

Being and Becoming a Waldorf Teacher



Bert Kraai

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Picture front page: Wassily Kandinsky, 'Berg', oil painting 1909, Lenbachhaus, München.

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Foreword by Martyn Rawson

As is well-known, the first Waldorf School was founded by Emil Molt the owner of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart in August 1919 under the guidance of Rudolf Steiner. There are now some 1,040 Waldorf Schools around the world in over 60 different countries, as well as even more early years centres and kindergartens, Waldorf-inspired special education schools and other care institutions¹. What do they all have in common?

Many of the things that characterized Waldorf education that were unique in 1919 are now widespread practice. These include co-education of boys and girls, classes of mixed ability including in many countries now the integration of children with needs of learning and mobility support, a class teacher who is responsible for a class up to eight years in primary school, the importance of arts and crafts for all children at all stages of school, main lesson blocks (often called project-based learning in other education systems), the central role of music and speech in education, story-telling, children making their own learning books, teachers creating their own lessons. Many kindergartens use natural materials and work strongly with rhythm. Classroom furniture often resembles the wooden desks and chairs typical to Waldorf Schools and are often manufactured by companies inspired by Waldorf designs. Even collegial and distributed leadership has been recognised as valuable in many education systems. None of these things that were once Waldorf specific aspects are now exclusive to Waldorf education and are part of high quality education in many countries.

This is good news for children around the world. It doesn't however help us to define what Waldorf is or what a Waldorf teacher is anymore. We need to look a little deeper into the activities and practices of Waldorf teachers to find what is characteristic of a Waldorf approach. The issues are complex. The International Forum of Waldorf and Steiner Schools recently agreed a new set of criteria for the recognition of Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired schools, which is very helpful. However, these ideas are part of a much wider discourse and pedagogy. Pedagogy is what teachers do to support children and young people in their learning and development. Pedagogy also implies a discourse out of which the practice grows - there is no pedagogy without discourse and no meaningful educational discourse without pedagogical practice. Or put simply, practice always implies theory and theory is pointless without practice.

Waldorf is about the ideas that inform what we do and the kind of people we are and what our intentions are. Waldorf is about being and becoming. Above all it is about our interest as teachers in the being and becoming of our pupils. That is of course not exclusive to Waldorf teachers. However, when pedagogy and discourse drift apart or lose sight of the central nature of the being and becoming of pupils, it can be a problem.

Teachers everywhere are interested in their pupils as people - otherwise why would they be teachers. The educational policies, standards and curricula that they are obliged to teach may be at odds with that interest because they may reflect what governments, or rather what their bureaucrats think the economy wants young people should be and become, what they should know, think and be able to do in order that the country be fit to survive and perhaps thrive in a competitive global economy. National curricula and standards and the testing regimes and ranking table and inspections are designed to enforce, control and manage, reflect a discourse that does then become a pedagogy (what teachers do and why) that is not interested in pupils as developing pupils in the same way. When what counts are grades, credit points, accumulating social capital in the form of competencies, qualifications, degrees, then the actual people become less important and their measurable learning outcomes become what we as teachers look at and see. By privileging a

competitive approach to success through education the neo-liberal discourse of developing a self that can be marketed replaces interest in people as anything else.

Education today increasingly promotes self-management, self-directing learning, self-presentation in ongoing competition with other selves to win the increasingly richer but rarer prizes that modern capitalist society offers as rewards for success. Competition means that expectations are high but the chances of success are reduced. Not all can succeed. There will be many losers and no one wants to be a loser. As the Belgian psychotherapist Paul Verhaeghe put it, people who promote competition in education but also espouse social justice and fairness don't realize that there is no such thing as competitive solidarity².

To go back to some very basic assumptions that underpin Waldorf discourse, it is sometimes overlooked that Steiner based some core aspects of his educational approach on his social theory. This basically states that, as Professor Bo Dahlin³ put it:

The emphasis placed by Steiner Waldorf education on Menschenbildung (formation of the human being), rather than on the dissemination of knowledge, is coupled with its view on the relationship between the individual and society. According to this view a democratic society is characterised by making it possible for each individual to develop his or her own innate potential and then allowing society to develop in accordance with the abilities and the creativity that is released in this way. This means that the future development of a truly democratic society is, actually, unpredictable. The logical consequence of this idea is that schools are to develop the inherent positive abilities of all children, without considering what the state and/or economical agents currently believe that the nation needs.

That is what Steiner meant when he stated at the founding of the Waldorf School that schools should not be bureaucratically run or based on prescribed curricula and learning outcomes that are defined externally. The only people who can realistically assess the learning needs of pupils in a particular school are the teachers who know them and who understand what is needed for them to participate as capable citizens in democratic society. Therefore the key skill that teachers need is to be able to 'read' the needs of their pupils in the circumstances they are in and to be able to creatively provide learning opportunities in which the pupils can learn and develop what they need to learn and develop.

As the educational research John Hattie⁴ put it, the single most important factor in enhancing pupil learning is the teachers' ability to evaluate the effects of their teaching on the learning behaviour and outcomes of the pupils. If teachers can learn from this evaluation to improve their teaching, that optimizes learning. Therefore teachers have to be researchers of their practice. They also have to be able to do this in collegial accountability, so that the school can be accountable to the parents and the state and assure them that the quality of the education is high.

That is why Steiner specified that the teachers' meetings should be an ongoing living academy (or university) for the professional development of the teachers⁵. In these meetings they will share and discuss their practice, deepen their understanding of the pupils, the teaching and the social, cultural, political and economic environment we live in. This teachers' academy, today we would say university, should carry out research into practice within the school and use this as a basis for developing curriculum.

If schools have to teach an externally determined curriculum (which is of course not ideal for a Waldorf School, but also not impossible), then the guarantee of Waldorf quality depends on the quality of reflective and evaluative work that goes on. Waldorf is above all an approach, an attitude,

a way of being and teaching. I believe we can deliver external curricula in a Waldorf way! There are limits to this and there are things we might feel are inappropriate but on the whole state school curricula comprise ideas and content that are in themselves culturally relevant. The main problem is the climate of competition, which leads to teaching to the test, to learning for assessment and not for assessment for learning. We need to ensure that the quality of learning is at the centre of our endeavour and that learning serves the development of the person in social ways.

That is why Waldorf teachers need to share and develop their common vision of what Waldorf means, what being a Waldorf teacher means. It is never just about serving the curriculum.

The teachers recorded in this book have done just that. They share their ideas and the school takes this seriously. That is why I think this text is of such interest to Waldorf teachers everywhere. I think that other teachers in other schools, in other places at other times may say different things. I might say different things. But that is what it all about - discourse, talking, thinking, sharing, exchanging, being open and learning as teachers.

In the end each national Waldorf association, each school and each college of teachers and finally each teacher has to decide what it is that makes them Waldorf. There will be many answers. What is important is that this process occurs at school level and regularly.

The process that is recorded in this book is exemplary. The answers that the participants gave are of great interest, though the fact the questions were asked in this way and answered thoughtfully is even more important. Because the interviews record the lived experiences of teachers situated in Zutphen (Netherlands), it means that the participants see the situation from their own standpoint. From their standpoint they have their own horizons - that is the view from a particular vantage point at a particular moment in time. These horizons will of course be different to those of other teachers in the Netherlands and even more different from those in England, Germany, America or China.

The point is that by engaging with the horizons described in this book and bringing my own horizons into dialogue with these, new insights will occur and so Waldorf education as a tradition in the best sense will grow and evolve as an entirety. The texts in this book provide an interesting documentation of the process in one school that is both particular and of general interest. There are no absolutely valid answers but there are very valid processes of inquiry and this book shows this in a very interesting way. For me this is an example of how practice based research should be done within Waldorf education. I hope this process of reflection will be continued.

Martyn Rawson, Hamburg, Germany

Foreword by Jan Alfrink

As a member of the Association of Waldorf Schools in Holland⁶ I take part in work-groups that concern themselves with the image of Waldorf Schools.

What makes a Waldorf School a Waldorf School?

The answer to this question is neither simple, nor direct. For Waldorf Schools are connected to people, to what people do and what they want to express. Eventually this leads to publications on paper, but these are the result of a communal process of searching, and with choices that are temporary.

In this book, Bert Kraai goes a step further. When may a teacher call himself a Waldorf teacher? How do you find the criteria that confirm this status? Having asked himself this, he went out among Waldorf teachers and interviewed a number of representatives. Gradually this led him to basic values, but also to the realisation that the world of Waldorf Schools is in transition.

Where have ways of teaching become so out-of-date that they only exist in the form of ideas? Where are Waldorf teachers succeeding in following the ways back to their origins and from there once more developing new ways? These questions will inevitably lead you to the origins of anthroposophy. Sometimes certainties obtained over time will have to be held up to question. You have to be brave to do that.

It is especially pleasant that in this book Bert gives the reader plenty of opportunity to share in observing the results of his search. Here you can find the expression of personal natures. Yet the book also contains clearly-formulated basic values that are waiting to be put into action.

Jan Alfrink, Zutphen, The Netherlands

Introduction

What is it that makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf teacher?

Being a teacher-coach at a Waldorf School, new teachers asked me this question again and again. After 7 years' work at the Waldorf secondary school in Zutphen (Holland) I couldn't give a satisfactory response. So I started asking other teacher-coaches what answers they gave to starting teachers. Strange to say, this produced not much more than "follow your intuition" or "read one of Steiner's books on education".

This surprised me. We have existed as Waldorf Schools for about 100 years and it is apparently hard to tell who we are, what we stand for, and why we do what we do. At least: it was hard for me to find anything in print that could be of use as a guideline for new teachers.

So at first I started to look for people close to me, who could help me go a step further in what makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf teacher. This question turned into a motive, not only for my personal interest, but especially for the new teachers I was coaching in becoming a full member of a Waldorf School.

This search resulted in inspiring conversations that I worked out into easily-read articles. And so a stimulating collection of stories sprang up about personalities, each in their own way shining light on Waldorf education, and bringing it alive.

Then I asked myself: have I touched on all aspects of Waldorf education? Have I done justice to nursery, primary and secondary schooling? Have I really let the different subjects take the stage? Should I go further afield, perhaps even abroad? Should I seek out well-known figures, or rather the ordinary school-mistress or -master who gives their all in each lesson? And while I wrestled with these questions, I noticed that in the conversations the same themes returned more and more often, each time in a different guise. That brought my personal search in the outside world to an end, knowing that I had not found the one and only answer and so leaving an open invitation to the readers to add their own stories and answers.

Once more I had a talk to Wim van Boxtel, my own teacher-coach. He asked me what common denominators I could find in these conversations, and what I could add to them. This question meant an invitation to digest the information from the interviews and to consult published works of literature. Often I would wake up with new ideas that I immediately noted down, amplifying them later. In this way I arrived at 7 clear themes, which I have set down as concrete guidelines for (beginner) Waldorf Schoolteachers.

This book has been written for new teachers in a Waldorf School, but also for teachers who wish to develop further. Besides them, there are more and more mainstream school teachers interested in what is going on in Waldorf Schools and what the intention is behind the way these teachers go to work. I have written this book for them too.

In the first part I have set out the interviews in the order I conducted them. The titles state the essence of each person's contribution to the enquiry. The interviews can be read separately, but I have noticed afterwards that there are all sorts of cross-connections. Sometimes one interview ends with the mention of a theme that another interviewee subsequently tackles in greater depth.

In the second part I weigh up the themes that recur in several of the conversations. In the third part I tackle these themes in greater depth and give concrete guidelines as to how to put them into action. In paragraph 3.6 "Delving into Waldorf School teaching" I offer some suggestions for further study. In the Notes there are many references for further reading.

As you read, please notice what each paragraph does to you; what touches you, what makes you enthusiastic, what would you like to use? The questions and exercises that follow may help you to take the next step in your development as a teacher in a Waldorf School.

In the fourth part the results of my practical research are put together with results of international efforts to find the essentials of Waldorf Education. This will lead to some qualities a Waldorf teacher should have or work on.

However you wish to read this book: from beginning to end, or by leaps and bounds, I hope that you will be able to find admiration for the rich (life's) work of a Waldorf teacher!

Part 1: In conversation

What makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf teacher?

Here you will find the interviews I had with a variety of experienced Waldorf teachers.

1.1 The intention makes the difference

My first conversation is with Hans Boss. He has worked as a teacher in Waldorf education since 1974. I ask him: "What's the difference between a Waldorf teacher and a teacher in an ordinary school?"

Hans acknowledges that at first there are few differences to be discerned between a Waldorf teacher and a teacher in an ordinary school. In both schools good teachers make an effort for their pupils, make contact with them, offer them a framework, give inspired lessons, explain the subject matter well and use active ways of learning, in order to learn in cooperation.

Hans states that the real difference lies in the intention that teachers at a Waldorf School have in mind when they are teaching. They focus on a child's development. What group of pupils do I have here? In what phase of life are they? What should they be developing? What questions do they really ask?

For Waldorf teachers teaching starts with the Waldorf School curriculum⁷. In this the different phases of life in the development of children are described and their impact on education. Although in the last decades society and children's circumstances have undergone drastic changes, the main ideas of this curriculum still seem to hold very well.

Over time the teaching authority in Holland has developed a system of education based on three six-year sections: kindergarten, primary school, secondary education. The Waldorf School however is based on three seven-year phases. In this respect teachers are following the fundamental pedagogical law of Rudolf Steiner⁸. This fundamental pedagogical law is based on the four-membered human being: physical body, etheric body, astral body and Self. The teacher always works from a higher part of being (Self, astral body, etheric body, etc.) upon the part of being that is developing in the child:

Child's age	What the child develops	What parents and teachers offer
0 - 7 years	Healthy physical body.	Rhythm between effort and relaxation. Play.
7 - 14 years	Rhythm between effort and relaxation, both physical and mental. Learning through play.	Consciousness and thoughts, feelings and impulses of will. Respect for the inner world of the child.
14 - 21 years	Consciousness and directing of own thoughts, feelings and impulses of will. Seeing the difference between one's own inner world and that of others.	Personal qualities, personality traits. One's own identity.
21 - 28 years	One's own qualities, personality traits and own identity.	Inspiration, spiritual consciousness. Belief and trust in oneself, others and in the future. Enthusiasm and creativity.

If this fundamental pedagogical law is NOT followed, the following may occur:

Child's age	Parent and teacher ask of the child	Consequences for the child
0 - 6 years	Infant / young child has to gather knowledge at an ever-earlier age, since it learns more quickly then. It often sits still in front of a screen (TV, computer or game-consoles).	The infant / young child is often tired and ill. It looks pale and has computer eyes. Bones, muscles and tendons develop poorly. The child develops all kinds of hypersensitivities (skin, respiratory, digestive). The child has little time to play or mess around.
7 - 12 years	The child has to become grown-up as quickly as possible. It is educated with adult thoughts, feelings and expectations.	The child scarcely has space to discover its own thoughts, feelings and impulses of will. The child no longer has time to be a child.
12 - 18 years	The adolescent has to learn more and more knowledge and skills in less and less time.	The adolescent will try to fulfil adult standards, or else it ends up in conflict. It feels ignored and misunderstood by adults. It doesn't have enough time to find itself and to discover who it really is.
18 - 24 years	The young adult has to study, work and make a career. No time for personal development.	The young adult becomes alienated, feels it has lost its roost. It jumps ('zaps') from job to job, from relationship to relationship.

Critical attitude and courage are needed to translate government influence and guidelines into an education that does justice to the tenets of the Waldorf School. For example, the introduction of central examinations is continually at odds with the desire to offer lesson material to pupils at just the right time in their development. Furthermore the content of subjects in biology, physics, chemistry and history is approached differently from anthroposophical backgrounds than in mainstream teaching methods. For example opinions in physics textbooks are momentarily presented as the only truth, whilst in a Waldorf School (from the 11th grade on) teachers show how opinions evolve over time, or even how distinct opinions can co-exist, depending upon the original view chosen by the observer.

For teachers in Waldorf Schools it is a challenge to build bridges between scientific thoughts and spiritual thoughts in anthroposophy. At the same time it is a challenge to develop, both in oneself and in the pupils, a broad vision of the world, beyond the borders of one's own subject.

It may be expected of a Waldorf teacher that they are conscious of why they work in the way they do: translating the background of human development into practice in the classroom. In so doing they address to the whole pupil (head, heart and hands) in their social context (preferably a stable, intimate and therefore safe group of pupils).

All this requires an attitude of continuous searching. Searching is a basic attitude of a Waldorf teacher. This reaches its clearest expression in the main lessons, when the teacher looks back each evening and asks himself questions: what did all the individual pupils in class develop? What is the next step to be taken? What does this ask of me, of the pupils, and of the class?

Questions and exercises

1. What is it that touches you in this interview?
2. What is your intention when teaching? What are you striving towards?
3. What parts of Rudolf Steiner's fundamental pedagogical law do you recognise in your interaction with children?
4. Which of the symptoms mentioned do you recognise in children when this fundamental pedagogical law is not followed? Do you have any further remarks to make on this?
5. How do you speak to head, heart, and hands in your lessons?
6. What do you know about the Waldorf School curriculum?
7. Do you notice any areas of tension between government/school inspection requirements and what the pupils actually need/ask for?

1.2 The courage to be an artist in educating

Handcraft and art subjects are also taught in Waldorf Schools. Handcraft subjects deal with the way you give form to the mineral world: wood, stone, clay and metal. Art subjects mean expressing yourself through drawing, drama or eurythmy.

