An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers' Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

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ABSTRACT. This article is a collaborative inquiry into teaching practices conducted by four university academics and seven experienced Waldorf teachers. The aim was to develop dialogue and reflection on the localized practice of the Waldorf curriculum in Taiwan. The theory informing this research uses a rhizomatic metaphor of educational dissemination. This emphasizes that as an international movement with a common source and shared educational principles, Waldorf education can also grow in the form of localized pedagogical practices and curriculum, by drawing on the rich local cultural heritage and teacher artistry leading to new understandings. The project used the model of a layered curriculum. The individual projects were analyzed using Biesta's model of the three generic functions of schooling, socialization, qualification and subjectification. Whilst the outcomes of the project were important locally, the approach recommends itself internationally, including in Europe.

Key words: Steiner/Waldorf education, global and local elements, practitioner research

ABSTRAKT. Dieser Artikel ist eine gemeinsame Untersuchung von Unterrichtspraktiken, die von vier Universitätsdozenten und sieben erfahrenen Waldorflehrkräften durchgeführt wurde. Ziel war es, einen Dialog und eine Reflexion über die lokale Praxis des Waldorflehrplans in Taiwan zu entwickeln. Die Theorie, die dieser Forschung zugrunde liegt, verwendet eine rhizomatische Metapher der pädagogischen Verbreitung. Dies unterstreicht, dass die Waldorfpädagogik als internationale Bewegung mit einer gemeinsamen Quelle und gemeinsamen pädagogischen Grundsätzen auch in Form lokaler pädagogischer Praktiken und Lehrpläne wachsen kann, indem sie sich auf das reiche lokale Kulturerbe und die Kunstfertigkeit der Lehrkräfte stützt, was zu neuen Erkenntnissen und neue Praxis führt. Das Projekt verwendete das Modell eines mehrschichtigen Lehrplans. Die einzelnen Projekte wurden anhand von Biestas Modell der drei allgemeinen Funktionen der Schulbildung, Sozialisierung, Qualifizierung und Subjektivierung analysiert. Während die Ergebnisse des Projekts auf lokaler Ebene wichtig waren, empfiehlt sich der Ansatz auch international, auch in Europa.

Introduction

106 years after the founding of the Waldorf School in Stuttgart in Germany in 1919, Waldorf education has become an international, even global movement with educational institutions in 70 countries on all inhabited contents (Friends of Waldorf Education, 2025). In the course of this dissemination, originally from Germany, but also from Waldorf centers in the UK (Emerson College) and Sweden (Järna), and then

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generally from Europe, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, the direction of expansion has been from the Global North to the Global South, in particular to South America, Africa and Asia (Göbel, 2019, 2020, Rawson , 2024). Over the course of this dissemination of Waldorf education over the past 100 years, one could say that the initial process involved the transmission of a set educational practices and curriculum, that was widely held to be 'true' to the original model from Stuttgart, even though the languages changed. We can refer to this as the 'foundational narrative'.

As Boland (2015) points out, drawing on terminology that Oberman (2008) developed for her study of Waldorf education in North America, the first phases of dissemination were overwhelmingly 'purist', meaning loyal to what they imagined the original form of Waldorf to be. Among 'purists' in particular, there is often a conflation between practices of Waldorf education and some of Steiner's anthroposophical ideas, which following Steiner himself, should form no part of what is taught in the Waldorf school (Steiner, 2020). Hoffmann and Buck cite an example from Taiwan, where a study by Kung-Pei Tang (2010, p 29-30) "reports that there is a veritable fixation on the theory of cultural epochs and the threefold social structures." Much has changed in Taiwan since that study.

The second stage involves a process of accommodation of Waldorf to local educational cultures and forms, including hybrid forms that incorporated new ideas from non-Waldorf education, usually progressive aspects. The third stage is evolutionist and involves Waldorf practitioners further developing the educational heritage of Waldorf education as hitherto practiced, which, for example may involve much higher levels of adaptation to the 21st Century and its rapidly changing contexts. As Boland pointed out in 2015, there were few guidelines for doing this. Hoffmann and Buck (2024a) note that different countries fall into these different phases at different times, there is no uniform, overall evolution, though there are patterns of similarity in certain aspects, one being the trend from almost 100% anthroposophical background in the teaching body to much lower percentages, accompanied by what Barz (2012) described as the shift from puritanism to pragmatism.

One could say that Waldorf education in Taiwan typically began as purist, had to adapt, for example, fairly quickly to the challenges of teaching literacy in Mandarin, which cannot follow Steiner's original model of introducing the individual letters of the alphabet, which are phonetic, through drawings and stories that highlight the shape of the letters and the sound associated with them. As Langely and Militzer-Koppel (2018) has shown, this approach also doesn't work for teaching English and needs to be modified. In Taiwan, Waldorf education also has to adapt to the requirements of state exams and in a more general sense, the cultural expectations of parents.

The context in Taiwan

Waldorf education has been established in Taiwan for 30 years. As of December 2024, various government and private surveys show that there are 76 Waldorf education-related institutions across Taiwan, including 22 early childhood education and 54 experimental schools or non-school-based experimental education programs for grades 1 through 12. The largest school CiXin in Yilan has over 1,000 pupils and has custom built, anthroposophically designed architecture. These school have to align with the National 12 Year Curriculum but are free to structure how they do this. Up unto 2021, there have been an astonishing number of 84 degree theses, three PhDs and 62 journal papers, 94 of which were empirical and cover a wide range of topics, and nearly all of which were published in Mandarin (Hsueh, 2022). This remarkable achievement has to do with the Waldorf Institute at the National Tsinghua University in Hsinchu. In Taiwan, many master's and doctoral students at various universities have conducted research and written theses related to Waldorf education. The establishment of the Waldorf master's program at National Tsing Hua University has further elevated the academic significance of Waldorf education research.

