



A Summary of the Steiner Waldorf Teacher Training Meeting – *from a personal and organisational perspective*

28 August 2008 11:00am – 4:30pm at Crossfields Institute

Present: John Burnett (JB), Gregg Davis (GD), Martin Hardiman (MH), Trevor Mephram (TM), Jeremy Smith (JS), Christopher Houghton Budd (CHB), Christopher Clouder (CC), Lynne Oldfield (LO), Kevin Avison (KA), Sue Reed (SR), William Steffen (WS), Thais Bishop (TB), John Thompson (JT), Angela Querido (AQ), Maria Fischer (MF), Fergus Anderson (FA), Charlotte von Bülow (CvB) and Theresa Johnson (TJ)

Apologies: Aonghus Gordon, Edinburgh Steiner Teacher Training

Co-chairing: Sue Reed (Hiram Academy and Crossfields Institute Advisor) and Charlotte von Bülow

1. Welcome

CvB welcomes all and introduces Sue Reed.

2. Talking Paper Session

SR introduced the concept of Talking Paper as being a method of ensuring that all voices be heard, such that if one is unable to speak their voice then they may *write* it. All participants are asked to explore the following questions and write their answers down on the Talking Paper:

- Who are you?
- What have you brought to this meeting? (*i.e.* skills, ideas, questions, concerns)
- Is your course accredited or are you working towards that?
- What are you doing currently towards capacity building and succession at your centre?
- What are your current student numbers and how many staff learners are in your organization?

Please see Appendix One for Table of Answers

3. Our Different Perspectives – A series of short presentations

i) Christopher Clouder

Christopher Clouder gave a heartfelt presentation on the future of Waldorf education and how we might proceed in these rather vague times. Important issues he raised included:

- We must use the Waldorf schools to change the education system
- We have a responsibility that goes beyond our children: i) we must be devoted and interested in what we are doing and ii) we must have an interest in our fellow educators iii) We cannot remain insular anymore; our interests have to be extended, invigorated and inspired by working with others.
- Friction is undermining the relationships between colleagues, teachers and parents, which can cause chaos.



- CC quoted from the book “Rethinking Teacher Education”, this is the end of the teacher education, as historically practiced, we, including the students, must learn to live with this new culture.
- To balance this bleak outlook, he quoted that: “[teachers], like schools, are still only *becoming*, that we don’t have all the answers, but that we are a community of enquiry. He feels that teachers must work with this sincere and modest feeling to develop a sense of enquiry, which will bestow teachers with strength.

ii) Christopher Houghton Budd

CHB gave an ardent and determined talk on the current state of Waldorf education, raising many questions and concerns, which included:

- Why is the sovereignty not with the teachers?
- Why is there no professional association of Waldorf School teachers?
- Why do we have a double name, Waldorf Steiner?
- The name *Waldorf* should be attached to the *teacher* not the school
- Are teachers clear enough about the place of the Pedagogical Section?
- The state has no business in education, and if we had a professional association that was self-defining and self-administrating, then there would be no need for the state. Indeed, the state would recognise it.
- A professional association would also mean that the trainings would have to be made coherent and have some essential Waldorf elements.
- The two issues of accreditation and financing should never be linked, for example when the state makes funding conditional on a particular curriculum.
- He concluded his talk with an emphatic question regarding state funding: Is it right for a state to collectively collect tax and selectively distribute it?

iii) John Burnett

John Burnett gave an enthusiastic presentation on the BA programme on Steiner Waldorf Education which has been offered at the University of Plymouth for the past 16 years. A significant number of students who sign up each year are between their late teens and mid twenties and it has been a challenge to meet the needs of these young students who come, excited and optimistic about Waldorf culture and pedagogy. He believes it is of great importance that these potential young teachers receive good mentoring and support, particularly when they visit and work in schools on placements.

The general theme of his talk revolved around the questions:

- What is the educational task for our era?
- What is appropriate and effective university education in our time?
- What is education about in the deepest sense?
- He made clear that in terms of developing higher education programmes based on a spiritual view of the human being, it is a tough environment out there and argued we must be able to engage intellectually as with current debate and be active in researching new ideas as well as reflecting on and critiquing existent practice.