That's why I consulted Rik de Ridder, who has been linked for years to the Waldorf School in Zutphen and has taken many initiatives in his field (painting). He also took a hand in cultural weeks and in the Parsifal main lessons. His opinion of the art of education in Waldorf Schools is very clear. I decide to sit down at a desk and listen to the master, who stands proudly by the blackboard.

Waldorf School teaching deals with having the courage to trust in your own intuition at any time. To be brave to tread untrodden paths, fully aware and conscious that you're doing what you're doing. It needs you to see clearly what the pupils need, and to ask yourself: what can I, the teacher, do about this?

There's an artist, a free person, in every human being. It's about setting yourself free from "knowing" - which is based on historical knowledge and experience. This "knowing" ruins everything. Follow your inner compass, your intuition. Let your hands do what your heart tells them to. And do so with a fully open mind, an awareness.

Rik takes a stick of chalk and draws the following drawings by Joseph Beuys on the board:

Child



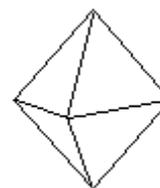
wanting
chaos
formlessness
limbs
approaching the other

Adolescent



feeling
moving
joining the stream
heart
meeting the other

Adult



thinking
stillness
crystallised form
head
seeing the other

We recognise roughly two ways to give form in graphic art: plastic (from the inside out) and sculpture (from the outside in). It's about keeping these two forces in balance at school. However, in a Waldorf School we teach primarily from inside, from the plastic force, to give form.

A Waldorf School doesn't have to become a school where mostly we do "fun things" with the pupils. In the first place, a Waldorf School is a workshop where we learn together what life is made up of. This means teaching the children how to solve the problems they created themselves (in this life or in a previous one).

Rik states: go towards the children, move towards the ball. Meet the other. Try to unite the pupils, as their teacher. Know the power of humour. Let yourself feed from the energy of your lower pole. And try to make this subconsciousness conscious.

Questions and exercises

1. How does this interview touch you?
2. What makes you an educational artist, in what way are you being creative?
3. When, recently, have you shown courage in your lessons? What was the effect? What do you need in order to do this more often?
4. Learning teaching skills takes place in 4 phases:
 - a. Unconsciously unskilled
 - b. Consciously unskilled
 - c. Consciously skilled
 - d. Unconsciously skilled⁹

Rik de Ridder advises you to trust your intuition during the last phase. What do you recognise about this from your own teaching experience?
5. What developments can you see in Joseph Beuys' drawings?
6. Rik de Ridder says his lessons are a workshop where children meet themselves and each other, and where, through falling and picking themselves up again, they learn to solve problems. What does this remind you of in your lessons?
7. Rik advises us to haul energy up from our lower pole. How is it in your case? Where do you get your energy from?

1.3 Living lively lessons of life

Don't teach children to build a boat, rather give them the longing for the sea.¹⁰

Don't go filling heads, but set a fire burning inside children¹¹.

Two sayings that are written all over Inge Haagsma's life. She began in 1971 as a German teacher and later French too at the Parcival College in Groningen and since 2007 she has worked for the association of Waldorf Schools in Driebergen. We sit in a classroom and she begins to tell her story.

Each and every child comes to this world with its own mystery. It is up to us to accompany and be a mirror to them, not to solve the mystery for them or give them answers. The answers they are looking for are the answers to their own questions. A child's Self cannot be educated. What we adults can do is create values through which a child can find and unfold its own Self.

After being born, a child repeats the whole of mankind's development in a short time. That's also one of the reasons why the Waldorf School begins by offering fairy-tales (a connection to pictorial imagination). Then fables (a connection to their naughtiness) and legends (as an opposite image, that of holy lives). Afterwards we follow the stories of mankind's development in Europe from the Old Testament via the Nordic, Germanic, Greek, and Roman cultural periods.

Today's children shape the future and bring their own aims for that reason. We accompany the children by being learners ourselves, as teachers or parents. Children learn most from what the teacher (or parent) has gathered from their own experience. And this is not just about knowledge, but above all about what the teacher has lived through, gone through in the process of his own development. Human science in anthroposophy gives many handholds, which show us insight:

- The three-membered human vision (body, soul and spirit)¹².
In education we work in particular with the forces of the soul: thinking, feeling and willing.
- The four-membered human vision (physical, etheric, astral, Self)¹³.
In the Waldorf School curriculum we try through our education to connect to the incarnation of these four parts of being.
- The four temperaments¹⁴ (melancholic [earth], phlegmatic [water], sanguine [light], choleric [fire]). We find the temperaments in the daily habits of men. They will find their clearest expression in the time of life between 7 and 14 years of age.
- The seven planetary qualities¹⁵ (Sun, Venus, Mars, Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn).
These qualities manifest themselves most clearly between the ages of 14 and 21.

It is the task of the College of Waldorf teachers to create values, so that every child can develop into a freely-acting, freely-feeling, and free-thinking human. I do this by employing my own passion from my relationship with my subject. For example I do the things that I like to do with pupils: reciting and story-telling. And I try to intuit what each group of pupils needs. General human themes always recur, for instance death/life, struggles, moral issues. For these reasons the book *The Little Prince* delights me and the pupils, year after year.

In my view a specific body of Waldorf School didactics does not exist. I am always busy making new,

creative lessons - that's what it's about. The curriculum descriptions do exist, but these are pretty general and point to the developmental step that is to be made in a determined year. Didactic instructions also exist on how to teach the main lesson block each morning over a 3-week period. The original meaning of the pupil's own "period book" was to report the individual treatment of the lesson material by each pupil - not to copy from one another.

Pedagogical views certainly influence the didactics to be used. Which pupil do I ask what, in which way? Which work-forms do I choose? In classes 6, 7 and 8 I choose to increase their vocabulary, memorising. Children are still able to make best use of moon-qualities then. From the 11th class on there is room for different ideas and viewpoints.

Lessons at a Waldorf School should be social and artistic: mobile, interactive and attractive to the imagination. I find it important that my lessons breathe, that effort and relaxation alternate and that there is room for sudden crazy ideas. That doesn't always turn out well and so it always takes courage to dare to go through a low point together.

Questions and exercises

1. What is it that touches you in this interview?
2. What do Inge Haagsma's two sayings evoke in you?
3. Take a child that poses a riddle for you. What does that child need from you?
4. Which of the aspects mentioned of human science would you like to find out more about?
5. What do you like doing with pupils? What makes you enthusiastic?
6. Which story keeps on inspiring you?
7. According to Inge, Waldorf School classes should be socially creative: flexible, interactive and suggestive to your imagination. Do you recognise in this anything from your classes?

1.4 Vision

Ivonne Verschuur, the teacher who accompanied me in my first student-teaching practice, let me have space in her lessons to play with the pupils and the material. Since then she has retired and I decide to look her up. Over a splendid lunch she tells me that teaching at a Waldorf School for her means: working from a clear vision.

She began as a kindergarten mistress in mainstream education. There she started by decorating her own classroom and experimenting with all sorts of activities and materials. Her colleagues gave her strange looks: what are you up to? Luckily she also had a colleague who encouraged her and said: "if you think it's good, above all, go ahead".

By roundabout ways she came into contact with Waldorf education. There she recognized several of her basic ideas that she had put into practice with more or less success. "Hey, this makes me feel at home, this suits me". She studied the background to Waldorf education. The storytelling material in primary school made her really excited. She became curious: where do these ideas come from? So she did some research: she read a great deal and organised conversations at home. She organised some help and decided to start a Waldorf School in Hoorn, set up a foundation and took her place on the board of governors. It was then that new questions came up, and she invited all kind of people: doctors, psychologists, clergy, teachers.

The Waldorf School pedagogy excited her in particular. She took part in an course of training for primary school in Waldorf education, then went to work in Zutphen, at the IJssel primary school and afterwards at the Berkel primary school. Questions connected to pupils continually led to conversations with others:

- how does this child develop, observed from different human angles?
- what challenges is this child faced with and how is it equipped to deal with them?
- where does this behaviour stem from? What question underlies it?
- what potential is present in this child, how can it develop further?
- what contribution can the class make to this?

In this way she sharpened her own vision. She tested this continually against literature, with colleagues, and in her own lessons.

In primary school the teachers together took responsibility for school policy. In 2002 she stepped up together with her 6th class to the middle school of secondary education (classes 7 and 8). There it immediately became sadly clear to her that the hierarchic model of organisation had slowly but surely made its entry into Waldorf education. Waldorf School pedagogy was no longer the basic idea in meetings, child-viewings became rare. The newly-installed leaders were preoccupied mainly with material things such as money, timetables, buildings and working hours.

She asked herself the question aloud: what is needed for the teachers to find succour again? So that they will study the background from which to teach at this school (together)? To keep their vision on Waldorf education anchored now and in the future, so that they can grow from impulsive actions to acting from an inner knowledge.

Questions and exercises

1. What is it that touches you in this interview?
2. How did you come into contact with the Waldorf School?
3. What does your classroom look like? What lesson materials do you use?
4. Imagine you are going to found a Waldorf School. Which 3 aspects of your present school would you keep, and what would you definitely do differently?
5. Ivonne Verschuur says that for her it is important to teach from a definite set of views. Now try to make a brief description of your own vision; what are you aiming for in your lessons?
6. Which pedagogical question would you like to have a chance to discuss with your colleagues?
7. Would you like to find out more about Waldorf education, and what do you need in order to do this?

1.5 Putting anthroposophy into practice

After a few weeks I manage to contact the man who accompanied me in my first teaching years, Wim van Boxel. Since then he's taken early retirement and has distanced himself a little from the often tortuous Waldorf School community, after years of intense involvement, in rough times and smoother ones, with Waldorf education. We ponder on the question thrown up by Ivonne in the previous interview: what can be done these days to realise the original impulse of anthroposophy in the field of pedagogy? Wim has already filled a few pages with his ideas on this matter. Over a cup of tea and some stroopwaffles he tells me this:

In every school there are good and not-so-good teachers. Teachers with talents and skills in pedagogical, didactic, social, and specialist subject fields, etc. Using the anthroposophical vision of human beings as your basis, teachers aren't handed anything extra. It's not the cherry on the cake. They choose an ESSENTIALLY different look at the growing child (the pupil) and at the accompaniment (upbringing, education). The teacher doesn't teach children to take their place in the present society, but teaches them to become people who can help to give shape to society.

If all's well, then every teacher in a Waldorf School says an active "yes" to anthroposophical thought. That means saying "yes" to the consciousness that reality contains more than our visible material world. That we are inhabitants of two real worlds: our material world and the spiritual world. Anthroposophy states opinions about this and serves as a source of inspiration for the teacher's work.

The organisation of the Waldorf School should make space for putting anthroposophy into practice. This means, for instance:

School size

A Waldorf School has human dimensions. It is a fertile social community where teachers and pupils know each other. Where people really meet each other and the line drawn between them is thin. In Wim's experience he knows this can only happen in a school with a maximum of about 400 pupils.

Organisational shape

Each teacher takes responsibility for what happens in pedagogy in the school. The school organisation is supported by the colleagues. The school is us, we build the school together. In order for the school to work well, delegation of tasks, responsibilities, and faculties is essential. In this aspect, it is more appropriate to work with a system of mandates (delegating tasks for a certain fixed period) rather than a hierarchical system. Members of the workforce are supported by or hand responsibility over to the mandate-givers (colleagues), not to a headmaster or board of governors.

Following pupils' development

The teachers at a Waldorf School follow the development of the pupils through the years. For this it is necessary for teachers from kindergarten, primary and secondary school to work together.

Space for teachers' development

The Waldorf School offers space to the (new) teachers to develop into a Waldorf Schoolteacher through training, refresher courses, companion-teachers and mentorships.

School development

There should be enough identity-carriers in a Waldorf School: experienced teachers who know the background and who want to give shape to the school based on the anthroposophical vision of today's human being.

Furthermore in a Waldorf School individual teachers must develop themselves further as (subject-)teachers and as human beings. For this you need:

Training in the background of Waldorf Schools

New teachers deserve plenty of opportunity to get to know all facets of Waldorf education. They receive internal instruction in the basic tenets of anthroposophy. The aim of this instruction is to let the teachers realise what it means to be a teacher in a Waldorf School. And to make them enthusiastic, to awaken an impulse to develop themselves. This instruction will end in a verbal assessment, where the teacher is asked if he/she really wishes to enter the process of becoming a Waldorf teacher.

Accompaniment by teacher-coaches and mentors

In the first two years of his post a teacher is accompanied by a teacher-coach. The latter initiates them into Waldorf School pedagogics and didactics. For instance: welcoming pupils, the morning verse, the main lesson book each pupil makes. But also pointers as how you teach children up to the age of 14 pictures using images, and how you gradually teach adolescents 15 and above to think abstractly. After the first two years it would be a good idea for the teacher himself to choose a mentor, who can accompany him in his further development as a Waldorf teacher.

Study in groups and child-discussions

The teacher needs a thorough study of anthroposophy, to be able to use the human vision as a source of inspiration for his lessons, which he can then express in his own original manner using the Waldorf School curriculum as a guide. This thorough study takes place during team meetings, departmental discussion, and on the teacher's own initiative in self-formed groups. Child-viewings are an excellent chance to practise observation from the backgrounds together, building an image of what this pupil is asking us here and now, in order finally to reach a common view on the desired pedagogical and didactic approach.

In-service training in one's subject, in pedagogy and (subject-)didactics

Most of the teachers who enter a Waldorf School have already followed a teacher-training course. Some have also several years' work-experience at another school. Teachers need training to keep up with the content of their subject, with general pedagogy and (subject-) didactics. They also need training in: "Which material do I offer Waldorf School pupils, when, and how?"

Following an inner training path

The only thing that works on a child is what the teacher has learnt from personal experience. That's why it's so important that the teacher continues to train and develop as a human. Pupils constantly hold up a mirror, reflecting our sun- and our shadow-sides and challenging us to be a role model for them. In order to carry out this wonderful work, inner harmony is needed. Meditations (such as teacher meditations) can help in this, and training exercises for the soul (such as the basic exercises).

Questions and exercises

1. What is it that touches you in this interview?
2. What does "anthroposophy" mean to you? What image does it call to mind in your case?
3. What can you say a heartfelt "Yes" to?
4. Wim van Boxtel attaches great value to seeking a connection to the school's origins, whether as an individual or as an organisation. What room is made for this in your school? What initiatives are you taking yourself?
5. What would you see if pupils held up a mirror to you? What are you satisfied with, and what are the parts of yourself you need to develop?
6. What new training do you need?
7. Where/how do you find inner harmony to be able to use and work from?

1.6 Personality

What makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf teacher? The most important thing is personality. Jos Erps is speaking, a German teacher since 1981 at the Zutphen Waldorf School, during which time he has spent a number of years as head of department and school director.

A Waldorf teacher has to give something extra to children. This means he is open to the world in which these children live. He has a broad social and socio-cultural background. He lets the children invite him to share something of these experiences with them. He knows how to touch children's feelings with his enthusiasm and experience of life. He has initiative, is conscious of physical reality, is fully grounded in the present, and is truthful and honest. And at the same time his antennas are alert to what is marvellous and special in these children: the spiritual reality.

It's about the uprightness of the teacher. Neither irony nor sarcasm have any place in a teacher in a Waldorf School. He is able to be open to the immediate question these children ask. He has an inner drive to develop himself.

It is also important that teachers look with sympathy upon themselves, the children, parents, their colleagues and those in charge of the school. It takes practice to watch clearly anew, every time: who is this child, who is this human being? This means keeping prejudices at bay. Making your own importance subject to the higher importance of the other, of the school. Looking in the mirror of your own Self, being able to laugh about yourself and keeping yourself in perspective. Then children feel safe and dare to show themselves.

Later in the evenings there is the opportunity consciously to stop and review all these meetings and what has been presented here. Every day unexpected events take place that hold potential. Every child, every person is a creative being.

Waldorf education invites children to open themselves. In this way they can "discover who they really are". That is the greatest gift of Waldorf education: that children can shine, develop all their talents in full, deeply and widely.

Opening yourself up entails a risk, however. Pupils (consciously or unconsciously) cross limits that really ought not to be crossed. Jos gives the example of a pupil who begins to drum on the back of the pupil in front. Jos asks the pupil: "What are you doing?" The pupil answers: "Oh, he doesn't mind, you know, I often do this". At which Jos asks the boy in front: "Is this correct?" The boy in front turns round and says: "No, I don't find this funny at all, I want you to stop doing this!". A sigh of relief passes through the class. Then Jos makes it clear to the pupil that his behaviour is completely wrong. The pupil realises this and at the end of the lesson says he is sorry, both to the boy in front and to the teacher.

Antipathy has its place in educating, even in a Waldorf School. It is salutary for the children when it is utterly clear what behaviour is allowed and what is not. That creates clarity and security. When a child crosses this limit, we do not help him by ignoring him or passing it off as unimportant. Suffering the consequences of his behaviour helps him to become aware of what he did. Sometimes a child needs to feel these consequences directly and to make an extra effort to put things back to rights. At this moment, pain leads to consciousness. It is important, as staff and school leadership, not to look away, but to have the courage to set limits to pupils' behaviour.

In years 7 and 8 Jos especially works on the "class body". When the atmosphere in a class is safe, pupils can plunge into it knowing that they are supported in their development by their classmates and the teacher. In years 11 and 12 he uses the curriculum far more towards the development of the individual and their own individuality. This is a hallmark of Waldorf School pedagogy.

Does a specific body of Waldorf School didactics exist? According to Jos this is above all to do with the attitude of the teacher, who is able to be flexible towards what happens in the class. That means just as much preparing a lesson well, as being ready to set everything aside as soon as it is clear that right then the children need something different.