Experimental education has a strong tradition in Taiwan since the Three Laws of Experimental Education and Taiwan is a leader in this respect in Asia, and even globally. Taiwan has encouraged a culture of experimental approaches including Montessori education, Waldorf education, Jena Plan, free schools, KIPP (Knowledge

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

12

is Power Program), TFT (Teaching for Taiwan, based on the Teaching for America Program, Indigenous experimental education, Ecology-oriented experimental education, and other less well-known approaches, and this has fructified the overall education culture in the country. With this project Waldorf education has been able to make a significant contribution. In Taiwan, Waldorf education also operates in diverse forms, including public Waldorf schools, private Waldorf schools, publicly funded but privately operated Waldorf schools, Waldorf homeschooling groups, and Waldorf experimental education institutions.

Adaptation

As Rawson (2024) has argued, this process of the dissemination involved two contradictions. The first being that as soon as Steiner died in 1925 a certain process of fossilization of practices set in, that was never part of Steiner's intention. Indeed, in the introduction to the first published curriculum (von Heydebrand, 1925), the editor summarized Steiner's intentions by saying that the ideal curriculum would always have to be adapted to the country, culture, language, external circumstances of the school and personalities of the teachers.

> The ideal curriculum must reflect the changing image of the developing human nature at its different ages, but like every ideal, it stands in contrast to the full reality of life and must adapt to it [including] the individuality of the teacher who faces a class, it includes the class itself with all the characteristics of each individual pupil, it includes the world-historical time and the particular place on earth with its applicable school laws and school authorities where the school that wants to realise the curriculum is located (von Heydebrand, 1925/ 2020, p.1, author trans.)..

For many years, in some cases over several generations, and in some cases, up to the present, what was taken to be the original curriculum was canonized and essentialized (sometimes even sanctified). At the same time in unintended ways and then increasingly deliberately, teachers began to adapt the curriculum and pedagogical practices to reflect local perspectives.

Though there has been little research on this, anecdotal evidence and experience suggests that teachers embody educational ideals and motivations related to their personal development and experiences of education and Waldorf education is grafted onto this stock. In this way cultural assumptions, expectations and dispositions shape the way Waldorf is taken up. This is a complex field that might be best approached through Bernstein's (2000) pedagogical discourse and his notion of a pedagogic device, which Bernstein describes as an ensemble of rules, procedures and tacit assumptions that are translated into classroom/ staffroom talk, curriculum and communication in relation to the micro and macro structuring of knowledge (Singh, 2002). Applied to a Waldorf context, the ensemble of structuring elements would include practices ("the way we do things here"), interpretations of Waldorf education through a local cultural lens and the influence of external advisors (usually from Global Northern countries and Waldorf traditions).

This adaptation also happened where school governance forms were adapted to local statutory requirements (i.e. in the case of schools with public funding) but also based on experience and the need to have structures of leadership and management that respond to the actual situation. Whilst the generative principle of collegiality remains, there are many different ways this can be interpreted and implemented.

Waldorf education as a transnational travelling educational approach that touches down locally differs in many ways from globally travelling policies promoted by transnational organizations, foundations, or even private educational consultancies, in that it is not explicitly part of a 'travelling policy' (Adikary and Lingard, 2018) because it is not being driven by an organization or policy group. The transmission of Waldorf education is not top down, because there is no 'top' with the resources to promote it. It is truly rhizomic in character, if not in intention, for the reasons we have discussed above, because of the implicit assumption that there is an original model. If anything, it resembles the "more cyclical, dynamic and spatialized perspectives (Lewis, 2021). Understanding how Waldorf really spreads and adapts is an area that would benefit from systematic research.

The rhizomic metaphor for adaptation

To some extent, the process of reflection in this project in Taiwan has also an element of decolonizing, not in the sense that Waldorf education has intentionally colonized (or missionized) anyone, but rather in the sense that critical questions have to be asked about the adaptation in an Asian country of a dominant idea from the West and to what extent it has been imported as an 'exotic', in the botanical sense, and what the basis for adaptation has been. This raises interesting questions about traditional and modern Chinese ideas about education, and in particular about the 'Taiwanization' or localization of Waldorf education.

Given the overriding mode of dissemination of Waldorf education from the Global North to the South, a decolonizing perspective suggests itself. Inspired by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012) notion a rhizomic structure of world literature as a post-colonial counterbalance to the dominance of colonial languages in literature- in Ngugi's case English in his plurilingual land Kenya , Boland and Rawson (2023) introduced this metaphor (which, of course, originally derived from Deleuze and Guattari's,1976, metaphor for deterritorializing knowledge), in the context of Waldorf education, comparing the original, intended dissemination as arboreal,, giving way to a decentralized structure in which local Waldorf initiatives grow from an 'invisible' network of ideas.
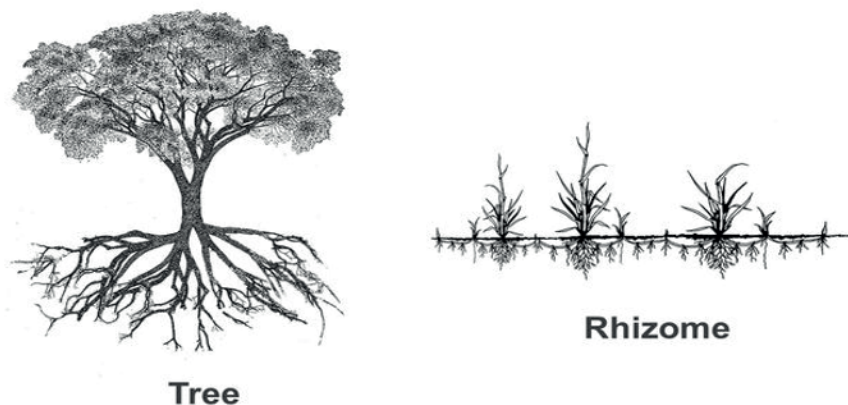

Rhizome

Tree

Figure 1 The contrast between an arboreal and rhizomic systems. The tree reproduces itself through fruits, the rhizome through its expanding network, in which theoretically all plants are linked.

In botanical reality mycorrhizal networks of fungal organisms called mycelium connect individual plants, sharing nutrition and information (Tudge, 2006. Wohlleben, 2016), which may indeed be a more appropriate metaphor for the way Waldorf schools could be linked, but this posits an ideal, situation which has generally not yet been achieved.

