

Task and Importance of Waldorf Education in a Global Age

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Abstract

This article is written as an academic commentary about competences in our global age from the perspective of Waldorf education. We are living in a time of change. As indicated by Regulation Theory, our world is becoming wider and bigger, and the world is globalized. By this process of globalization we have to face new challenges, such as climate change, pollution, poverty, financial crisis, freedom, migration and individual identity. From this viewpoint, the concept of three folding of the human being, the basis of Waldorf education, can be helpful. The three basic abilities of focus cover the abilities of observation and thinking, feeling, and action. These are the main skills that people need to be able to understand the world. In this context, it is not only important to acquire skills in these areas, but also important that thoughts are not abstract from reality and not abstract from human feelings. Thinking, feeling, and actions should be related to one another.

Keywords: global age, three folding of the human being, Waldorf education



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Introduction

We live in a time of change and transformation (Polany, 1979) and we call this process of transformation globalization. The world will continue to evolve and become more confusing. We are no longer living in a single country; we are members of the whole world. We can no longer focus solely on Taiwan; we have to widen our horizon. What are China, Japan, the US, and Europe doing, and what is the impact on Taiwan? Each country and each citizen is thus involved in a network of dependencies and this network is global.

A big challenge for us, as individuals, is not to feel overwhelmed by this vast size and passively wait for things to happen. We should follow the ideal of Confucius, remain active, help to shape the world and, at the same time, create a harmonious order to restore heaven, humanity and earth. In earlier times this was the king's task; Wang and Wang's sign expresses this fact, as we know:



Figure 1. Wang: Connection of heaven, human and earth

Each of the three horizontal lines represents one kingdom of the world, the top of heaven, the middle one, the kingdom of men and the bottom the kingdom of the earth. The vertical line represents the king who connects, penetrates and harmonizes heaven, earth and people.

Today, there is no king and everyone in a certain way is Wang; every human has the task to restore the lost order. This will only succeed if we

acquire a broad, global horizon.

But the earth has not only become bigger and wider, but in a way smaller and more limited. Everywhere, as humans, we are now confronted with the finiteness of the earth. We no longer have enough oil, water and other resources, the rivers and oceans are polluted and the population of people is increasing, so we feel more and more the limitations of the earth. Humanity is facing huge challenges.

This article therefore deals with the challenges of the global age on the one hand, and with the skills that we have to build in order to meet these challenges on the other hand. In the Waldorf schools, in my opinion, some of these necessary skills are created through education, so it is worthwhile to deal with this pedagogy.

Before going into pedagogy in the narrower sense, I would like to pick up an aspect that has always been very important in Asian-influenced culture, namely how to achieve harmony between people. I would like to briefly mention the so-called regulation theory.

Regulation Theory

Subsequent to the neo-Marxist Gramsci (1994, 1996), a group of French economists in the 1970s and 1980s did not just deal with economics, but with societal phenomena. One of the questions posed by this group, Aglietta (1979, 2000) and Lipietz (1998), was how stable, long-term social relations can be achieved, and what social framework conditions must exist for this to happen. Times of peace and stability have always sporadically existed in Europe and Asia, for example after World War II until today. The regulation theoreticians work out the meaning of culture.

A stable period, which the regulation theorists call a formation or a historical block, can only arise, according to their point of view, if in a certain way a consensus emerges about values, norms, and the life and coexistence within a society. This means that this consensus must be between

the elites of a country and the ordinary people. For only when people embrace common goals and appointments (also unconsciously) because of their cultural character can a society survive peacefully and in the long term. Goals could be, for example, democracy, prosperity, freedom and much more.

The Situation in the West

The regulation theoreticians have dealt in particular with the time of the so-called Fordism, the period after the Second World War until the 1970s and 1980s. This time was marked by a compromise between labor unions and companies, rising prosperity, democracy and peace. The reason for this was that economic and social aspects were balanced. This changed in the 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberal thoughts became stronger and the economy began to dominate all areas of human life. As a result, the social compromise that has prevailed for a long time has become increasingly fragile. The consensus between elites and the wider masses and within the elites has weakened and continues to weaken, and it seems that we are in a transitional phase where a new social consensus is being negotiated. The regulation theorists have pointed out these phases in particular. For it is precisely during these times that every human being can play a major role, and every new idea, if taken up, can lead to great changes. This means that it is increasingly important for people to choose the proper commitment and how they want to shape their future. Never before have people been so free to shape and determine their own biographies and society. In this context, Beck uses the words “children of freedom” (Beck, 1998).