- Speaking from the heart he revealed that he has always believed all members of the wider Waldorf community should feel some ownership of the Plymouth Course. The course, the tutors and the students need the support of networks and working with other schools. In particular, the course depends on a positive relationship with teachers and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.
- He concluded by answering his own question, How do we fulfil the educational task of our time? Our modern culture, which began in the Fifteenth Century, is coming out of the last vestiges of the middle ages of intellectualisation and we are now stepping into post-modern uncertainty. We can begin to meet these uncertainties through engaging in and supporting individual research, asking questions about practice and theory, thinking deeply about our pedagogical ideas and, where appropriate, publishing and disseminating them.

iv) Trevor Mephram

Trevor gave a very organised and thorough power point presentation entitled "Teacher Education: Principles in a new Context". One of the first things he mentions is that what children really need is *a lot of art and to feel loved*. TM identified certain aspirations for teachers and training, which include the following:

- Steiner teachers need professional recognition and registration with the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)
- University accredited Steiner Teacher Training
- Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL) and CPD routes for school based colleagues
- Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP)
- Steiner Waldorf Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Steiner Waldorf Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

To put these ambitions in context, TM emphasized that out of more than 700 Steiner teachers in our movement, the large majority are graduates, and approximately 15% have QTS; that there are six 'Class Teacher' courses in the UK; there are no training programmes for upper school teacher; there is a growing demand for teachers due to an aging teacher population; student enrolment is steady, but figures for entry into the classroom do not seem to meet the demand. The Steiner Schools movement has no accrediting body for training courses because it is simply too expensive, in terms of money and human resources.

TM listed some of the organisations which work with teacher qualification and development, including TDA and GTCE. He then summarised an outline of the core standards, which, in places, are arguably 'bland and absurd', focusing on developing professional relationships, knowledge, understanding, skills and practice. In essence, it is mostly about planning, recording and paperwork! They do not mention the *children or the teachers as learners*; there is no emphasis on 'soft skills' (i.e. reflection), or consideration of how a child learns and grows. He is currently in the process of meeting with some of the organisations mentioned above.

Finally TM went through a list of 'criteria' indicated by Steiner (*Renewal of Education*) concerning what a teacher really needs to develop, become or exhibit:

- Interest in the human community
- Understanding of the child as a growing person



- Holy awe before the task and reverence for the child's pre-earthly life
- Rhythm in soul qualities; humour and seriousness
- Knowledge of how to draw as much as possible from the child, especially in the intellectual sphere.
- Work in a way that children love the teacher ("Education of the will is always influenced by personal relationships with teachers, even after puberty.")
- Self-development to develop such qualities
- A deep sense of responsibility

In 1919, Steiner declared that "We are looking for a school that is free from the state." He had to make three major compromises with state authorities on school inspections, teacher qualification and academic equivalence for children at 9, 12 and 14 in order for the first Waldorf School to open its doors. The exploration and the challenge continue today.

4. Collecting Questions and Insights

The primary purpose of today's gathering was to *collect issues* to be explored further at future meetings. The following are some of the issues participants contributed for further discussion:

LO: The Teacher Education Circle (TEC) still exists. It is in the process of regenerating itself and is planning to re-gather in November.

JT: How do we get TEC together as an entity, instead of individuals? How can we get groups to come together and understand each other?

TM: Do we see ourselves as part of the *state*? Clarify the terms.

GD: What issues are not being met in schools? For example, how to deal with the media and science.

JT: This is the social situation; we must also look at free spiritual life. What does free spiritual life and economic life mean?

LO: To explore the relationship between Crossfields Institute and the accreditation of our courses.

GD: Is there a circle of teachers/educators and what is their aim?

CHB: Why are the Waldorf teachers not creating a professional teaching association?

Other issues/insights/questions gathered on Talking Paper by Sue Reed and other participants:

- i) Autonomy of the teacher
- ii) Community of enquiry
- iii) Concept language
- iv) Educators' competency
- v) Inspiration from the original source – Rudolf Steiner
- vi) How do we combine the esoteric background underpinning Waldorf theory and practice with the prevailing academic, economic and exoteric culture of contemporary society?
- vii) What is the well being of the Waldorf movement?
- viii) Referencing anthroposophy



- ix) Expertise in one's field
- x) Research and moving into the future
- xi) Mentoring and recognition
- xii) Pathway of the student, including financing and accreditation
- xiii) Time, epochs and place of education and learning
- xiv) Aspiration: professional recognition
- xv) Action research
- xvi) Development: can we cross boundaries?
- xvii) Context: Where are our future teachers?
- xviii) Awarding bodies and status
- xix) QTLS and Steiner Teacher Academy
- xx) Why do many Steiner School teachers think that a QTLS is of inferior quality to theirs?
- xxi) Crossfields Institute – Networking – Interest groups are TT, CEST, GS and EUR.
- xxii) Crossfields Institute – Co-ordination – do we have common vision?

