

Assessment for learning and development in Waldorf education

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Abstract

This text explains the concept of assessment for learning in the context of Waldorf (Steiner) education and is an update of earlier versions. It defines assessment and outline the purposes and forms of assessment in general and assessment for learning in particular, showing typical examples of assessment. It looks at how criteria are formulated and the role of feedback.

Introduction

The etymology of the word assessment links it with the Latin verb (*Swaffield 2011*), 434) meaning ‘to sit beside’. It therefore suggest someone sitting beside a learner, in dialogue about a piece of work. Carlina Rinaldi of the early years’ programme Reggio Emilia in Italy defines assessment as ‘deciding what to give value to’ (Rinaldi 2006), 70).

The Swiss Waldorf teacher Robert Thomas (Thomas 2005) wrote, “for as long as schools have existed...one of the teacher’s main tasks has been to observe, evaluate, judge and classify the work of their students.” These are the main aspects of pedagogical evaluation. Waldorf schools have practiced a range of methods of pedagogical assessment since the founding of the first school in Stuttgart in 1919, though the activity has rarely been documented in a coherent way. A short chapter was included in the *Educational tasks and Content of the Waldorf Curriculum* (Avison & Rawson, 2014; Rawson & Richter, 2000) and then followed up with a small booklet on the subject (Mepham & Rawson 2001). David Mitchell (Mitchell 2005) published a collection of articles related to pedagogical evaluation in Waldorf education, including a paper I wrote and have since updated several times, outlining some basic principles and practices of pedagogical evaluation of assessment. For such an important theme, this is very little. In the United States a book was published on *Assessment for Learning in Waldorf Classrooms* (Ciborski & Ireland 2015), which focuses on measuring student progress towards lifelong learning goals. To my knowledge, it is also not a topic that gets much ‘air-time’ in Waldorf teacher education. In this paper I wish to build on my earlier work on what I have learned through practicing various forms of assessment for many years.

In their classic book on assessment, Black and Wiliam (Black & Wiliam 1998) commented that teachers do not take up even good ideas supported by research (such as assessment for learning) if these are presented as general principles and if they are not translated into everyday practice. The reason for this is not their obtuseness or resistance to change but the situated nature of classroom practice. There is no effective theory of teacher action. Therefore in this paper I have chosen to outline some principles, refer to some research, offer some practical examples from my own work and offer all this as a basis for cooperation at collegial

levels of working. As Wiliam and colleagues (Wiliam , Lee , Harrison , & Black 2004) note in another paper, it is also not a question of expecting teachers to discover by doing, what the ideal model for assessment is on the grounds that this is better than telling them what to do. Outlining other people’s theoretical and practical experiences may be the only way of getting the topic onto the agenda in schools. Unless assessment is externally required, it is rare in my experience that it is a topic of discussion among Waldorf teachers.

What do we mean by assessment?

In general terms, pedagogical assessment means noticing how pupils progress over time. Professor Mary-Jane Drummond (Drummond 2003) of the Cambridge University School of Education argues that every child has the right to a satisfying and fulfilling education and that this right generates the responsibility of teachers to enable this. She writes, “paramount ...is the responsibility to monitor the effects of their work so as to ensure that their good intentions for children are realized. The responsibility to assess, to watch and to understand learning, is an awesome one...in exercise of this responsibility, teachers are powerful agents in children’s well-being; the power of teachers to bring about progress and development through their teaching is dependent on their willingness to accept their responsibility for understanding learning” (Ibid. 10).

Let us unpack the principles implied in Drummond’s statement. Children have a right to a fulfilling education. This means that they also have the right to the outcomes of intelligent assessment. Assessment is essentially concerned with understanding learning and development. It is a central tenet and basic prerequisite of Waldorf education that teachers study and understand learning and development. A central part of Waldorf teacher education is about understanding learning and development from the perspective of an anthroposophical approach (what in German this is referred to as *Menschenkunde*) This involves the study of the general principles of human development and the foundations of human experience.

Waldorf teachers are expected to be able to apply this general understanding of learning as a set of heuristic tools to understand the particular children and young people in their school. The careful observation and understanding of each individual leads us back to appreciation of the general and common processes of learning and development. Knowing this enables teachers to design and plan their teaching. It is an iterative process of doing, observing, contemplating and reflecting that informs the creation and shaping of pedagogical situations in which learning and development can occur.

Assessment therefore involves a cycle of reflecting on, in and for teaching. The first is retrospective, looking back at what has been. The second involves intuitive knowing-in-practice, the ability to act intelligently in the pedagogical situation drawing on embodied, tacit working-knowledge and then the third, reflecting for teaching involves planning, anticipating and preparing for practice.

Drummond also makes the point that assessment is a moral task because;

At the heart of effective assessment, at the heart of worthwhile teaching and a proper understanding of learning, is the power of teachers to think, not just about pedagogical issues, but as moral beings. The power to make moral judgements about what is good

and worthwhile is added to the power of teachers to act, in classroom practice, to bring about the learning that is judged to be good and worthwhile, the expression of the idea they are striving for. (Ibid. 151-2).

Because assessment is about making moral judgements, the effects of these judgements on the pupils is pedagogical. Pedagogy is the enactment of the educational values we hold. It reflects who we are and is what we do and the effects this has on the pupils. Each action we make as a teacher has some implicit or explicit intention and purpose. As Pestalozzi said, *Leben bildet*, life shapes the child. Life shapes who we are and who we are shapes what we do and this shapes those who we do it to.

Of course what we experience is not the only force that shapes us. Who we uniquely are, determines how we engage with and deal with what we experience. It is an interactive and individual process for the learner and for the teacher. So what we do (and who we are) in relation to assessment pedagogically shapes the experience that the pupils have. Pedagogy is always located within a discourse or set of shared assumptions, understandings and intentions that. In order to understand the effect of our pedagogical actions on the pupils, we need fully understand what we are doing and why. Pedagogical assessment has an effect on the pupils and it may be what we intended. There are unconscious results of what we do, which may be different from what we say and think. Giving grades, for example, involves passing a judgement on a person and this has an effect on her that we may not intend. It signals what we value, what is most important to us. Often our messages are mixed and even contradictory.

Just as the rewarding of performance in tests sends a moral message, so too does understanding learning, showing interest in the person, being respectful, not responding to outer reactions of pupils but listening to the hidden message in their behaviour or appearance- all of which are also possible results of pedagogical assessment. By sending the signal that we are interested in a pupil's learning and person, we are valuing both the learning and the person.

That is why assessment requires the Aristotelian virtue of practical wisdom, *phronesis*, the art of living that makes us good. Professor Gert Biesta, one of the most influential academics in education today, has described this ability of educational judgement as a form of practical wisdom, (Biesta 2012). He suggests that this is more important than mastery of techniques for teachers. Teaching is a skilled craft involving the mastery of many techniques but relies on the ability to make wise judgements in practical life in the classroom. Biesta calls this skill virtuosity. Virtuosity is applied virtue.

Pedagogical assessment is a process that involves judgement based on accurate observation, weighing of evidence, critical thinking, care, interest and according to Drummond, appreciation of people and processes of learning. Assessment is an ongoing process that rarely requires a final or ultimate judgement. It is careful, respectful and tentative, provisional and iterative. It can have an enriching effect. It can open doors, rather than closing them. Assessment can have the interests of the child or young person at heart or it can be response to external requirements, quotas, targets and so on. At its best it is the act of understanding

what children can and need to learn next. It can shape our curriculum and lesson planning (Swaffield 2008).