Figure 2 An image showing mycorrhizal networks linking trees in a forest as a appropriate metaphor for the links between Waldorf schools

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

14

However, none of these metaphors does full justice to the actual situation if we factor in the complexity of what formal concepts (e.g. as outlined by international Waldorf organizations) exist, what people think was/is intended, and what actually happens in each country and in each case, and who describes this. In Hoffmann and Buck's (2024) edited volumes of articles about the development of the Waldorf movement internationally there are reports about a number of countries, though unfortunately not Taiwan. This is a valuable contribution to the topic and highlights the question as to who can legitimately report on developments in any given country.

Most of the contributions are from academics who have researched aspects of Waldorf education in their country, which are often very insightful into perceptions of Waldorf from outside the movement, though some are well-known for being strongly critical of Waldorf education's links to anthroposophy. Sun (2024), for example offers a study of Waldorf education in China, which highlights the ways in which middle class, well-educated parents, who have been the main founders of Waldorf schools, seek an education which reflects their aspirations, their criticism of mainstream schools and its assumed affinities with traditional Chinese education and philosophy, rather than any strong connection to anthroposophy. This illustrates the point made above, that people who are drawn to Waldorf education, are often as motivated by their own educational ideals, as they are by the theory of Waldorf education. Since many such parents become teachers, the image used above, that Waldorf is grafted onto an existing stock, is appropriate.

Clearly any adaptation of Waldorf anywhere, even within Europe, raises many questions that have generally not been posed within the Waldorf discourse, but in the Global South, the question always involves a postcolonial perspective (Rawson, 2025). The contribution in Hoffmann and Buck from Kenya (Kagan et al, 2024) makes several relevant points with regard to decolonization, adaptation of Waldorf and the aspirations of parents and it is interesting to compare this to a similar study done on the history of Montessori education in Kenya, which also addresses the question of origins, adaptation and current developments (Abiodun, 2024). Formal education was introduced by European colonizers and the education system has remained strongly influenced by its British predecessor. Montessori was introduced in the Mid-20th Century by Catholic missionaries, whilst Waldorf education spread from South Africa, where it had also been introduced by white Europeans, mainly by European teacher educators, and is still very much guided by South African and European advisors. Both education systems appealed because their pedagogical approach, which focused on the developing children, was perceived as a strong contrast to mainstream public or private education. Both appealed to parents who were looking for a return to traditional African values, yet combined with a modern humanist approach, which appeals to urban, middle-class educated parents. Montessori has established itself much more strongly than Waldorf, with a number of state funded settings (which explains the fact that third of children come from working class and poor backgrounds) as well as private schools, often supported by international NGOs. The researcher makes the point that adapting the core Montessori principles,

> to the Kenyan cultural context involves thoughtful integration of the Montessori method with local traditions, values and educational needs…This involves understanding and respecting the diverse cultures within Kenya and reflecting these in the classroom environment and learning materials. For example, traditional Kenyan crafts, music, and stories can be included …This integration helps children connect their education with their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity and belonging…Engaging with local communities is vital for successful adaptation…For example, Kenyan festivals, traditional ceremonies and cultural practices can be integrated into classroom activities and lessons (Abiodun, 2024, p.40).

The Kenyan researchers summed up their study noting similar parental motivations:

> Having recognized the limitations of the mainstream education system, parents have sought out alternative education systems that prioritize the holistic development of the whole person. The Waldorf system, with its emphasis on creativity, imagination, and autonomy, has been seen as a viable alternative to the traditional Western-style education system. Although Waldorf education also has colonial origins and is also brought in by European 'agents' Kenyan parents and teachers emphasize the similarities between Waldorf educational and values (such as Ubuntu). Like precolonial educational systems in Kenya they argue that Waldorf embraces holistic self-expression through the emphasis on creativity and the arts and is based on the oral tradition, where

knowledge and skills were passed down from generation to generation through storytelling and other forms of spoken communication. Furthermore, the Waldorf system has been positioned as an alternative education system that promotes the preservation of the culture and knowledge of Kenyan people, helping to recreate and preserve local cultural heritages, and traditions through holistic education that relies on storytelling, crafts and rhythm (Kagan et al, 2024, p.109).

There are obvious similarities between the reception of Waldorf and Montessori, though one can doubt whether Waldorf schools are quite so expansive in relation to local communities and traditional crafts and materials. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents want above modern, Western education though without the exam pressure that mainstream still has.

The main difference in this present project is that the research on adaptation was conducted by experienced Waldorf teachers supported by university scholars who teach on a Waldorf Masters programme. As we report below, the central assumption was that the curriculum itself could be adapted to reflect pedagogical needs in Taiwan, whilst maintaining a relationship to core Waldorf principles. This is not parents and novice teachers seeing in Waldorf what they are looking for from their personal and cultural perspectives. Here is a group of senior teachers, some of whom have offered professional development within the Waldorf movement in Taiwan and some of whom are familiar with European practices having visited schools in Germany and the UK. Nor was the research team a group of academic outsiders, looking in, as it were. This was a group of very experienced insiders, who nevertheless conducted the research within the academic environment of a national university.

A layered curriculum

In recent years Bransby and Rawson (2022) have developed a layered model of curriculum, drawing on Steiner's notion of the ideal curriculum. Using an ecological model that locates curriculum within a meta-context of the educational principles of Waldorf education, and generative principles (Author, 2021), three nested layers of curriculum are envisaged.

1. A macro level that comprises an ideal-typical developmental sequence of themes relation to the process of individuation, which is deemed to be common to all Waldorf schools anywhere on the globe,

2. A meso level that comprises the content, skills and knowledge relevant to each country, taking local social, cultural and regulatory factors into account,

3. A micro level, in which individual teachers plan, enact and evaluate lessons that orientate themselves on the meso and macro levels.

This structure has the advantage that schools (and Bransby and Rawson take the view that schools determine curricula, not individual teachers) in a country like Taiwan can map out the knowledge and skills their students have to learn, and the methods to be used to achieve these, based on local considerations but using the macro-level framework for orientation and the whole is embedded in the general framework of Waldorf education.

