

The Relationship between the Waldorf Educational Movement and Research

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Initially, based on Waldorf's fundamental principles, Waldorf teachers do research every day, including research on children, research on oneself as well as research on the curriculum, and then integrate these research results into the practice of education.

Waldorf education itself represents a different view of knowledge from the mainstream scientific paradigm which has excessively dominated the life of modern people, keeping knowledge away from real life. Waldorf education is important because it was founded to make up for this rupture and to change not only the way of education, but also the worldview – from a materialistic view of science to a holistic, life-oriented, empathetic view of knowledge, which integrates will, feeling and cognition, as Steiner called spiritual science.

However, today's children grow up in a drastically different environment than the children of the past. Waldorf educators need to produce an enormous amount of new knowledge in the face of the new world and the new generation. This will require a significant investment of effort and resources – much more than the load of individual teachers and schools. In other words, Waldorf's relationship with research must transcend the boundaries among individual teachers and schools in the future. Cross-school networks become increasingly important. For instance, the community of Waldorf educators or schools need to work with teacher training organizations, research institutes and university institutions to establish support systems, which are all important infrastructures for research.

However, this alone is still not enough to respond to the demands of the times. We also need to transcend the barriers between the Waldorf community itself and mainstream society. I believe that the best guarantee for Waldorf's sustainable existence lies in presenting Waldorf's rich educational achievements and profound theoretical knowledge through a large amount of rigorous research, and fully engaging in dialogue with the mainstream academic community to contribute to the progress of education as a whole.

In addition, in order to communicate with the mainstream academic community, we need to make a conscious effort to translate the difficult vocabulary used in Waldorf and anthroposophical circles into a language that is understandable to the general public, so that the knowledge of Waldorf and anthroposophy can be made more public

and testable by the public.

Meanwhile, Steiner emphasized the importance of living knowledge that integrates willing, feeling and thinking, which is the knowledge that is most lacking in the university system based on materialism. The current academic system itself has serious shortcomings that need to be reformed (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Scharmer, 2019). Waldorf's view of spiritual science is itself a force that can help balancing the materialistic view of knowledge, and can have a shifting influence on the mainstream academic paradigm. Just as Arthur Zajonc called it an «epistemology of love», it is also Goethe's emphasis that love and understanding are mutually generative. Waldorf's knowledge paradigm can not only contribute to mainstream scholarship, but also become a force for the transformation of academic institutions and higher education.

References:

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