Assessment involves a complex set of skills that are referred to as *assessment literacy* (not assessment of literacy), which means the ability to practice assessment, the ability to critically understand the issues related to assessment (e.g. the nature of performance, the validity of assessment data such as grades etc.) and the ability to communicate about assessment (Swaffield & Dudley 2011).

As Thomas (Thomas 2005) points out, in assessment there “is a ‘what’, a ‘how’ and a ‘who’. The ‘what’ consists of measurable facts, the ‘how’ contains a relationship between the learner and the teacher, and the ‘who’ indicates something that is unique, but not immediately tangible but is rather future-orientated, a kind of message from the future”(Ibid. 22). We generally assess the past, what has already happened. This means we have to create space for the person’s potential future development. Assessment can be an anticipation of the future and can help to bring a certain future about. It has influence over the future.

Therefore we need to give space for the voice of the person we are assessing and perhaps for something that hints at what they may become, the distinctive signature of that person in her deeds, gestures, and what they create. We have to learn to ‘read’ something of the unique emergent quality of the person. We have their words, written and spoken, we have their deeds, what they do and make, but we need to be sensitive to the particular impact this person has on us, on other people and on the world. We can call this *assessment for the future*.

This may sound esoteric and in a way it is, but I believe we can take account of this element practically in our approach to assessment in ways that are distinct to Waldorf education.

Waldorf and assessment

It would be fair to say that the theme of assessment came late to the Waldorf discourse and mostly prompted by external requirements and the forms taken depend very much on what the state expects or what is typical in mainstream schools. There have been relatively publications (Rawson & Richter, 2000, Mepham and Rawson, 2001, Ireland and Ciborski, 2015, Rawson, 2015, Rawson, 2016). A recent statement prepared for the Steiner Waldorf

Schools Fellowship was formulated as follows; firstly assessment was designated on of the three core practices.

Then following a list of learning dispositions, skills and knowledge, the generative principles for assessment are defined:

Teachers support their pupils' learning and development by generating knowledge of them using assessment for learning.

Generative principles:

- Assessment for learning is a vital support for pupils' learning and development.
- The learning being assessed takes the whole person into account, in ways described in this book, and includes assessment of socialization, qualification and appreciation of the development of the person.
- Assessment evaluates the things that Waldorf education values and is comprehensive.
- Waldorf practice uses formative, ipsative and summative assessment for different purposes.
- Since learning should be experiential and social, performance assessments are appropriate (e.g. naturally occurring evidence).
- Assessment gives teachers important feedback on their teaching as part of their planning reviewing process.
- Assessment should be effective, unobtrusive, embedded in classroom practice, unbureaucratic, yet also well-documented.

Then learning for assessment in Waldorf education is defined:

Waldorf education recognizes that assessment for learning, or learning-centred assessment, is a vital support for learning and development and to enable quality development and high levels of teaching effectiveness. The phrase *assessment for learning* interprets learning as defined in the section on learning and takes the whole human being into account. It is not just about measuring the delivery of cognitive, disciplinary knowledge and subject-based skills, but has to do with making judgements about what pupils' learning processes and overall development and appreciating their development as persons, their achievements and interests. It is also about recognizing emergent qualities in the person.

The remainder of the text overlaps with much that written in this text.

Purposes and forms of assessment

Assessment has different functions. These can be briefly outlined as follows:

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is process-orientated. It includes the monitoring of the ongoing learning process of individuals and groups and it is used to make adjustments to the learning process. It is concerned with how learning occurs and is either informally or formally noted by the teacher or is used to provide feedback to students. Knowing how pupils are learning, what difficulties they may have, what they can do well enables teachers to offer the right kind of support at the right time and provides the teacher essential information about the effects of her teaching. Therefore, formative modes of assessment are used to accompany learning processes and give individual pupils ongoing and concrete feedback. It is important that pupils understand in age-sensitive and language appropriate ways what the learning aims are and what criteria will be applied to assess a particular assignment or block (what Americans call rubrics), how to achieve them and how they are currently doing. This can be done verbally at the start of a block or for older pupils it can also be provided in writing so they can refer to it. Teachers use informal and formal formative assessment in their ongoing lesson reviewing and planning processes.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment makes judgements about whether outcomes have been achieved. This kind of assessment can be used to establish if a student has completed a task successfully, has learned what was required. It usually occurs at the end of a period or block of learning before a new stage or phase starts. It is often formalized by tests with clear criteria for achievement. It requires a judgement based on evidence as to whether a pupil has achieved what they set out to achieve. This assumes that there is baseline of criteria defining what pupils are supposed to achieve. In state schools, summative assessment is most commonly used for purposes of accountability to external bodies, e.g. by highlighting how many students pass exams at certain levels. This often affects the status of the school. Summative assessment can be based on the outcomes of a series of episodes of learning collected in a portfolio. Black and colleagues (Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall, & Serret 2011) make the point that collegial collaboration is important in designing appropriate tests and assessment arrangements.

The tasks should be carefully designed to include tasks that are as realistic as possible and which provide opportunity for creativity and encourage richness of language. Pupils need to have access to all the relevant information to answer the questions and the techniques required. If work is assessed that is done in groups or outside the classroom (e.g. homework), one has to be aware of the extent of coaching and support. The alternative is not necessarily a high-pressure situation like an exam and the learning should produce 'natural evidence'.

There needs to be a range of tasks since no one task is likely to involve all the skills, knowledge and attitudes being assessed. These should be collected in a portfolio. The criteria for marking tasks need to be clear to all involved and broken down into concrete steps or stages if necessary. Where holistic assessment is used, for example to judge creative writing and the quality of writing in essays. Thus there needs to be a balance of 'hard' and 'soft' criteria. Finally having tasks moderated by teachers who don't know the student or who are not currently teaching them is useful in the dialogue between first and second marker. The fact that the first marker knows the pupil well is both an advantage and a disadvantage. However by using evidence from the text and taking other recent work into account, it is possible to affirm a first marker's judgement. Once more, it is ideal when subject teachers get

together and discuss assessments in a concrete way using examples. Summative methods are used at the end of learning blocks and year-end assessments to show performance of groups or individuals over time and for purposes of quality assurance.

Ipsative-referenced assessment

Ipsa is Latin for self, therefore ipsative means self-referenced. That means a pupil's performance is evaluated against her own prior performance. This means assessment is relative to the person. The same summative achievement might mean a great improvement and effort for one person or the result of little effort and no improvement for another. Ipsative assessment is a way of individualizing feedback to the person, taking that person's whole situation into account. In effect, this is *the* Waldorf way of assessing and it is certainly the most relevant way to assess individuals in classes with a wide range of abilities and even including children with learning disabilities. It means the student is not competing against others but with herself. The pupil asks, "can I do better than last time? Can I improve on what I have achieved so far?" Ipsative assessment gives the individual an answer to this question. An example of this in my school is the use of feedback sheets after each main lesson block (or half-term or project). The students gather their feedback sheets in a folder. In a tutorial conversation the student and tutor look back over the sheets and discuss trends and tendencies. Here the comparison is between subjects over time by the same person, rather with comparisons with anyone else or standardized criteria.