How does a new teacher become a good Waldorf teacher? This begins by becoming conscious of what one's inner driving forces are. Then reading literature, talking to colleagues. Each teacher finds his own way in this. The teacher-coach or a more experienced colleague can be a good sparring-partner. The team, too, can play a part here in supporting him. For example by pooling observations of children with the aim of reaching the most objective image possible. Or by comparing literature about phases of childhood¹⁶ with everyday practice.

It is a matter of training your own observation and learning to trust your own intuition. That decides what you reflect (or do not yet reflect) to the children, either verbally or non-verbally or on paper. An assessment or report must never be a settling of accounts. It serves as a mirror to the child and should offer handholds for its further development as a human being.

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. Jos Erps says that he invites pupils to let him share something of his social and cultural experiences with them. What have you to offer children in this respect?
3. What antennas do you have working? What are you good at observing in pupils?
4. When you look in the mirror of your own Self, what can you smile or laugh about? What are your weak points/ human traits?
5. For new parents and pupils, a Waldorf School often means a school where there are few set boundaries and where freedom reigns. What do you think?
6. How do you correct pupils' behaviour? What do you use to do this?
7. Who represents what values in the school? What do you yourself stand for?

1.7 Vitality and inventiveness

Janneke van der Torn was a pupil at the Waldorf School in Zeist from the 11th class onwards. What she recalls is that the teachers were personalities. Several of them were really wise. The most important thing they did was... to educate themselves.

She gives the example of the eurythmy teacher, whom Janneke challenged with the question: "can you teach eurythmy with pop music too?" To which the teacher said: "I don't know really, I'll have to think, and sleep on it". In the next lesson he talked to the pupils, explaining that he thought it wasn't possible. These are the kind of living meetings that she will never forget.

What was special for her as well was that the lessons were taught with unity. When she had a Geography main lesson, the teacher explained how this material built on material from the main lessons the class had had before. Subjects were inter-linked, with all kinds of cross-connections. After spending years at a mainstream school with separate subject lessons, this was a joyful discovery for her: everything is connected after all.

Teachers were open to feedback, didn't just stick to their same old story, and dared to give lessons off-the-record. It was a game for her class to try to get the German teacher to enthuse about opera. But indeed it was thanks to this teacher that she came to know opera music. Teachers were courageous enough respond to matters directly, both actual in class or outside the classroom.

She also found the personal bond with the teachers to be special, in spite of and maybe just because of their individual characters, and their passion for their subject.

Now she works as a Waldorf School primary-school teacher, has been a primary-school leader for several years, and is a trainer in the school advisory service for Waldorf Schools. She tells how nowadays children ask different questions from those they asked a few decades ago. This means that it is no longer any good to keep on teaching the same way, harking back to instructions from a century ago. It is right to find your own answers to the questions children currently ask by using these instructions from Steiner, about pedagogical issues, and on using subject material. Pupils want to meet a person who is sure of themselves, living in the real world, and who knows what he/she is talking about.

Teaching children makes a great deal of demands. So it is important to look after yourself all the time. Janneke has learnt how valuable it is to reach the classroom with plenty of time to spare to create your inner space and to be able to welcome the pupils. And, after the lesson to take the time to digest all the impressions, put observations in order, and to ponder, to reflect on yourself.

Studying anthroposophy, the background to Waldorf Schools, is essential. But this cannot remain separate from daily reality. It is no use blaming the requirements of the government and school inspectors. In the Seventies we ran along in an happy, free atmosphere. Now in the 21st century our job is to deliver teaching that is technically high-quality, which reaches the objectives clearly, and still to do this in a way that motivates the pupils and gives them room to develop themselves.

It is our job as a teacher in a Waldorf School to address head, heart, and hands in every lesson. To make children enthusiastic for all the world has to offer and to let them discover their own talents. Of course it is inspiring to read a good book about anthroposophy or to listen to a fine lecture about Waldorf School pedagogy. But then it's about going to work together. To develop themes such as:

- breathing in and out, alternating effort and relaxation, consuming and producing
- address head, heart and hands in each lesson
- the daily, weekly, annual rhythms in the timetable
- working with temperaments and planetary qualities
- aiming at types of constitution.

But also concrete questions such as:

- what is a good learning environment for boys?
- how will we use multimedia?
- what crafts do we offer?

Cooperation between members of a team of colleagues is essential. This can be achieved by sharing: exchanging successes and failures, exchanging ideas, dialogue. On an equal footing. Experienced teachers can share their wisdom and opinions. Young teachers can ask new questions, with their fresh look at things, their creative, brand-new thinking, helping to look for new, contemporary solutions. When teachers make a community of learning together, they create a fertile base for the pupils.

Let's talk more about our subject, what moves us, what makes us enthusiastic. Fewer meetings about rules and regulations. More efficient administration: our main task should not be filling in assessment forms, but meeting the pupils. And meeting each other, for example by meeting one another at the end of the day to correct and discuss pupils' work.

Waldorf Schools can work together much more, combining their strengths. And teachers at Waldorf Schools can learn a lot from mainstream schools, for instance, about teaching active and cooperative learning. This requires a different mindset: no longer classical teacher-centred education, where pretty main lesson books are produced, but instead accompanying pupils to discover the world around them together.

On the other hand, mainstream schools can (and want to!) learn a lot from Waldorf Schools about awareness and observation of pupils and offering possibilities for them to develop. Right at the moment Janneke is helping a mainstream school that wants to use main lessons. Main lessons are little treasures: open places where teachers may give their own input, choose their own approach, in order to connect pupils' interest with what the teacher himself is enthusiastic about. Other treasures of Waldorf education are:

- arts and craft subjects
- the integration of head-heart-hands in every subject
- practical experience and enlivening the lesson material.

We may enjoy and be proud of all these children searching for themselves and developing. And we may also regularly put feathers in each other's caps - celebrate successes and talk about them!

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. Which primary or secondary schoolteacher made an impression on you? How come this happened?
3. Janneke van der Torn talks about living meetings and a personal bond with pupils. What does that bring to mind in your lessons? How far may/can that contact reach in your opinion?
4. Which question would you like to discuss with your colleagues?
5. What is really special about Waldorf education for you?
6. What are you proud of in yourself? Why do you think your school/colleagues deserve a reward?
7. What could collaboration with other Waldorf Schools produce, in your opinion?

1.8 Open to two worlds

Who are you as a Waldorf School? What do you stand for? That is the question the outside world is asking right now. As Waldorf Schools we are undergoing a transition from inside to outside. That needs reflection on our roots, courage to let go of what doesn't fit anymore and trust in finding new ways together.

In 1980 Jan Alfrink founded the Waldorf School in Zwolle. There, 33 years later, he gave a lecture on the basic tenets of anthroposophy to commemorate the fact that 100 years ago Rudolf Steiner visited Zwolle. There was intense interest: the same interest he meets in the fifteen teachers of the Van der Capelle College (a regular upper school), who are going to start up a Waldorf School middle school in Zwolle.

Jan Alfrink is optimistic about the future of Waldorf Schools. He feels that fears of The Hague (where the Dutch government is stated) are without grounds. He notices that the Education Ministry is looking on Waldorf education with interest. At the Ministry questions are asked and space is being made for further development. Besides Zwolle, people are busy setting up middle schools in five other places in The Netherlands, all in a satellite construction. Isn't that amazing? What is the reason for this?

Certainly, Jan acknowledges that Waldorf Schools face the challenge of giving the philosophical basis of anthroposophy a shape that is recognisable in our world and time. Some teachers cramp up, try to hold on to what has been handed down to them by tradition. But the source is much deeper than the outward forms that sprang up last century. It is time for us to emerge: to let traditions go that have lost their force and to serve mankind's development in our time. Together, to cooperate in new ways. Old institutions are under pressure: associations, churches, trade unions and (Waldorf) school organisations too. Nowadays every person is searching (virtually) for new connections with their own identity as starting-point. It is all about matching up intentions. That is how networks are formed, where groups of people work together intensively.

Nearly all Waldorf Schools work with the mantra: "become who you are". This is actually a contradiction. How can you become who you already are and still be the person you want to be? There's a mystery here. Jan started interviewing former Waldorf School pupils. He asks them: "have you indeed become who you are?" One interviewee said that the deep interest shown by teachers for her as a human being had impresses her most. This had touched her as a child, deep in her soul. She had been seen. At such moments a little of the karmic connection between humans can be felt.

This deep interest in children is not a trick, something that you can just learn from a book. It requires an intention, a will, a basic attitude. First, saying "yes" to the wish to meet every child's being. Only then comes practice, the inner path of training yourself. If you want to be a teacher in a Waldorf School, then you will be one. So for a teacher this really holds true: become who you want to be.

So it starts with the choice: do you, as a teacher, want to be part of a Waldorf School? From his work as teacher-coach Jan has learnt that teachers choose to do so for a great variety of reasons. Sometimes consciously, from a way of life that fits the vision of the Waldorf School. Upbringing, background, or socio-cultural or religious reasons to name a few. However, and much more often, unconsciously, through recognition, an inner connection. "I feel at home here, I belong here."

In the episode of 21st of February 2013 the Dutch television programme "De hokjesman" Michael Schaap asks different people the question: "Are you an anthroposophist?" It is striking that at first the question produces in many of those asked an answer that avoids the question. They don't say "yes" straightaway out of fear of the consequences that other people will adduce from this. They fear to be labelled by outwardly distinguishing features. The question, though, is whether these features really exist. It is all about an inner choice: what do I wish to connect myself to? What wants to be born inside me and through me?

Where a will springs up, there opens up a way.

Once you have made this choice, then the search begins. Rudolf Steiner gave all kinds of instructions in his lectures, which have been published in a great number of editions. It is worth the effort to study these instructions and subsequently to examine them yourself: to feel with your own intuition, to ponder (meditate), to try them out. We keep on asking ourselves questions, and are constantly tested by our surroundings: is this right, is this really what you want? By taking our questions with us into the night, and remaining open to instructions sent from the spiritual world, we can realise that we do not have to go on this individual path of development alone.

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. What is your school's mantra? What effect does this have on you?
3. For what reason did you choose the Waldorf School?
4. What did you say "yes" to when you came to work at this school?
5. Jan Alfrink says that time is ripe for Waldorf Schools to make clear what they stand for. When you meet someone new, what do you tell them about your work as a Waldorf teacher and about your school?
6. In your book, what makes a real Anthroposophist? Do you fit that definition?
7. Jan also says that to work as a Waldorf teacher means a constant process of searching and researching. Does that strike a chord with you?

1.9 Ideal and reality

"In Waldorf education, the main aim is the development of man towards freedom". Speaking is Arend Zantinge, teacher of mathematics and architecture at the Zutphen Waldorf School since 1983. He is master of the art of posing questions, challenging you to choose your point of view. What do you stand for? What are you aiming for? This search for your own motives and ideals is an important aspect of the Waldorf School curriculum.

I'm sitting in Arend's home. Over a cup of tea he quickly comes to the point. He says: in order to answer the question "what makes a teacher a Waldorf teacher?" you must first go back to the question "What is the Waldorf School about?"

The main part is the vision on mankind and on this world. All other relevant and essential aspects are derived from this. First of all as a teacher you must train yourself from a spiritual viewpoint to look on mankind in general, the pupil in particular, and at the world.

The Waldorf School was founded as an initiative for the renewal of society. Steiner sees that in the present phase of development of human culture (the development of the conscious soul) a form of society is needed where the spiritual, political and economic estates are not subject to each other, but must be largely autonomous. Liberty, equality, and fraternity are the respective principles of these three areas. This is a social condition for further human development.

Obviously, on the other hand, people with a definite attitude are needed to promote and sustain such a form of society. Into this great framework Steiner placed the initiative of Waldorf Schools in 1919. In a lecture that attracted much attention (*Education as a Force for Social Change*) he himself explained how in the first seven-year phase the basis for spiritual liberty should be laid, in the second seven-year phase the basis for equality in politics and law, and in the third seven-year phase the basis for fraternity in economic life. As a Waldorf teacher you should be conscious to a certain extent that you are dealing with this kind of great enterprise.

In the upper school the emphasis is on thinking and judgement-making, step by step, where each class has its own character. As a teacher you must gain more knowledge and feeling for this. Arend gives illustrations.

Pupils in the 8th and 9th grade are right in the midst of puberty. It is the time when you create your own inner circle and have a great clearing-out. Everything in your own upbringing is fought against. What makes sense can stay, the rest is rejected. Your own circle of friends is sifted critically: who suits me and who doesn't? Along with all this come emotional outbursts.

In the 10th grade pupils take stock: where am I now and where are the others? How does my life look objectively? This fits the current social view of the world: material and deterministic. Everything can be taken apart into components. The whole of evolution and the history of mankind is made up of cause and effect.

But the Waldorf School curriculum goes further. In the 11th grade pupils discover that you can approach objective facts from different angles. And with different intentions. What is possible? What is allowed? What makes sense? Who decides what? What the world looks like depends on your own point of view. Moral thought is born. In a Parcival-period children search for their own ideals.

Hopefully, the pupils who leave school after the 12th grade will have a certain awareness of their own direction and motives, together with a collection of essential skills. They do not just repeat the thoughts of others, but can think and judge independently. Our desire is that they find their own way and commit themselves to what they really have been born to do. That is the reason behind everything we do as a Waldorf School!

As young adults they enter existing society, develop further and sometimes have to adapt. That can mean they have to wrestle with their deepest-seated ideals, but that's life. Then again a crisis may arise and they have to make a choice: am I ready to follow my ideals and my drives, in order to remain true to myself? Because that's the only way that they will help society and human development to take a step forward.

Arend Zantinge illustrates this with an example from his own life. After secondary school he went to Delft to follow a degree in Urban Studies. He already had an idealist slant and worked for years after university in areas of influence in town planning and use of space. At the same time as he was in Delft, he made considerable research into anthroposophy. In his thirties he began to want a job that wasn't just 20%, but the full 100% in line with what he found important. He wanted to be in meaningful work. So he came to the Waldorf School. In his spare time he qualified as a mathematics and physics teacher.

But does freedom really exist? What does this free man look like? Or is Dick Swaab right when he posits in *We are Our Brains* that our actions are determined by our brain's activities? Rudolf Steiner wrote a book about this issue, *The Philosophy of Freedom*. His basic premise is that man is equipped with his own free will. Freedom of will means that you let your actions be inspired by a thought born freely. Freedom therefore is what hallmarks our thinking. In *The Philosophy of Freedom* Steiner is directly opposed to Swaab. Swaab's vision stems from determinism and leads to a society that functions like a mechanism. Steiner's vision stems from the possibility of freedom and leads to a society that functions like an organism. Steiner says: matter is congealed mind. Swaab says: mind is a product of matter. These opposing premises have far-reaching consequences for the way we look at pupils and education, even at different school subjects. People create their own reality.

The spiritual battle of our time is centred around this. Do we make a world where developing towards freedom is promoted, or are people locked into material determinism? As a human, can you put your ideals to work or must you function like a cog in a mechanism? Steiner is very biting when he describes the consequences of materialistic education as "mechanisation of the mind, vegetation of the soul, and animalisation of the body".

Waldorf education is about letting pupils track down their own leitmotifs. "Become who you are". Do that which before birth you intended to do (karma). That implies that the same may be expected of teachers. In the upper school you educate pupils using your Self. You must stand there as a independent person with your own views on your subject and on life in general, not as a civil servant simply carrying out what the ministry or the school council have decided. It is about being conscious of where your inspiration comes from and where it is leading you to. And that is what shines down on the pupil. If we make ourselves subject to "the rules", then the rules boss us. If we allow ourselves beforehand to be limited by the money available, then money bosses us. If we let education be conditioned by existing methods of teaching, then these methods boss us. Then the only spiritual development that is still possible is subject to all of this.

Arend's criticism also applies to the hierarchical organisational structure that is now becoming more and more common in Waldorf Schools in Holland. He acknowledges that we have brought this upon ourselves, through the fact that the collective leadership of a school by its staff meant a learning experience, where far from everything ran smoothly as a matter of course. But now an official power structure is growing where people shirk responsibilities or pass them on upwards. We are in danger of behaving like puppets: we point upwards and at each other. Instead of taking complete responsibility ourselves (or together) for what we create ourselves (or together). We should search for new forms of organisation where tasks and responsibilities are shared more organically, and we help or complement each other.

"A pound of feathers can only fly, if a bird is in it"¹⁷. This quotation from Bert Schierbeek is a favourite image of Arend's. In other words: a Waldorf School only works if there is a living identity inside it. Every teacher has to be able to be "the bird" and represent the Waldorf School approach at - for instance - a meeting with parents. Only then will we succeed to make parents and government enthusiastic about our education.

In education we are always looking for the right balance between ideal and reality, between mind and matter. Staying true to our humanist backgrounds and opinions, but continually attuning to current life, to today's world. Keeping a clear view of the reason why we exist as Waldorf Schools in this world: to develop free-thinking, committed and responsible men and women who act freely.

As a teacher you are a conscientious, responsible, highly-educated professional, who should know what he stands for and why. By nature you abhor expressions like "being passed on" and "my leader" but you are happy to cooperate with colleagues towards the further development and subject-based practice in your school. You keep on developing as a person and in your subject. That alone is what works with your pupils.

And as we finish, Arend adds: you are not alone in this. It only succeeds through cooperation. But furthermore: help from above. Think of the "unprinted passage" and the teachers' verses¹⁸ given by Steiner as a little bit of back-up.

Questions and exercises

1. What is it that touches you in this interview?
2. What ideals do you strive towards in your work?
3. Freedom plays an important role in Waldorf education. For what do you need freedom?
4. What are you responsible for in school, and for what do you take responsibility?
5. What are your weak points, and your stumbling blocks? When do you need leadership/guidance?
6. Do you share Arend Zantinge's criticism of a hierarchical organisational structure, or are you happy with such a structure?
7. For you, which part of the school is the "bird" and which the "feathers"?