5. Group work based on the following questions:

- a) *How is your organisation developing a culture of progression, i.e. staff learning, accreditation, ensuring succession, etc?*
- b) *What skills and capacities have you got that could be shared with others?*
- c) *Any other topic that the group wished to discuss*

Group One

Group One's discussion centred on TEC (Teacher Education Circle); the division within Waldorf Education, and quality assurance. The key issues and questions that arose included:

- Is TEC still needed and what is it for?
- Pros and Cons of TEC (Pros: builds community; honours the Time Spirit; enables us to honour our disagreements just as much as our areas of commonality; Cons: emotions, politics and geographical problems entered the group; lack of common language).
- Co-ordination of teacher trainings needs to take place
- The issue of the Waldorf movement not being regulated
- There is a need to maintain a *standard of teaching*. *How do we deal with the question of Quality Assurance*, which includes good governance, finance, legalities, and competent teachers?

Group Two

Group Two's discussion centred on the topic of developing a culture of progression. Emerson College has some small CPD beginnings that are in line with their mission statement – the main hurdle is a small budget. They are in communication with Crossfields to explore the prospect of accreditation. University of Plymouth, SWSF and Hereford Academy all agreed that their basis for progression revolved around shared principles, trust and transparency. There was also consensus that succession ought to be built in from the inception of an initiative, and that there should be substantial movement through the 'organ' in order to detach the initiative from 'charismatic leaders'. Accreditation was touched upon, with the main questions being: *What is it worth? Does it invite accountability?*



Finally, the topic of research was looked at; the main issues that arose were that the research needs to be relevant and immediately feeding back to our daily work. It was suggested that various organisations could host research activities, thus linking us professional accreditation. Overall a *strategy* is required.

Group Three

Group Three's discussed both questions, *developing a culture of progression* and *sharing capacities with others*. The following are the highlights of this dialogue:

What's needed for developing a culture of progression?

- Clear protocol on how adult educators are trained and prepared
- Clearly written course descriptors for all
- Anthroposophical adult trainings
- Adult teacher-educator courses
- A 'body' to bring quality control to anthroposophical adult education courses; requires goodwill and sharing of responsibility
- Overview to ensure progression of levels through the courses
- Self-reflection on the part of the trainers to ensure regulation of course quality
- Development of trainer interest groups (under Crossfields' umbrella?), such as *teacher trainers, curative educators etc...*
- We need to open ourselves to non-Waldorf trainings in order to gain recognition more widely outside the Anthroposophical movement.

What capacities have our group's trainings built up that could be shared with others?

- Emerson teacher training promotes a day per week in a Waldorf school during attendance on a part time course.
- London Early Childhood teacher training has build up confidence in part-time teacher training; their curriculum is constantly being reviewed to update, keep abreast and compliant with the law; quality is constantly being reviewed and interest is being shown by non-Waldorf educators.

6. Valuing the Individual's capacity and role – Sue Reed

SR provided us with an overall view of Ruskin Mill Educational Trust's process and where it is right now. She provided all participants with a copy of RMET's comprehensive and colourful 'Staff Orientation Programme', a one-year interdisciplinary course that provides a basic introduction to teachers' work at RMET at OCN levels 2 and 3 (they are currently working on a level 4). This programme will inform levels 6 and 7 research programmes, which include the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) Lancaster University's Goethean Science modules and research with the Rudolf Steiner University, Oslo. All staff are undertaking CPD course and are all in the research process. RMET/HA is also in a 'grass-roots' dialogue with Crossfields Institute, which involves strategic implementation progression which will inform the vision and ethos of RMET.

SR highlighted that there is the potential for students at RMET to have a multi-faceted role, which include being house parents, neighbourhood heads and tutors.



7. Crossfields Institute and what we can offer – Charlotte von Bülow

The essence of CvB's presentation was about organisations coming and working together. Crossfields Institute is dedicated to contributing to the further development of collaboration and dialogue. The aim of today is to look ahead, listen to the Time Spirit and most importantly to each other. There is no voice after all if there is no solidarity. CvB asked *where is the awarding or validating organisation that not only recognises spiritual values but also works out of it?* Crossfields Institute has the potential to take on the project of becoming just this, but we need affiliation and commitment from organisations. She reported that C.I. is enthusiastic about engaging in dialogue with those interested in quality assurance, developing strategies, research groups, action learning, networking and accreditation pathways, including both those we are familiar with and those we will invent.

WS: Meetings make visible the connections and the collaborators.

8. Identifying Action Points

- QTLS status
- Teacher training aims and collaboration
- Strategy for Waldorf movement
- To what level is WTT part of the national debate?
- Lynne Oldfield co-ordinating a TEC meeting in Oct/Nov
- Crossfields to provide future forums for continuing discussion/meeting of minds to achieve the aims of QTLS
- Is it possible for TEC merge into this forum?
- Contact SWSF and TEC

9. One word in conclusion from each person

Participants were asked to share one spontaneous word that reflected how they felt about the day. Some of these words included: Future, hope, clarity and roll on! On a personal note, I feel that today was a momentous day marking the beginning of a new and unified approach to changing and challenging times.