

Introduction

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The three writers of the research papers that follow are qualified Waldorf teachers and graduates of the Centre for Creative Education in Cape Town, South Africa. Their papers are based on empirical investigations carried out in the final year of a four-year undergraduate degree course. All three explore the same broad theme: how does “*the story form*” work in Waldorf classrooms? The task of each researcher was to explore how the “universal grammar” of the narrative form (Bruner, 1996; Gottschall, 2012) manifested itself in a particular classroom situation.

Within this common theme, each writer pursued an ambitious research question of personal interest; and each drew on the ideas of a theorist of narrative in order to shape her question. The focus of Kate Giljam’s question was on a key feature of the story form: what Jerome Bruner (1996, p. 94) called “trouble” and Jonathan Gottschall (2012, p. 15) called “predicament”. Her research question became: *How are narrative predicaments created by the teacher and how do the children engage with them?*

Faatimah Solomon’s research question was the following: *How is narrative methodology used to connect the known to the unknown in a Waldorf main lesson?* Her question was derived from Kieran Egan’s sense of the neglected power of intuitively understood “abstract concepts”, which he saw as necessary pre-conditions for learning (Egan, 1986 p.8).

The research question asked by Charlotte Nash also drew its inspiration from Kieran Egan. He had argued that “the dialectical process of forming binary opposites and mediating between them” is a key component of learning (Egan, 1986 p. 15). Her question became: *How do binary opposites facilitate affective meaning and conceptual understanding in this classroom?*

For the purpose of their final year research project, each researcher was treated as a post-graduate student capable of independent work with the support of a supervisor. Their work, preceded by an introductory course in qualitative research, took about three months of full-time work. This was their first experience of research and of formal academic writing. The three months included two weeks of immersion in the complex world of a Waldorf primary school class; engagement in each case with a gifted and experienced teacher; the recording and analysis of an immense amount of data; and the writing of a detailed formal research report.

In all, this was a mind-stretching experience for young researchers. Each became deeply engaged in her research journey; and each journey became something of an intellectual quest, requiring courage, originality of mind and self-reflection. And all three research questions were eventually answered in fresh and unpredictable ways.

I commend their work to the readership of the RoSE Journal. It would be interesting to know of similar empirical research carried out in Waldorf classrooms elsewhere in the world.

References

- Bruner, J. (1996) *The culture of Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Egan, K. (1989) *Teaching as Story Telling: an alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gottschall, J. (2012) *The Story Telling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York: Mariner Books