Ipsative methods are used in one-to-one pedagogical conversations, both informal and formal, in which the learner is helped to recognize her own progress measured against her own previous achievements and levels of participation. Thus the pupil has the feeling that she is not competing with others or external standards but is trying to do better, or maintaining her own standards. Children and young people undergo all manner of developmental crises prompted from outside or through changes in themselves and this often impacts on school learning. They need to be helped to see what these causes and symptoms are, recognize the effect they are having on them, rather than having the feeling "I am too stupid" or "it's the teacher's fault that I don't get it". Then they can find ways of moving on with the help of the teachers. Waldorf schools practice individual case studies in which a group of teachers who teach a particular pupil meet, share their experiences of the pupil, look at her work across all subjects and activities, discuss her situation in school, take into account her overall development throughout childhood (as much is known). The parents are involved and can contribute their perspective and when the pupils are old enough, they too can contribute their own views in age-sensitive ways (though they usually don't participate in the case study itself). The teachers try to form a picture of the pupil's learning and developmental pathway, how it has been and what is now in the current situation and try to sense the nature and character of the emergent person and her biographical intentions. The purpose of such case studies is to grasp the 'meaning' or signature of the pupil's biographic trajectory through her life course so the teachers can understand her situation better. Of course the process also leads to possible support and interventions. It is also a significant pedagogical learning process for the teachers involved.

Diagnostic assessment This can be used to identify whether individual pupils need support and as a basis for a judgement what kind of help is necessary and available. Diagnostic assessment is sometimes associated with a focus on problems and deficits.

Assessment for learning This approach seeks to interpret evidence for the use of learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. It involves sharing learning goals with pupils. It involves them in self-assessment and provides them with feedback, which leads them to recognize the next step. It assumes that every student can improve (Assessment Reform Group, (Group, 2002).

Assessment for learning *can* be instrumentalised to monitor how students attain specified learning outcomes, as Swaffield (Swaffield 2011) points out. It is often presented as an effective way of achieving targets, though if the aim is the overall well-being of the pupil, then it combines the best aspects of assessment. However, the basic process if it is linked to a notion of learning that understands it as the development of the whole person (and not just of exam grades and specified cognitive learning outcomes).

Evaluative assessment

This is used by teachers to evaluate whether methods of learning were as effective as hoped. Here the teaching is evaluated, not the pupils.

Peer-assessment and self-assessment

Firstly pupils should be involved in designing assessment procedures as much as possible. Among other things this helps them appreciate the nature of assessment. When pupils are invited to assess each other's work, performance and presentations, they learn to do so in a considerate, fair, sensitive, tactful but honest manner. They learn how to frame and then apply criteria and the experience what it means to make judgements of assessment. This strengthens their own ability to assess themselves. Above all the range of feedback given by peers, by class mates is always astonishingly diverse and rich. This is one way of approaching the future-quality of achievements and the potential of the person. It is a human and non-bureaucratic way of valuing the uniqueness of a person- the actual anti-dote to standardization.

A complete assessment would involve a self-assessment, the peer-assessment and that of the teacher, whose greater experience is very important. These three dimensions also encompass the social context the learner is embedded within, and is a process that as Thomas suggests, enriches the cultural climate of the school.

Methods of assessing

The key to assessment is framing learning outcomes in the first place, for which concrete evidence can be found. Learning outcomes have to be transparent, comprehensible to the students and teacher and concrete enough that we can show evidence supporting their attainment. If something is evident, it is evident to all involved who understand and are involved in the actual situation. Students and other teachers must be able to recognize it.

Ideally all teachers of the same subject agree what learning outcomes are appropriate for subject-based competencies and all teachers should agree what key or general competencies are deemed as outcomes and what evidence can be collected. The reality is that this frequently breaks down for a variety of reasons. Thus it is a core task of school leadership (and probably

national associations of Waldorf schools) to ensure that criteria and procedures are established for all subjects, in ways that can allow maximum freedom for teaching and yet provides benchmarks for orientation.

Assessment can be used to identify what outcomes are possible and desirable for a particular group and thus can be a basis for judging the progress of individual learners. Evaluative assessment can be used to judge whether a particular approach, particular curriculum activity or material is as effective as hoped or intended. It can of course be used to judge the quality of the teaching and the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher.

Modes of assessment include, observation and monitoring of performance or activities, projects, group work using checklists with criteria, including naturally occurring evidence, feedback on main lesson books, portfolios, presentations, portfolios (in which pupils select the work they want assessed), end of written block tests, oral exams (often in small groups), self-evaluation.

The following table shows typical types of assessment in a Waldorf upper school setting (modified from a model by Swaffield and Dudley(Swaffield & Dudley 2011).

| Activity | Timescale and form | Assessment purpose | What could these assessment outcomes be used for? |
|---|---|--------------------|---|
| 1. A pupil's question or comment in a lesson reveals a level of understanding that is greater or lesser than the teacher expected. The teacher attunes her response carefully and makes a mental note of the exchange | Ongoing in any lesson Teacher makes mental or written notes | Formative | Planning immediate subsequent teaching, redirecting the pupil's learning. |
| 2. A teacher marks a pupil's work or judges her oral contribution in a class discussion. The teacher gives prompt feedback on where the objectives were met, where there are gaps, and how improvements can be made. | Daily/weekly Teacher's records of assignments and outcomes, oral written feedback to assignment when handed back | Formative | Giving students ongoing written or oral feedback. Planning future teaching. Checking that learning is progressing, recording issues that need addressing. Contributing to the overall assessment for a block, providing fine-tuning advice on learning, identifying micro-improvements. |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 3. The teacher poses questions orally or in written form in a lesson to see how the pupils are progressing in their learning. | Mid-block Teacher's records, lesson plan and review | Formative | Checking and judging levels of progress. Identifying aspects that need to be explained again. Planning subsequent lessons |
| 4. A teacher plans a focused assessment at the end of a block, in which the pupils are to apply their recent learning. This can take the form of a written test or homework with tasks requiring the application of new and old learning. | End of a main lesson block Teacher's records, feedback sheet | Summative Diagnostic Evaluative | Evidence that learning outcomes have been achieved. Identifying students that need learning support Planning next block. Teacher self-evaluates teaching |
| 5. Portfolio of work done over the block. | End of a main lesson block Teacher's records Feedback sheet End of year/half-year written report | Formative Summative Diagnostic Evaluative | Giving formative differentiated feedback about gaps in learning, mapping out next steps (feedback sheet). Evidence that learning outcomes have been met. Identifying needs for learning support Planning for next block Teacher self-evaluates teaching |
| 6. Sitting an exam/ gathering continuous assessment grades/ or a combination (e.g. 20% exam, 80% assessments) | End of year | Summative | Gaining a qualification |

Hattie on assessment

There is overwhelming evidence that assessment is the most significant factor in improving the quality of learning, in particular when assessment for learning is used (AssessmentReformGroup, 1999; Swaffield & Dudley 2011). Assessment can provide feedback to students and teachers, thus leading to better teaching and learning. The New Zealand academic John Hattie has investigated the educational literature for evidence of what supports learning. He published the results and the implications for teachers in his famous book *Visible Learning* (Hattie, 2012). Hattie has been publishing on the theme of assessment for many years, stressing the importance of feedback for learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The fundamental claim of his study is, as he put it in a recent interview (Fernstrom 2015), "know thy impact". This means that teachers who are able to assess the impact of their teaching on the actual learning behaviour of their pupils have the most beneficial effect on learning. This is particularly effective when they do this within the community of teachers in their school. He states that there are many ways of being an excellent teacher and we should learn to discern how these work. The relevant debate about what makes good teaching and learning should be between teachers within a school culture. Good teachers are those who seek and work with evidence of their impact.