The Situation in Taiwan

In Taiwan, similar things can be described. After World War II, there was a broad consensus that the country should be built up. The result was

that Taiwan became one of the most successful countries in Southeast Asia, characterized by industrialization, education, culture, prosperity and peace. But with the end of the Cold War and the rise of China as the dominant power in Asia, Taiwan feels that its existence is threatened. The result is that the long-lasting social consensus is becoming increasingly fragile and the hitherto prevailing harmony among people is losing gradually. Taiwan, like many other countries, faces major challenges. In the following, we will take a closer look at our global age.

The Global Age

Since the 1990s, publications by Albrow (2007), Appadurai (1998), Beck (1997, 1998, 2007), Giddens (1996), Perlas (2003), Robertson (1992, 1995, 1998), Zürn (1998) and many others analyzed the age of globalization. These scientists emphasize in part different aspects of our present, but agree that the social conditions for people are becoming increasingly fragmented and confusing. The social frame, given in the age of Fordism (Aglietta, 2000; Lipietz, 1998) by stable economic conditions, a strong state and a more homogeneous cultural space, is weakening. In the global age, culture is characterized not by homogeneity but rather by heterogeneity and diversity (Breidenbach & Nyiri, 2008; Breidenbach & Zukrigl, 2000; Hansen, 2003).

This means that, in principle, the acting person has never been as free as today. His biography becomes an elective biography (Sen, 2007). On the other hand, this freedom also leads to people feeling more insecure and disoriented (Beck, 2007).

Because we are networked as humans, globalization also means that action can always affect people in remote places. The consequences of our actions can have an immediate effect on us. This means that we have to learn to take responsibility for our fellow human beings and for our actions (Keller, 2010).

The process of globalization has led to changes in the dimensions of

nature, the economy, state and culture, and poses great challenges for the individual and human society:

- At the level of nature, humanity is confronted with the finiteness of the earth, with the consequences of climate change, environmental degradation and pollution.

The task of the school in general is to develop a relationship of nature with the children, which does not conceive of man as an independent existence of nature, but as part of nature. Protecting nature also means protecting ourselves. An understanding of nature must not only be developed on the intellectual level, but must also affect our actions (Keller, 2011).

- Despite economic successes in the industrialized countries, many people in the world, especially in Africa and Asia, continue to live at a subsistence level.

Therefore, in addition to a true understanding of nature, it makes sense to create an understanding of the global economic context and the global financial system at school in general. Without the interpenetration of these relationships, we will not be able to reduce poverty and unemployment, or behave in solidarity with nature and our world citizens. In order to be able to think about and understand relationships and relationships of dependency, it is necessary to broaden static and monocausal thinking through processual and dialogical thinking. For example, to understand a production chain and the parallel cash flows, we are forced to “liquefy” our thinking, otherwise we will not be able to grasp these processes and their changes.

- At the level of the state, we face the challenge of achieving greater equality, justice and security, and regarding all human beings as equal in their humanity. Here, the nation state comes to its limits and is forced to reconcile with other states and unite to form communities of states (EU, UN, ASEAN, etc.) (Eppler, 2005; Zürn, 1998).

Equality and the importance of human rights are also related to

people's feelings (Steiner, 1981). Can we empathize with a fleeing person who has lost his home country, and experience this unfair situation? The task of the school is to promote the feelings and empathy of the children and adolescents, so that we can feel and sympathize with injustice, fear, insecurity, etc.

- As far as culture is concerned, people need to learn to live together peacefully in one place despite different worldviews and cultural imprints. School in general has to prepare us to deal with foreign cultural influences and to learn together with our “foreign” fellow citizens to create a livable future.

At the global level, therefore, we are forced to give up selfish and static thinking and involve other countries and, above all, people in our deliberations and actions; otherwise, as Samuel Huntington predicted, there is a threat of a “clash of civilizations”.

