affective and volitional connection between the student and the practice of teaching. Such learning processes can potentially become transformative for the student (Rumpf & Kranich, 2000). This is also the case with the courses offered in the methodology and didactics of teaching different subjects. It is certainly *not* the case that leading concepts and paradigms underlying traditional educational science and research play no role in academic Waldorf teacher education. This foundational study is accompanied by general studies in pedagogy, educational science, teaching methods, subject disciplinary knowledge and a broad range of classroom skills. However, the emphasis throughout lies on generating educational knowledge designed to help aspiring teachers to develop a deepened and experiential understanding of the developing child in such a manner that it can potentially lead to the teacher's own personal development. It is this approach that is seen as a decisive basis for those kinds of 'knowledge in action' (van Manen, 1985) that can best contribute to learning the art of teaching.

4 The study and practice of the arts in Waldorf teacher education

Along with the anthroposophical/anthropological courses and the courses in methodology and didactics, a further cornerstone in all Waldorf teacher education programs throughout the world is the actual study and practice of different arts. This view of the importance of integrating artistic practice into teacher education is, in itself, not unique. Prominent educators such as John Dewey (1948, 1980), Seymour Sarason (1999), Elliot Eisner (1985, 2002) and Maxine Greene (1995, 2001), have established wide-ranging connections between teaching and the arts and also made the case for the value of artistic practice for teachers. What is unique to Waldorf teacher education is that this understanding has been integrated into its programs for over a hundred years and thus offers a longstanding and living example of its actual practice and results.

Waldorf teacher education understands artistic practice as both an essential dimension of a teacher's personal and professional development and as fostering many of those specific capabilities necessary to attain artistry in teaching. Steiner (2004) made no distinctions in this context between teachers of cognitive subjects[3] and artistic ones. Teachers of all subjects and at all levels from elementary to secondary are required as part of their studies to engage in

[3] Cognitive, used in this context, would include not only the natural sciences, but also the humanities.

the regular practice of the arts as an essential part of their preparation for learning the art of teaching.

The idea is that artistic practice, in itself, offers unique potentials to actively and creatively experience different dimensions of the world and of oneself. Through such practice one gets to encounter and address different challenges, including continually experiencing oneself as a learner. Christoph Lindenberg elucidates the unique contribution of artistic practice to teacher education by focusing on the effects of such experiences and the expansion and intensification of perception they can lead to:

> There is a type of activity through which one continually learns to observe the results of one's actions and that is most notably artistic activity. In sculpting or carving one not only directly sees that one was too tender or too rough in the way one handled the material. When one intends to sculpt a hand or a foot, one often first realizes how inexactly one has observed and perceived its form: the result itself will demonstrate how one observed it. When one repeats such exercises over a period of time, one notices that one is beginning to learn to see. (…) It's the same with playing music, with each tone on the flute, or on the violin, one immediately hears what one has done and is perhaps rightfully shocked by it. (…) Through artistic practice, it is not knowledge which is accumulated, but rather its effects can be seen in one's actions at a level that is usually unconscious - in the feeling one has for something. Through artistic practice, which in no way is based on an expectation that it should lead to a work of art, the very nature of one's attentiveness is changed. One is led from thought to perception. That change is decisive, because in perceiving a connection is established and the more one learns to actively hear and see the more one is connected to the world (Lindenberg, 1985, pp. 154-155).

It is the role of practicing in teacher education that is highly significant in this context and which bears closer examination. Artistic practice can not only lead to some form of artistic product, but more significantly in this context, also transforms the person who has engaged in it.

The distinction between practicing and training is crucial. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, they have very different meanings (Bollnow, 1982). When training for something, one has clear goals and attaining those goals becomes the focus of the work; the way one reaches them becomes, at most, a secondary consideration. Much traditional learning relies heavily on training, focusing on defined, short-term and often testable goals. Practicing is fundamentally different and involves a longer and subtler process. The dancer and violinist have in common that they have practiced for years and through their practice they have been transformed. Their practice sits deeply in their bodies and movements and

very much shapes the way they feel and perceive. Such long-term transformative processes are also very much part of learning a craft as Richard Sennet (2008) has eloquently argued. It is not reaching a specific goal that transforms a practitioner – she may not even reach that goal – but the nature of the practice itself. These processes considered here in the context of teacher education can thus initiate far-ranging possibilities of personal development and transformation and are viewed as differing from forms of teacher training focusing exclusively on subject knowledge and teaching methodology.

Each art has its own special qualities which can also be directly connected to the art of teaching. For instance, the work on speech and drama can play a significant role in developing those capabilities of voice, gesture, expression, timing which play a significant role in the teaching of any subject. The study of music and singing opens up possibilities for both a teacher's own musical/artistic development and later in supporting the developments of her pupils. The same holds true for the visual arts. Going through such learning processes in the course of teacher education may thus enable teachers to help their pupils, in age-appropriate ways, to develop their own capabilities.

As Lindenberg (1985) emphasizes, the study of the arts can lead to the enhancement and differentiation of perception through working with different materials. Whether in the development of a more refined sense for colors and forms through painting, in developing a haptic, artistic sensitivity through sculpting or carving, in learning to listen to and sing music in a more differentiated manner, in responding and moving to music and language through eurythmy[4], rich opportunities for the development of sensory and perceptual capabilities which are inseparable from the way we perceive and relate to the world are offered. Goethe's maxim "Every object well-observed opens up a new organ in us" points out the relation of the development of the senses to a heightened connection to the world (Goethe, 1988, p. 38). At the same time, this enhancement of *perception* is inextricably tied to the further development and refinement of those forms of artistic *expression* which are being practiced. Learning to perceive and learning to do are part and parcel of artistic experience.

