



The Waldorf education movement: History, achievements and challenges

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Abstract

This article reviews the development of Waldorf education inherently in Stuttgart, Germany, and to this day. After a brief summary of the foundation of the first Waldorf School, the article goes on to describe the principles of Waldorf education, then its development in Europe and the world during the 20th century to the present day. Finally, the article brings the main challenges that this educational path faces in our time and into the future.

On September 1, 1989, the first Waldorf school in Israel opened its doors in Harduf, following the establishment of kindergartens some years prior. On September 4, 1989, the very first Waldorf school in the former Soviet occupied countries of Central and Eastern Europe was founded in Solymar outside Budapest. The first East African Waldorf kindergarten was established on September 14, 1989, on Magadi Road in Ongata Rongai outside Nairobi, and on September 3, 1990, the first Waldorf school in the former East Germany opened in Berlin with 140 pupils.

Nineteen eighty-nine was a year of tremendous, deep change worldwide. For a brief moment, idealistic impulses for the future of society, for education, for nature and environment, and for a more equitable economy, were stronger than ordinary political powers. These idealistic notions overcame formerly impenetrable barriers. The moment was short-lived. Still, it generated Waldorf schools in Central and Eastern Europe from East Berlin to Asian Russia, as far as Nakhodka, from Tallinn to Bucharest, and from Ust-Kamenogorsk to Tbilisi.

Seventy years earlier in 1919, the first Waldorf school opened in Stuttgart, Germany with 256 students. The year 1919 was also one of global change. World War I dismantled the world of the emperors and former European life, and uncertainty reigned. Political systems entered an era of global interdependence. At this moment in time, people in Central Europe shared a longing for a new societal order and the struggle for a republic, or at least for a more democratic order, began everywhere. In such moments of chaos new initiatives are born.

In this period of unrest, in Württemberg, south Germany, the director of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette company decided to provide a benefit for the children of his company employees, who deeply appreciated his intention. Emil Molt (1876 – 1936), himself, knew what it meant to grow up in poverty and the importance of education in overcoming its barriers. When the idea to found a school crystalized, he asked Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925), with whom he was acquainted, whether he would support such an undertaking and help find and train teachers and develop a curriculum for a very new form of education. Rudolf Steiner agreed. Emil Molt then asked Karl Stockmeyer (1886 – 1963), a state teacher at that time, to help with the organisation



of the school. They began preparations in April 1919, and opened the Waldorf School, named after the cigarette company, in September of the same year.

Fortunately, from November 9, 1918 to October 31, 1919, an incredibly short period of less than a year, there was a minister of education in Württemberg who supported this new endeavour. After a conversation with Molt, Steiner and Stockmeyer, Baruch Berthold Heymann (1870-1939) gave permission to open the school. Most importantly, he permitted teachers with an academic degree but without a teaching diploma from Württemberg to teach. Heymann's knowledge of early nineteenth century law enabled him to make this exemption.

Meanwhile, Molt bought a restaurant on a hillside of the Neckar Valley, where people used to take Sunday afternoon walks and stop for coffee. He asked an architect to renovate the restaurant into a schoolhouse within three months. During this period, Stockmeyer was asked to scour the country for potential teachers and invite them for a preparatory course. Steiner taught a 14-day introduction to an understanding of the growing child from the perspective of the body, soul and spirit (Allgemeine Menschenkunde, formerly translated as the Study of man, currently translated as the Foundation of human experience). He also developed age-appropriate curricular outlines and the Waldorf methodology. With this incredibly brief preparation, the first Waldorf school began on September 7, 1919, with a festive opening ceremony in the then largest hall of the city of Stuttgart, and a week later teaching and learning began.

Waldorf education: Fundamental principles

Teachers of this new school came from different areas of life, a majority from university positions where they were used to teaching adults. With a few exceptions, none were experienced in teaching small children. Their preparation was extremely short, and they were thrown right into teaching and purposely given subjects to teach outside their own academic field. Steiner was convinced that fostering the learning of children requires teachers who learn as well. Hence, he gave quite a few teachers subjects other than their own. In order to learn, children need the example of the learning (and struggling) adult.

