

'The Development of Waldorf Pedagogies in the World and its influence on Pedagogical Art'

A Conference held at the Dnepropetrovsk University in the Ukraine 4 May 2012

Conference delegates were warmly welcomed in true Ukrainian fashion here in the heart of the European steppe. In a land of deep black soil, endless skies and the slow, broad presence of a mighty river we were made to feel at home by a flute recital, by local heads of government, by representatives of the university and by Tatiana Nechytaylo, for many years the representative of the Ukraine within ECSWE.

Our first speaker, **Svetlana Kramarenko**, Associate Professor, Head of Pedagogic and Psychology Department in Dnepropetrovsk Training Institute told us that the government of the Ukraine had declared this the 'year of education', providing the perfect context for our work. Mrs Kramarenko talked about the 'The Place of the Experiment', a project launched in 2001, aimed at looking at the development of Waldorf education via curriculum research and involving a mapping exercise with the Ukrainian state provision. This has been a unique opportunity to look at ways of integrating the Waldorf approach into main stream education. It was a necessary prerequisite for enabling Waldorf pedagogy to find its place in the Ukraine and has attracted appropriate interest from the press, from other pedagogical practitioners and enabled extensive international collaboration as well as giving a context for teacher training and validation. The project has already shown the effectiveness of Waldorf education in developing cognitive, social and creative abilities. It is evident that Waldorf school leavers achieve high results. Nevertheless the need to study the traditions of Waldorf schools still exists in order to substantiate methodology and to strengthen its place in the main stream system. There are certain contradictions that have to be worked with: there is often insufficient understanding of what lies behind the education; there are valuable teaching guidelines but these tend not to reach main stream communities. A solution might come from the fact that the Institute of Innovative Activities looks at



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different streams in the world, putting Steiner education into a wider context. There is a lack of scientific research into Steiner education that would help us to inform people about what we are doing. Everyone involved in the project has to be extremely grateful to the teachers in the Waldorf schools as they go about their work with great commitment.



Christopher Clouder speaks at the Dnepropetrovsk University

Our second talk was headed: 'Development of Waldorf Education in the World and its Influence on the Art of Teaching'. **Christopher Clouder**, director of ECSWE thanked the Ukrainian federation for their hospitality, it was full of warmth and the perfect complement to the open minded collaboration we were hearing about that is being undertaken in the interests of all children. Schools are human institutions and as such are imperfect. Institutions are a reflection of our humanity, we all have blind

spots and failings and so do our institutions. It has been wonderful to hear the praise for Waldorf education, but we also have to recognise that Waldorf schools do not have all the answers. All across the world schools are all in development and always will be, they are communities that are learning, not only for the children but also for the adults, it is a process that never stops because we can always do better. Steiner warned us against complacency when he said that if you come out of your classroom as a teacher thinking 'I have given the most wonderful lesson', then you are not a Waldorf teacher, because you could always have done better. Just as we work with the developing child then so we have to develop ourselves. It is important that the way we structure and build our schools enables us all to develop and learn. One of the insights in to this process is that the children contribute to that process. They are not just the objects of our skills, but they make a contribution to their own educational process and ours. This is a new recognition of children and childhood; it is no longer unique to Waldorf schools, more and it is being said that the children are co-creators of our work. This has been formally recognised in the 1989 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the influence of which is steadily growing. There is also work to be done on the spiritual side. In that area Russian literature has made an important global contribution, Mr Clouder said that he had never found a body of literature that so understands childhood as that written in the Russian language. The level of soul exploration that these great writers embodied is just as important as the quantitative research; they go hand in hand with our work. Reading and understanding those works is as important for a teacher as reading all the psychological text books they may have to study. Those works go to the heart, not just the head, In reading and entering great works of art you become a changed person, that is why the role of art is so important in our schools, it helps us grow, develop, creates new insights and helps us to understand each other. It enables us to respect the uniqueness of each individual child and what they bring to the community. That then enables a school to be a place of warmth, just visiting the school here one could already experience the warmth coming from the children and the teachers, the joy they were having in learning. That is the right of every child, which is why we are so keen to collaborate with everybody who has that thought and good will at heart. In that dialogue we too can become better schools and better serve our children.