1.10 Working in groups

Wim Wibbelink is working as co-head of education at Zutphen Waldorf School. Originally he was a drama teacher. For him group work is central to both activities.

Before he came to work at this school, he travelled to all sorts of schools with a play about coming to terms with mourning. Out of all the schools he visited this school stood out. On arrival he was given a tour of the organically-shaped building, as well as an introduction to the origins from which this teaching sprang. He wanted to work here.

A year later he received an invitation to produce several plays. He knew his subject already, but here it was a matter of which play, and when, and how you offered it to the pupils. At first he felt quite sceptical: first he wanted to try out these ideas against his own observations. However he soon noticed the greater value of offering lesson material at the right time. On experimenting, he discovered that the wrong exercise in the wrong class did indeed turn out to be counter-productive.

He took up the challenge, together with colleagues, of writing down the drama curriculum (that had always been orally transmitted, discussed, and adjusted). Then it became clear that this curriculum differed in several points from that of other upper Waldorf Schools. Apparently each Waldorf School has gone its own way, following its own experiences and convictions. Wim looked for possibilities to start discussing this.

To give an idea of what the creation of one's own curriculum entails, he gives several examples. In the 7th grade the drama group works with existing plays, woven into which is the year's theme "voyages of discovery". Pupils embark on new experiences by acting parts. They learn to stand on their own two feet, without the help of parents or a prompter. They have to do everything together as a class: allot parts, build sets and help each other.

In the 9th class the pupils are right in the midst of puberty. Then their inner side is very vulnerable, so above all the play is about their outer side. Caricatures, black/white characters. The plays are above all about expression, with song and dance. Pupils make lists with one another of who wants to take on which challenge. The idea is that everyone takes a step further in their development.

In the 11th class a balance is sought between Apollonic and Dionysiac forces. Apollonic represents the suprahuman, distant, ideal, control and restraint. This means: learning to make use of proven ways to work and to take into account the laws governing communication with the audience. Dionysiac stands for the human element, that inner one that wants to come out. So: raw, rushing life-energy, intuitive ideas, creating pleasure.

What marks out Waldorf education is that from class 7 to 9 drama is done as a subject with the entire class. Thus this subject offers a platform to create groups. From class 10 onwards drama is an optional subject. Together with pupils a choice of play is made, they discuss how they will project their own personality into the characters, and (in year 12) what happens when they step out of a role that they know well. At the same time there is opportunity to discover drama as a form of artistic expression or as a means of criticising society.

How did Wim become a Waldorf teacher? By gathering information from colleagues and by trying to reach out his hands to it in practice. By reading a lot of literature, both by the founder and by people

who put anthroposophy into practice themselves. Furthermore by taking part in the Michael Lectures, subject group conferences and the international training weeks in Kassel. And last of all by learning from feedback from pupils.

He has chosen a post as a leader because he wants to build something good together with others. In this school, because he feels a bond with anthroposophical thought. The continuous critical observation of the development of the whole person, reflection on his own actions - that is what he learns from every day. He experiences himself as a spiritual and social entity in his meetings with others. Thanks to these meetings he is always capable of mining new seams, in himself and in others.

He is driven to have meaning for others and in so doing to contribute to the development of the world. It is still about searching for a way he can embody his post as leader with his own personality. He wants to use his experience working with groups and group processes to create an organisation that can be supported by as broad a base as possible, where responsibilities are shared. In this way he can contribute to the living community of the Waldorf School.

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. What did you do before you came to work at a Waldorf School? What do you do in your spare time?
3. What training have you done to become a Waldorf teacher?
4. How are you and colleagues involved with the Waldorf School curriculum?
5. Imagine your team is a car. Which working part would you be? In other words, which qualities do you bring to your team?
6. What part do you take in accompanying group processes in class? What exercises do you use for this?
7. What is your contribution to the shaping of the school community?

1.11 Learning your whole life long

In "De Pelikaan", a cafe in Zutphen, surrounded by the smell of freshly-toasted coffee, I go into conversation with Loïs Eigenraam. She works four days a week as kindergarten teacher in the IJssel primary school in Zutphen and besides this with the school advisory service, on a freelance basis. She is also a teacher in the Helicon teacher-training facility and at the Parents' Academy. Finally she is the owner of *Arts of Education and Life*, her base for (inter-)national work with Waldorf Schools and pedagogy.

Way back when, she did the training for kindergarten leaders. That meant three years' study of the four- to six-year-old child. Then a year in EDOKA: a course to get the main certificate to be qualified for infant education and the first years of primary school. Then she did three years of training to prepare for Waldorf School kindergarten education.

Loïs speaks with great respect about childrens' development in their first seven years of life. When you meet infants you can feel how part of them is still in the spiritual world. She sees it as her job to cherish and protect this, to give them the time to reach here. They come from the time before birth, where they are prepared with great love for their earthly existence. They carry with them their own reason for being, the mystery that they can try to reveal step by step with our help.

Children play themselves playfully into life. If you carefully observe a young child at free play, then you'll see the child's reason for being. That is why time for really free play is so very important for a child. Play, language, the good example of an educator are conditions which bring a young child to grow and flower.

There is really a continuous dialogue in course:

heaven
child ∞ parent
teacher

Loïs makes a plea for continuing study and training. It shouldn't be optional, but stem from a hunger for development (of mankind) and a realisation of one's duty to the children we are bringing up. This can be done in many ways:

- for kindergarten and years 1-12, by following summer courses;
- by following the courses put on by the School Advisory Service, the conferences about the young child in Germany, the regional study day for kindergarten leaders, the regional meetings for infant and kindergarten leaders and the training at your own school;
- by setting up internal courses (in conjunction with other schools)
- by studying together and chewing over the basic literature on anthroposophy under the guidance of an experienced pedagogue;
- by attending regional pedagogical days;
- by working together in the pedagogical department of the association for Waldorf Schools, and doing research there together.

Loïs welcomes continuing cooperation joyfully: between local lower and upper schools but also (inter-)nationally.

The teacher really has an influential part to play. We can give children an example of how we are in development, day and night. How you are working at your own biography and are a part of the development of man, of mankind. Daring to admit that you are not perfect, that you have limitations, that you struggle. And that despite these you are continuously making the effort to get the best from yourself and to give that to children.

Take time for yourself. Invest in your own development. Invest in each other. Invest in the education of children.

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. Inside every pupil lives the young child that wants to play. What allowance do you make for children to learn through play?
3. Even in you that young child exists that wants to play. What room do you give yourself to discover and experiment in your lessons?
4. Where are you at odds with yourself and with school? When is the adolescent in you visible?
5. Lois Eigenraam suggests a great deal of possibilities for further study and training? Which of these appeals most to you?
6. What is it that makes you want to put in the effort to get the best out of yourself and give it to the children?
7. With which other Waldorf Schools do you collaborate, or could you do so?

1.12 Play-wise

In the midst of the bustle of children Wim van Bindsbergen and I look for an empty room to have a conversation about his 32 years connected to Waldorf education in Zutphen. We manage to find a quiet spot three times, each for a twenty-minute talk.

The same mobility and improvisation comes out in this teacher's tale, a man for whom being a teacher in a Waldorf School has become a way of life. After teacher-training in Nijmegen in Dutch and History and the completion of history studies at the Catholic University, he began training in educational work at De Kopse Hof, to be able to work more freely with people. Until one day he saw an advert for a post in the Waldorf upper school in Zutphen that had just been founded. He can remember how in the train to the job interview he read a book about educationalists in the twentieth-century. He had no idea what sort of school the Waldorf School was. The only thing he knew was that he wanted to become a teacher and to give playful lessons to young people.

The playful element in this school suited him, working from creative imagination (Schiller calls it *Spieltrieb* - play instinct¹⁹). He began to research the background to Waldorf Schools, starting with *The Spiritual Ground of Education*. This book contains accounts of a series of lectures Steiner gave in Oxford in 1922, where a few main elements are included quite succinctly. These opinions hit him like a bomb. For example, that the profession of teacher is an especially important job, for you are engaged in shaping young people as an artist would. For that reason Steiner also speaks about the art of education and pleads for a creative, artistic approach to giving classes. He only gives a few instructions on this - no rules.

One of the instructions is to give pupils concepts in such a way that these concepts may keep on growing. It is not so much about the passing-on of knowledge, because knowledge grows old very fast. It is not just about skills, teaching tricks, because man is not a sophisticated ape. It is about learning how to live your life. That is why it is so important to transmit lesson material with imagery, so that pupils can add their own imagination, ask questions and set off in search for answers.

Besides teacher training at university Wim also did drama training and worked for 25 years with pupils, parents, and teachers in various drama productions. For him, every teacher is an actor, an entertainer. He acts for himself, for pupils, and plays with the situation, is authentic and proud of his own idiosyncrasies. To do this he uses four tools: voice, word, gesture and movement (position) in space.

A second element that he likes about Waldorf education is the spiritual dimension. In his classes he doesn't just bring pupils into contact with the material world, but also with spiritual reality. For instance, in the horror story "Mrs. Zenobia" by Edgar Allan Poe, about a woman who is decapitated when the big hand of a grandfather clock catches up with the little hand. This story helps him to make children conscious of the concept of "time". Further, he uses pictures and poems (ones he makes up himself if possible) to bring over the essence of a main lesson.

He thinks it is important for teachers to have a positive attitude: full of expectation towards pupils and the future. He resists a defeatist view of the development of mankind, the sort he often finds in other history teachers. History is more than a continual repetition of the past. It offers a tremendous source of stories from which we can learn, and which we can put to use in our present lives, and in shaping our future. As humans we have been given freedom of choice: we can change ourselves and

the world around us. It is our task as a teacher to help children to further their development. Or, as it is put into words in the verse inscribed on the foundation stone of the Waldorf School at Zutphen:

"We want to work with wisdom to hear questions,
With respect for everyone's destiny,
With enthusiasm to awaken ideals
in young people who, by their actions,
give us a glimpse of the future."

As a group of teachers it is special to be allowed to be part of this great task. Special too, to do so with all our qualities and imperfections, our sun side and our shadow side. Time and again it is about our intention, the choice of which impulses from the spirit world we pay heed to, what we represent. That makes working in a Waldorf School more than just a nine-to-five job. It is a life-task, a continuous way of learning, of self-education, and developing with each other. The school forms a community of learning with each other, where teachers connect to the basic ideas of anthroposophy and give them shape. Each in his own entirely free and playful way.

Questions and exercises

1. What touches you in this interview?
2. How does being a teacher in a Waldorf School mean a profession, and how a lifelong task, in your opinion?
3. What is the first book you read about the Waldorf School or anthroposophy?
4. Where do you see the playful, creative, artistic element occurring in your lessons?
5. What do you understand by "spirituality" and what does it mean to you?
6. Wim van Bindsbergen talks about a spiritual dimension that is part of teaching and meeting pupils. How do you relate to that? What do you do with it?
7. What appeals to you in the foundation stone verse of your own school?

1.13 By way of questions

Besides these 12 teachers I spoke to many other teachers as well. People who have made a name for themselves within the Waldorf School community, and likewise teachers who have just entered it. I saw how every person throws a different light and particular emphasis on the question of what makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf School teacher. So I do not claim in any way to have been able to build a complete picture with these 12 articles. On the contrary: I invite you to enter into conversation with inspiring people around you, to collect treasures, and to share them with each other.

Questions and exercises

Find and meet up with someone in your own circle who in your book is an example of a good Waldorf teacher. Try to see what makes them a good Waldorf teacher. Talk to them and listen carefully to what lies behind their words. See for yourself what you would like to develop. What is the first step you need to take?

Part 2: In conclave

Just what is it that these conversations have shown me about what makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf Schoolteacher? The time has come for me to go into conclave with myself, to consult written works, and to exchange ideas with others once again. A number of themes recur time and again, and need closer study:

1. Janneke van der Torn and Wim van Bindsbergen speak about *self-education*: looking back, reflecting on oneself, working from within your own personality. What does this really mean?
2. Inge Haagsma, Jan Alfrink, and Lois Eigenraam speak of the *pedagogical aim of the Waldorf School*: unveiling the mystery of the child. But just what is that about?
3. In the first conversations it appears that there is no real body of *Waldorf School didactics*, that it matters more for you to relate to what pupils need at that particular moment. However as we go further it seems that there are plenty of practical instructions for a body of didactics that fits the basic pedagogical ideas. Where can you find these and how do you put them to work?
4. The *organisational shape of the Waldorf School*. In the past, Waldorf Schools sprang from the idea of the threefold structure, with a council of teachers and working with mandates. In almost all Waldorf Schools in Holland this form of autonomy has been replaced by a more hierarchical structure of leaders and employees. Ivonne Verschuur, Wim van Boxtel, and Arend Zantinge point out the dark side of this development and call for a reestablishment of the original ideas. Jan Alfrink sketches out yet another way. Where is wisdom to be found?
5. Lois Eigenraam, Wim Wibbelink and Wim van Bindsbergen say that the *spiritual dimension* of the Waldorf School is important for them and talk about going along an inner path of training. But what is this about, and how do you give it shape?
6. Ivonne Verschuur, Janneke van der Torn, Lois Eigenraam and Wim van Bindsbergen state that it is important for you to *study the origins of Waldorf education*, of anthroposophy. But what is important about this? What are the central values that influence Waldorf education? What consequences has this for you as a Waldorf teacher?
7. Finally Jos Erps says that a Waldorf Schoolteacher must *stand right in the middle of this world*. But what do you do when pupils, parents and the government set questions or demands that are diametrically opposed to the ideals and knowledge of the Waldorf School that have been gained through experience?

In the third part I shall explore these themes at greater length and offer practical guidelines to help the reader to put them into action.

Questions and exercises

What other central themes can you see in the previous interviews? Which of these do you think need tackling in greater depth? Who can help you to do so?

Part 3: In action

In the interviews themes come up that require closer study. In Part 2 these themes have been summarised briefly and I have asked a few questions aiming at a closer examination. In the third part I shall develop each theme, partly from my own experience, and partly with the help of ideas gained from my reading. Besides this I offer concrete suggestions as to how the reader can put these into practice. For clarity I have set the themes in the same order and with the same numbers that I gave them in Part 2.

3.1 Self-upbringing

One of the main ideas that stem from anthroposophy is that humans come from the spirit world to earth with certain intentions. We have carefully prepared our incarnation, but at the moment we are born on earth, we forget this "script". We cannot catch sight of it anymore; it is as if our candle has been blown out and we are all feeling in the dark. That goes for pupils, teachers and parents.

It is my job as teacher, now that I am an adult, to take responsibility myself for what my past intentions were. To be able to pick up the trail of my own script again needs a certain attitude in life: a constant observation with all available senses of what is taking place and to try to make clear what is being asked of me. What must I do here, what must I develop? It is not only about connecting with this world, with children and other adults, but also from a distance to become conscious of where this brings me to on my path. This works best in a healthy rhythmical process: the constant alternation of looking to get closer then again to distance oneself, of sympathy and antipathy, of compassion for another and compassion for yourself.

Thus working in Waldorf education is really just as much about children as about your Self. This involves your whole being: your own personality, your own ego. But also what you think, feel and wish and the way in which you train yourself in this. It's about the qualities that you put in and how you deal with your stumbling-blocks. About how pure your intentions are: are they mainly directed towards your own ego, or do they stem from your higher Self and are thus serving another and greater whole? It is about how you use your own character and temperament, but also how you bridle this and, if necessary, guide it. And it is about how you deal with your own energy, how healthy and vital you are, how you live in your own body and care for it.

When you choose to be a teacher in a Waldorf School all of this is on the agenda. No wonder that an interviewee said that this means a "way of life" for him. To work in a Waldorf School is a vocation to which you are born.

Becoming your own master

It has already been hinted at in the interviews: the importance of alternating effort and relaxation, of (meditative) preparation and afterwards looking back / reflecting on yourself. Becoming your own master begins with taking good care of yourself. It isn't difficult to bite off more than you can chew, and become overworked, in a Waldorf School. On the contrary, it is an art (of life) to become captain of your own ship and to take care that your physical, etheric, astral bodies and your Self continue to develop harmoniously. Indeed this is of the greatest importance in Waldorf education. As a teacher, you are your own instrument. Children use you as an example: they mirror themselves in you, imitate your behaviour, and use your norms, values, and intentions as the buoys by which to steer their own course.

In meditative preparation all types of Steiner's exercises and verses are of help. The verses for the weeks, for instance, with which the teaching team begin each morning. The (kindergarten) verses or the verse with which we begin each day with the pupils. A new colleague described these as gifts that create a moment of peace. I feel it is an art to be totally aware at these initial moments and to show the pupils the way to live them together.

Luckily, as teachers we do not need to be perfect. I think it far more important that pupils see that we are open to feedback, that they can see that we are people who want to learn by getting up again after a fall. And that we gather people around us who can support us and if necessary guide us. In that way pupils feel they can trust us, that we are a safe river-bed upon which they may row with the stream.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you about the development of this theme?
2. The first paragraph is about the idea that, when we come into this world, we have forgotten our intentions. Do you relate to this and if so, how many of your own intentions have you discovered so far?
3. The second paragraph contains the recommendation to come closer to the other via a rhythmical process, then to take time for yourself. Do you relate to this? How do you give shape to it in your own life?
4. The third paragraph is about the metamorphosis of the four parts of being. They are mentioned in reverse order: metamorphosis of the Self, the astral body, the etheric body, and the physical body. Which process of metamorphosis requires of you most attention at the moment?
5. A few of those interviewed describe teaching at a Waldorf School as a vocation. What is it like for you?
6. Which verses are most present in you day-by-day? What do they do to you?
7. How, and about what, do you ask for feedback from pupils?