It was also of utmost importance to Steiner that his teachers develop a serious interest in their pupils. Today, attachment research widely confirms that learning happens when there is a relationship, not only in the context of, but through relationship. Children in primary school typically learn because they love their teachers, not due to an awareness that it is important to learn. For this reason, Steiner wanted the same teacher to teach a group of children from class one through class eight. It is the love for their teacher that enables children to develop their interest in the world, and it is the teacher's desire to constantly acquire knowledge that builds the bridge for learning. In contemporary language, one could say that developing self-efficacy, a deep belief in one's own capabilities, is possible through experiencing a grown-up person with a loving interest in all things while learning. Human beings learn only from human beings, not from machines. All current educational theories recognise that children need to be active



in the process of learning, but little emphasis is put on the social-emotional aspect of learning. Whether the teacher is emotionally attached or deeply interested in the subject is influential. To develop competence, children need adult role models, that of parents and teachers.

Steiner became very concerned when he discovered a lack of interest and relationship between pupils and teachers, especially between high school students and their teachers. He spoke strongly against this apathy and distancing, even threatening teachers with dismissal. Active, positive and serious interest of the teacher in the individual child is one of the main pillars of Waldorf education and of any good education. The importance of this principle was validated and acknowledged through the meta study Visible Learning conducted by John Hattie in 2014. Hattie examined 252 different educational elements. He found that the teacher is the most important, together with the teacher's trustful collaboration with other teachers. No technique can replace a human teacher.

From the very beginning, Waldorf teachers were asked to develop an inner image of the future, towards which education journeys, and to be constantly aware of their students' potential. Rudolf Steiner encouraged the teachers of the first Waldorf school to undertake exercises to work on their own temperaments, their own impulses, their own one-sided capabilities and, in doing so, to create an inner openness to the New, to the unforeseen, to the appearance of a worthy idea. How relaxing for children are teachers who leave their comfort-zone and take part in discovering the inner and outer world.

For Steiner, another factor was enormously important in Waldorf education and he addressed it in his introductory course Study of Man: age appropriate learning. You do, what needs to be done, whenever the child is ready. There are general developmental phases that each child goes through and, in each phase, the child can be strengthened by an age-appropriate curriculum or hindered by learning something too early or too late.

In the first Waldorf school, the technology taught was the technology of the time. For example, the older children learned shorthand or stenography. They learned old techniques alongside very modern ones. If someone were to think that modern Waldorf schools should still teach stenography, the majority would think this nonsensical. A few years after the founding of the first Waldorf school and after the death of Rudolf Steiner, Alexander Strakosch, the technology teacher who gave up his promising career as an engineer for Austrian Railways to become a Waldorf teacher, started vocational training at the school. He began with the girls, who at that time were being trained to become housekeepers. He was deeply convinced that everyone requires a certain level of cultural, historical, and scientific knowledge and experience in the arts. He wanted to offer these girls much more than what they were receiving in typical vocational training and to offer more vocational options.

Strakosch came from a cultured Jewish family and when the Nazis came to power, they passed a law forbidding Jewish teachers to teach in state recognised schools. Strakosch was forced to leave the Waldorf School together with three other teachers, and with him the vocational impetus of Waldorf education fell into a deep sleep. Only in the late 1970s was this impetus renewed and spread limitedly to a few countries. What remained was a general introduction to



technology in the upper grades and related techniques. Today, children learn, for example, to type blind when age-appropriate and they learn to use the computer as an instrument. Hence, kindergartens and schools must develop an understanding of the appropriate age at which to introduce IT and digital literacy. The timing of IT lessons varies from country to country; however, in general, Waldorf kindergartens never teach computers, nor does it happen in classes one to three. In German Waldorf schools, IT starts at the earliest in class seven, and in other countries a bit earlier.

The underlying principle in Waldorf education is: from doing to understanding, from will to thinking. This is why children learn to write first, before they read. Movement begins, strengthening the brain, and reading and understanding follow. Today, however, when children are tempted by technology at such a young age, we need to do more. Andreas Schleicher, the founder of PISA Studies - OECD, writes in his book World Class (2018): "In a nutshell, the kinds of things that are easy to teach have become easy to digitise and automate. The future is about pairing the artificial intelligence of computers with the cognitive, social and emotional skills, and values of human beings. It will be our imagination, our awareness and our sense of responsibility that will enable us to harness digitalisation to shape the world for the better." Waldorf education underscores this understanding that digital literacy never should stand alone, but should always be counterbalanced with social and emotional skills as well as creativity and imagination. Instead of becoming dependent on a machine, a machine can be a very helpful tool.