About the same time as the UN convention an important European document appeared which is increasingly influential in many parts of the world. It was commissioned by UNESCO and compiled by Jacque Delors, then head of EU commission: '**Learning, the Treasure Within**'. It talks of four pillars of education:

1. First is the most traditional, *learning to know*.
2. The second is *learning to live together*. In this we recognise the importance of pluralism. If educational is monolithic we stop learning and developing, we need diversity, a theme that also underpins our ECSWE work, we want more pluralism: anything that serves the quality of education has the right to exist.
3. The third pillar: *learning to do*. It is not enough to just have ideas and knowledge, one must be able to bring them to earth in a physical and tangible form and this also lies within our methodology.
4. The fourth pillar: *learning to be*. Every child has a sense of self respect, that they have a contribution to make to our society. One of the most important things is therefore learning to learn, that sense of identity evolving. It is a constant learning process.

In the reports from our Ukrainian friends we can see an example of what we have been working towards in Steiner education for decades. It also needs a certain gesture from the adult around the children: it is not just a method and cannot just be applied as a recipe. Of course aspects of it can be used elsewhere and are transferable on a practical level: we can learn from each other about the curriculum, but the other dimension is 'spiritual mindfulness' of the teacher, constant personal development within the teacher, the way the teacher looks at children needs deep constant, inner work. To do that we need support of colleagues and a structure within the school that supports that process, something which is not always easy or joyful. As well as our strengths also our weaknesses become visible to the children, we are who we are, that is what the children always see, but the delight of being a Waldorf teacher is that the children forgive us, because they can see through to our intentions, and just as we forgive them constantly, they forgive us if our intentions are from the heart. If we see pedagogy as an art we also have

to allow mistakes. If we admit our mistakes we can put them right. These are the general gestures of Waldorf education: it is wonderful to see this interdependence of colleagues, knowing that the same gesture comes towards the children.

Vladimir Zagvozdkin, Head of the Laboratory of Estimation of Quality of Education and senior researcher of the Federal Educational Development Institute, spoke about 'Current tendencies in Education, Pedagogic Research and Waldorf Pedagogic'. Mr Zagvozdkin was one of the pioneers of the Waldorf movement in Russia. He is currently researching the tendencies of education in Europe and the developed world. His focus has been the Finnish system. It has raised the question what is 'modern'? Modernity is often used in connection to education. It seems that nowadays everything has to be 'modern'. How can we be up to date and modern without losing the values of our education? To answer this we have to define modernity, the fashion for which started in the 1960's. We continue to invest more and more in education but the returns appear to be the same! Some statistical research proved that education doesn't give us anything and that schools are not effective! The main influence appears to be home environment. If we have a child with a positive or a rich family this child will, at the end of the day, have a positive result. If you have a child from a problematical background, we get a negative result from schooling, so the conclusion is that school does not change anything, so why invest in education? This provocative thesis gave reason to look deeper into the issue. The task was to find out what does the school give at the end of the day? These researchers revealed the following: it is not the system that makes a difference, but the school within the system, the individual school. But what makes schools effective? Even in the same school under the same ethos, teachers are different. For instance a good teacher in one school and a bad teacher in another school can be on the same level as good teachers in other schools. The researchers classified different groups of students: some were gifted, some are successful, some just suffer and make no progress, they lack in self-confidence, and for different groups you need different approaches. There are various factors that influence the result: social and cultural factors, the education of parents, the social atmosphere, time available for learning, pace of demands and so forth. With this awareness the difference between the best and the worst students gets narrower in effective systems, in other words the

chances of children from less favourable backgrounds to succeed increases. The conclusion may be that a good or efficient school is one where students do well despite unfavourable environmental factors, one where all the children have the same chances despite the differences in background.