- The challenges in our global age therefore not only affect nature, the economy, the state and culture, but also each person individually. In order not to be crushed and paralyzed by the above-mentioned challenges, it will be necessary to dismiss the students with a lot of self-confidence from the school and with a sense of freedom, with the feeling that everyone will find their job in the world.

Skills Building in the Age of Globalization

Thinking, Perceiving, Feeling and Acting

The questions to be pursued here are: how can children be prepared for the future and what skills should be trained? Further ahead, the tasks were outlined along with abilities such as developing process-oriented thinking. Here, this aspect of capability development should be taken up again and more fundamentally considered. An epistemological approach is chosen.

If, as human beings, we are entrusted with a task or are supposed to

solve a problem, then we are always strangers to this new topic and remain distanced, that is, unfamiliar. Steiner uses the term antipathy (Steiner, 1966: 35) in the second lecture of the “study of man”. We have not yet connected with a cause and be a stranger to her and uncomprehending. If we begins to deal with the problem or the question, we becomes more and more connected and deepened, gaining an increasing understanding and coming to more and more comprehensive knowledge (Steiner, 1979). In order to do that, people have to get involved in the content and, as Steiner’s other word implies, must be sympathetic to the topic. With this, peoples becomes more and more involved with the facts of the surrounding world and overcomes his original antipathic attitude.

If a person wants to know something, he has to connect to the thing in many different ways: He has to perceive it with his senses, consider it and engage emotionally willingly in this process. Here, on the basis of Waldorf education, especially the book *Von Seelenrätseln* (Steiner, 1917) and the first five lectures on the “Study of Man” (Steiner, 1966), three levels of the human soul are distinguished, namely thinking and perception, feeling and acting.

In school we have to train the three dimensions of these abilities: training of perception and thinking to understand the world with our minds; training of our emotional life, so that we are able to empathize with other people, and the ability to perform meaningful and essential actions (sustainable).

Perception and Thinking

Our present education systems tend to neglect corporeality more and more, thus also including the human senses. We learn in artificial spaces and hardly get in touch with the reality of the earth. Learning is mostly understood as a cognitive process. It does not bring us pure cerebral knowledge because the reference to us, to other people and to the earth is missing. The goal of Waldorf education, which pursues a holistic approach,

is, for example, learning with all the senses. Traditionally, we start from the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting. But today we know many more senses, such as the sense of balance, the sense of motion, the sense of warmth, and also the language and the sense of thinking (Kranich, 2003). It is always about coming into contact with the world with our senses, perceiving things and experiencing them in their particularity and in their being. A beautiful example of how we can learn with all the senses is offered by the natural history periods in the Waldorf School.

When we absorb knowledge at mainstream school, we do so mainly through seeing and hearing. But here the focus is rather on the knowledge and not training the senses.

Have we really learned to observe and perceive a thing, a process, a plant, an animal or a human being?

This can be learned; for example, that the drawing takes an important part in the classroom, for example in the treatment of plants.

Some examples from the 5th class are shown in the following:



Figure 2. Different mushrooms



Figure 3. Different Mooses

The training of the senses and the perception of the things of the world, of course, not only play a role in relation to the plants, but in every lesson. The first step is always to perceive the earth and the beings and things of the world as they are.

Of course, the lessons should not stop here, just to observe and describe. Now you have to consider the perceived. What did I observe? What is important and essential? The student compares the new observations with old experiences, reflects, weighs and tries to discover regularities and irregularities.

Classes in the Waldorf School are predominantly phenomenological in the sense of the great poet and naturalist Goethe (2016). This means that the student should start from the experience and the phenomenon in order to develop knowledge and laws. The student then plays the role of a researcher and discoverer. This is often not the case at mainstream school. Most students are the ones who simply pick up known knowledge and learn it for the tests rather than being part of an expedition to explore unknown learning areas.

An example from the physics class 6th class is shown in the following:



Figure 4. Three candles in front of an archway



Figure 5. Shadows and light spaces

The shadows and light spaces on the wall are made visible. Four different brightness levels can be observed. Three candles throw their light in the middle (brightest archway), then two candles to the right and left of it and then a candle on the edge, and no candle.