Within a short time, a secondary school opened in the first Waldorf school. Imagine, the school that was founded in 1919 with 256 children, grew to over a thousand students within five years. The primary aim for secondary education was to teach young people in such a way that they could, step by step, develop their own judgemental capacities: to learn as deeply and broadly as possible in order to truly understand, to create an investigative and analytical mind. To not merely believe what you read on your smartphone news application.

At the moment when you are able to make a judgement, it is mostly your heart and your conscience that say what is wrong or right. Your heart adds the moral quality. Moral education, from the beginning, was an intrinsic part of Waldorf education throughout, appearing with different qualities in the primary and secondary curricula, including the moral quality you urgently need for any true human communication. Developing critical thinking and problem solving, especially in secondary education, should never stand alone, but should always be contemplated in the context of community responsibility and developed in conjunction with communication and collaboration. From the start of the first secondary school classes in the mid-1920s, new, diverse forms of teaching and learning were integrated into the Waldorf movement. Today, a broad variety of methodological approaches are used.

An additional element central in the founding of the first Waldorf school, and which has become increasingly endangered in recent decades, is the freedom of the teacher, the freedom of how and when to teach. The more free teachers are to create lessons suitable to the needs of the children sitting in their classroom, the more they engage in teaching. When teachers are



required to use standard textbooks and follow a national curriculum, the less they engage in teaching. Therefore, Rudolf Steiner only provided curriculum indications and encouraged all teachers to create a curriculum based on the needs of the real children sitting in front of them. Today, many teachers adopt this approach of individualisation of the teaching process, although not necessarily the institutes with the task of developing national curricula. Steiner did not hint at the freedom that allows the teacher simply to do what unexpectedly comes to mind. He talked about a rich knowledge of the teaching subject and subtle observation of the developing children in order to discover the appropriate topics for the children. The teaching of history has a different effect than mathematics, painting a different effect than drawing, and Steiner advised teachers to use these effects carefully. Self-development of the teacher in order to become a person capable of controlling emotions, inquiry in order to acquire balanced judgement, and cultivating social awareness in order to work cooperatively were deemed central to the process of becoming a self-directed (free) teacher.

The first Waldorf school was run cooperatively by parents and teachers. To the astonishment of school authorities in Württemberg, the three men who arrived at the ministry of education for accreditation conversations advocated a different form of leadership. Top-down leadership, the undisputed norm in the early decades of the twentieth century, was seen by them as an old-fashioned Roman heritage that they wished to discontinue. They were striving for a more modern form of shared leadership for the school organisation. And they were aware that such a modern form of leadership would not ease conflict, but would have to be developed through ups and downs. School autonomy was the goal, an autonomy from outside education authorities who typically interfered. They did not deny inspection, not at all, and found it reasonable for issues of security or hygiene. However, for the running of the organisation and for the actual teaching they desired freedom. School autonomy was and is a focal point of any responsible teaching and learning. When teachers run their school jointly, everyone is more committed to the organisation and its wellbeing. When teachers or delegations of teachers are active in decision making, they not only develop a sense of belonging, they know that successful school performance depends upon them. When teachers and parents, themselves, set the priorities, how to raise and spend money, responsibility matters. Today, in many countries, such a situation is, unfortunately, merely a beautiful dream and has nothing to do with the reality of schools. Regulations have become rather strict and precise; hence the scope of organisational freedom is similarly confined.

Waldorf education internationally: A journey from 1919 to the present

After the death of Rudolf Steiner in 1925, the Waldorf movement counted eight schools in four countries. After the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, schools were opened in Dornach, Switzerland (Friedwirtschaftschule; 1921), in Cologne, Germany (Neuwachtenschule; 1921), in Hamburg, Germany (Freie Goetheschule; 1922), in Essen, Germany (Rudolf Steiner Schule; 1922), in Kings Langley, Great Britain (Priory School; 1922), in The Hague, Netherlands (Vrije



School; 1923) and in London, Great Britain (The New School; 1925). Teachers from these early schools met on a regular basis, exchanged research and supported each other in their understanding of this new educational approach. This was a small group of people and each member was responsible for numerous tasks.