3.2 Keeping the pedagogical goal in mind

One of Rudolf Steiner's morning verses for teachers says: "This child has come down to us from the spiritual world, your task is to understand her mystery from day to day, from hour to hour."

This is our task: to unveil and understand the mystery of the child. But what does that involve?

In a splendid Dutch book called *Achter de sluier* Jaap van de Weg shows how through meditation you can "light up the dark, create space when hemmed in, gather strength together where all lies in fragments". That is not only what we are in need of, but also what we need to offer to children. Children are feeling in the dark for their life's task, often feeling hemmed in, realising that they still lack strength and courage. They need shining examples, adults who give them space to develop in, who guide them on their way, giving them pillars of support they can hang on to when needed, and haul themselves up by.

It is our task to be that person for these children.

This seems so obvious, but it isn't. Nowadays something is happening. Parents are busy with their work and study, with their relationship(s), maintaining friendships and social contacts, and digesting all the information they receive. It seems that they have less and less time for themselves and for their children. The number of broken relationships is growing, which means children lose their home base. They get a part-time father and a part-time mother, occasionally supplemented by a stepfather, a stepmother, by step-brothers and -sisters. Children come to school without breakfast, carrying weekend bags, have two addresses where they stay, each with its own (house) rules and own style of upbringing. Instead of guides in their childrens' lives, parents have become passers-by.

Teachers too find that they have less and less time for contact with children. The government requires more, or higher qualifications, just like in Finland. And then teachers have to put more and more down in writing, in reports to their superiors and to government inspectors, in particular in the face of the growing number of children in care. The teachers' attention is continually being taken up by the introduction of new teaching methods or because they have to carry out educational reforms. They tend to lose themselves in this, their attention and time become fragmented. Instead of expedition leaders, teachers have become ticket inspectors in childrens' lives, who appear now and then to check, and to blow their whistle.

Nowadays pedagogy and childrens' upbringing are under pressure. What can parents and teachers do to help? First of all by making time regularly for their own inner development. In this respect anthroposophy mentions walking along an inner path of learning. There is more to be said about this inner path of learning; I go into this in greater depth in section 3.5. It is your own free choice to train your inner self and the way you do so. But it is essential that you make a clear choice, so that colleagues and pupils see that you are at work at shaping your own being.

In anthroposophy your own inner development is tightly connected to what you do every day. This inner training is linked to your vitality, pedagogical energy. Linked with leading children into the stream of living learning, taking pedagogical responsibility for the children who have been put in your care. It's about staying alert and having the guts to say "no" in time against measures meant to register statistics in order to control the development of a child. This one-sided emphasis on measuring and registration puts the focus on the past: and there development is no longer possible.

(A child's) life is always lived forwards. That requires alertness, living in the present moment, the development of pedagogical tact: taking in the child's perspective, and sensing what the child needs from you at that time.

Be careful in judging tough children. These children ask us a question and put us to a test. However annoying this may be, we should be grateful that they do so. In this way they help us to develop ourselves continuously. At the same time this requires patience, to step back now and then, observe the child and what it triggers within ourselves. Because all we see, feel and hear of the child says something about ourselves. It is as if we look into a mirror and see a part of ourselves. In so doing compassion can arise: to live the other as oneself. You can ask yourself: how was I as a child? What was I struggling with? What patterns of behaviour did I choose to survive? By looking at children in this way, looking and questioning yourself, you will be able to combine affective proximity with professional distance.

It is important to form a circle around the children, together with parents and colleagues, accompanying and mirroring one another. To meet each other, in a moment of stillness and inspiration, to stand just there, at parents evenings, and in the communal enjoyment of the year-celebrations. Share knowledge, experiences, insights. With colleagues this can happen in many ways and at many moments: during meetings, child-discussions, sharing opinions, themed-/work-groups and (regional) training courses. It is fine for this to be actively stimulated and facilitated by the school leadership. But we are all free to develop our own initiatives alongside this. In and out of school-time.

All this is aimed at making us become creative educators, both parents and children, and to help sculpt the developing child. Not to force a personal stamp onto it, or the stamp of our society, but to leave room for the child's peculiar self to develop. We are working together like gardeners, who create the environment that promotes growth and blossoming: observation, tilling the soil, adding nutrients, offering support where necessary, talking with the child and above all enjoying. So that children can become who they are, equipped to do what they have decided to do in this, their life on earth.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. What do you think is meant by the word "unveil" ?
3. The original German text is: *Du sollst sein Rätsel löschen*²⁰. How would you translate this?
4. Jaap van de Weg talks about meditation as a way to light up the dark, create space where we are hemmed in, gather strength together where all lies in fragments. What type of meditation suits you?
5. Halfway through, mention is made of the free choice to work at your own inner development, of following an inner training path. What choice do you make? What do others notice about you as a result of your choice?
6. At which moments do you feel that you and colleagues and/or parents form a circle around the children?
7. What could you do to have these experiences more often?

3.3 Creating Waldorf School didactics from Waldorf School pedagogics

As a teacher-coach, when I sit in on a lesson with an experienced Waldorf teacher, apparently everything works by itself. The teacher uses his own experience to relate to what is happening in the class or with individual children. He creates a base, energy is generated, a flow begins. This has become second nature to the teacher. If I ask him about it, he replies, surprised: "well you know, I just do it this way."

Teachers who have newly entered Waldorf education look for instructions, ingredients, and magic spells that give them results. The instructions are already included in the many lectures Steiner gave on this subject. For example, in the book *Practical Course for Teachers*. But they are not just a free-for-all: you have to dig to find the buried treasure and gold nuggets. The study of these instructions needs a lot of time and stamina, and above all is a task to be done in the company of others.

Stockmeyer has catalogued Steiner's instructions by subject and school year in the book *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Steiner-Waldorf Schools*. Furthermore there are authors who have developed Steiner's instructions in every separate subject. For instance Barevalle in the field of mathematics and Tittmann in language. These interpretations, however, are one century old. Since that time circumstances in education have changed considerably. Participation in regional examinations, for instance, has put the original Waldorf School curriculum under quite some pressure.

And so it requires constant self-examination, discussion and (self-)reflection to adapt Steiner's instructions to the present day and the direct situation with this unique group of pupils. Waldorf education should be continually reshaped. Steiner gave no method of education which we can follow slavishly. Steiner called on us to develop our own education out of freedom.

A few instructions that always inspire me anew:

- give children the opportunity to wonder at the beauty of the world they live in;
- let children experience and develop lesson material creatively;
- do not pre-digest the lesson material, but let children discover it themselves;
- address as many of the senses as possible simultaneously;
- make use of movement, so that children learn things by heart;
- in language, use images connected to the stories told in the respective age-phases;
- in arithmetic, work from the whole towards the summated parts; give them numerate skills as a connected whole.
- do everything at the right time: only offer lesson material when the child is ripe for it, for instance, cover fractions in class 4 (start of the second Self-phase);
- teach pupils pure observation (up to class 8);
teach them to judge from observation (class 9);
teach them to use causal thought as a means of examining and understanding the world (class 10);
teach them to judge with their soul, to connect feeling to thinking (class 11);
finally teach them to make their own individual judgement, and to connect wishing to thinking (class 12);
- give pupils the opportunity to set off in search of their own Leitmotiv (Parcival-theme, third Self-phase, class 11);

Frank de Kieft²¹ distinguishes three elements in Waldorf education:

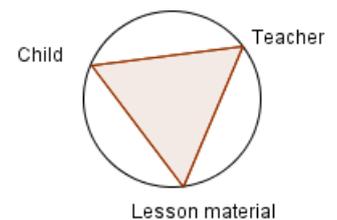
1. main lessons, to explore new lesson material;
2. subject lessons, to practise lesson material systematically;
3. afternoon main lessons, to develop lesson material creatively.

De Kieft pleads for the same lesson material to be given in all three elements, through a concerted curriculum.

In Holland I see ever more teachers in Waldorf Schools using mainstream education textbooks and teaching methods, even in main lessons. This is practical, for books contain many exercises. The risk is very high, however, that the teacher will also conform to the didactical approach that has been chosen in the teaching method. Then they lose the freedom to direct the lessons according to their own ideas and to discover the lesson material together with the pupils. I also see that pupils begin to conform to the body of learning in the textbook and rarely attain individualisation and creative development any more. They become tired, bored, and lose interest. Instead of learning from life (living learning), children start to learn from a book (dead learning). In other words: use a book as an accessory, but not as the motor!

Something similar happens in ICT studies. When smart boards were introduced in my school I saw the blinds go down and the lights go out. The teacher literally disappeared from sight. It still happens often that a smart board stays switched on for the whole lesson, taking the pupils' attention (energy). Computers, tablets, smartphones and so on can be very useful, as long as they are consciously used within limits in class.

In (Waldorf) education I believe it is about the triangle of teacher, child and lesson material. Together they form the spokes of the wheel of the learning process.



My conclusion: Waldorf School didactics exist. In his lectures Rudolf Steiner has given many instructions on how you can introduce lesson material in a pedagogical manner. At the same time, it is true that the body of Waldorf School didactics is constantly developing, because we are always changing the shape of our lessons. From within ourselves, from the pedagogical origins, and from the unique group of pupils who are in front of you at that moment.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. Can you recall moments when together with pupils you entered a flow?
3. What are the sources of inspiration for your lessons?
4. In the fourth paragraph it is stated "Waldorf education should be continually reshaped". But that can't be done! Or can it? And if it can, how do you do so?
5. Which of Steiner's instructions help you to stay "awake"?
6. Do you see possible ways of presenting the same lesson material in all three of: morning main lesson, subject-lesson, and afternoon main lesson, as Frank de Kieft pleads?
7. Where do you make use of existing lesson methods and IT teaching aids? How do you make sure you retain "mastery over the book/computer"?

3.4 Shaping your school's organisation together

Waldorf Schools were founded as a place to practise giving form to social threefolding²². This social threefolding is actually a social concept which distinguishes three spheres of life, each of which have their own laws: cultural or spiritual life, political (and judicial) life, and economic life. Cultural or spiritual life includes upbringing and education, religion, science and the arts. These areas must be able to develop freely, free from economic life and political life. In political life equality is the basic principle, in economic life brotherhood should be the Leitmotiv.

At the time he lived, Steiner tried to get world politics to take interest in this renovatory concept. Sadly this failed because of the existing power structures, personal interests, and the convictions of the politicians in power. He also tried to acquaint teachers, parents, and children with this concept and to put it into profitable practice on a small scale. However this needs a high degree of self-awareness in all those involved, and for them to search for new ways together. With hindsight, it is justifiable to ask if then the time was ripe for this.

Waldorf Schools were founded out of optimism with a matriarchal structure of discussion: everyone could join in talk and thought about everything, and decisions were taken together, preferably as a consensus. Together they began to build heaven on earth, which on closer viewing did not always appear to be heavenly. Not every teacher was capable of producing the desired pedagogical-didactic quality. And at economic and political levels there was too little guidance. In brief: leadership was necessary and this was fulfilled by team-members who carried out this task for several years by mandate. This did not always favour continuity. Furthermore, leadership appeared to be a separate world, especially when outside authority and pressure increase (parents, government). In consequence many schools brought in (outside) knowledge and power relationships were formalised. That is how a patriarchal structure began.

I see around me, as a consequence of this hierarchical power-structure, teachers who no longer feel free and are no longer behaving freely. They become dependent on and expectant of leadership from above. I see us looking and pointing at each other: the workforce at the leaders, the leaders at the workforce. Instead of everyone taking responsibility themselves for their own development and teachers taking responsibility together for the development of the pupils and the school community.

In my opinion the key to a next step lies in integrating male and female qualities. That is to say, on the one hand to transform the male energy which is too strongly directed outwards, into inwardly-directed female energy. No pointing the finger at school leadership, colleagues, pupils, parents, government, education ministry and so on. Rather to point inwards. What must I develop in myself in order to stand up, offer resistance, and initiative?

On the other hand, to transform female energy (too strongly directed inwards) into outwardly directed male energy. No tea-parties, praising Waldorf education to high heaven, judging mainstream secondary schools, gossiping, undermining each other and so on. But to step forward ourselves and to show what we stand for as a person and as a school community.

When teachers resume their own responsibilities, leaders can take a step back. They will then be freed from the burden of tying up all the loose ends. Then they will retrieve the freedom to look after their own well-being and that of the whole school community. Then new organisational structures can arise from a creative process. Networks of people working together in teams, project-, and work-

groups. Possibly with an element of teams responsible to themselves. And possibly even with principles from the social threefolding, where more or less independent folds within the Waldorf School begin to concern themselves with cultural life, economic life, and political life.

In my opinion however, all will stand or fail by the level of consciousness of the people who are working together. The freedom (and the corresponding responsibility) attainable by every individual decides which organisational structure can be realised. In this, the weakest link sets the strength of the whole chain.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. Steiner pleaded for a concept of society where upbringing and education (spiritual life) may develop freely, independently from political life and economic life. What could be the advantages of this?
3. Waldorf education began free from government intervention (in educational, political, and economic content). These days government intervention can no longer be avoided. What opportunities and threats does this represent for Waldorf Schools?
4. What qualities of teacher self-governance can you still recognise in your school? What makes this work? What challenges does this imply?
5. Where have hierarchical structures become a part of your school? What makes them work? What challenges do they imply?
6. In your school, what are the present points of conflict in the matter of leadership?
7. From where you are, what contribution can you make to the school community?

3.5 A journey of inner training

What is meant by following an inner training path, what training paths are there and where do you begin?

Anthroposophy literally means "wisdom about humans". Rudolf Steiner proceeds from the thought that human souls return in several incarnations and so undergo a real path of development. However, this individual path of development is part of a much greater development in mankind. He describes how human souls have fallen from paradise in order to undergo a development of consciousness during their incarnations, that makes them capable in the end, once transformed, of a complete union through free will and love with the spiritual world. Every person stands somewhere on this path of developing consciousness. They have a certain level of consciousness.

To progress in one's development of consciousness it is necessary to train your own soul: inner training. This training takes place in a constant interaction with what surrounds you:

- mineral realm
- plant realm
- animal realm
- society
- higher (not observable by the senses) beings²³.

And in a constant interaction with your own inner world:

- your own physical body (materials consumed, transformed, and excreted)
- your own etheric body (all that flows and moves rhythmically)
- the astral body (thinking, feeling, wishing)
- your own Self (including the lower Self, the ego, that is focussed on survival, and the higher Self that continues on its journey of development after death)
- higher, in part still to be developed, parts of being²⁴.

A person's higher Self continues its own unique training path as it goes through various incarnations. Straightaway that makes it hard to say something in general about this training path or about other training paths. Hard for me too. Yet I want to give a direction and a few helping hands in this section. Just see what you find useful at the moment.

Inner training involves principles, natural laws, that an initiate is able to "read". Rudolf Steiner was such an initiate. He possessed clairvoyant gifts and was able to look on these principles of the spiritual world. During his lectures he was constantly sensing what part of this he could bring forth and was permitted to transmit to the audience. We possess his basic works and a great deal of his lectures were noted down in shorthand and printed, but now we ourselves have to learn to sense which information can be used by us at which moment. That requires a constant basic attitude of searching.

What makes it harder still is that the information doesn't necessarily come just from Steiner. There are (have been) many illuminated people, initiates who give, or have given us instructions. It is up to us to separate the chaff from the grain, to find out with utmost care what makes sense to us at that instant.

Following an inner training path seems like walking through a labyrinth. An inner realisation directs

us to search for a centre, for healing, reunion with our origin and at the same time union with our destiny. We walk in a certain rhythm, step by step. Not in a straight line towards the centre, but via circles that bring us one step closer to our origin or goal than the previous circle brought us. It is important to keep this centre in sight and to stay in rhythm; not to sit down or run away when you take a knock. Nor is there any point in just quickly taking an "inner thoroughfare" to the centre, for then, disillusioned, we will be thrown back like a boomerang to the place we came from. It is simply about the inner transformation that we undergo on our journey and being able to blossom completely just at the moment we are able to be at the centre. Then something may fall into place, drop away from us, enlighten ourselves. Then this bit of our journey is completed. From there, we can go back into the world, where new tasks (karma) are lying in wait for us.

These transformations are constantly taking place, on a small scale and on a great one. Sometimes it is time to take a big step, an initiation into a higher level of consciousness. Such an initiation needs careful preparation, means challenges and certain rituals.

In the series of lectures *Founding a Science of the Spirit* Steiner distinguishes 3 paths of initiation:

1. the Oriental path
2. the Christian path
3. the (Christian) Rosicrucian path.

The Oriental path was the ancient path of initiation, up to long before we began to count the years. It requires complete submission on the part of an initiate: the own ego is in a way wiped out. This is something that for people with a modern level of consciousness is scarcely possible to achieve any longer. This complete dependence is replaced by freedom nowadays: a pupil chooses his own teacher, someone who paved the way, like Jesus Christ did to his disciples. Nowadays a pupil has gained responsibility for his own path of initiation and has to know what he is doing.

The oriental path gives us many training exercises. Think for instance of Zen, yoga, and Tai Chi. These exercises are still of use for cleansing and mastering one's own etheric body (breathing, heartbeat, energy- and fluid-balance, food-stuffs and waste products), and to harness the astral body (thinking, feeling, wishing). However the development of your own Self, whilst maintaining individual consciousness, requires more modern ways of initiation.