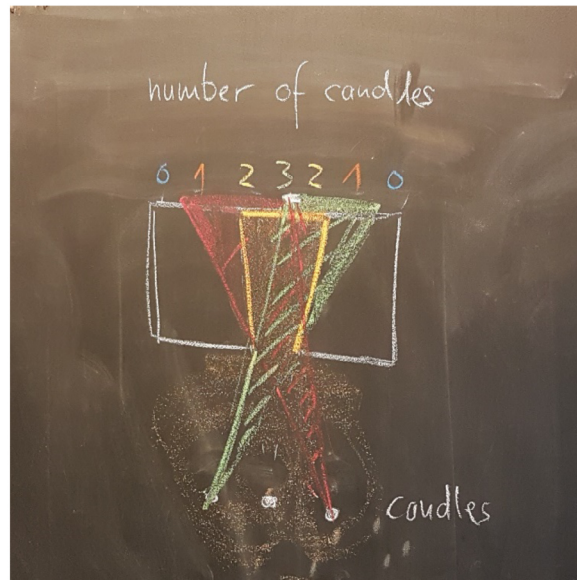


Figure 6. Explanation of the phenomenon, developed with the students together on the blackboard

Feelings

Even at the time of the Enlightenment, the purely rational and purely empirical conception of the world had been resisted; personalities such as Rousseau had felt deeply that an essential dimension of human beings had not been taken into account, namely human feeling. One can not only grasp the world with senses and mind, but also with feelings. The very beauty and uniqueness of a landscape or of a person is revealed not only by the intellect, but also by the feelings. Without human feelings and empathy, there is a danger that thinking will develop into cold, calculating and inhuman thinking.

If you want to name two representatives who today point to the importance of feeling, one is Goleman (1999). His book EQ - Emotional Intelligence is a plea that emotions, sensations and feelings for a successful life are at least as important as cognitive intelligence. Another important representative is The Empathic Civilization (Rifkin, 2012).

In Waldorf education, one assumes that feeling can be trained above all when one works artistically. Let us clarify this fact with two small examples. When I sing a sad song, I have to absorb and feel the mood of mourning. This sense of grief is fundamentally and qualitatively different from the idea of grief. So, as a human, I have to feel empathic in moods.

This ability is also needed when doing drama. The student should play a funny, young man, who adventurously pulls through the country. He can do this only convincingly if he puts himself emotionally into this mood.

So it is understandable why the artistic teaching in a Waldorf school is so important. Speaking, reciting, playing dramas, painting, drawing, singing, playing musical instruments, making sculptures, performing eurythmies and much more are elementary components of the curriculum and also take up a not inconsiderable part of the time.

Some examples are shown in the following:

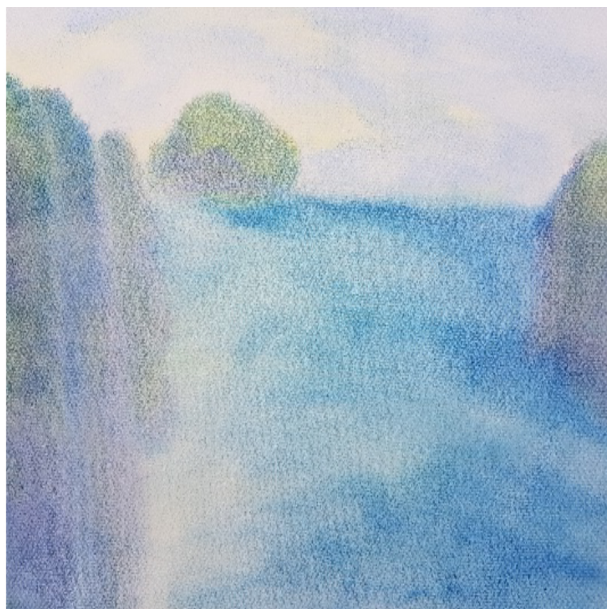


Figure 7. Painting in Geography, 6th grade. Coastline with rocks



Figure 8. River in the mountains, 6th grade. Landscapes in geography



Figure 9. Free art form, 11th grade



Figure 10. A work from the 12th grade

In addition to doing arts, social interaction is another important area for training emotions. Daniel Goleman impressively emphasizes that one has to

learn to deal with one's own feelings as well as the feelings of others to be successful in life. Goleman even argues that emotional intelligence is more important than its cognitive counterpart (Goleman, 1999).