The Context in Taiwan

In Taiwan, all Waldorf education, in essence, is considered experimental education and must comply with the Experimental Education Act to develop curricula with unique philosophies. Therefore, the implemented curriculum should showcase the uniqueness of Waldorf education. On the other hand, Waldorf education shares many commonalities with Taiwan's current implementation of the 12-year national curriculum guidelines, the most significant being the integrated learning process of competency-based pedagogy, trans-discipline, placed-based, and the development of diverse assessments.

The project

The project as started in 2021, with the circulation of an invitation from the Waldorf Centre at the Tsinghua University, entitled "The art of teaching and the learning community of teachers". Due to the pandemic, some of the initial meetings were held online. The research team met with the volunteers, who came from different Waldorf schools in Taiwan and discussed possible projects. The schools involved were, Taoyuan Renmei Waldorf, Hsinchu City Waldorf, Yilan Compassionate Waldorf (3 teachers), Hsinchu Zhaohai Waldorf and Changhua Athena Waldorf.

The teachers met regularly, for 30 days for one hour each, exchanging their plans and discussing their projects and some of them also gave courses in their own schools on action research and the need to adapt the curriculum to the Taiwan context. In 2022, the project began. In 2023 there was a presentation of work in progress and further dialogue.

A group of experienced teachers under the guidance of the authors, decided to review their curriculum and explore aspects that they wished to revise their subjects both from the perspective of an up-to-date curriculum but also from the perspective of Taiwanization. The process was centred in the university and involved wide ranging discussions, exchange and some input on new ways to considering curriculum based on the layered curriculum model, which was still being developed at this point, so that one outcome of the project would be a refinement of the layered curriculum approach. Most of the presentations were made to the wider group of students on the Tsinghua Masters Programme, some of whom work in Malaysia and Mainland China.

The individual lesson plans were documented using the following common heuristic framework:

- WHY? Why teach these topics? How do age and topics relate? What are the vertical relationships between topics?

- WHAT? What knowledge, skills, and attitudes must students learn in the curriculum topics? What content should be taught?

- HOW? What teaching methods should be applied for this topic? How should materials be selected? How should teaching be conducted?

The research methodology

The main methods used in their project were those of action research and collaborative practitioner research (Wells, 2008, Noffke and Somekh, 2013, Herr and Anderson, 2015)

The teacher participants in the project prepared drafts of their projects and presented the research group for feedback and were then developed into detailed plans. The teachers then taught the new main lesson blocks (usually 3 weeks in the so-called main lesson, the first two hours of each school day, though in some cases the teaching involved field trips). Each of the projects was documented including student material, photographs of the activities and feedback from students and each teacher presented this to the research and feedback was given. Those teachers who taught their new block more than once were able to refine and revise their documentation. In effect each participant wrote up their action research project as a master's level thesis.

Finally a book was published by the university (Hsueh, 2025) documenting the whole project and each of the pieces of partitioner research. Within Waldorf education internationally, this is if fairly unique, though in some other Masters programmes, individual projects are conducted and written up as theses. Where this project differs, is the in collaborative nature of the project and the academic level of the research.

The individual projects

The individual projects will be very briefly presented and the evaluation by one of the authors in consultation with the research team is then summarized. Space prevents a full description of each project, but each as evaluated using the following criteria:

- Curriculum appreciation and context for this topic,
- pedagogical aims in relation to the aims of Waldorf education, and in particular to developmental aspects of the education,
- content and course structure,
- pedagogical implementation process,
- teacher reflection.

In the book, the documentation each project was accompanied by a detailed discussion within each of these criteria. Space permits only brief mention of the individual projects.

My I-curriculum - Localized practice and reflection on the main course „Humans and Animals" for the fourth grade of Waldorf

In this project Hungche Lee explored the first zoology block in grade four, traditionally known as the human being and animals, based on his experience in two Waldorf schools over a number of years. He referred to the pedagogical process as My Self, in which the teacher in collaboration with the students (hence "My Self"). He explained the focus of the project as addressing three levels of questions, why, which looks at the pedagogical reasoning in relation to the development of the students as persons, how, which focused on the methods best suited to engaging the children existentially by providing experiences through which they can form a relationship.

His research question was:

What is the difference between teaching a curriculum on humans and animals in Germany a hundred years ago and teaching a curriculum on humans and animals in Taiwan a hundred years later? In the context of globalization and the post-epidemic era, what role do humans play in the natural ecology? What is the significance of the curriculum of humans and animals in contemporary Waldorf schools and what does it bring to children?

This experimental project chose animals to study that were familiar to the children and which belong to the local fauna of the Taoyuan area of Taiwan and included field trip, observations of nature and narrative. It is impractical for a class of children to observe wild animals, except for remote glimpses, which are also important in showing how animal observation requires patience and tolerance of disappointment, which are very relevant experiences for children used to getting more or less instant gratification of their needs. So therefore, teacher narrative is used to create vivid images of the animals in their form, movement, activities and life habits. Narrative enables the students to form a relationship to the object that is mediated by an adult, who has themselves formed a strong relationship with the object through their preparation.

This main lesson block was contextualized in terms of the curriculum before and after grade four with respect to the relationship of people to animals. From encounters in stories and folktales in the first two grades, the students learn about farming and animal husbandry in grade 3. Now in grade 4, the emphasis is on studying animals from a more the perspective of their types, including their bodily form mode of movement, feeding and life habits, before moving over the next years into more zoological study. In grade four the emphasis is on characterizing the animal types and then relating them to the human being, highlighting the aspect that human culture replaces with tools what animals can do with their anatomy, and that animals have no choice about their way of life. This element of human freedom does hand in hand with human responsibility (Rawson, et. al, 2014), which is a key aim in Waldorf education.

Practice and reflection on Waldorf's fourth-grade local geography block in grade 4.

Pohsun Hsu developed a new approach the grade 4 geography curriculum, which builds on the first three grades, in which children explore their local environments through the seasons, and in grade three look at local traditional farming methods (e.g. rice cultivation and fishing) and traditional and vernacular house building techniques. The preparation and documentation of the block involved reviewing the pedagogical rationale of this topic, identifying that this has strong developmental factors. The underlying assumption of Waldorf education is that certain themes that are connected to the emerging relationship between Self (as spiritual core of the person), the body, the social and natural environment (Rawson, 2024b). Certain experiences created by the teacher can prompt developmental tasks that resonate with the students' overall development.