'Co-operation of IAO' **Christoph Johannsen**, the Director of the International Association for Waldorf Pedagogy in Eastern Europe and further Eastern Countries told us that the IAO is a regional international organisation that concentrates its efforts on the middle of Europe and Central Asia. After 1989 and the collapse of the Eastern bloc, many people in what had been Eastern Europe wanted to develop Waldorf education. The result was that many so-called advisers went to these regions in order to help. 1995 saw the founding of IAO in order to supervise and co-ordinate this help and it played an active role in the establishment of the four Ukrainian schools.

Two main areas of focus were identified by IAO. The first was to help and advise, working directly with teachers, something that required a lot of personal input. The second focus was to educate these teachers for specialist subjects. Soon it became apparent that this was insufficient. Teachers had to be trained in order to bring people closer to what lies behind the Waldorf impulse. This would not have been possible if it had been carried only by German colleagues. There was support from colleagues in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Holland who all contributed to the training seminars. It also became clear that it was not possible to work solely with educational plans that had been translated from German to the native languages of Russian and Ukrainian. There was a need for intensive planning into bespoke educational plans for each country. This work was mostly done by Ukrainian colleagues, but in close collaboration with their German counterparts. IAO is hopeful that this year will see a conclusion to this initial stage. Educational plans for classes 10 and 11 will soon be presented formally in order to round off the process. All those who have participated in organising seminars know how expensive it is. These costs have to be met by IAO. It is also essential to have locally based partners to work with in order to be able to present yourself in the public realm. There has been close co-operation with universities in the Ukraine. Every year a fourteen day seminar is held at the State University in Kiev at which the IAO gives lectures on Waldorf

education. The students get diplomas for their participation which is acknowledged as an official programme of the university. None of this would be possible without the help of volunteers who support us, without the partners we have in the Ukraine and but for the fact that our 'partners' are also our friends!

Our next speaker, **Svetlana Kirilenko**, spoke about 'Organisation of Research and Development Work in the Waldorf Schools of Ukraine' We were told that she knows every teacher in the Ukrainian Waldorf schools and probably every pupil. She has been involved with the schools from the very beginning. When colleagues in the Ukraine first started to look at Steiner education and to realize its potential there was the recognition of three main tasks. Firstly, to create the content of the education by writing a curriculum and mapping this against national standards. Secondly, to find ways of monitoring the progress of the child in this new system. Thirdly, finding a model for leading these schools. In 1999 the first school became 'experimental', an official designation, three years later the 'experiment' was extended. The outcomes included a curriculum and also a system for monitoring children's development. In recent years the task emerged to make the research more concrete. The focus has been on the 'I' concept, or ego-awareness, a very current issue on education. This 'I concept' is seen as being connected with self-appraisal. It was realised that Waldorf education is very strong on self-appraisal and developing the concept of self.

We were also told about the research into the Dnepropetrovsk and Kirov Rog Waldorf schools and the positive feedback from teachers and pupils about the impact of working with an experimental model of education. There was statistical evidence to show that the pupils' memory, both short and long term, had improved. Concentration was also measurably better. It has also been possible to research personal development, the 'I concept', or self-value. Most pupils have a positive self-image. Also in their attitude to morality it was demonstrated that they are eager to be better and to improve themselves. But of course there are difficulties, not least the need to incorporate educational technologies into the Waldorf approach. In addition there are some schools that are trying to use some elements of Waldorf pedagogy and there is a need to look at how this can be done, for example through seminars on themes such as colour, form, speech and movement.

This will raise interest in Waldorf pedagogy and reach like-minded people. There is no doubt that Waldorf ideas have reached right into the educational tradition in the Ukraine.