In today's school system, competition and competition for the best grades and best places at the best universities play important roles. We overlook the fact, that human is primarily not a selfish, but a social being from the beginning of our evolution (Bauer, 2008). Human beings alone are weak and vulnerable beings, and only where people are living or working together are they strong.

All the challenges and problems to be solved today, as indicated above, cannot be solved by selfishness, but only by commonality.

Therefore, teamwork, project work, social issues, etc., play a big role in the Waldorf School. Ideally, the class community is maintained from grade 1 to grade 12 so that students can acquire all the social skills necessary for their future in a familiar environment.

Action

In his book EQ, Goleman has pointed out not only the importance of feeling and dealing with emotions, but also the ability to act, what is called action competence. It is amazing how little we educate on the ability to act in the whole education of children and adolescents. While they learn to come to mainstream school, but an action in the real world is, of course, something completely different. This does not mean that the school is unsuitable as a space for learning; the school as a protected space for learning is of great importance. But our school in general should also be supplemented with real actions in real life, of course, according to age and topic. Some examples may illustrate what is meant here.



Figure 11. Farming in the 3rd grade: When plowing, the farmer and a student lead the plow



Figure 12. The class pulls the harrow to refine the ground



Figure 13. A student gets the seed poured into an apron



Figure 14. The children walk across the field and seed the grains



Figure 15. Housebuilding in 3rd grade: Each student builds his own little house



Figure 16. Forging in the 9th and 10th grade



Figure 17. Forging in the 9th and 10th grade



Figure 18. Measurement of angles in 10th grade

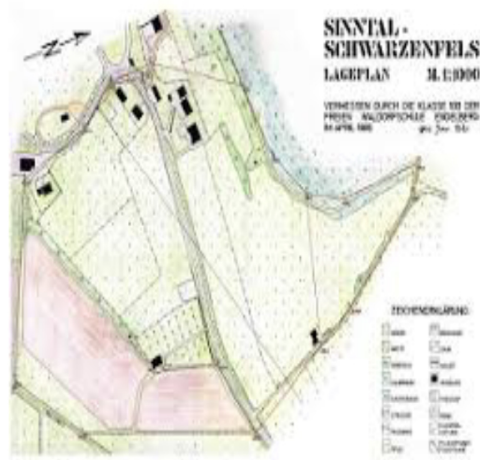


Figure 19. Field mapping in the 10th grade, map is made by a student

Summary and Outlook: From Experience to Recognition

It is crucial that human is not only conceived as a thinking, feeling and acting individual, but rather characterized by all three soul activities. Human is incomplete if he only observes and considers the things of the world, but if he empathically feels the situation in question and then acts essentially (sustainably), he becomes human. This means that we, as “children of freedom”, need to connect thinking, feeling and action.

Among other things, Steiner addressed this topic in one of his most important books, *Die Philosophie der Freiheit* (The Philosophy of Freedom) (Steiner, 1894), and described the fact described above as the “cover-up” of thinking, feeling and acting, which he called “ethical individualism”. In dealing with Kant and the categorical imperative, Steiner elaborates that an action carried out only in a sense of duty is not enough, since just feeling does not coincide with action and knowledge. The goal of the philosophy of freedom is to bundle and bring these three soul forces together. To strive

for truth leads to love of the world. Then the actions we perform will be appropriate and humane.

Finally, after pointing out the importance of thinking, feeling and acting, what the school can do is to enable people to act truly, energetically and humanely later in their lives (ethical individualism).

The basic idea behind this article is simple: firstly to draw attention to the training of the basic abilities of perception, thinking, feeling and acting, and secondly to the fact that these three abilities are connected in connecting to, and recognizing, the world. Until today, the emphasis in mainstream schools is on the ability to understand intellectually; according to the views advocated here, schools in general must be thought of in an expand context, so that a holistic qualification of human being is made possible.

The Waldorf Schools have tried to conceive learning in this sense since 1919:

Through practical subjects, (for example horticulture, carpentry, textile processing, etc.) and internships (for example surveying internship, social internship, and industrial internship) the training of the competence to act is in the foreground.

Through artistic subjects such as painting, drawing, drama, sculpture, music, etc., the feeling and sentience skills are trained.