The second way, the Christian way, is the way of esoteric Christendom. This way was practised up until the Middle Ages. The Christian way means coming into contact with the Spirit of Christ, which has descended to the etheric earth and can accompany us as inner teacher on our way of initiation. In most cases the pupil needs to retreat for some time out of normal life and to go on their own lonely path. As it were to follow the path Christ showed us, through the death of the ego towards the resurrection of the Self.

The third path, that of the (Christian) Rosicrucian's goes in search of self-knowledge. The lower Self must be subjugated and cast off in order to enable the higher Self to develop. These ideas should not only be realised and carried in one's heart, but above all be put into practice (head, heart and hands). This path of initiation is the most accessible to modern humans. In his book *How to Know Higher Worlds* Rudolf Steiner gives instructions for this anthroposophical way of initiation. In the book *The Effects of Esoteric Development* Steiner further explores the experiences, possibilities, and the risks involved.

For years the anthroposophical community has wrestled with the instructions for this path of training. People have struggled wildly with the exercises Steiner showed, in hopes of becoming clairvoyant like him. But there's no point in blindly following another's instructions, this is about following your own training path. Besides, Steiner has often stressed this. You cannot achieve development of consciousness by force. It is a choice to set off on the road.

Rudolf Steiner gave a number of training exercises for this third way, the "basic exercises"²⁵:

- Exercising thought.
The aim of this exercise is to keep one thought in mind and not to drift away from it. It's about concentration and learning to get a grip on your own thoughts.
- Exercising the will.
The aim of this exercise is to learn to steer your own will by carrying out a precise action exactly as you had previously intended.
- Exercising feeling.
The aim of this exercise is to become aware of your own feelings and to name them, without being carried away by them: to possess your feelings, but not to be them.
- Striving for positivity.
By conscious contemplation of your surroundings and other things (or the other person) you take up an attitude. This automatically awakens antipathy. The aim of this exercise is to develop sympathy from the same conscious state for everything that you meet on your path.
- Impartiality.
The aim of this exercise is to lay yourself completely open to all that comes your way. (Thinking) without prejudice, (wishing) without an automatic reaction. It means letting go of your own frame of reference that has been built on past experience and to open yourself to the unique situation that is coming your way here and now.
- Harmony, balance.
The five characteristics of the soul (control of thoughts, control of impulses of will, calmness in the face of joy and sorrow, positivity when judging the world, impartiality in your attitude to life) should be brought into harmonic agreement with each other, by continuing to practise them separately or in combinations of two or three.

This is all very well, but becoming conscious is not always pleasant. It is painful too: the pain of the duality of today, your own struggle on the path towards individuality (French for that which cannot be shed/divided). This inner struggle can be almost unbearable sometimes. The temptation may arise just to flee from this reality, just to experience unity once again, that heaven on earth. By, for instance, using techniques to broaden the mind and/or means such as alcohol or drugs. Another temptation is to start fighting against everything and everyone that contributes to this pain: even though for a while you do not have to feel your own pain. Finally you may be tempted to down tools and to limit yourself to the material world, that always offers support and satisfaction in the short term. But through this fighting, fleeing, or running away, to my mind you fail in your own task and your contribution to the development of mankind. Consciousness and suffering pain (together) belong inseparably with one another.

Your inner training path begins in the place where you are at now in the development of consciousness. It is time, I think, for everyone to learn to find their own inner compass, to set it, take its reading, and learn to trust it.

When setting your course, you can make use of the ideas that have been put down on paper, for example by reading Steiner's lectures. At the same time you can bring your thoughts to rest with the help of meditation and then focus your attention by means of verses, visualisations, and affirmations. This is the way of the head.

Next, when meeting others, be aware of how they affect you, and train yourself to go to meet them (and in so doing yourself) with unconditional love. That is the way of the heart.

Lastly it is possible in your everyday life and work to be of service, for instance by creating some work of a higher order (art). This is the way of the limbs.

In this way you can distinguish different ways, where one path may be more accessible to you than another. But in the end I believe head, heart and hands cannot do without one another. Everything is connected. Blossom in the place you are.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. Rudolf Steiner believes that humans have several incarnations. What is your view?
3. In the second paragraph there is a description of the development of humanity. It offers a perspective of where we are (or may be) heading. How do you picture the future of humanity?
4. What bond/interaction do you have with mineral realm, plant realm, animal realm, society, and higher beings?
5. What advice is useful for you at the moment in following an inner training path?
6. Which path of initiation appeals to you/ attracts you the most: the oriental path, the Christian path, or the (Christian) Rosicrucian path?
7. Which approach suits you best: the way of the head, the way of the heart or the way of the hands?

3.6 Delving into Waldorf School teaching

One of the questions that is asked of a teacher new to a Waldorf School at their job interview is whether they subscribe to the identity of the school, if they are ready to make closer study of the background of Waldorf education, and if they will do their best to give shape to this. How can you explore these origins?

These books give a brief introduction onto anthroposophy:

- *Anthroposophy* - H. van Oort
- *The Education of the Child and Early Lectures on Education* - R. Steiner
- *Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy for Beginners* - L. Tummer

At the start of Waldorf education in September 1919 in Stuttgart Steiner gave a series of lectures to a group of experienced anthroposophists. These lectures are described in *The Foundations of Human Experience, Discussions with Teachers* and *Practical Advice to Teachers*. For beginners, this is heavy going. Steiner gave many lectures, even to an audience less familiar with anthroposophy.

Editions are available including:

- *Study of Man* - R. Steiner
- *What is Waldorf Education?* - R. Steiner
- *Balance in Teaching* - R. Steiner

Various authors have translated Steiner's body of thought for daily use in class. A few examples:

- *A handbook for Waldorf Class Teachers* - K. Avison
- *Waldorf Education* - H. Barnes
- *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice* - K. Childs
- *Waldorf Education* - C. Clouder & M. Rawson
- *An Introduction to Steiner Education* - F. Edmunds
- *Phases of Childhood* - B. Lievegoed
- *Educating Through Arts and Crafts* - M. Martin & M. Rawson
- *Adventures in Steiner Education* - B. Masters
- *Understanding Waldorf Education* - J. Petrash
- *Towards Creative Teaching* - M. Rawson & K. Avison

Books about following an inner training path:

- *Contemplative Practice and Reflection* - M. Rawson
- *Lighting Fires. Deepening Education Through Meditation* - J. Smit
- *Anthroposophy and the Inner Life* - R. Steiner
- *How to Know Higher Worlds?* - R. Steiner
- *The Philosophy of Freedom* - R. Steiner
- *The Spiritual Ground of Education* - R. Steiner
- *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry* - A. Zajonc

It is also very refreshing to read books about other (traditional) revolutionary schools - such as Montessori, Dalton, Jenaplan, Iederwijs or Sudbury Valley School. Or even visit these schools to see what we have in common. Anthroposophy is much more than just your own Waldorf School or the entire Waldorf Education system. You may find inspired teachers in any school, working on a revolution of education from inside out. Go out and meet them: shake hands, share thoughts and join power²⁶.

However: the most important things are (and will always be) your own personal questions. These are what drive your further development.

Questions en exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. Which books are already on your bookshelf? Which have you already read?
3. Imagine that you are going to found a Waldorf School at the other end of the world. Which three books would you take to help you?
4. Which books are now on your list of wishes?
5. To which magazine are you (or the school) subscribed? Which do you read regularly?
6. What other type of school are you interested in and do you like to visit?
7. Which question do you want to ask now? Who can you ask this question?

3.7 Standing right in the middle of this world

In his interview Hans Boss talks about how government influences life in a Waldorf School in all sorts of ways, in so doing limiting freedom of thought and action in education. Jan Alfrink says, indeed, that the Ministry in The Hague, the schools inspectorate, and other mainstream schools are especially interested in the way education is implemented in Waldorf Schools. What of the relationship between Waldorf School and the outside world? And what role in this does a Waldorf teacher have?

To begin with, we as a school owe our right to exist to the parents. Parents entrust us with their children for approximately 1000 hours per year with the job of:

1. taking good care of them (physically, mentally, and socially)
2. bringing them up so they will be able to take their own independent place in society
3. teaching them the knowledge, skills, and aspects of attitude that they will need later in order to make an active contribution to society
4. enabling them to develop themselves in such a way that they know who they are, and can go out into the world full of (self-) confidence.

The first three objectives are valid for all schools. The fourth is typical of (traditional) revolutionary schools, to which Waldorf Schools may be included.

Thus parents are not a nuisance when they ask (critical) questions. Parents are ultimately responsible for the upbringing and training of their children, and delegate a part of that responsibility to us as teachers. In my opinion a Waldorf teacher should be focussed on searching for win-win-situations, where parents and teachers complement each other.

Then there is the government, and the schools inspectorate. In fact they are also appointed by parents, via the option clause and payment of taxes, to facilitate education and to control its quality. Here, too, government civil servants on the one hand, and governors and leaders of Waldorf Schools on the other, are important in society.

Yet in practice it appears there are all sorts of conflicts between teachers, parents, school leaders, school governors and the inspectorate of schools. These conflicts are almost always to do with different visions about upbringing. As a teacher, how do you tackle this in a good way?

Firstly, it is important to be conscious of your own vision. Not until you know where you stand and what you are aiming to achieve as a teacher and a school staff, will you be resilient and therefore ready to fight if necessary. For example, in Holland the following issues are hot:

- In a Waldorf School, at the pre-school and infant stages, we let children learn through free play. We postpone reading and counting until the child's body shows that it is ready for this. This conflicts the common habit to start cognitive training at the age of four.
- In a Waldorf School children learn in a safe group, guided by a teacher who accompanies the pupils intensively for a long period. In this way teachers and pupils can build up a strong relationship, in which they can get to know each other. Pupils spend as much time as possible with each other and they develop along with their peers. This conflicts with annual assessments on cognitive skills and regrouping.

- The pedagogical principle is what leads, throughout the whole Waldorf School. Didactics, teaching aids (e.g. teaching methods, ICT) and the organisational structure all support this. This means that in all decisions taken in the Waldorf School, the pedagogical principle is considered and is often decisive. Since Waldorf Schools grow larger and larger, it becomes hard to keep this in focus.
- Lesson material is adapted to the childrens' developmental phase. The jointly-conceived Waldorf School curriculum takes the lead here, in which compulsory terms are inherent. In practice Waldorf Schools are adapting regular methods, even in main lesson blocks.
- In a Waldorf School we think learning is more important than testing. This means that we keep our distance from the national reference-tests. In practice Waldorf Schools are dealing with a government that is implementing intermediate tests to guard the performances of schools on different aspects of learning.
- In a Waldorf School we learn with and from each other. A class is a plural mix of children, into which each child adds their own qualities and stages of development. This may mean, for instance, that we keep pupils with different cognitive levels together in the same class for as long as possible. In practice most Waldorf Upper Schools have implemented classes of the same level, implying class changes when cognitive achievements are higher or lower than before.
- A 6-year course is so much more valuable for the development of the independence of the pupils that this justifies one or two extra year's financing by the government. Pupils can mature completely in a Waldorf School. When they leave school they know who they are, make informed choices for study or work and develop into balanced adults who are ready to learn all through their lives. In practice a growing part of our students is leaving Upper School after 4 or 5 years.

I would rejoice if Waldorf teachers at infant, primary, and secondary levels agree on this sort of common basic ideas and go into the breach together. Not frustrated or helpless, but with an inner conviction, in touch with a gentle, sure power. In a way that has been walked before us by people such as Gandhi and Mandela. Then it will become clear what Waldorf education stands for.

During the "battle" it may be that certain long-established ideas cannot be kept. Take, for example, the financial cuts on Waldorf School subjects like handicrafts, art, and eurythmy. It may also be that certain ideals are difficult to realise: the increasing external pressure for intermediate testing and the responsibility to show the results of learning are done at the cost of the time of the pupils, parents, each other and... your own training and development.

When this happens, sometimes it is necessary to come to a compromise over this sort of essential basic ideas. That hurts. Around me I can see that a number of teachers are left mourning for what is lost. Sometimes however you have to accept reality. But you have to remain just as conscious of common ideals, and make a constant effort to realise them anew: at a later time, one way or another, in a fresh contemporary shape!

As a Waldorf teacher we stand right in the middle of this world, but we are not a slave to this world. We make our way in this world, in freedom, responsibly. To do this we must be able to name our origins and our ideals, and constantly to present them in a fresh guise. In order to shine a clear light in our society on how mankind can develop toward the future. In my opinion, as Waldorf Schools, that is our reason for being.

Questions and exercises

1. What appeals to you in the development of this theme?
2. What is your experience of the relationship between the Waldorf School and the outside world?
3. How do you get on with parents? What effort do you put in here?
4. What is the relationship between parents and school, in your case? What possibilities for meetings are there? What information and support do you offer parents, and what do you ask of them?
5. What have we in common with other (traditional) revolutionary schools (Montessori, Dalton, Jenaplan, etc.) ? What can we mean to each other?
6. What is the relationship like between your school and the schools inspectorate? What do you notice about this?
7. For what "hot issue" would you want to work hard to resolve, together with other Waldorf Schools?

Part 4: Continue the quest to Waldorf School essentials

Waldorf School teaching takes its shape and content from the teachers who are at work within it. In their biographies, and in what they inspire in children, something of what moves and inspires the teacher becomes visible. That is why I began my quest.

Their individual motivations join together in the Waldorf School community. There, teachers see themselves mirrored in each other, talk to each other, and rub off against each other. For the first generations of teachers, this was largely an unconscious process. The Waldorf School community was a sort of family, where you were taken in and soaked up its essence. Teachers bonded heart and soul to their school and often spent more time there than at home.

In the 21st century working at a Waldorf School has become a job that teachers combine with their family and with other activities outside the school. The number of part-timers in the school has increased enormously. Teachers have begun to see themselves as employees and have a more independent, critical attitude. In my interviews I noticed that older generations find this ongoing change a problem. Knowledge and ideas are no longer passed on personally to each other. The wisdom built up with effort over time seems to be falling into decay. The Waldorf School community is becoming ever more pluriform and less closely-linked. At the same time I think that this suits a time when we are becoming more and more conscious of our own individuality, so as to search inside and outside ourselves for what we can find in ourselves and how to meet and complement others.

This quest for what binds us together is very much of our time. Whilst I was busy with my interviews, the Association of Waldorf Schools published an identity document, the need arising in my fellow teacher-companions to describe the qualities of a Waldorf School teacher, and Martin Rawson was also busy extracting (publishing?) the Essentials of the Waldorf School. In the following paragraphs I'll share the results of their quests with you and invite you to discuss these with each other.

Because the future of the Waldorf School depends on the extent to which we as teachers can find each other in a common vision of what sort of school we are, what we stand for, and what our priorities are. Rooted in and inspired by the original ideas of the school, anthroposophy. Standing in the present moment, connected to the children, their parents, and society. What is needed, what is being asked of (the development of) humanity at this time? If we do that, we can look forward to a future taking shape with and through these children.

4.1 Roots of Waldorf Schools

The first Waldorf School was founded in 1919 amongst a lot of other traditional innovative schools like Dalton Schools and Montessori Schools. What do these schools have in common? What elements of a Waldorf School are common for innovative schools at that time and what is specifically Waldorf? And what does Waldorf have in common with innovative schools of later decades?

Rudolf Steiner was a child of his time. In the first half of the 20th century many other educationalists rebelled against the industrialisation of education. Children were prepared via standardised procedures to take their places in a already existing society. Above all these factories of learning were aimed at teaching children to read, do arithmetic, and to obey the rules already laid down.

It was in that time that, alongside Waldorf Schools, Montessori, Dalton, jenaplan, and Freinet schools were founded. They all have one or several of the following reasons for being in common:

1. The child is central, not the lesson material. This can be seen in the choice of lesson material (to match the developmental phase or interests of the child) , its presentation, the tempo, etc.;
2. Education is focussed on the child's individual development, not on marking it according to a class average or a national standard;
3. The child has a degree of freedom in choosing what, when, and how it is going to do (something), as opposed to classical teacher-driven education;
4. The child works at its own tasks, instead of all the children carrying out the same tasks simultaneously;
5. Children learn through (physical) activity, instead of having to sit still and listen;
6. Children discover the world for themselves, instead of being spoon-fed with knowledge;
7. Besides cognitive development, attention is paid to development of personality;
8. It is in childrens' nature to move about, and they are challenged to do so (instead of sitting down on a chair all day);
9. Children learn lessons that will serve them all through life instead of learning material that will quickly become out-of-date;
10. Children are offered integrated materia instead of it being divided into subjects;
11. Didactics fit the psychological learning development of the child instead of a transfer of knowledge that is aimed at adults;
12. Children learn to work and live together instead of competing against each other for the highest mark.

It is worth your while to find out about the ideas that brought about these traditional innovative schools. On the one hand to discover how many things their intentions have in common from school to school. On the other, to acquaint yourself with the different ideas from which these schools sprang, and the choices made as to the way education should be organised.

Here I'm going to attempt to map out the similarities and differences between these traditional innovative schools. To begin with I lack both the time and the expertise to do this. But it is far more important still, that every attempt to make generalisations about a type of school would not do justice to the enormous differences between schools of one particular type. Thus every Jenaplan School, just like every Waldorf School, has itself the right to choose how to shape its own education. It is my firm conviction that this should remain so, because schools should continue to develop in order to meet changing ideas, children, teachers, and society.

Upon becoming conscious of our own roots and our connections to other traditional innovative schools, it is important to remain alert to this and to know that we are connected to the innovations and revolutions that are taking place in our current education. In various places teachers and/or parents are busy with a revolutionary reorganisation of existing education, or with the founding of a completely new school. One example of this is a junior school in Amersfoort that has adopted the 7 basic ideas of Steven Covey as its origin.