During the following twelve years until the Nazi government imposed a prohibition on Waldorf schools in the year 1938, parents and teachers founded 26 Waldorf schools in seven countries. In 1926, schools were established in Basel, Switzerland, Budapest, Hungary, and Oslo, Norway. In 1928, the educational impetus leaped across the Atlantic Ocean and the Rudolf Steiner School was founded in New York, USA. The New York and London schools developed with the inspiration of members of the New Education Movement. At that time, the New Education Movement was active not only in England and the United States, but also in South Africa and Australia. Quite a number of people from schools and universities interested in alternatives in education gathered within the New Education Movement. They invited Rudolf Steiner in 1922 and 1923 to lecture before an interested public at Oxford. These lectures generated strong interest in Waldorf education in the English-speaking world, where it continues to develop differently than in the German-speaking world. While the schools in Germany, Holland, and Hungary closed their own doors or were closed by authorities, the schools in Switzerland, Great-Britain, and in the United States continued during WWII unobstructed. This still quite young educational impetus was strong enough to lead to the opening of six new Waldorf Schools in Great-Britain and the United States during WWII, and with the Rudolf Steiner School in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the first school opened in the southern hemisphere. The large number of refugees from Europe also brought Waldorf education to North and Latin America. Among the refugees were Jewish anthroposophists and anti-Nazi activists, who together strengthened the movement in the Americas.

From the outset, Steiner intended to set up a worldwide movement for innovation in education with as many schools as possible. He wanted this school movement to become large enough to achieve a paradigm shift in education. Karl Stockmeyer, who was responsible for the organisation of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, established in the foundational years a network of supporters stretching from Italy to Norway and from the United States to Russia. Only through the generosity of network members and local groups of the Association for an Independent School System (Verein für ein freies Schulwesen), the host institution of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, was it possible to finance the school during the years of the world economic crisis. At times, Stockmeyer's fundraising efforts among the local groups competed with those of the other Waldorf schools, who faced economic challenges as well. The local groups were of the opinion that their members should send their donations to the school in their own city and not to Stuttgart. Everyone was fighting for survival. In the 1920s and 1930s there was no public financial support for independent schools, which were forced to survive by virtue of sacrifices made by teachers, who were paid very low salaries, and by parents, who struggled in order to pay school fees.

Shortly before Rudolf Steiner died, he asked his assistant to write a letter to the Stuttgart Waldorf



School conferring on the faculty the responsibility for the future pedagogical and economic viability of the German Waldorf schools. The Stuttgart teachers took this task extremely seriously, and from this moment onwards corresponded regularly not only with all the German Waldorf schools, but also with the majority of Waldorf schools worldwide. They were asked to assist teachers, to mentor and, in some cases, to help financially. Because of their deep gratitude to and connectedness with Steiner, they spared neither trouble nor expense to help the other schools, even when the source of their problems was inept leadership and /or untrustworthy management. The teachers of the Stuttgart Waldorf School travelled to other schools to support and give lectures, consult onsite as needed to overcome difficulties, and evaluate new teachers and make recommendations regarding their continued employment, including writing warning letters if warranted. In 1927, the Stuttgart faculty launched a teacher training program for urgently needed new teachers.

The life of the German Waldorf schools became demanding and difficult when the Nazis came into government and immediately worked to control the school system. Each year brought new obstacles and all attempts to survive somehow were unsuccessful. By 1938, all schools had either closed by decision of the teachers, who refused to swear an oath to Hitler, or by the government, with one exemption. The Waldorf school in Dresden operated until 1941. However, not only were the Waldorf schools in Germany forced to close, but also the schools in Vienna, Austria and in The Hague, Netherlands. The school in Budapest, Hungary closed for different reasons in 1936. The Norway schools went underground and those in Switzerland and in Great Britain continued, the latter under evacuation. The movement in the United States grew during this period from one to five schools.

In the first four years after WWII, six of the German Waldorf schools and three schools in the Netherlands resumed teaching. In that same period from 1945 to 1949, seventeen new Waldorf schools were founded, even though the war resulted in a severe loss of Waldorf teachers. Everyone was looking ahead wholeheartedly, glad that the dark years had come to an end. With enthusiasm, they rebuilt their schools and returned to the business of educating according to their own ideals. The schools in Great Britain, in Norway and in other European countries were urgently looking for teachers. The lack of trained teachers was a common problem then and perhaps the longest ongoing problem of the international Waldorf movement from its early years to the present. After WWII, no Waldorf initiative remained in Hungary, Poland, or in the Czech and Slovak republics. Because of the new soviet dominated system, the Waldorf movement came to a halt in Central and Eastern European countries. The communist school system, originating in the work of Lenin's wife Nadeshda Krupskaja, was introduced across the entire area. With one exemption. In Dresden, East Germany, the Waldorf school reopened in 1945, and for a short while was the only school in soviet territory that received permission to operate. In 1949, this school was closed for a second time, now by the communist government. Only after the implosion of the communist experiment in 1989 could the Waldorf movement re-emerge in central and eastern European countries.

