

Conditions for developing good practice in Steiner Waldorf Teacher Education Programmes

Introduction

To be a teacher in a Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner school is a marvellous and challenging profession. You need to be well prepared for the subject you teach. You will need to be able to develop faculties and capacities in building and maintaining good relationships with children and young people parents and colleagues. You will need to be adept and sensitive in observing children and young people. You will have a deep interest and sufficient knowledge in child and human development. You will express a commitment to explore anthroposophy as a path of knowledge and enquiry. Last, but certainly not least, you will need to nurture some artistic skills and the gift of improvisation.

Structural context

In many countries there are training centres, seminars or academic courses that offer a grounding and a preparation for this profession. After all, the quality of the education offered in the schools depends largely on the quality of the teacher education.

In countries where there is a national body – it is the responsibility and the task of the federation to formulate standards for Steiner Waldorf teacher education, and to support and develop the quality of teacher education. According to the context and conditions, a variety of different forms of teacher education have developed.

Being aware of the fact that one of the most important factors for the development of quality is the readiness of teacher educators to continue to learn and share their practice with colleagues in different contexts, the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum initiated the International Teacher Education Project (ITEP). This research project offers the possibility for regular exchange between teacher educators.

In countries without a national association or federation, Steiner Waldorf teacher education needs a set of basic requirements and good practice guidelines, in order to be included on the Steiner Waldorf World List. The following text adopted by the International Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (Hague Circle), describes these requirements and guidelines. Ideally, they will serve as a tool for self-assessment, or in a recognition process, when assessors chosen by the Hague Circle will write an 'expert opinion' and make a recommendation as to whether a teacher education centre should figure in the Steiner Waldorf World List, or not. ¹

¹ The International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) has adopted a similar text for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education. It is available here: <https://iaswece.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-training-EN-2.pdf>

Sometimes, points are formulated by employing intended ambiguity and a degree of open-ness – in order to cover a broad range of situations. Whether the teacher education course confers a state diploma, or is hosted by university, whether it is accessible only with prior academic learning, whether well-developed Waldorf schools exist in the country or not, all these elements and many others will influence and modify the training course. The following text is intended as a formulation of a series of fundamental recommended elements and practices, which can and should be adapted according to the cultural context, and especially with regards to the existing legal context for adult education.

Essential ingredients in a Steiner Waldorf Teacher Education Programme

A fundamental characteristic of any Waldorf institution – a nursery, a kindergarten, a school, or a teacher education programme – is the commitment to exploring and developing Steiner’s educational insights and indications. A deep interest in Steiner’s picture of the developing human being, along with an interest in individual and collaborative pedagogical research, will enable students and tutors to develop new forms adapted to the time and the place in which they are active.

‘Rudolf Steiner’ and ‘Waldorf’ are protected service trademarks.² The educational approach and its distinctive qualities are rooted in a set of core principles that are practised and renewed in a wide variety of contexts around the world. The *Hague Circle / International Council for Steiner Waldorf Education*, in partnership with the *Pedagogical Section*, has drawn up a list of required elements and features, as part of a recognition process for Steiner Waldorf Teacher Education Programmes, either by a national association, or an international professional body. The elements and features are based on work done by colleagues in the “*International Teacher Education Project*” and the IASWECE working group on training.

The education programme and faculty

1. A teacher education programme is based on continuing research and practice into Waldorf education, while taking an active interest in the wider educational discourse and a range of approaches to pedagogy and adult education.
2. The person responsible for the teacher education programme (e.g. the programme director) *has some years of teaching experience, both in a Waldorf school and in adult*

² To find out more about the trade mark, and/or to apply, consult the web page of the International Council: <https://www.waldorf-international.org/en/the-protection-of-the-educational-concept/prerequisites-and-procedure-in-awarding-license-rights/> or write to: info@waldorf-international.org

education, including programme review, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum research and development.

3. Members of the teaching faculty are qualified for their positions and responsibilities by virtue of their *teaching* experience in a Waldorf school and have a *teacher diploma* (Waldorf or other).

4. The training programme employs effective practices in adult education that take into account the learning styles of adults and support the development of creative and independent thinking.

5. The faculty and staff are committed to ongoing professional and personal development (participation in conferences, courses, action research groups, participation in the ITEP zoom meetings).

6. The training course content includes a balance of academic, artistic, reflexive and experiential/practical work and activities.

7. Courses make provision **for** mentored teaching, placements and internships for student teachers in Steiner Waldorf schools and early childhood settings.

8. The programme provides appropriate individual student support, feedback and assessment, and maintains records of attendance, course completion and other relevant documentation.

9. Curriculum and course content include a range of topics and themes that are brought in a variety of ways. See the section on Curriculum and Course Content below for a listing of specific themes and topics. The training course should include a minimum of 500 *directed learning hours*, plus mentored teaching practice / school experiences / practicum. (A *directed learning hour* embraces lectures, seminars and tutorials, discussions among students, artistic and craft activities. If a course offered has a substantial online element, a minimum of 200 hours should be in-person contact and learning.)

10. The programme leaders and/or faculty members are encouraged to become involved in the broader movement of Steiner Waldorf institutions and activities in their country, their region and the rest of the world, to cultivate connections with other educational professionals in their country, to participate in activities such as trainers' meetings and conferences, to undertake collaborative research groups, and working group activities on a regional, continental, and international level.

Course content to include:

- Continuing exploration and enquiry into the nature of the developing human being.

- Anthroposophy as a path of knowledge and practice, to enliven relationships to the world, each other and oneself, and to deepen a sense of enquiry and responsibility.
- Steiner's lectures on education.
- Child development.
- Waldorf approaches to curriculum, and pedagogical methods.
- Artistic practices.
- Aesthetic appreciation as a pedagogical tool.
- Theory, art and practice of context sensitivity and cultural diversity.
- Knowledge practices and the importance of self-development.
- General knowledge and specific professional knowledge.
- Theory, art and practice of individual and collaborative research (the teacher as researcher & artist; the teachers meeting at the heart of the school's educational work).
- History and philosophy of education and societal change.
- Meeting and working with parents in the school community.
- Collaborative governance, shared leadership, clear and effective management.
- Relevant legal responsibilities, including the duty to protect children from harm and promote their well-being, financial probity and public regulations.

Programme Organization

1. The programme recognizes and complies with relevant legal regulations and does not discriminate against any person based on ethnicity, faith, gender or culture.
2. The programme, as an expression of the free cultural life, has an appropriate legal body and operates as a not-for-profit organisation.
3. The programme has a clearly defined organizational structure, effectively implemented.
4. The programme has clearly articulated policies and procedures for admissions, enrolment, tuition, and programme completion.
5. Effective policies and procedures are in place covering concerns and complaints and health & safety.

*The International Council for Steiner Waldorf Education /
Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum*

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