From the perspective of Waldorf teacher education, the entire spectrum of artistic experience offers opportunities of developing those capabilities which "knowledge in action" teaching calls for. In conjunction with the abovementioned studies of pedagogical anthropology and the methodology and didactics of specific subjects, the active practice of the different arts is designed to provide a basis for achieving artistry in teaching.

[4] Eurythmy is an expressive movement art to music or language developed by Rudolf Steiner in 1911. It is a performance art, as well as being part of the curriculum of Waldorf education from pre-school through high school. There is also a specific form of therapeutic eurythmy. Steiner described it as speech or music made visible.

5 The transformation of teacher education into classroom teaching

It has always been one of the central tenets of Waldorf teacher education, both in its emphasis on pedagogical anthropology and in the practice of the arts, that pre-service pedagogical studies are not designed to instill knowledge which the student then 'has' and later applies, but that they are forms of knowing which have to be continually renewed through the active and continual development of the teacher. What has been learned has not only been cognitively learned, but is also deeply rooted in the affective and embodied experience of the teacher. Ernst Michael Kranich writes:

> The idea that after completing one's college studies, one's task in school is to implement what one has learned is a problematic expectation that needs to be revised. Every preparation for every lesson is a study in bringing the lesson material to life. This has to happen for each single lesson because in the realm of experience it is not a question of the command of knowledge. (…) It should be clear that by *experience* one does not mean a diffuse emotional reaction to some kind of impression. … Instead, it is the expansion of horizons, drawn from the deepest sources of learning, an interest which affects the pupils and through which questions develop. Thereby the experience for the teacher and for the pupils becomes the basis for the next steps in learning (Kranich, 2000, pp. 136-137).

Viewed from this perspective, teaching calls for forms of engagement which include but also go well beyond the preparations for specific lessons. For students who are gaining their first teaching experiences in their internships and for novice teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers, such thoughts can easily seem far-removed from the daily challenges of lesson preparation and classroom teaching. At the same time, the realization that learning the art of teaching can, in itself, become an inspiring, generative process, based not on learning to follow someone else's 'recipes', but drawing on what Kranich refers to as "the expansion of horizons, drawn from the deepest sources of learning" can provide a strong incentive to pursue a personal engagement with one's subject and how it can be taught, leading to "an interest which affects the pupils". The nature of subject and lesson preparation is thus also seen as part of long-term inner processes which, through their transformative qualities, can provide a further basis for artistry in teaching. Christoph Gögelein writes:

> What is most important in all of a teacher's preparations is not that knowledge has been accumulated which will then be decisive in classroom teaching, but that the teacher through engaging in practice has initiated transformative processes that affect the configuration of his entire physical, soul and spiritual being. They then have the trust that such practice at the right moment – both in their preparations and in the classroom – will make

> fruitful insights and actions, also completely new ones possible (Gögelein, 1994, p. 307).

What Gögelein refers to as those "fruitful insights and actions" which occur at the "right moment" is clearly connected to what van Manen calls the *pedagogical moment* (van Manen, 2015) and what Steiner and others have often referred to as *pedagogical intuitions* (Schieren, 2010). Both the intensive study of pedagogical anthropology and engaging in artistic learning processes are considered in Waldorf teacher education as providing a basis for the development of those capabilities which can lead to pedagogical intuitions.

In his discussion of the nature of intuitive processes, Alan Kaplan emphasizes both holistic perception and the decisive role of one's inner attitude and viewpoint in determining *what* is perceived and evoked:

> Intuition is not intangible or mysterious; it is the simultaneous perception of the whole. We must learn (or relearn) to do this. (…) We are participants in our world's unfolding, not simply onlookers. We are part of what we observe, and thus affect both it and ourselves. We will enable to emerge what we look for, and eradicate what we do not look for. If we look only for superficiality, for efficiency, for number for structure, for the discrete object, then we will create a world which is devoid of the invisible breath of life, of wholeness and meaning (Kaplan, 2002, p. 32).

In his observations regarding the decisive role which underlying attitudes play in determining one's perceptions and conclusions – "We will enable to emerge what we look for, and eradicate what we do not look for" – the crucial role of the encompassing understanding of the developing child and adolescent in the pedagogical anthropology of Waldorf education becomes evident.

Kaplan views intuition as a capability that can, over time, be practiced and learned:

> There are many ways of developing the capacity to see holistically, to see the living whole, to read and understand the meaning which lies invisible yet fully revealed all around us; as Goethe put it, nature is an open secret. All these ways have to do with developing our capacity for observation, reflection and participation. Though we are looking for that which lies beyond the sense particulars, nevertheless we do not see it through abstracting, generalising and intellectualising. We are looking to develop an intimacy which discloses the world. (…) This takes time, patience and effort. (Kaplan, 2002, p. 33).

The entire spectrum of courses at Freie Hochschule Stuttgart and in other Waldorf teacher education programs throughout the world is designed to support students in developing their

own ways of seeing "the living whole, to read and understand the meaning which lies invisible yet fully revealed around us" (Kaplan 2002, 33).

As in every other teacher education program, there invariably remain a host of open questions, as to what degree these programs actually accomplish the goals they have set for themselves. This is undoubtedly a question that continually calls for different forms of evaluation, as well as for research which reveals what has been fruitful and what hasn't succeeded in the ways that were imagined. There have been attempts made in different areas, but there is far more that still needs to be done (Martzog et.al., 2016, Martzog et. al., 2018). What I have described in this article should thus be viewed as a work in progress.

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