At a time when pupil numbers are decreasing due to developments in demography, a natural tendency arises to want to differentiate one's school from other types of education. It is timely, as a school council of teachers, to be conscious of our own intentions, of the choices made, and to interpret these clearly. At the same time I notice that this sometimes leads to a movement away from mainstream schools, other innovative schools and even other Waldorf Schools. I think this is not a healthy path. Believe in what you stand for as a teacher council, and then you'll see how this resounds amongst parents and children.

I find it especially useful for teacher councils to meet and learn from one another. We have a common aim and a common task: good education for our children, in all their many shapes. Only on meeting do we become conscious of our own identity and the choices we are making.

What Steiner's vision was when he founded the Waldorf School was far greater than what we have been able to create so far. Through the basic idea of threefolding Steiner saw education via freedom: worldwide, in many shapes, matching local culture and circumstances, following the development of specific children, in place in our time and this world. In this respect there are challenges enough still awaiting (Waldorf School) education in the 21st century!

Questions to lead you onwards

1. Which of the 12 listed points can you recognise in your conduct of your own daily lessons? Illustrate this with a concrete example. Discuss the results with a colleague. Invite them to visit a lesson of yours.
2. Which of the 12 points listed do you not recognise in the conduct of your daily lessons? What do you think about this? Discuss this with a colleague.
3. Which of the 12 points listed do you find typically suited to a Waldorf School? Give reasons for your answer. Discuss the results with a colleague.
4. Which of the 12 points listed DON'T you feel suit a Waldorf School? Illustrate your answer and discuss this with a colleague.
5. Study further the basic ideas of at least two other traditional innovative schools. For each, make a table with two columns, in the left one list the similarities to a Waldorf School, in the right the differences. You can use the following websites to help you, but consider making a working visit to such a school. Discuss the results with a colleague.
6. Which current examples of innovation in education do you know about? Follow the media, search in Internet or ask colleagues. Maybe there is a school near you that you can visit together with a colleague.
7. The education authority stimulates schools to match their education to the demands of this time, e.g. Cooperative Learning²⁷. Yet not all innovations in education are given a positive welcome by the education authority. How do you view the role of the education authority where innovations in education are concerned?
8. Many idealistic innovative movements in education run aground due to hubris, unreal aims, shortfall in support, and so on and so forth. This has meant that innovations in education

haven't always had a good name. List 7 important factors which according to you will help carry out an impulse for innovation in your school.

9. Which innovations in education would you be ready to work hard towards? Find out among colleagues if this desire is alive in them too, make a plan with each of them and see if you can make your school leaders keen to put this on the agenda.
10. Try to sketch/describe 3 scenarios about how your Waldorf School may look in 5 years' time:
 - a. With no changes in policy.
 - b. After putting into place your educational innovation.
 - c. Following a revolutionary take-over by pupils and parents.
11. For Steiner, freedom is a very important value in education. As a teacher, in what areas would you like to have more freedom?
12. Freedom comes together with responsibility. How, and to whom would you hand over your responsibility for the area in which you have been given more freedom?

4.2 Characteristics of Steiner Education in Holland

The issue in this book appears to be of current import. In The Netherlands, Europe, and all across the world people are busy answering the question: what makes Waldorf School education different.

In 2013 the Association of Waldorf Schools gave Jan Alfrink the task of leading a project to create an identity document. This project group, with the approval of all Waldorf Schools in The Netherlands, finally reached the following 10 common characteristics:

1. Waldorf Schools prepare children for the society of the future.
2. Waldorf Schools look for the challenge of the reality that faces us.
3. Waldorf Schools offer education in accordance with phases of youth.
4. In Waldorf Schools we follow the seasons and the rhythm of nature.
5. Eurythmy is a subject that supports all other subjects.
6. In Waldorf Schools every act of teaching and learning is a creative process.
7. Morning lessons give the opportunity to study in greater depth.
8. Waldorf School teachers are conscious of their role of examples.
9. Waldorf Schools develop each child's natural receptivity.
10. Waldorf Schools create on a basis of trust.

A common base for Waldorf School education was sought in this identity document. At the same time the intention was to make clear to the outside world what we as Waldorf Schools stand for nowadays. It became a binding working document that states who we are and what is most dear to us. It is not intended to be used as fuel for discussions about choice of wording, or what has been under- or over-emphasised, but above all as a means of common inspiration to 21st-century Waldorf School education. Here is a quotation from this book:

"The Waldorf School's basic tenet is: education is also upbringing. Education goes further than just learning how to read and do arithmetic well. Education is also meant to serve to develop personality, both that of the individual, and in their relation to the social community. Waldorf Schools wish to be of importance in a child's life.

Every child has certain innate talents. Waldorf Schools wish to allow a child to discover and develop them. That requires an education that broadens and develops a free personality in terms of cognitivity, inventiveness, originality, and creativity. An approach based on the anthroposophical vision of Man, consisting of body, soul, and mind.

Waldorf School education demands situations where teachers and pupils show the very best of themselves, letting themselves be challenged and inspired by each other. So that children grow up to be people who give meaning and direction to their own lives. Who know how to find their own place in today's fast-changing society".

Questions and exercises

1. Which of the 10 points appeals the most to you? What do you stand for and what is it that moves you in this point?
2. Which of the 10 points, in your opinion, needs more attention to be paid to it in your own school?
3. "Educating is also upbringing". What for you are the common ground and the differences between education and upbringing?
4. Which title best suits you? Miss/sir, teacher, educator, educationalist, artistic teacher..?

5. "Education...community" does this strike a chord in you? How is this shown?
6. At which moments do you notice that you as teacher are of importance in a child's life?
7. What space do you leave in your lessons for children to discover their talents? Stop and think of "Multiple intelligences" by Howard Gardner.
8. What appeals to you most in the anthropological vision of man?
9. What is the best you can do?
10. How do you let others challenge and inspire you?
11. Which children are an example for you of what we in Waldorf Schools are striving towards? What contribution have you/has your team made to them? What space have you set apart for this child, and what has been asked of it in its own development?
12. Are you still in contact with children who have left school? What message do they have for you?

4.3 Characteristics of Waldorf Education in Europe and worldwide

The question of defining the characteristics of Waldorf Education, and therefore of a Waldorf teacher, is ongoing. Conferences are being held quite regularly in Europe and throughout the world where the defining characteristics are assembled, exchanged, and established. After lively discussions a document is eventually created through cooperation. Energy has taken shape in written words and once again can be brought to life. Because it is worth the trouble to let yourself be inspired by what other people all over the world have said and written about Waldorf Schools. Only when you know what tradition you are "stepping into", who your "family" is, will you feel bound and free at the same time, to make your own contribution.

Now it is my own experience that reading this sort of documents only comes to life when I work towards a specific task. So I invite you to do just that in the questions and exercises that follow.

Questions and exercises

1. First take a look at the particular qualities that the European Council for Waldorf Schools has established. You can find these at: www.ecswe.net/about/characteristics-of-steiner-waldorf-education. Read these qualities through and lay them as a blueprint onto your own school. It is best to do this together with some colleagues. With a green marker pen show where your school fulfils the blueprint, in orange where improvements are possible, and in red where your school does not come up to these criteria. Discuss the results with your colleagues. Are there some points you'd like to tackle straightaway together?
2. The International Forum of Waldorf Schools has taken a different approach. Instead of a kind of checklist they have made a more general description of the defining qualities of Waldorf Schools. You can find these at: www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch/fileadmin/paedagogik/Kriterienpapier/201412_Characteristics_WS_final.pdf. Read these qualities through, please.
 - a. What strikes you/ what picture stays in your mind?
 - b. Are there any contacts between your school and other Waldorf Schools?
 - c. what is peculiar about your school? How does it differ from other Waldorf Schools? What contribution can you all make to Waldorf Schools in The Netherlands and worldwide?
 - d. Are there contacts between your school and the social life going on around it? How and when do pupils come to meet this? What does your school offer to its own local social life, nearby and further off?
 - e. Draw a picture of what your relationship with your pupils looks like(size of the figures, position on the paper, etc.).
 - f. Ask pupils for feedback about your lessons: what is going well, what can be improved, and what tips have they got for you? First let them write this down individually, collect the results, sum them up, and discuss them with the class.
 - g. What is creative about your teaching?
 - h. To what extent do you involve colleagues in the preparation of your lessons, and in reflecting on them afterwards?
 - i. If you look at your school as a living organism, what is healthy and what isn't? To what extent can you influence this and change it?

4.4 Qualities of a Waldorf teacher

While I was busy doing my interviews, the need arose in my fellow teacher companions Wim van Bindsbergen and Frank Planting to work out in closer detail the profile of the skills of a Waldorf School teacher. This skill of our school association was founded on the general skill profile of a teacher in mainstream secondary education by adding specific characteristics for a Waldorf School teacher. It also included criteria for assessment for different salary scales.

When we read these pieces of text, however, it was our opinion that the specific characteristics of a Waldorf School teacher by far outrun the mainstream requirements. Furthermore, a number of essentials are missing, in terms of basic beliefs and aspects of attitude, that a Waldorf teacher is equipped with. After long reflection, we decided to call these "qualities", which a Waldorf School teacher should have and should work to improve on.

I have obtained permission from my colleagues to include our work in this book. All in all we found 14 qualities, and these are divided up into 3 groups:

A. Personal aspects for development

The Waldorf teacher...

1. is a contemplative and evolving human being;
2. has a spiritual view of the world;
3. anticipates the spiritual development of the young child (and the forces active in that development);
4. is a free, responsible and enterprising human being.

B. Pedagogical qualities / pedagogical aspects for development

The Waldorf teacher...

5. create their lessons inspired by the development psychology as worked out in the Waldorf curriculum;
6. tries to involve in their lessons the 'whole being' of the child;
7. emphasise in their methodology the ability to judge in an objective way;
8. opens the world for his/her child;
9. works from personal inspiration and enthusiasm.

C. Didactical qualities / didactical aspects for development

The Waldorf teacher...

10. uses didactics not as a goal but as means;
11. creates in his lessons a rich context;
12. uses a learning process, based on education through experience;
13. works both in an activating as well as a differentiating way;
14. works with group dynamics.

We have gone into these qualities in greater depth in the first enclosure. On the one hand this list is a summary of a great number of aspects that are presented in the interviews. On the other hand it is also a guideline for use in coaching and (self-)training.

Questions and exercises

1. Which of the above qualities can you recognise in yourself?
2. Which qualities do you feel to be the most important in your work. List your top 5.
3. Which qualities do you need to improve on further? Who are examples to you in these? Who or what could be of help to you in this?
4. Which qualities don't you find appropriate (to you)?
5. What qualities do you invest in your work, that you do not find in the summary above?
6. How would you wish this outline (with possible adaptations) of the qualities of a Waldorf School teacher to be put into practice in your school? Think for example of team meetings, POP-, progress- and assessment-talks.

4.5 Steiner Waldorf School Essentials

During my visits of the teacher conferences in Kassel (Germany) I came into contact with Martyn Rawson. As a Waldorf teacher he has been associated for over 30 years with different Waldorf Schools. Although he is a native Englishman, he now lives in Hamburg (Germany). He speaks several languages fluently and keeps up a lot of international relationships, some of them with the pedagogical section in Dornach (Switzerland).

In the year 2000 he attempted to write a book, together with Tobias Richter, to outline the basic principles that inform Waldorf education in terms that non-insiders could understand. He therewith focussed on the curriculum: what Waldorf teachers do with their pupils and the way they do this. This 'Yellow Book' titled *Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum* has now been translated into 18 languages and was meant for school boards and public education authorities, but is used also when founding new Waldorf Schools in foreign countries and foreign cultures.

Martyn tells²⁸: "Novices are inducted into the practices of a Waldorf teaching community by their more experienced peers. The curriculum as living practice (that is, what and how teachers actually teach in specific schools in different countries) is there as a wise resource and novices are well-advised to follow it. Experienced teachers however continuously review their teaching and especially the actual learning of their pupils. Waldorf education has often placed great emphasis on the teaching but often neglected the outcomes in terms of learning and development, perhaps assuming or hoping that all will be well. It often is (but that does not mean it couldn't be better) reach more children, enable richer, more transformational learning, enable all children to reach the potential that is even beyond what we imagine it to be! "

Martyn continues: "Today we are used to school curricula that are predominantly focused on learning outcomes. Most state curricula list outcomes in the form of knowledge and skills (often called competences) that pupils are supposed to have by the end of their time at school, so that they can contribute to the modern, globalized knowledge economy or in other ways fit into existing society. The Waldorf curriculum however is ongoing, emergent, situational and highly dependent on how it is taught.

A curriculum that reflects Waldorf educational principles can be called a Waldorf curriculum. A Waldorf curriculum approaches the task of preparing children and young people for the challenges in the world in quite a different way. It describes experiences, activities, themes, story material and phenomena that can provide children and young people with learning contexts in which they can form and shape themselves, school their abilities, cultivate their feelings, define and re-define their relationship to the world and others and above all, to develop new ideas. Instead of delivering prescribed outcomes (often described in fine-grained detail step by step, thus allowing little scope for creative teaching) a Waldorf curriculum enables general, integrated and holistic (the embodied person) learning and development.

These experiences are mediated using learning methods that address the developmental age of the learner in an open way. The Waldorf curriculum avoids specifying what the outcomes are in too much detail, since these outcomes are ultimately unknowable because each person constructs her own relationship to the world. It is of course appropriate and indeed pedagogically necessary that teachers know what their pupils should and can achieve as a minimum. The pupils should also know what is expected of them. And they should be helped to recognize whether and how they are realizing their learning potential and what minimum skills are essential. If they are not yet able to reach this level, they need support to get there. There is a world of difference between having

standard attainment targets, which are so determined that some, perhaps many are bound to fall short (as is the case in many exam systems) and showing each person and group what they could achieve and how to get there. Attainments should be attainable for all, which is why they have to be individualized. The key message for pupils is, can you do better than you have managed so far? Waldorf education does not promote a competitive climate of winners and losers, though we do value real, meaningful achievement."

A logical question arising now is: What is the essence of Waldorf education?

Martyn: "At heart Waldorf education is, as Dr Stephen Sagarin has written in his excellent blog (ssagarin.blogspot.com), an emergent process. Waldorf is not an objectified thing complete in itself, like a model that simply needs unpacking, assembling and using, nor is it like a programme that only needs to be installed and run on the appropriate hardware. Using a perhaps more appropriate metaphor, we can say that it is also not a handbook of modules, with content descriptors, assessment criteria and methods supplied with recommended readings (though it could be packaged as such). Nor is it an account of practice in Germany, or anywhere else, that can and should be emulated.

Waldorf is a way of seeing the world and the human being and on the basis of this, it is a way of entering into a pedagogical relationship between teachers, pupils and parents. It sees human beings as social individuals, as people not cases or files. It sees the world as something precious that needs to be cared for. This way of seeing and being is complex but I believe it can be broken down to some basics, to what I call Waldorf essentials. I would like to outline some of these. Obviously in an article of this length I cannot explain them in detail, nor can support this reading by choosing quotations from Rudolf Steiner or other authorities - though I could (and have done elsewhere). I offer these essentials as a basis for discussion and would be very happy to engage in discussion (either directly or via email) with individuals or groups who see things differently or who just want to discuss the issues involved.

Before listing these, let me just explain how I think we can arrive at such ideas. Where do we get Waldorf essentials? Waldorf essentials are drawn from two fundamental sources. The first source comprises knowledge generated by teachers through ongoing observation, study, inquiry, reflection, contemplation and discourse about the pupils, the pedagogical practice and the natural, social and cultural context that the education is located within. I call this source, EXPERIENCE. It is enhanced by the experiences of other people, which I try to make my own.

The second source is IDEAS. Firstly this involves anthropological ideas about how human beings grow, learn and develop. This includes what we know is generally true of human beings. It is often knowledge that has a broad tolerance of variation since human beings are incredibly varied. The second set of ideas relate to an archetypal-ideal notion of harmonious human development. This source of ideas about human development has been enriched enormously by Rudolf Steiner's spiritual insight. These are the insights, for example that Steiner presented to the teachers at the first Waldorf School and which were based on his basic works and on a lifetime of spiritual research. The relationship of these sources is interesting, complex and needs to be explored because the relationship between the individual and particular situation can be understood in the light of the archetypal ideal and that ideal gains its validity and relevance only when we recognize it in the individual. The particular – the child- and the general laws of development become meaningful to us through the archetypal-ideal of harmonious growth and development. Any judgement about an individual is neither a measurement against a standard model, which leads to ideas such as, this child

is too of something, or not enough of the other. The archetypal-ideal is a thought tool (to borrow a phrase from John Dewey) to enhance our understanding of both the particular and the general.

Together these two sources, EXPERIENCE and anthropological and anthroposophical IDEAS, inform Waldorf practice. The term anthroposophy literally means knowledge of and through the human being. Steiner used it to include knowledge gained through spiritual insight and contrasted it to empirical knowledge, which claims to be only based on experience or theoretical knowledge, which is not primarily concerned with human experience. I use the term practice to mean what we do and the reasons why we do this.

Waldorf practice and therefore curriculum are derived from experience understood in the light of ideas. Reduced to its simplest we can say, Waldorf is:

EXPERIENCE + IDEAS = KNOWLEDGEABLE PRACTICE".

Martyn puts this into practice himself by producing the 'Waldorf Essentials', see enclosure 2. These 'Waldorf Essentials' are being developed by experienced Waldorf teachers during workshops and checked with the ideas of Steiner. Together they fill one A4 paper with some key aspects of Waldorf education. This list will never be complete. On the contrary: it is an invitation for further discourse, leading towards changes and additions.