Whereas in the large soviet-ruled region of the world only an underground movement could



exist, by the early 1960s, pioneer Waldorf initiatives were launched in countries of the southern hemisphere. Enthusiastic parents, mostly from within the anthroposophical movement, were searching for educational alternatives for their children. The first kindergartens were opened in Johannesburg and in Cape Town, South Africa by English and Dutch speaking white South-Africans, while the kindergarten and school in Sao Paulo, Brazil began due to the initiative of German speaking refugees, who left Nazi Germany before the holocaust. The kindergarten and school founded in 1940 Buenos Aires grew slowly. In the 1950s, the rift between the anti-Nazi founders and Nazi families who joined the school eventually led to a split. In Australia and New Zealand, movement pioneers in the 1960s originated from anthroposophically interested groups. The movement in New Zealand was fortunate when two women invested inherited assets into buying an estate that served for a very long time as the beautiful home of the Waldorf Teacher Training Institute in Havelock North, New Zealand.

In northern and western Europe and in North and South America, the Waldorf movement grew slowly but steadily. Movement growth received a visible push through the social ideals that became apparent and public during the protest of 1967-68. The demand for freedom and participation in government, the demand for creating a society that protects human rights and fosters human dignity, that breaks with the past, that creates space for the individual person to develop – upon these demands pulsing in the souls of young people a further broadening of the Waldorf movement took place. In its encouragement of individualism, in the unfolding of hidden personal talents and in the responsibility sought for human society and nature, people found an answer to what they were seeking in Waldorf education. In countries like Belgium, France, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, and in Italy and Austria, Waldorf schools were slowly established.

Despite the geographic spread, the number of movement schools in July 1989 was small, with 454 Waldorf Schools worldwide. Outside of Europe, in particular, Waldorf education remained a rare phenomenon. Teachers in the few schools outside of Europe often experienced an uncomprehending, sometimes hostile environment. It took enormous courage for parents to send their children to a school outside mainstream education, parents responsible for the global spread of Waldorf education. Neither the political nor the scientific climate of the years between the end of WWII and the pivotal year 1989, fostered freedom in education; however, in Europe, in particular, independent school movements fought for parental school choice.

The anthropological basis of Waldorf education was generally seen as having a nimbus of inscrutable, secret lore and therefore was scientifically reproachable. Although throughout the decades the situation improved, periodically this kind of flat criticism repeated itself. In this atmosphere, a certain defensive mentality grew within the Waldorf movement that hindered, for quite some years, the so necessary educational dialogue.

A true worldwide dissemination of Waldorf education occurred only after the year 1989. In more or less all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, new Waldorf kindergartens and schools were founded, helping to implement new paradigms of education and to overcome the manacles of socialism. The first Waldorf seeds were planted in African countries, such as



Kenya and Tanzania, and more schools opened their doors in South Africa, especially after the election of Nelson Mandela as president in 1994 and the end of Apartheid. The Waldorf idea also spread throughout Latin America; in Argentina and Brazil, home to pioneer schools, Waldorf education now appeared outside the large metropolitan areas. With this stage, Waldorf education took root as a local phenomenon of and for local people and ceased to be a movement of expatriates. Only from 1996, did pioneers begin founding Waldorf schools in Asian countries, including Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand and India. These schools were based upon the well-functioning examples of Waldorf kindergartens and schools and assisted by European and American mentors. After what can be termed an imitation phase, teachers increasingly became researchers and developed their own culturally-based curricula. The design of these diverse curricula took years and was generally understood as an ongoing development process. Supported by the pioneer schools, many more Waldorf initiatives began in Asia in the following two decades.