Hattie also points out that the teachers should ensure “ that students are aware of what success in a series of lessons looks like, near the start of the lessons, and having transparent (to the students) and defensible decisions about the best proportion of surface and deep learning (in their teaching and in their assessments)”. That means, students should know what a successful piece of work looks like, what a completed task is, what words like ‘good’ and ‘well done’ mean in concrete terms. That means the pupils should be aware what the minimum learning outcomes look like. If they wish to do better, the assessment should inform them what they would have to do to attain a better result.

Hattie also stresses the importance of school culture. A culture of assessment is as important as teacher-student and student-student relationships. Central to this school culture is an atmosphere of trust; “you need a culture of high trust for teachers and students to discuss their impact, what is working, and as critically what is not working. All learning feeds on error, mistakes and misunderstanding. High trust is necessary for this learning to progress. Also most of us are wary of progressing if there is unfairness, fear of failure, and criticism for "not knowing". Absolutely we need high trust to explore, to make mistakes, to learn, and to have fun in learning.”

On the subject of giving pupils grades, Hattie has an interesting perspective. He suggests that the only reason for giving students grades is to enable them to learn what they can do next. In his words, “grades can be beneficial to students WHEN they are accompanied with information that the student understands about "where to next". Without this kind of feedback, grades are of little use at any age. I would be asking about the nature and quality of feedback at every age, asking about how and what students understand when they are given feedback (such as grades), and teach students and teachers to optimize the "where to next" feedback. Debates about grades alone are not helpful.”

This is a very helpful perspective on grades for Waldorf teachers. Grades only make sense if they are accompanied by feedback telling the student what she has to do to achieve the aim of the next task, or in the case of failure, what she needs to do to achieve what is required. This means giving a note or grade with formative feedback that highlights the next learning step. This question as to the effect of giving even young children grades and notes has been sharply put into focus recently in Germany by Ulrike Keller (Keller, 2012) who has written about the injustice of grading children’s work and how grades take away children’s interest in learning. Sabine Czerny (Czerny 2010) has criticized how many bureaucratic aspects of schooling, including the dependence on a grading system of notes, is used to enforce compliance and

control children and teachers. She argues that forcing children to attain standardized learning goals has gained dominance over the interest in children's development and prevents children getting the individual support they need. She notes that the prescribed outcomes take no account of children's developmental processes, let alone make allowances for personal circumstances and individual crises. She argues that the current system in Germany is more concerned *when* attainment occurs rather than *how* and she criticizes the fact that tasks are set in which only a percentage of the children will be able to achieve them- it is neither foreseen nor desired that all children perform well, thus making it inevitable that there will be many losers, and that from an early age (a point also made forcibly by Verhaeghe (Verhaeghe 2013), as I discuss later).

Her conclusion is that children are increasingly de-motivated and alienated by the grading system. She concludes that "there is an evil in the fact that we continuously have the need to measure children, another in the fact that we don't even distinguish between different kinds of achievement, nor do we provide adequate circumstances under which this measurement occurs" (Ibid. 345)

Assessment for learning: Implications for practice

If we take the points made by John Hattie above and what I have outlined above about the nature of assessment for learning, we can identify several key points. I will illustrate these points using an example from my own practice, which is reproduced at the end of this paper. At the beginning of each main lesson block, some of my colleagues (in the subjects of English, Biology, Chemistry and Art History) and I give the student a sheet that outlines the content and aimed for learning outcomes of the block as well as advice on methods and information they need for the work. The learning outcomes form the criteria for the assessment of the block (examples can be found in the appendix).

This outline enables the students to understand what is expected of them. It does not prescribe what each individual will learn, that is open-ended, but it does describe the minimum that is expected of each pupil. Since we give these blocks each year we need only modify them, rather than inventing them anew each time. In fact we learn by doing this, and modify them accordingly. The student must know what the aims of the unit of learning (e.g. a main lesson block) are at the start. This includes an overview of the content and the criteria and mode for the assessment (i.e. what they have to do by the end of the block to have achieved the aims and learning outcomes of the block). This is briefly outlined in the Shakespeare block paper in the appendix.

I have long since abandoned the primitive method of correcting students' tests or homework and handing it back simply with a grade (e.g. 15 out 20 correct). This has almost no learning effect. The teacher spends hours marking endless papers. The students get the results back, look at them for about 5 seconds and that is the end of the learning effect. Yet everyone demands that the teacher does her work in doing the marking. When the student gets home, the parents may ask, "what grade did you get in the test?" The student answers with a number. End of meaningful conversation.

It is far more effective to set tasks that the students themselves can mark. If it is a vocabulary test or a test about any other information that the students have been given, they can compare it with their own records. It is a basic principle of assessment for learning that that students cannot be assessed on specific information that hasn't been provided by the teacher. Checking one's own work against the original information and getting students to mark each other's work, is a far more effective and interesting process for students because it enables them to take control over their learning.

When the assignment is more complex, such as writing thoughtful comments and interpretations, the teacher's feedback is important. For practical reasons, I try not to get the whole class to hand in an essay at the same time, otherwise I have no time left for lesson preparation and other tasks. I prefer to see plans and drafts of essays and give feedback in the lesson promptly. Thus students have the chance to alter and improve the essay, thus learning far more than doing all the work and then discovering that it was not very good. The motivation to re-work a completed task is very limited, compared to the motivation of preparing something really good.

There are several points about this approach that are important; firstly, the emphasis is on the learner, not the teacher or the curriculum- these serve the learner. That means in assessment the learner has to be involved, informed in terms she can understand and be the recipient of useful feedback. One could say the Waldorf aspect of the curriculum is what comes out in terms of transformation of the people involved. Learning and development go hand in hand, with the learning process driving the development. Many aspects of emotional, cognitive, social, linguistic development arise in and through learning. It is the purpose of the Waldorf curriculum, to provide experiences that enable learning and development to occur.

A second point is that if we describe learning outcomes, these represent a minimum that we expect every learner to be able to achieve. If it is worth teaching, it is worth learning and our job is to ensure that the learner can do just that. That does not cap learning- far from it. My students always surprise me what some of them learn and can do. I wouldn't be able to, nor would I want to, define that. I repeat, the learning outcomes mentioned are a minimum and I give a scale of attainment from strong to weak to indicate if more than the minimum has been achieved.

Learning outcomes have to be concrete enough that we can show evidence of them. Much learning happens within the person and may not even be visible, though we may intuit that it is there. Apart from which, many learning outcomes only manifest much later and thus remain invisible to us. If we have an understanding of learning that sees it as the transformation of the whole person (body, soul and mind) over time, then we can't expect to be able to generate evidence for all of this process. The person who best knows what has been learned is the learner. However, it is useful and valid to assess evidence that is visible.

Providing students with feedback

I have mentioned feedback frequently so far. It may be helpful to have a closer look at what this means. Providing students with formative feedback during the learning process can enhance learning. However, as John Hattie and Gregory Yates (Hattie & Yates, 2014) point out, research shows that there is an empathy gap in feedback between students and teachers. Teachers are convinced that they regularly provide useful feedback, yet outside observers rate this as little and rarely given and students often consider that their teachers provide infrequent and low-level feedback, if at all!