In this case local geography connects the students to their immediate locality, including an awareness of historical aspects of the world (older building and roads) or work, local industries, local architecture and the way the environment has been shaped by human intervention (e.g. the straightening and channeling of the local river, and its submersion beneath urban and industrial development). Instead of simply being in a place, this activity, especially the field work and excursions, requires the students to attend to various elements, thus making a more conscious relationship to them. Furthermore, exploring the physical and human geography of the locality and cultivates the cognitive skills of translating direct experience into the form of a representation of physical space on a two-dimensional map.

This project was able to demonstrate close overlaps with the Taiwan national curriculum though highlighted that this Waldorf approach added a significant developmental perspective to the learning.

A further important aspect was that in the preparation the teacher himself developed a new relationship to the locality, which enhanced the authenticity of the process for the students. The teacher reflection records that;

In the local geography block, my initial understanding of the Hsinchu area was mostly limited to general sightseeing areas or public facilities. However, after living in Hsinchu District for a long time, I developed my own knowledge of Hsinchu District's industrial activities (lychees, fishing ports, glass, etc.), and the depth of ecological activities (wetlands, green grasslands). In selecting the appropriate content of this study of the locality, the preparation has gone through three transformation processes, and each planning stage has made different adjustments and arrangements according to the student status at that time..

Localized practice and reflection on the Waldorf ninth-grade „Taiwan History" main lesson.

One of the key areas of localization within the Waldorf curriculum is history, since all published versions offer a Eurocentric view of history and cultural evolution. In the various workshops and discussions in connection with the ongoing upperschool teacher training that has been running for a number of years in Yilan under the auspices of the Taiwan Waldorf Association, there has been a particular focus on the history and social science curriculum and Hsinhui Lin has been a regular contributor. The project including teaching blocks over two school years in two different Waldorf schools.

The focus in this block has been the grade 9 Taiwan history block. The planning started with a review of the developmental tasks (Bransby and Rawson, 2022, Rawson, 2024). The term developmental tasks derives from sociology and the life-course discourse (Havighurst, 1982, Hurrelmann and Quenzel, 2013, Hurrelmann and Bauer, 2018). Rawson (2024) has modified this approach for Waldorf education to take account of multiple factors that shape individual development. We can show these graphically as follows.
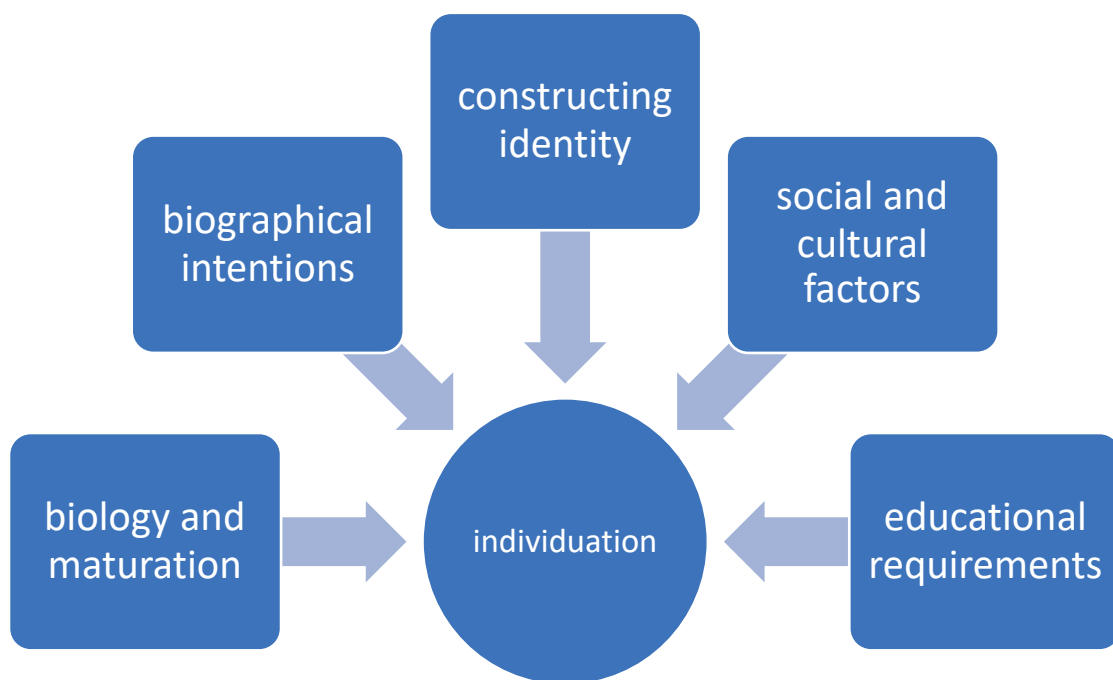
Figure 3 The factors that influence individual development

In grade 9 in Taiwan students face a number of developmental challenges, that have to do adolescence, the tradition Waldorf transition from the class teacher period to the high school, questions of identity in the Taiwan context, particularly in relation to the China-Taiwan issue, and all this in the context of youth in the age of smart phones and social media.

One pedagogical response through the curriculum is to provide students with a factual (and therefore more objective) account of Taiwan's past and the development of the Island and its culture and inviting students to take a personal (and therefore more subjective) position in response to this, including their own experiences.

The grade 9 history curriculum marks a transition between history as story up until grade 5, followed by a more chronological narrative up until class 8, connected to the geography curriculum: In grade 5 ancient history, grade 6 Asian early history and geography, grade 7, the Han colonization of Taiwan and the 'civilizing' of Taiwan's indigenous Aboriginal peoples, grade 8 modernization and industrialization of Taiwan. After grade 9, in which modern history is addressed, the following grades take a scientific look at the origins and human societies and then, in grades 11 and 12, global history from an Asian perspective.