Questions and exercises

1. What do you know about the Waldorf school curriculum concerning your own subject? Enquire of a more experienced colleague, look for advice in your own school's curriculum, or that of another school (in Internet).
2. How is the Waldorf School curriculum a source of inspiration to you?
3. What do you find missing, what would you like to add to it? Confer with members of your own department.
4. How does the Waldorf School curriculum relate to the examination requirements of your own subject? How much liberty have you (or do you take) when choosing the subject matter, and the pedagogical and didactical approach?
5. It needs courage, in the face of the pressure of rules from the authorities, inspectorate and possibly the directors of your school to stand firm and to make space for education that corresponds to the needs of children and your insights / the insights of your team. Where do you encounter this pressure? What does this require from you?

Conclusion

My search began with the question:

what makes a teacher in a Waldorf School a Waldorf teacher?

What brought this about was the request to coach (new) teachers to be Waldorf teachers. I didn't feel capable of doing this: who am I to coach other teachers in this? I am still myself such a searcher. And besides: what is the hallmark of a Waldorf teacher, what distinguishes them from a teacher in a mainstream school, what is it they must develop? And lastly: how can I support them in their development, or is this above all a path they must tread on their own?

After all the interviews, and reading books and articles, I have a clearer view of my second question: what is the hallmark of a Waldorf teacher? But whether they are so very different from a teacher in a mainstream school remains a question for me. I would rather turn the question around. The ideas embedded in anthroposophy are not the sole property of Waldorf Schools, but fit the development of the consciousness of the whole of humanity. This development of consciousness is far broader and I see it in many more places in our society. And, happily, in teachers in other schools too. I join Janneke van der Torn and Jan Alfrink in saying: it is time that teachers from Waldorf Schools and from mainstream schools start to cross-fertilise.

At the same time the background we use as basis for our work and the intention with which we inform our way of upbringing imply a number of central features, which find expression in a Waldorf teacher's work. In the fourth chapter I went in search of these central features, as they are described both nationally and internationally. Together with a group of fellow teacher-companions I have also named a number of qualities that a Waldorf School teacher should possess or be developing.

And as to the third question - how I can support the development of a Waldorf teacher - I have gained more insight. I have realised that I can be no more than a catalyst in a process of development that a teacher chooses for themselves. It is the teacher himself or herself who unfolds his/her own unique individuality, who asks the questions of themselves and of myself. Working with children or collaborating with colleagues is a means, not an end in itself. If teachers always keep their eyes fixed on their own process of development and look after themselves, they will keep their vitality and balance. And that means they will remain real for the children.

Ask questions, always keep asking yourself questions:

- Child, who are you, what wants to be born out of you, what can I mean to you?
- Class, who are you, why have you sought each other out, what can I offer you?
- Who am I, what am I being asked to develop, what sources of help can I use?
- Waldorf School, who are you, what is being asked of you at this time, what contribution can I make?
- Society, what moves you, what do you ask of the teacher/school/class/children, what is my part in this?

And there, finally, I have found an answer to my first question: who am I, to be coach to other teachers? It is precisely because I am a searcher that makes me an example to other colleagues. All that I have learnt myself and made my own, I can transmit to the teachers I coach. Out of admiration and respect for each other. In all humility.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the production of this book. Firstly all the people I interviewed, who tried to express what moves them the deepest. You need courage to do this. That is exactly the point we have reached as Waldorf Schools: to have the courage to step forward to say who we are and what we stand for. These people have not just given us an example of this, but also their experience as a guide. I am grateful to them for this.

I also wish to thank those who helped me to publish this book. Anke Arts for her careful proof-reading. Jan Alfrink for accompanying the process of linking the information from the different interviews and converting this into an accessible book. Bart Muijres, the Dutch publisher who believed in the valuable approach of different Waldorf teachers telling their story on Waldorf education. And Jonathan Squires for translating the manuscript part by part and sending me a whole lot of joyful e-mails.

All of this, the conversations, writing about them, and putting this book together, has been a path of development for me too. It has been a great pleasure for me to get in contact with so many people.

If you have any questions, comments or contributions after reading this book, please let me know at info@bertkraai.nl.

About the author

In 2004 I contacted Wim van Boxtel to ask if I could spend a day at the Zutphen Waldorf Upper School with him. At that time I was teaching computer studies at the ICT-Lyceum, Deltion College in Zwolle, the Netherlands. Wim put a schedule together for me that showed me how a theoretical subject, like chemistry, and a craft subject - clay-sculpture - were taught in a Waldorf School.

I immediately fell in love with the way pupils, and subject matter, were treated in this school. I hunted out the teacher in charge of staffing to tell him : "I like to work here" - upon which I was asked: "But what subject do you teach?"

At the ICT-Lyceum I taught various subjects; computer-programming, Dutch and ... Mathematics. The latter often made my heart beat faster. I decided to train to be a maths teacher. I already knew where I wanted to do my first teaching practice: at the Zutphen Waldorf Upper School.

By now I am working there with great enthusiasm. After a few years I was given the chance to accompany colleagues to become good, or even better, Waldorf School teachers. But what does this actually mean? What makes a teacher at a Waldorf School into a Waldorf School teacher? Well, as a relatively new member of staff in a Waldorf School, I could not answer these questions very well.

So this question from new teachers became a matter for my own investigation. It has brought me many stimulating conversations and new contacts. It seemed especially educational to listen to the stories told by veteran colleagues. And I noticed that it also did them a lot of good to tell me what they found so important about their long work experiences, what they had done in their Waldorf Schools, and what they wanted to hand down to others.

I hope that among its readers this book will give rise to this kind of conversations as well, between young colleagues and older ones.

Bert Kraai

Attachment 1: Qualities of Waldorf teachers - Wim van Bindsbergen

Together with Frank Planting and Wim van Bindsbergen we had some brainstorm sessions on what makes a Waldorf teacher Waldorf. Finally we distinguished 14 different qualities a Waldorf teacher should have or should work on. Wim put them into words and divided them into 3 groups: personal/human, pedagogical and didactical.

A. Personal aspects for development

1. **The Waldorf teacher is a contemplative and evolving human being.**

He develops himself as a pedagogue, which means that he develops his ability to sense and detect, and is truly interested in the “being” of the child. This he does in close cooperation with his fellow teachers, particularly by training himself in “child viewing” during the weekly teachers' meetings. He also makes himself acquainted with the Waldorf pedagogy through self study, study groups and workshops and anthroposophical education and is able to renew the curriculum on the basis of his own education and development.

2. **The Waldorf teacher has a spiritual view of the world.**

This means that he regards the children as spiritual beings, who come into this world with their own life assignment. He is convinced that it is a highly spiritual and moral task to assist these children to develop whatever they need to stand up to their life assignment. This is supported by all school meditation and individual work as well.

3. **The Waldorf teacher anticipates the spiritual development of the young child (and the forces active in that development).**

The Waldorf curriculum is based on the anthroposophical view on human development. According to this philosophy a child is developing the following four bodies in three phases of approximately seven years: the physical body, etherical body, astral body and finally the Self. In the Waldorf School therefore we do not only speak about subject-teaching, but merely about development-teaching ('becoming who you are').

4. **The Waldorf teacher is a free, responsible and enterprising human being.**

They are professionals who are able to reflect upon their own pedagogical actions, and to account for these actions in their communications with children, parents, colleagues and the outside world. They take responsibility for the school's pedagogical climate and are loyal to vision and rules as agreed upon between the board of teachers.

B. Pedagogical qualities / pedagogical aspects for development

5. **Waldorf teachers create their lessons inspired by the development psychology as worked out in the Waldorf curriculum.**

In their lessons they take into account the development phases of the developing child and order their subject materials according to 'grade characteristics' and 'grade themes' of the Waldorf curriculum to nourish the child in its specific development issues.

6. **The teacher tries to involve in their lessons the 'whole being' of the child.**

They do not only approach them in a cognitive way, but involve thinking, feeling and the will of the child. They therefore work in a creative way, it is the art of pedagogy they try to perfect. Education needs to be a healthy, breathing, rhythmic process, in which the 'whole being' is being involved.

7. **In their methodology the teachers emphasise the ability to judge in an objective way.**

Free thinking is developed in connection with development of the will and of feeling into a theoretic, morally and individual ability to judge. In this way the child is able to look at the world as a free person and to create in this world through free judgment and inspiration.

8. **The teacher opens the world for his/her child.**

They are open to the world in which the child lives. Their knowledge is well grounded in a broad social and cultural way. They acquaint the children with the questions of the modern world, and are able to light a fire of ideals in their children to make a personal contribution to future of mankind.

9. **The Waldorf teacher works from personal inspiration and enthusiasm.**

People especially learn from other people, not only through media and schoolbooks. The personal, warm, vivid delivery of the learning materials is essential. Therefore teachers develop their own study materials through their own involvement with the world, inspiration and passion for their profession/subject.

C. **Didactical qualities / didactical aspects for development**

10. **The teacher uses didactics not as a goal but as means.**

At a Waldorf School didactics are used in service of the personal development goals of the child. Even tests and exams required by the government are to be taught as development material. This requires a thorough subject knowledge as well as a large creativity.

11. **The teacher creates in his lessons a rich context.**

What is being learned has to be connected to feelings of joy, surprise and beauty. The lessons are characterized by change; the teacher uses a variety of approaches and working methods, all aimed at connecting the children to the world through what is being learned.

12. **The teacher uses a learning process, based on education though experience.**

The learning process starts with perceiving, tasting and connecting. Only then can the subject materials be mastered. Through this mastering, the child comes to his/her own understanding and conclusions. Finally the child is able to use the subject material both in an intellectual and a creative way. It has become part of them.

13. **The Waldorf teacher works both in a activating as well as a differentiating way.**

If a teacher truly wishes to connect with the subject material, an interactive learning process is a requirement, as well as an open view towards level and development questions of every individual child. The teacher knows how to challenge children to

develop in both a broad and profound way.

14. The Waldorf teacher works with group dynamics.

They are able to use various dynamic methods to support the development of each individual child. A person can only develop themselves optimally in a group when they participate in this group for a longer period of time. In Waldorf Schools the class cohesion plays an important role in the social and biographical development of the children.

Attachment 2: Waldorf School essentials - Martyn Rawson

The following list characterizes what I see as some (but not all - the rest you have to define for yourself) key aspects of Waldorf education²⁹. Each of them has a complex set of explanations and frequently is only fully comprehensible taken in the context of other essentials. I believe that each of these essentials is justified in terms of Steiner's ideas of Waldorf education and its role in society.

1. The Waldorf view of learning and development includes:
 - 1.1. an understanding of the basic processes of holistic learning;
 - 1.2. the recognition that learning means the transformation of the whole person as embodied mind (soul) and spirit;
 - 1.3. seeing learning as a on-going process of constructing identity across changing situations and relationships;
 - 1.4. recognition of the importance of self-formation in social contexts, often referred to as social learning.
2. Teaching supports healthy processes of learning and development by:
 - 2.1. ensuring that learners develop sense of coherence based on the pupils regularly having the feeling that what they are asked to engage with is basically comprehensible, manageable and meaningful;
 - 2.2. using artistic, aesthetic and interdisciplinary processes in learning;
 - 2.3. learning in and through the world, which means starting from where we are, moving from the tangible to the intangible, going from the phenomenon to the meaning, recognizing the actual situation as symptomatic of more complex processes;
 - 2.4. providing the same amount of time and resources for practical craft activities, artistic work, projects and academic learning.
3. Teaching:
 - 3.1. enables and supports the self-activity of the student;
 - 3.2. uses narrative and living pictures at all levels to convey complexity;
 - 3.3. is skilled artistry;
 - 3.4. is based on 'reading' the child and cultivating pedagogical tact, the ability to act meaningfully in the pedagogical moment.
4. Pedagogy:
 - 4.1. recognizes that pupils have a need and a right to formative feedback that they can understand and that helps them take the next step;
 - 4.2. requires teachers to be able to identify the needs of their students and know how to address them;
 - 4.3. requires the abilities of critical self-observation and the self-development of the teacher since the personality of the teacher is an educational factor in its own right;
 - 4.4. means offering the pupils moral guidance through example.
5. Educational practice:
 - 5.1. is based on inquiry by the practitioners;
 - 5.2. is based on open discourse among practitioners and between institutions;
 - 5.3. is based on collegial accountability in any given school.

Attachment 3: Literature and sources

This is a list of used literature and sources, complemented with some titles from a list of recommended literature for Waldorf teachers, found on www.freunde-waldorf.de/en/waldorf-worldwide/waldorf-education/literature/recommended-literature.html.

Books and articles

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- Weg, J. van de (2015). *Achter de sluier*. Zeist, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Christofoor.
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Useful websites

- www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch/fileadmin/paedagogik/Kriterienpapier/201412_Characteristics_WS_final.pdf
International characteristics of Waldorf Steiner Schools.
- www.ecswe.net/about/characteristics-of-steiner-waldorf-education.
Website of the European Council of Steiner Waldorf Education.
- www.vrijescholen.nl/vrijeschoolonderwijs
Website of the Dutch council of Waldorf Schools containing an identity document.
- www.openwaldorf.com
Frequently asked questions about Waldorf School education.
- waldorfeducation.org and www.whywaldorfworks.org
Websites of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)
- www.waldorfearlychildhood.org
Website of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN)
- www.waldorflibrary.org
Website where almost all books on Waldorf education are listed.
- www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org
Website of the Waldorf Research Institute contains an overview of all available literature.
- www.essentialschools.org
An example of new impulses in education having much in common with the ideals of Waldorf education.
- ssagarin.blogspot.com
Blog of Dr. Stephen Keith Sagarin about Waldorf education.
- www.rosejourn.com/index.php/rose/article/download/70/98
Article in Research on Steiner Education (RoSe) of Martyn Rawson on Democratic leadership in Waldorf Schools.

Attachment 4: Notes

¹ More details on the founding of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart (Germany) and the growth of Waldorf Education all over the world can be found on Wikipedia, page: *History of Waldorf Schools*.

² This quote comes from *What About Me? The Struggle for Identity in a Market-Based Society* of Verhaeghe.

³ The underlying social theory of Steiner's educational approach is described by Bo Dahlin in *Steiner Waldorf education, Social Three-Folding and civil society: Education as cultural power*.

⁴ A full report John Hattie's educational research is in *Visible Learning for Teachers*.

⁵ This quote of Steiner comes from *A Modern Art of Education*.

⁶ Jan Alfrink has been member of the Association of Waldorf Schools in Holland, situated in Driebergen and called "Vereniging van vrijescholen" (www.vrijescholen.nl).

⁷ For more information on the Waldorf School curriculum inspect *The Tasks and Content of the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum* of Avison, Rawson & Richter.

⁸ The fundamental pedagogical law of Steiner is explained in *The Education of the Child*.

⁹ The four stages of competence are described on Wikipedia, page: *Four stages of competence*.

¹⁰ This saying of Inge Haagsma is derived from Antoine de Saint Exupéry: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea". See https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Antoine_de_Saint_Exup%C3%A9ry.

¹¹ This saying of Inge Haagsma from Wiliam Butt: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire". See www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/williambut101244.html.

¹² For more information on the three-membered human vision read Tummer's *Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy for Beginners* or Steiner's *The Foundations of Human Experience*.

¹³ For more information on the four-membered human vision see Wikipedia, page: *Anthroposophical view of the human being* or read Steiner's *The Education of the Child*.

¹⁴ Inspect www.openwaldorf.com/temperaments.html for an abstract of the four temperaments, read Childs's *Understand Your Temperament* or Lissau's *The Temperaments and the Arts*.

¹⁵ For more information on Planetary types take a look at <http://busbi.home.xs4all.nl>.

¹⁶ Jos Erps means literature on the development of children, e.g. Lievegoed's *Phases of Childhood*.

¹⁷ This quotation of Bert Schierbeek comes from his Dutch poetry album *De gedichten*.

¹⁸ Arend Zantinge indicates Steiner's *Towards a meditative deepening of the teacher and kindergarten teacher profession*.

¹⁹ See Schiller's *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*.

²⁰ Christof Wiechert wrote a German book on child conferences titled: *Du sollst sein Rätsel lösen. Gedanken zur Kunst der Kinder- und Schülerbesprechung*.

²¹ Frank de Kieft wrote a Dutch book on Waldorf School didactics, titled: *In gesprek over leren en didactiek*.

²² For more information on Social Three-Folding read Steiner's *Freedom of Thought and Societal Forces*.

²³ Read Steiner's *Towards a meditative deepening of the teacher and kindergarten teacher profession*.

²⁴ For a brief introduction on the seven and nine membered human vision read Steiner's *The Education of the Child*.

²⁵ Find more information about the basic exercises in Steiner's *An Outline to Esoteric Science* or visit <http://tomvangelder.antrovista.com/pdf/basic.pdf>.

²⁶ In The Netherlands Claire Boonstra started a new company to share thoughts and join power in renewing education, named: . Take a look at her video on www.claireboonstra.com and hear her personal story on www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEDM3zzYN_I.

²⁷ See *Kagen Cooperatieve Learning*.

²⁸ These notes are taken from a lecture of Martyn Rawson held in 2014 at a conference of the Vrijeschool Zutphen, Netherlands. The full text is available at www.bertkraai.nl, tab Publications. Martyn gave me his permission to use parts of his lecture for this book.

²⁹ These 'Waldorf Essentials' are taken from a lecture of Martyn Rawson held in 2014 at a conference of the Vrijeschool Zutphen, Netherlands. The full text is available at www.bertkraai.nl, tab Publications.