Hattie and Clarke (2019) summarize that feedback sits in a formative assessment culture as formative evaluation/assessment, and has the primary function of closing the gap between what the pupil can do and what they need to be able to do and by bridge this gap leading learners from where they are, which is probably within their comfort zone and out of this into the more challenging learning zone, without driving them into the panic zone! Good feedback requires criteria for successes and examples what this might look like. Giving feedback means understanding how pupils learn in the first place. Responding to mistakes is obviously an important area in which feedback can support learning and this requires that the learners have resilient dispositions as learners and are willing to learn from mistakes and corrections. Hattie and Clarke point out that mixed ability learning groups are a prerequisite for maximising teacher and pupil expectations and thus set the context for feedback. They also make the important point that praise and feedback about learning should not be confused because praise often distracts from the actual need to look at weaknesses in the learning. Both are needed but have different functions: “well done, you really achieved something, but this aspect would be better if...”. As they also put it, “there is negative correlation between external rewards and task performance. Feedback in all forms should avoid comparison with other students”((ibid, 47). Feedback is ipsative.

In my workshops on feedback in the context of assessment for learning, Waldorf teachers attending frequently claim that they give regular and useful feedback, just as the research shows. They believe that they are doing a sound job and providing much feedback. The problem, as the research shows, is that feedback given at the group level (e.g. on handing back an assignment and addressing the class as a whole) is experienced as irrelevant by those who gave correct answers and is ignored by those who didn't. Students ‘tune-out’ when generic advice is given. Students, especially those in need of support, need personalized feedback, either verbally or in written form. Teachers confronted with this fact usually claim that they have no time to deal with more than a few individuals. This is no doubt true, though it depends on how one teaches. If there is a clear ‘working part’ to the lesson, the teacher can use this time to speak to individuals. I also avoid giving the whole class the same assignment in the same timeframe. That means I don't have to hand back so many assignments at once. This spreads the work over the week.

Also giving praise is considered by teachers as positive and valuable feedback. However, if this is done too much, it becomes counter-productive. “If you praise a good deal, students

learn that you are a teacher that praises a good deal, and that is all” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 47). Praise needs to be specific and perhaps proportional. Is it necessary to praise people for doing what they are supposed to do anyway? Isn't praise appropriate for exceptional achievements that go above and beyond the norm. It can be motivational with weak students, as long as their individual effort merits comment.

Of course, the effectiveness of feedback depends on many factors, which boil down to three questions: where is the student going (i.e. what are the aims)? How is the students doing right now? and what is the next step? This means there needs to be clearly articulated goals, since feedback needs a context. I have aims that I share with the students and those which I don't. Among those that I don't explicitly share are notions such as; the aim of my teaching is to create learning situations in which individuals are called upon to step up, take responsibility, and engage with the world in ways that enables to come into being as individuals- as subjects. I do tell the students that there are criteria that I don't assess because all learning involves biographical relevance that I have no access to (nor expect to know). I also tell them that I seek to learn from the whole process so that I can grow professionally. However, there clear criteria that I can share and that reflect my personal conviction about what is important and not just external criteria that have to be fulfilled for exams. In language learning I am convinced that active participation in the learning community is the most important aspect that leads to learning. I tell them this and try to explain it to them (my arguments include the idea that natural language learning occurs in meaning practice and communicative relationships- hence participation as the first and most important criteria. The opposite is of course true; if you don't participate you can't expect to learn much. The worst a student can do is hinder others from participating by excluding them or using verbal or behavioural violence against other members. Any one doing that is going to get very low grades from me, quite apart from my formative and ipsative assessment! The other criteria practically write themselves because they belong to the practice of my English teaching.

Here is an example taken from a recent English block:

Class 11 English morning lesson block: short stories
October 2018, (8.00 until 9.30, Monday to Friday over three weeks)
Teacher Dr. Martyn Rawson

Aims

In this block we will work with the short story genre of literature, understanding what makes a good short story, studying examples of good short stories and writing short stories. We will also practice skills required for the MSA exam. We will compile a book of short stories by the end of the block.

Specific criteria

- Active participation in the group work and class discussions.
- Speaking English as much as possible in the lessons.
- Understanding and commenting of texts
- Understanding the main characteristics of short stories (plot and structure, character, setting/location, narrative perspective, the theme and climax.
- Showing evidence of learning from mistakes.
- Keeping a portfolio of texts, short stories and notes.
- Writing and developing at least one short story.
- Level of English usage*

(*this can be demonstrated using standard European Qualifications Framework for Languages, if required. Usually I just assess language level across the range of skills.)

In the case of this teaching block, students wrote analyses of shorts stories I gave them and they wrote drafts of their own short stories. These were corrected in the lesson with each student (whilst the others were working on their tasks) and formative and ipsative feedback about this specific assignment was given verbally and more general issues could be discussed individually (specific weaknesses, work habits etc.). This assumes a lesson plan that enables the teacher time in the lesson to work with individuals. At the end of the block I gave them a feedback sheet that was both formative and summative (usually within a week of the end of the block). This looks like this:

Feedback sheet (to the short-story block described above)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Short story block October 2018 | Name: |
| Criteria | - + |
| Active participation | |
| Speaking English | |
| Understanding short story structures | |
| Evidence of re-working texts | |
| Portfolio complete | |
| Own short story | |
| Grade at MSA level | |

Comment:

The assessment is indicated by a cross along the continuum between – and +. This indicates a general tendency and has no upper limit. The only exception is the grade in the last line that has to be given as a state requirement. This grade in effect translates the criteria above. I give a personal comment below, which generally praises excellent work or describes specific steps the student can take to improve her level of attainment.

This is a very simple form of giving documented feedback that also provides me with a record of achievement that flows into the overall assessment and the annual report. Behind it stands my own record keeping, which records written work handed in, and notes made each week about student behaviour in group work and in the lessons (i.e. speaking English in informal situations and group work). There are two more example from my upper school teaching (my other subjects are taught in German).

The feedback sheet has summative character in that it sums up the attainments of the whole main lesson block. During the block, student's work is continuously seen, corrected and given back with feedback. The students are also required to write a reflection on the block. Since they are used to doing this, it requires no further explanation here. However, the students are aware that they can write about what they found interesting or not, what was difficult, how their work changed over the block and looking, back what they felt had been helpful. They do not shy away from offering constructive criticism of the lessons, class-mates and teachers. The student should be able to self-assess whether she has achieved the learning outcomes and will be able to understand why she achieved them or not. It is not shown here, but the students have an identical feedback sheet for their own self-assessment. This can be compared with the teacher's feedback and if necessary a conversation can be held about the implications.

The marking of the work and the feedback must show the student how the learning outcomes were achieved and what the next learning step is. If the outcomes are not or only partly

achieved, I must tell the student in terms she can understand, what she has to do to achieve this and how to go about it. This should be done soon, preferably whilst this subject is still being taught, so that the work is done in context and with the support of the teacher if necessary. If the feedback is too long after the block, it makes no sense and is usually not done.

Process-orientated feedback is valued more than final grades (Hattie and Yates, 2014). Progress is measured less against abstract and general goals as in terms of the student's own achievements over time (more, less, getting more skilled, making fewer mistakes etc.).

As all the literature on feedback notes, a feedback culture depends on students feeling able to make mistakes, meaning that it is OK to make mistakes because we can learn from them. In fact, especially in foreign language learning, it is practically impossible not to make mistakes, though it is possible *not* to learn from them, but rather to go on repeating them.

What is very important is that the tasks are scaffolded to involve a stepped sequence of mastery of the skills in question, by offering three levels;

- a) initial knowledge acquisition in a new area,
- b) applying knowledge and skills previously learned and
- c) exhibiting strong levels of mastery or expertise.

At the first level, students need feedback that relates to what they need to know, including basic skills and vocabulary. They need assurance and corrective feedback so they can gain confidence. The second level requires students to apply what they have learned to a wider range of tasks, finding connections and seeing relationships. This enables them to elaborate on what they know and can do in a context that makes sense to them. Positive suggestions can help here (“strong use of adjectives and adverbs gives the story new dimensions”, “character is well-described, now what about plot?”, “what else do you think is important?”). Feedback directs attention to connections.