Instead of following the usual historical sequence in grade 9 of following the sequence from ancient times, Aborigine cultures, the Dutch, Spanish, British colonial influences, including the role of missionaries, the Zheng periods, the Qing period in which Taiwan was formally annexed to China, the Japanese colonization and post Second World War developments, leading to the democratic processes of the part 30 years, this block took a reverse perspective starting in the present, by asking students to consider the variety of cultural factors influencing Taiwan society today. In this context the teacher introduced aspects of Aboriginal culture including myths, totem design and music. This exploration led them to recognize that most Aboriginal people after centuries of struggle, now identify themselves as Taiwanese.

The evaluation of these blocks showed high levels of student interest and participation and in particular in questions of Taiwan identity, as well as individual identity.

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

20

Localized practice and reflection on Waldorf's tenth grade „Ancient History" main lesson.

Yi Rui Chiu, who is a teacher at Yilan CiXin Waldorf school has also been a regular participant and contributor to the history workshops in the high school training. The theme of exploring the origins of humanity, early human prehistory and the transition to sedentary life forms and farming, leading to early urban development, is one that may not have an immediate appeal to sixteen-year-olds. However, the scientific aspects of the research, the theories guiding interpretations, the questions relating to myth and cultural memory and the aspects relating to cultural identity, ensure that students quickly get involved.

Yi Rui, who also works as a teacher educator has been among the most active proponents of the localization of Waldorf curriculum, bringing the latest research into the curriculum.

The evaluation of student response to these new blocks shows that the complex history of Taiwan and its movement away from identification with China, is one that strongly supports students in their personal orientation. In particular the multi-perspective view of history offers young people the possibility of escaping both nationalist narratives and Eurocentric readings and finding more nuanced and individual understandings.

People and Computers: Localized Practice and Reflection on Digital Media Education in Waldorf Schools.

Yihui Lin of Hsinchu Zhaohai Waldorf Experimental Educational Institution started with the rapid progress of artificial intelligence and digital media, which have ushered in the fifth economic model of change since industrialization.

In many countries until recently Waldorf education has taken a distancing position from all aspects of digital technology, until the recent developments in Europe with widespread recognition of the Waldorf approach to media literacy (Hübner, 2021). It is all the more remarkable then that this project developed completely independently of these new approaches (not least because the literature has only been available in German or English, and indeed not all Waldorf advisors are even aware of these innovations).

This project was designed to teach grade 9 and had no precedents in the existing published Waldorf literature. It therefore had the advantage of being able to construct curriculum on the basis of the teacher's perception of the developmental tasks, without having to engage with Waldorf practice traditions. It therefore took a historical approach looking briefly at the history of technology related to computation and communications. The location of the school is significant because the Hsinchu is a major centre for Taiwan's crucial IT industries, and the teacher's own 20 years background in software engineering, which enabled the students to form a personal relationship to the topic.

The initial pedagogical approach involved a playful introduction to software design, and the opportunities, limitations and risks of digital technology, a typical student comment was "computers can enable you to write 'hug' but they cannot reproduce the beauty and experience of a real hug".

The developmental approach can be seen in the original documentation.

During this period, adolescents undergo a dual phase: they display enthusiasm and activity within groups while simultaneously seeking privacy. They may outwardly appear confident but internally struggle with self-doubt or criticism. They may desire to be treated as adults at times but use their youth as an excuse for immature behavior at others. These adolescents are learning to view the world from various perspectives, experiencing oscillations between likes and dislikes, wants and aversions. Although their behavior may sometimes evoke anger or frustration, these are essential steps in their journey toward self-balancing.

Just as newborns must navigate the birthing process through sheer determination, ninth-grade adolescents must exhibit strong willpower to navigate their emerging self-awareness. Therefore, in their studies, adolescents are given opportunities to become aware of their behavior and its impact, to understand the complexity and fluidity

of their inner feelings, and to express their thoughts clearly and sensitively when facing the real world. These learning experiences during adolescence are akin to those of a newborn.

Standing at the threshold of an unknown future and a familiar past, adolescents face the dilemma of whether to move forward or retreat. Ninth grade serves as an integration of the learning experiences from the previous years, from connecting life experiences and phenomena observation to comparative analysis and conceptualizing principles in the external world.

This is not a quote from standard Waldorf literature but the lived experience of the teacher. This kind of developmental description shows the extent to which the pedagogy takes the developmental situation seriously.

In the reflection, the teacher recommended a neutral, non-judgmental and respectful approach to these technologies to counterbalance the impression the students may have had during their earlier experiences in Waldorf education, in which some teachers from a somewhat naive and ideological perspective have communicated a very negative view of digital technologies. The overriding thought behind this approach was that, "If a person does not understand the tools in his hands, it is equivalent to being controlled by them; just as he is not aware of the source of his thoughts and words, he is restricted by habits."

Local practice and reflection on the chemistry main curriculum

This project was led by Hsini Li of YiLan CiXin Waldorf Experimental School, who is also the coordinator of the high school training. She is convinced that science education also has to serve the developmental individuation process of each student by enabling them to form a personal relationship to the phenomena, as well as being able to apprehend general laws and systematic scientific methods.

The so-called phenomenological approach within Waldorf education is a special form of phenomenology, also known as a Goethean approach (Holdrege, 2005, 2018). Phenomenology in the specific sense used in Waldorf schools applies to the way science is taught. It means that science teaching starts with the encounter with a phenomenon (usually through direct perception or where this is not possible through accurate description, e.g. in astronomy). These are things are first observed, then described, contextualized and named and then a concept is formed that captures the characteristic of the phenomenon. Usually this leads to discussion about the significance of the phenomenon, for example for practical application, or in the case of biology, the implications for the organism, its environment and relationship to human activities.

This is how science is taught up until grade 8. In the high school, this approach is extended to include discussion of the laws governing phenomena, how living organism are classified, how chemical processes can be represented by formula or how mathematics is used to measure relationships. The origin of this process is Steiner's(1988) theory of knowledge, in which he described different approaches to inorganic, organic and cultural and psychological phenomena. The nature of the inorganic world can be defined by the laws of nature and causality and demonstrated by proof. In way of approaching the organic world is to try to perceive the organism in its processes of emergence, that is how it grows and forms. Each species has its own characteristic and original form, which Steiner called the type, which can then manifest in many variations, "the basic element is an organism in the form of the: a general form of the organism which includes within itself all particular forms. This general organism we will call, after the precedent of Goethe, the type. " The type is the idea of the organism, rather than the actual plant or animal, and each type can manifest in many subtypes or subspecies. This reference to Goethe as the source of this approach is why this is often referred to as Goethean science.