Beginning in 1983, Jörgen Smit, the leader of the pedagogical section at Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, the headquarters of the international Anthroposophical Society, called for worldwide Waldorf conferences and invited colleagues from across the globe to meet each other, learn from each other, and experience how incredibly colourful the Waldorf movement expresses itself and creates new modalities. The Waldorf landscape changed tremendously through colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe and Africa and from the growing Asian movement. The landscape became more colourful, more manifold and multi-layered. At the same time, new pedagogical challenges arose against the backdrop of a world witnessing a growing gap between poor and rich. For decades, the Waldorf movement has been a phenomenon of the more established bourgeois middle-class, with parents taking an active role in the educational development and success of their children. Inherent in the foundations of Waldorf education are two potentially opposing values: the renewal of education through an anthropologically based approach and a strong social impulse. Quality education should be available for all children. This, at least, was the motivation of Emil Molt and Rudolf Steiner, and is shared by many people active today in the movement. In light of the need of many, many children in underprivileged or neglected environments, Waldorf initiatives began in the 1980s and 1990s in the townships of South Africa and in the favelas of Brazil, and also in Sierra Leone after a dreadful civil war destroyed nearly everything, to ensure a healthy restart for society. Socially responsible education and community organizing are immense fields of work in a huge number of countries, requiring tremendous initiative, currently only possible with economic support from Europe. So long as governments are not prepared to pay for independent education, initiatives for poor and underprivileged children are only possible through financial support from more well-off societies.

Since about the year 2000, a number of factors have led parents to seek educational alternatives: the growing academisation of education systems, greater and more advanced controls over schools, early achievement tests, and more rigid compulsory national curricula. Parental choices are different than the choices of politicians. Politicians, and often education scientists



and business people, generally prioritize outcomes and are interested in what they call human resources. Their arguments often sound human and friendly, but their process for achieving the outcomes they seek, and the outcomes themselves, create a rather conditioned, not necessarily positive, character of pupils.

Beginning in 2010, at least in Europe, education goals and education standards have become more unified, although the European Union defined education as a subsidiary task of the member states. In this same period, the level of educational performance has generally dropped. It appears that educational goals have also standardised globally, probably as a result of the comparative studies organised by OECD. Minimally, these studies contributed to a streamlined expectation. Finances for education in African and poorer Asian countries were approved by IMF only under condition that these equalising standards be introduced. Manifoldness and diversity have fallen silent.

Looking forward: Challenges in education

Against the current challenge of conformist global tendencies, the Waldorf movement strives, at times even fighting for, the emergence of the individual human being. Although standardised educational systems continue to carve away at Waldorf education, Waldorf schools maintain a strong wall of resistance to these tendencies, in the knowledge that the spiritual and physical health of children depends upon the ability of educational environments to foster individual growth.

Advancing digitalisation of kindergartens and schools and increasing media consumption by young students demands awareness and requires envisioning the parameters of an education that promotes a healthy, self-responsible and innovative life, and to take action vehemently to implement such an education. Digitalisation will continue to change all areas of life and, therefore, must be seriously addressed as one of the major or the major challenge for education and life in the future. Digital and media strategies have become the focus of recent research by national and international Waldorf institutes. In this respect, the Waldorf education movement seeks to play a ground-breaking role in fostering a healthy childhood and protecting human dignity for all.

From its inception, the Waldorf idea is about humanising school, teaching children according to their needs, helping them to unfold as individuals and operating schools in a self-responsible way. The more education and especially education strategies of ministries of education become standardized the world over (currently many policymakers favour competence-based education, which certainly is much better than the previous goal of rote memorisation), the more it is necessary to fight for independent schools with non-mainstream curricula. These schools bring sufficient creativity into the educational scenery to keep alive the goal of humanising schools in general. Beyond that, the coming generation of children and young people will teach us the priorities they urgently need to fulfil their missions in life. We are obligated to maintain



open minds and to observe the winds of change carefully and, above all, to keep the Waldorf educational institutions sufficiently flexible to always be ready to provide new solutions to new needs instead of relying on the old. This inner and outer flexibility is, perhaps, the most difficult challenge, as it does not allow us to be, how we are. It asks us to become, what we want to be. And this is constant, hard work.

With these foundational ideas and drive, the Waldorf movement developed in 80 countries, home to 1,200 schools, 2,000 kindergartens, and a number of Waldorf training centres worldwide. It is one of the most successful independent educational movements, with the potential to grow and to serve more and more children worldwide.

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