At the third level of feedback, the teacher takes time to appreciate the virtues of the work. One needs to elaborate on the achievement, reflecting back on the relationships between process and outcome. Self-assessment is also important at this stage because self-correcting shows and requires high levels of learning. What students produce should be valued to enhance the experience of expansive learning (i.e. their learning is self-motivated and is not merely a response to external requirements). At this level students do not require feedback as frequently or as quickly as novices because they are largely self-regulating.

Feedback is effective when (paraphrasing Hattie and Yates, 2014):

- The process “resides in what is received and interpreted by the student, rather than what a teacher gives or believes has taken place”.
- Feedback works best when the learner knows the criteria in advance.
- Feedback cues attention to the task or aim (rather than to the person).
- Feedback engages the learner just above the level they are at.

- Feedback appeals to expansive (i.e. self-motivated) learning.
- Feedback is most effective in a classroom climate in which mistakes are accepted and learning from them assumed.
- Feedback works best when teachers acknowledge their own need to learn and modify their teaching.

Nyquist (2001) distinguishes between:

- Weak feedback: students are given their grades.
- Feedback alone: students are given grades plus information about the possible correct answers.
- Weak formative assessment: students are given the correct results plus some information.
- Moderate formative assessment: students are given information about correct results, some explanations and some specific suggestions for improvement.
- Strong formative assessment: students are given information about correct results, some explanation, specific activities to undertake in order to improve. (quoted in (William 2011) p. 7)

This is a helpful overview that can be applied to a range of learning situations. It makes the point that grades are next to useless in terms of feedback.

Forms of assessment documentation

Assessment can take different forms, depending on the type of assessment and the purpose it is put to. Informal assessment may need no documentation. The teacher simply thinks about a situation and enacts the assessment by modifying the teaching or through an informal comment to the student. However, it is useful to keep notes on the observations one makes. These can be simple and use rubrics or symbols that the teacher herself understands. I keep a table with the class list and record whether the assignment or task was adequately fulfilled and any unusual or important aspects.

The next level of formality is to record the notes or grades given with some kind of comment for each task evaluated. Feedback sheets are the easiest form of recording assessment. By keeping a copy of the feedback sheet given to each pupil, the teacher has a fairly comprehensive record of all assessments. I put all the feedback sheets in the photocopier and copy them in A5 booklet form. This keeps them all together and easy to store. When I have such feedback sheets, this simplifies the process of writing an annual report. The report simply puts into sentence form the criteria one has applied to the assessment.

In my school the students collect the feedback sheets from each block (or half-termly report) in a folder and use these as a basis for tutorial conversations in which the student and tutor can discuss more general aspects of school work, motivation, interests, difficulties and so on. These tutorials can be as regular as necessary and as possible. In class 9 and 10 these can be obligatory, given way to a needs basis, in which either student or tutor can request a meeting. Likewise the feedback sheets for students can be made available to the teachers' group when a pupil study is done. The feedback sheet is only one dimension of the picture the teachers

form of the person and her work and relationships, but it nevertheless gives a comprehensive picture, if the feedback sheets are done well. Thus feedback sheets have a formative and summative function, but also an important diagnostic function as part of pupil studies and evaluations.

Pupil studies (case studies) are a form of formative and diagnostic assessment, in which all the teachers who teach a particular student share their experiences of the person being studied in order to understand her better. This understanding can be used to address problems or simply as an example through which the teachers can school their powers of observation, thinking and judgement about individuals. There is a wide range of literature on pupil studies (Mepham & Rawson 2001; Mitchell 2012; Wiechert, 2012), so I will detail the activity here. One point I would make however, is that, like all forms of assessment, a pupil study can have a powerful effect on the person being studied and thus needs to be done with strict adherence to ethical principles, including rigorous and critical self-reflection. As Peter Kelly of the University of Plymouth (Kelly, 2011) has pointed out, teachers have unconsidered, unconscious responses to pupils that may privilege some and disadvantage others in the way we respond to them, how we observe and judge them and their activities. Therefore, it is particularly important in pupil case studies that each teacher practices critical reflection to identify such tacit attitudes and habits of speech and action.

Assessing competencies

Most educational plans have adopted the notion of competencies, which are defined as knowledge, skills and attitudes in a particular field. This move to defining learning outcomes in terms of competencies reflects both the lifelong learning agenda and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO policies of focusing learning on outcomes that are relevant for participation in new knowledge economies. Key or core competencies have long been defined as the preconditions for active participation in contemporary society by European and international agencies (Bjørnåvold, 2001; OECD, 2005; OJEU, 2006). Bjørnåvold (ibid. 225) includes lifelong learning, the ability to participate in learning organizations and the ability to learn from one's biographical experiences as central key competencies.

The New Zealand Council for Education Research has modified the OECDs definition of competence by describing them as “capabilities for living and lifelong learning”(Hipkins, Bolstad , Boyd, & McDowall 2014). They point out that competencies are not specific things that one has or knows but cross-curricular capabilities such as learning to be and learning live with others, that cannot be located in a single subject. They ask teachers provocatively, “how does today’s subject-based learning (e.g. in English or maths) provide opportunities for individuals to realise their potential as they live their lives, both now and in the future, however that unfolds?”(Ibid. 16). The key competencies the New Zealand curriculum seeks to promote should enable young people to:

- Know who they are, what they value and why, and where they fit in. This self-awareness includes recognising difference and appreciating diversity.
- Be willing and able to imagine what it might feel like to walk on others’ shoes.

- Question knowledge claims, rather than take them at face value.
- Look beyond immediate causes to consider the joined-up nature of things and events in the world.
- Think critically, creatively and meta-cognitively.
- Cultivate curiosity and a sense of wanting to know.
- Show resilience in the face of challenges and uncertainties (Hipkins et al., 2014)

These are competencies that Waldorf teachers can closely identify with. If we examine our written Waldorf curricula (e.g. (Rawson & Richter, 2000; Richter 2006) we can find aims that resonate with these spread across the subjects. We assume that the combination of good teaching and the Waldorf curriculum will provide opportunities for these competencies to grow. But we don't assess them. Assessment in Waldorf schools, as far as I can see, is restricted to annual reports, monitoring by class teachers and then formal tests within subjects. Nowhere, have I seen coherent, deliberate assessment of such competencies, except in those few schools who work with competence portfolios. This is a theme I will return to later.

In Germany competencies are assessed in schools primarily within the context of subject-based learning (i.e. in maths, in biology, in German as mother tongue or in English as a foreign language), especially at the upper levels of school graduation qualifications, such as the Abitur (Pepper, 2011),338). Because of the restrictions imposed on Waldorf schools in many Bundesländer in Germany, the assessment of key competencies is almost exclusively based on subject-based knowledge and skills and assessed in formal exams and measured against standardized learning outcomes and levels.

I believe this influences Waldorf teachers in how they assess the work of students in the upper school. Subject knowledge and skill dominates in all forms of formal assessment. Very little awareness is shown of key competencies, which are implicit in much teaching and learning, but rather explicitly highlighted. Even interdisciplinary aspects of key competencies are neglected since most subject teachers focus on the knowledge and skills related to their subject. Subject learning however is only a small part of competencies, even if we take to somewhat dated approach of identifying subject, method, social and self-competencies.