In her introduction to 'Teaching of Art and the Art of Teaching', **Mrs Tatyana Nechitaylo**, teacher of history in the Dnepropetrovsk Waldorf school took us into the Altamira caves of Spain, "Sistine Chapel of Stone Age art" in the year 1879, where amateur archeologist Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola made a remarkable discovery. The girl's words went down in history. "Dad, look, oxen!" On the ceiling of the small low hall, as if having bunched up, a herd of bison stood, having adopted different postures. Their images were so realistic that it frightened the child. What made a man of the paleolithic era paint? This question opens up a rich exploration for class 10 students in their World History lessons. What made people draw, make musical instruments, and decorate things? Each time it was an attempt to comprehend a phenomenon, to create a perfect shape, to fix the moment. Observing the development of a child, we see the development of humanity as a whole. They make 'wall paintings' on paper, they make forms from sand and dirt – each parent knows it very well. The child makes himself or herself familiar with the world, and art is the first thing that he or she resorts to. Not being able to speak, the child is able and wants to draw; he or she sings and dances. Words will come later, the ability to express one's thought clearly is a high art which poets are master of. But something that has not become completed yet, that has not developed into a definition, that has not become clear and precise can be expressed in a great number of ways through colour, music, and the plastic arts.

One of the central concepts of a Waldorf school is teaching all kinds of art from class one to class twelve. Art is integrated into each subject. The moments during a lesson when a child draws in an exercise-book, sings, creates a character in a play become that open space where will and intellect in collaboration create something new and unique. What gives a new impulse to develop can be only created in the art. That which has become a shape is already completed. If the shape is perfect then it has finished its life. You can admire the shape, but you cannot change it. Who dares to add something to "The Sistine Chapel"? However, you can paint a new one! Each child, coming to school has a bright individuality. Each should find himself or herself, his

or her own task; learn to make first unassisted steps. Image-bearing teaching allows the child to remain free. The pupil perceives an image created by the teacher according to his or her temperament and abilities. A bright image endures inside the child, it changes and metamorphoses. When preparing this lecture, Mrs. Nechitaylo asked the school-leavers for help. One of the children's observations is that they remember every single year of their school life, each year was inimitable and unique.

Each subject is made so that the content supported by images and arts grows up together with the child. The personal involvement, the feeling of co-creation makes a lesson unforgettable. The child together with the teacher creates the lesson, giving new ideas, opening new impulses. And this becomes possible only when each lesson is a work of art, in which there is room for doubts, repeated attempts and amazing godsend. It is important that the teacher does not criticize the pupil, does not impose or dictate his or her own opinion or view, but creates the room where in a friendly atmosphere, with joy and enthusiasm, even the shiest child can make a step to understand himself or herself in the light of the subject, whether it is mathematics or art. The teacher does not recreate in the child himself or herself, but allows the child to meet with his or her future.

The art of teaching is one of the highest arts. The teacher connects the past, our knowledge and abilities, with the future, in each child, every day. And arts enable us to do it in freedom, in joy and in becoming.

The conference was concluded with the view of a former Ukrainian Waldorf pupil: **Mr Alexander Balding**. Mr Balding described his experiences as a pupil of the Dnepropetrovsk Waldorf School from the age of 6. Starting at a time when very few people had an idea as to what the education entailed, the school still succeeded in creating a unique atmosphere of kindness and comfort. The pupils, he told us, realized that the ways in which they were taught and learned were different from other schools. They were taught to see the world as it really is, to love nature, to see its beauty, to work hard and to respect the work of others, they were taught to be human and to see the truly human in others. In their first meetings with science they did not learn dead formulas but were given real experiences. They could

first 'see' and 'feel', from that point they could understand formulas and see real content in them.

When it was time to leave school and choose professions for themselves it was easier for them than their peers who had attended mainstream school, they had not only learned about the world of work but had experienced many aspects of it at first hand. The fact the Waldorf schools do not place a particular emphasis on teaching science in an exact way was initially inconvenient for this speaker, however in the longer term the broader approach gave him an excellent foundation. His ability to be creative as an engineer stems from this. Only a Waldorf school gives its pupils the necessary freedom of thinking and creativity and the tools to use this freedom.

It is now clear that Waldorf education has more than just a right to be present in the Ukraine; it has to expand further, allowing new generations the possibility to become truly developed people!

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