This is very much part of what aesthetic judgement is about. Aesthetic in this sense has little to do with beauty or high art, but rather relates to the original meaning of the word aesthesis in ancient Greek, which meant literally the experience of the senses. Though the German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) introduced the educational significance of aesthetic experience in this sense, Waldorf education through Rudolf Steiner has been more influenced by Goethe, whose interpretation of aesthetics as a process of self-formation, and Schiller's aesthetic theory, and generally the idea of Bildung during Goethe's times

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

22

(Soetebeer, 2018). Goethe's interpretation of aesthetic experience as a transformative process. In Herbart's (Hostinsk, 2017) aesthetics as a basis for education, the encounter with the world, if it is intensive and direct enough, produces an immediate, un-reflected total experience that is met by an inner felt affect. These two aspects are simultaneous and part of whole experience, which is the basis for an aesthetic judgement. It is partly objective, being directly empirical and it is partly subjective because it is the response of the individual, though in the first instance and in its naïve form, is not the result of education or existing concepts. The difference between an immediate perception and observation, is that in the latter the observer has been guided to direct their attention to specific aspects. In Goethe's reading of aesthetic experience has the following components:

- The aesthetic experience of aesthesis directs attention to the primary sensory qualities of colour, sound, shape, taste, etc. Perception is accompanied by feelings (affect). This serves knowledge formation.

- The concept of gestalt (a whole living entity) combines the passive sensory and active cognitive-affective elements and is thus the basis for the self-active self-formation of the person.

- Art, understood as all human artefacts, is the medium through which people can develop their self-active self-formation.

The aesthetic experience in education, that is, the intentional creation of opportunities to experience phenomena has its theoretical basis (known as Goethean science of phenomenology) in this way of encountering the world. Encountering the human world requires, following Steiner's theory of knowledge (1988), requires a different approach to that of the natural world, namely an interpretive approach.

From age twelve (grade 6) onwards science is separated out from general nature studies, and the chemistry curriculum begins in grade 6 and 7 in a specific sense begins. This differs significantly from the Taiwan National curriculum, which starts chemistry in grade three, using the atomic model expressed in formula. Hsini Li devotes a significant part of her theoretical work by comparing the phenomenological and atomic perspectives, providing a well-founded account of the advantages of the Waldorf approach, which is particularly relevant in Taiwan, where Waldorf literature on science teaching is not easily available and in which the national curriculum and culture places high value on the sciences. This account will certainly provide promotors of Waldorf science very coherent arguments. Part of this justification is the necessity to counter chemophobia, the association in lay people's minds of chemistry with artificial, hazardous and polluting products. The phenomenological approach starts, not with chemical products but with substances and matter and how they can be transformed by water, fire, and ai and by building on the students' vivid sensory experiences, and by linking these to everyday experiences (e.g. in the kitchen).

The planning included the consideration of the developmental tasks facing the students in grade 7. One interesting aspect of this was establishing that most of the students had recently entered puberty, with all the challenges that this brings with it. this is considerably later than is common for students in Europe (Largo, 2012, 2019, Eckert-Lind, 2020), which is 9.8 to 10.8 years. This is closer to the age of puberty when the Waldorf School was founded in the 1920s in Europe, and therefore in closer alignment to the traditional Waldorf curriculum.

The theme of fire and its transformative effects mirrors the transformations of bodily puberty and its psychological consequences, though not in a naïve way, but rather tangentially, through the theme of the possibility of transformative agency, and how this needs to be contained and kept safe. The dangers of uncontrolled fire as viscerally well-known to the students and therefore a certain moral quality is always present, without having to be explicit.

In terms of localization the teaching drew on local natural resources to explore the full cycle from raw material to finished products. The examples being salt won in Taiwan's coastal regions but also gold and copper mining, as well as other more common minerals and metals. Likewise in grade 8 food chemistry the students explore Taiwan's sugar production, local production of tofu from locally grown soya beans, including washing the gluten out of the flour and using the remaining starch to make liangpi or cold noodles and linking this directly with Taiwan cuisine. They also look at the production of lime from oyster shell that is used in the traditional building industry.

Local practice and reflection on art history through the transformation of the soul

Roujune Yu of the Institute of Educational art and Healing Mingdao University chose to address the question of the student's changing consciousness through a study of the changing human consciousness through history, by addressing art history. The assumption she makes is that," the development of art History corresponds to the development process of consciousness and civilization in the long history of human beings. Through the perspective of art, students can have a glimpse of the trajectory of civilization evolution and gain strength and inspiration from it."

In particular, the context of artificial intelligence requires everyone to cultivate the powers of discernment between real and fake, copy and original, authentic voice and artificial production. One 'antidote' to is through developing aesthetic judgement and this can be achieved through a balance of analysis of master works of art and artistic production- painting, writing poetry, so that the doing and studying become two side of understanding. Recognizing the 'voice' or 'hand' of a master is recognizing something of the being of the individual embedded in the signature or style of particular historical period or place. This encountering, or at least sensing of the essence in works of art enables the young person to recognize that they too have biographical intentions and a voice waiting to emerge. Art is one way of bringing this forth. As Biesta (2017) has commented, through art we encounter the other and the world and this can help the subject feel summonsed into being. The essence is approached first through the form that an artwork takes, through accurate description of how the work affects us bodily, emotionally and in our will, and then through appreciation of the means used to achieve the effects, then through the themes that come to expression. Like the phenomenological approach, this symptomatological approach is appropriate for approaching art, literature, music, and so on.