Waldorf education is of course interested in enabling young people to develop the full range of competencies. In fact, in Germany, a whole book was published explaining what these are (Götte, Loebell, & Maurer, 2009). I don't believe this publication has great influence on practice, which is a pity since it contains a very well-argued case for what Waldorf understands by the term competence.

The problem with subject-based perspectives of competence and formal, summative assessment methods (written tests) is that this approach ignores a number of basic facts about learning. Key competencies are deeper level skills than subject knowledge and the components of knowledge, skills and attitude can only be identified and assessed in interaction rather than in isolation. As Pepper notes,

Knowledge cannot be applied without skills, skills cannot be applied without knowledge and neither will be applied without supporting attitudes (based on

underlying values). Furthermore, information about one component cannot be accessed by simply assessing another component by proxy; the relationships between knowledge, skills and attitudes are neither uniform nor linear. Since the key competences are intended to be motivating and to prepare learners for lifelong learning, they need to be applied in a range of relevant and real or authentic contexts. (Pepper, *ibid.* 344)

He concludes that assessing key competences means accessing students' knowledge, skills and attitudes through their application in a range of relevant, real and authentic contexts. Furthermore, we know from research that much learning is social and associated with social practices (Billet, 2009) and that using only assessment forms that involve individuals isolated from others because we valorise individuality rather than sociality, is a very limited perspective.

It is necessary to tease out what the problems are with our conventional way of understanding competences. Firstly, the conventional view sees knowledge, skills and attitudes as fixed, permanent properties of a person, once acquired the person has them always. An assessment that takes this view based on a single situation (e.g. an exam) does not take into account the possibility that this competence could be expanded given the right opportunities or it might decrease over time, if not used. The level achieved in a single exam does not tell us what that person can do in 6 months. It overlooks that fact that competences are bound closely to specific situations in which they were learned. The idea that competences can be transferred is unproven.

Therefore it makes sense only to make judgements about a person on the basis of demonstrated knowledge, skill and attitude over time and in different situations. The way we get students to demonstrate competences must be open enough to allow the student to demonstrate what they can do, rather than try to isolate what they can't yet do. Changes in performance may indicate that the person is learning. In certain phases of learning that which has been learned has to be opened up, challenged, deconstructed so that it can be re-learned at a new level. We see this naturally occurring when students in puberty go through phases when they become inarticulate, unable to concentrate, or forget what they have known. They are undergoing processes of restructuring that neurologists have identified.

How many teachers would agree with Gordon Wells who writes that knowledge is not something people possess but an activity we engage in? He wrote, "knowing can thus be most adequately understood as the intentional activity of individuals who, as members of a community, make use of and produce representations in the collaborative attempt to better understand and transform their shared world" (Wells 1999). If this is the case, at least even partially, it has significance for assessment. As Delandshere (Delandshere 2002), 1479) puts it, "If what we know cannot be separated from how we know and from the experiences and activities that shape it, then the assessment questions have to be framed in such a way as to be consistent with this theoretical perspective..."

One of the key problems with assessment is that it poses the question, "what do the pupils know?" without answering the question, "what do we mean by 'know'?" Although we may

have a working theory about knowledge (i.e. it is what I know), in fact we generally don't know what it means to know something, or at least we have one-sided and partial understanding of what knowledge is. Many teachers don't really distinguish between propositional, theoretical knowledge and tacit, implicit and embodied knowledge, practical know-how, knowledge of something (i.e. knowledge of its existence), knowledge for something (applied knowledge in order to do something) and knowing-in-doing. These are all valid but different kinds of knowledge. Without getting too philosophical, it should be clear that the question of knowledge and knowing relates to our understanding of learning on the one hand, and our understanding of the nature of reality on the other.

Thus assessment requires an adequate theory of knowledge and knowing that account for what knowledge is and how it is generated. Is knowledge acquired through internalization or is it constructed? Is learning a process of acquisition, participation, input-output, transformation of the person, or all of these? On the other this requires us to choose between a notion of reality (that which we are learning about) as something pre-existent in the world just waiting for us to become aware of it, or is reality constructed socially (i.e. people in a certain cultures have the following explanations for phenomena), or is knowledge of reality created by the person internally, or what? How many Waldorf teachers could explain what the theory of knowledge and learning is that underpins Waldorf education? I suspect a survey would come up with a wide range of answers, usually subject-specific.

Possibilities for Assessing Competences

Given that evidence of competencies can generally be found in real or authentic situations involving complex problems and groups of people, we have to look first at how dispositions to competencies can be developed. This means that the teaching primarily has to provide opportunities for work on problems that are real to a group, a class, a community or the world (Hipkins et al., 2014), 137). The teaching has to make use of different modes of learning and engage in collective knowledge building and collective action. There needs to be support in critically reflecting and taking multiple perspectives.

Secondly we need to be aware of the reasons we are assessing key competencies. These can be summarized briefly in a table.

| Purpose | Appropriate assessment tasks and tools |
|---|---|
| Accountability, reporting and qualifying | |
| Summative assessment results are shared with students, parents, the wider community, used for applications to further and higher education. | This method has traditionally been met by exams. Key competencies can be evidenced through learning outcomes that are appropriate to the complexity of the skills involved and documented on a unit by unit basis (punctuated ongoing assessment) rather than only at the end of the period of study. Assessment for learning can also be used for summative purposes in units. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Improving teaching and learning | |
| This includes formative, ipsative, diagnostic and evaluative assessment for learning and the assessment of teaching | Tasks can be given that are open, creative and that provide evidence of learning and development. Students know what the aims are and get regular feedback. Teachers evaluate their own and others' teaching and teaching concepts and make improvements. Practice-based inquiry is used to research practice. |
| Further lifelong learning | |
| Here the focus extends assessment for learning to dispositions and actions. It involves students in decision-making and reviewing. It involves elements of biographical learning and informal learning (including outside of school). | Students are involved in self-assessment and upper school students are given support in structured reflection. Students are given support through conversations with teachers about strengthening learning, identities, personal goals and careers. Methods are used to encourage self-directed learning, team work, negotiating, research, presentation of learning outcomes to empower them to continue learning after the minimum has been achieved. This encourages expansive, self-motivated learning based on interest in the interconnectedness of social life and nature and in the will to solve complex problems in the world. |

Following Hipkins (Hipkins 2007; Hipkins , Boyd , & Joyce 2007), tasks that support and enable the assessment of key competencies have the following characteristics:

- The learning that can be done if the task is clear to students and teachers.
- The task must afford opportunities to use the competence appropriately.
- The task involves some kind of performance, that is a real task is fulfilled that is located in a meaningful context and doing something that the students experience as relevant. Assessment should be in a context that is meaningful to the student and draws on dispositional components. In Waldorf terms, this means that the task must engage the pupil's will and feel meaningful.
- The assessment should occur over time, preferably across multiple contexts in which each context afford the use of the competence in different ways.
- Both the learner and the assessing teacher are clear about what kinds of evidence are required and thus the assessment should be based on clearly formulated criteria and evidence that is evident to all concerned.
- The process of assessment is also formative and empowers the learners by helping them to understand their learning better.
- There needs to be clear feedback based on the evidence that make the achievements and the next steps clear to the students.
- When making an overall judgement about competency, several episodes over a period of time are included and several assessments are taken into account.
- Ideally more than one person is involved in the judgement.

- If the students are old enough, they should be involved in the assessment process, which should be collaborative.