In the treatment of the traditional school subjects, the focus is not only on the transfer of knowledge, but also on the training of thinking. Now come with theoretical subjects into the point of view; these have already been carried out earlier: Learning should not be taught so that knowledge is not learned abstractly, but so that this process is also associated with an experience. Learning processes should therefore be designed in such a way that action, feeling and thinking are included. The understanding of a thing is then supported by action and feeling as learning is not an abstract (separated from the world), but rather a concrete process (connected to the world). This method “from experience to understanding” can be shown by a simple example.

What is a triangle?

Learning through action: what makes a triangle a triangle can be experienced in a first step through action. One draws and discovers as many different triangles as possible, transformations of triangles, etc., to find out which forms a triangle can take.

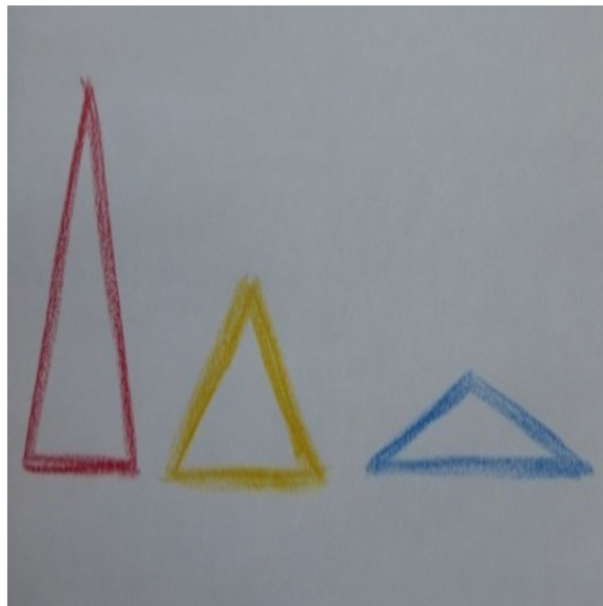


Figure 20. Three different triangles

Learning through the participation of feeling: One can ask oneself, which qualities a triangle has, and what its relationship is to the world? Is it heavy? Is it lying or standing? How pointed is it and how does this pointiness affect me, etc. The goal is to address the feelings and to understand the triangle emotionally (see, for example, Schuberth, 1998).

Learning through the mind: Once the first two steps have been completed, you can join in on mental issues. For example, you can calculate the angles or area, or how to geometrically construct a circle from a triangle.

Decisive for the method moving from experience to comprehension is that the understanding of triangles created by the learning process not

only arises intellectually, but also takes into account feelings and actions. Educational concepts such as the triangle are then living and experiential concepts.

If Waldorf students are learning in this way, there should be an impact on their life and their biography in the future. There are several studies which are focused on this topic. The most substantial empirical study is conducted by Barz and Randoll (2007). One result is that former Waldorf students are more individualized, creative, active and social than people with a traditional school background.

This creativity and activity of humankind will be needed to face the challenges of our global age. Some of these challenges were named at the beginning of this article. The regulation theory pointed out the importance of the harmonious balance in our society. This social balance will be reached only if we are facing the challenges of our global age, such as climate change, poverty, a fair financial system, protection of the human rights and living in a multicultural society. To work on the challenges we will need powerful social individuals. Our educational system should give the frame that children can develop in this sense.

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全球化時代華德福教育的任務與重要性

Gunter Keller*

摘要

本文係以學術評論形式從華德福教育觀點探討全球化時代我們所需的能力與素養。我們處在一個變動劇烈的時代，如調節理論所言，世界變得更大、更寬廣，世界邁向全球化的歷程。然而在此過程中，我們必然面臨前所未有的自然、經濟、政治、文化以及自我認同的新挑戰。

從此角度來看，人類三元的概念，即華德福教育的基礎，可能有所幫助，著重於三項基本能力，即觀察與思考、感受與行動之能力。這些是理解世界所需的主要技能。

在此背景下，重要的不僅是獲取這些領域的技能。同樣重要的是，思想既非抽象而遠離現實，也不是遠離人類的感受。思考、感受、行動應該相互關聯。

關鍵詞：全球化時代、人的三元性、華德福教育



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