This involves "the science of art appreciation" and this is placed in the context of the developmental tasks facing young people in grade 9. This art appreciation involves studying, copying and contextualizing classic works of art, in in this case through a comparison on Western and Eastern art traditions. This is placed within the vertical context of the aesthetics and humanities stream of Waldorf high school curriculum in Taiwan, which looks at calligraphy, poetry and poetics and traditional Chinese painting, which form a cultural unity, in grade 10. In grade 11 a history of music follows the model of comparing Eastern and Western traditions, and in grade 12 architecture and philosophy, as well as modern art in both spheres.

The particularities of this project included mixed-age groups, instead of the usual strict structuring of classes in year groups of learners and an informal master-apprenticeship workshop approach, involving working together in the studio, observing and discussing works of art, copying and practicing techniques and visiting local art collections, where sketches were made. The approach is interdisciplinary, through which theme across other subjects (the ocean, religion, ecology, etc.) are integrated where appropriate.

Discussion

The seven examples each shed light on the process of curriculum design and the teaching process as well as common practical aspects of the localization of the curriculum. The main points can be summarized as follows.

The issue of adapting curriculum in response to the rapid changes in technology and the impact these are having socially, culturally and economically call for significant new accents in both the global and local Waldorf curricula. These developments bring with them many challenges and contradictions, including the impact on the natural and human environment, extreme polarization in the responses of different states to these, the imminent threat of conflict in Taiwan is reflected in actual conflicts in many other parts of the world. In the face of these challenges the issue of advanced human culture, democracy, and indeed the challenges to the historical consensus that science is something objective, mean that education cannot simply go on reproducing its traditional approach. The aspect of learning how to learn, learning discernment as an

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

24

antidote to the discourse driven by fake news and conspiracy theories. The benefits and threat of artificial intelligence, again points to an education that enables and encourages independent judgement making.

An interesting interpretation of the notion of a layered curriculum that distinguishes levels, was the emergence of the term 'levelled curriculum', meaning the absence of a hierarchy of curriculum. Akin to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's notion of a colonial hierarchy of languages, literature and cultures, the notion of a levelled discourse within the Waldorf movement, in which the current hierarchy of languages and literature on Waldorf education, is German, followed by English. A gesture was made by publishing this study firstly in Mandarin, and then offering this paper as an accessible summary.

The core aspect of localization was also a rediscovery of Taiwan history, culture, geography and animals. Even the topic of computers had a strongly Taiwan element because of Taiwan' position in the global IT world, as a major provider of chips used all over the world in all digital tools. In spite of all the risks of nationalism, a land like Taiwan is justified in cultivating pride in local achievements.

Another aspect that emerged was an affirmation of the phenomenological perspective of Waldorf education. We can cite Li's original project submission,

> See the phenomenon, observe and discuss it with real feelings, dialogue, dialectics, refinement, and obtain new and meaningful things that are meaningful and warm to the individual. Concepts will not only grow in knowledge, but also be connected to emotions, becoming the source and power of students' future actions. The local Waldorf curriculum in this study provides a positive and effective practical case in the overall education of thinking, emotion, and will, in combining individual and holistic topics, as well as individual freedom and responsibility in facing the world (Hsini Li, 2024).

This aspect highlighted the need for a reflective and transformative teacher education, including initial training and ongoing professional development. This project was seen as a model for supporting this process.

A further area of discussion that this project prompted was to look at the 12-school-year National Taiwan Curriculum, with its four-fold emphasis on learning, learning strategies and methods, application of practical performance. This highlighted the similar aspirations of Waldorf education, though it also highlighted the importance of the Waldorf aspect of literacy-orientated assessment, "based on the principles of literacy teaching, emphasizing integration, situational utilization, and through practice, the flexible application of „learning by doing/learning by doing", comprehensive performance, and reflection and dialectics" (Hsiaohua Hsueh, 2023).

The study also highlighted the benefits of the collaborative inquiry approach, particularly in terms of participation and the level of learning involved. As Hsueh (2022) put it,

> It can be seen from the important discussions in foreign Waldorf education journals that Waldorf research, on the one hand, attempts to demonstrate self-criticism and innovation Some imminent issues of social justice and ecological justice have become the real social conditions that the younger generation is most concerned about. All education must actively face them, and Waldorf cannot look from the outside, dealing with the weak, marginalized and oppressed. Individuals or groups must take more active actions (Hsiaohua Hsueh, 2022, p .113-114).

This reflects one of the core principles of Waldorf education, that of the collective responsibility of the teachers for the development of the education. This responsibility ideally is based on reflection, discussion, exchange and practitioner research. It also highlighted the fruitfulness of practitioner research supported by university staff trained in research methods, who work together at eye level with teachers.

Conclusions

This project demonstrates that curriculum development can be conducted at a high level through the partnership between experienced teachers and university colleagues experienced in research methodology. Although Steiner (2007) described the regular teachers' meetings as involving ongoing university-level research, this has mostly remained a good idea but rarely realized. This project shows that this can be

achieved in a school-university cooperation. The benefits are that experienced teachers develop their 'master' level competence, become in effect master-teachers, through this opportunity to contextualize their practice-based research in a wider academic discourse. At the same time, they become a resource for professional development within their own schools and in the Waldorf movement as a whole (many are involved in teacher education).

The other main outcome of the study has been that the layered curriculum model offers a useful tool for the localization of the international Waldorf curriculum. Through these projects the Waldorf movement has made a significant step towards localizing its curriculum and showing how this can be done. Through the peer review process, facilitated by the colleagues at Tsinghua University, a high level of development and refinement of the individual projects could be achieved. This is quite different to the individual initiatives that happen in an unsystematic way all the time among creative Waldorf teachers, innovations that are rarely presented, justified and evaluated, and which also often remain attached to a single teacher and 'disappear' when that teacher moves away of ceases to be active. Here we have a systematic, founded and well-researched process of innovative development.

This project contributes to the Taiwan Waldorf movement and to Taiwan's overall open culture of educational experimentation. It is also something that the Waldorf movement internationally can learn from and is in every sense research in Steiner (Waldorf) education, thus contributing to the mycorrhizal network of Waldorf discourse.

Martyn Rawson Hsiaohua Hsueh, Hornfay Chern: An Inquiry into Waldorf Teachers'
Localization of the Curriculum: Practice, Reflection, and Dialogue

26

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