Other factors that need to be taken into account include the fact that students and teachers need to know about knowing and how knowledge is generated, at least at a practical level. It is necessary to foster dispositions to learning. This can be done by encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning (e.g. by not doing everything for them, not telling them the outcome before they have understood the process, by not giving the definition before the experience- in other words following the principles of Waldorf education!). In Waldorf terms it means strengthening the will to learn and then providing examples of how to go about it. Students need to know how they learn best, what works for them. As Hipkins puts it, “we believe assessment needs to help them to build coherent narratives about their identities as people who practice, persist, and overcome obstacles to immediate learning success.” And of course we need to offer rich learning contexts both in school and out of school.

Group work can be the focus for dual assessment. As in a drama production, the whole work is the product of many people working together, though individual contributions can be singled out within this context and valued in themselves. In other words, the project can be assessed, the participation in the project can be assessed and the individual achievement can be assessed. It means that tasks can integrate learning, knowledge and skills from different fields. Below I give an example how projects can be assessed.

Other methods include learning logs or journals, in which students record their experiences with learning. Portfolios are ideal (and been adequately described elsewhere, e.g. (Koch, 2010)). Learning narratives is a learning story that documents a complex situation (a class play or social practical) in which the learner then shows what the challenges were, what skills, knowledge and attitudes she brought to the task, how she developed these through the activity, what obstacles occurred and how these were overcome, what her role was and what others contributed. These can be illustrated with photos, eyewitness accounts, feedback from others and so on.

The competence portfolio can be a tool that can be used to document competencies by combining the elements just listed. It is important that these are well-scaffolded, that is introduced in small steps from class 9 onwards so that the students understand and value their use. Then they can take responsibility for their competence portfolio in class 11 or 12, when they really need it. If they are not introduced early in simplified form, the task of introducing them can swamp the teachers and students at a time when they should be using the portfolio to draw out make conscious their learning process, rather than devoting their time and energy to learning how to use a portfolio!

One of the most interesting forms of assessment is what is known as naturally occurring evidence. This is evidence derived from activities in a range of real contexts and in everyday life over a period of time (Hipkins 2012). That means that evidence should not be derived from contrived assessment events. Evidence can be collected in any form that occurs that appears to the competence in question in use. In other words, pupils’s work that is produced in the normal course of lesson can be used. The examples can be copied and collated over

time. This is easiest with written work, or with products that can be photographed, recorded or filmed, but the same principle applies with oral work (a presentation or participation in discussion, responding to or giving feedback, asking questions and sustaining dialogue) performance. The important thing here is that the teacher documents the occurrence using criteria. Here having colleagues collaborating and mutually confirming judgements is important.

Hipkins (Hipkins 2012), 106) makes the point that naturally occurring does not mean spontaneously occurring. Teachers need to design meaningful tasks that create opportunities for students to demonstrate their competence, without creating artificial or contrived situations. And they must be able and willing to document these occurrences.

What are the risks of assessment?

There are Waldorf teachers who think that all forms of assessment are undesirable. I have a theory why many Waldorf teachers are resistant to assessment. It has, I believe, to do with a fear of control and of categorizing of people. Assessment has been presented in this paper as a benign, pedagogically meaningful activity but it can be and frequently is used as an instrument of control. It can dominate teaching and learning. These dangers are mostly associated with the neoliberal culture of control (in the name of quality but meaning efficiency of delivery) that influences education policies.

Most education regimes around the world over the past twenty years have moved towards a culture of standardization, testing, managerialism and performativity. Performativity is the essence of a performance-orientated culture. Performance in itself is not problematic. It simply means that somebody enacts something, like performing a play or performing in a concert. However, performance has come to mean attaining set goals, achieving targets, and ultimately attaining higher, better, more productive performance. Performance is usually rewarded, just as failure to perform is punished in one way or another. Educational performance is rewarded by grades, notes, qualifications and higher ranking positions, thus making education a competition rather than an empowering, enabling activity of human emancipation and social justice.

Professor Stephen Ball of the London Institute of Education calls performativity in education, “a culture or system of terror. It is a regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change. The performances of individual subjects or organizations serve as measures of productivity or output, displays of quality, or moments of promotion or inspection ”(Ball, 2008), 49). The state determines the criteria by which these judgement on the ‘quality’ or value of the performance. These criteria are usually in the form of standards, norms, benchmarks, targets or learning outcomes. They are enforced and controlled usually by procedures to monitor, test and assess performance. And the state implements management system in schools to ensure that performance is delivered and measured.

It is in the nature of performance that it is inflationary. Good performance can always be better, targets are moved upwards, standards get higher. However, performance inflation leads

to an inevitable reduction of quality since endless improvement is only possible by saving somewhere. In education this saving is usually in teacher time (i.e. years at school) and therefore of reducing costs. By standardizing methods, by reducing ‘inessential’ activities at school (music, the arts, social learning) and material in the interests of efficiency and putting learners under pressure, education is streamlined, made more efficient and allegedly more effective in delivering the prescribed targets. These targets are generally levels of literacy, numeracy and other competences on the basis of testing. Above all performativity turns education into a culture of competition. Pupils compete with each other, though not on level playing field. Pupils with educated middle class parents who belong to the dominant (white) culture have a big head start. One of the useful things the OECD does is to point out regularly how unfair the German education system is (OECD, 2012).

Paul Verhaeghe is a senior professor of psychotherapy in Ghent in Belgium. His recent book (Verhaeghe 2013) highlights the effects of this trend in education. He describes the impact of neo-liberal, individualistic and consumerist values on processes of identity among young people, in a society in which the economy is focused on short-term profit. In particular he suggests that an education system that is competitive rather than cooperative and that encourages pupils to see the accumulation of credits, grades and qualifications as cultural capital, as its primary aim, is likely to generate, on the one hand, a lot of people who experience themselves as failures. On the other hand material and consumerist success becomes a dominant factor in the identity of those who are successful in the competition for resources. There are sets of attitudes that belong together; sharing, cooperation, interest in others with difference, social and ecological responsibility, open-minded spirituality, concern for holistic health and well-being belong as one set. Greed, competition, egotism, hedonism, xenophobia, protectionism and the belief that people misfortune (unemployment, sickness, burn-out, lack of health insurance, refugee status etc.) is their own fault.

Verhaeghe already sees the trend to the second set of dispositions in children whose response to their parents’ requests that they do some house work, or help others is along the lines of, “what’s it worth for me? What benefits will I get from doing it?” His conclusion is that it is not surprising that young people adopt an egotistical consumerist, me-first attitude, since this is the dominant message of a society that valorizes greed and allows 1% of the population to own 50% of the wealth, when tax avoidance is a way of life and the state bails out the bankers when they lose our money playing the markets like casino gamblers. Education policies and the government may espouse social justice, fairness, tolerance and solidarity but the embodied, lived message is the opposite. As Verhaeghe puts it, unfortunately there is no such thing as competitive solidarity.

That is certainly the main reason why many Waldorf teachers shy away from forms of assessment. They do not want to contribute to a competitive society. However, I believe that there are other reasons. A second reason may be that they themselves have suffered the effects of being assessed in their own education career- indeed it is not possible to become a teacher without having passed tests and exams more or less since childhood. A third reason, and this is the only one we may be able to do anything about, is a lack of understanding of what assessment as a support for learning can be.

Waldorf education is well-known for not giving grades or notes, but rather for providing written annual reports. My experience has been that many teachers neither fully understand why grades are not given (until sometime in the Upper School), nor do they strictly speaking stick to this unwritten but widely repeated ‘rule.’ It is very common for teachers right down into the Middle School to give written tests in which the outcome is reduced to points (e.g. 15 out of 20), which the children ‘translate’ into grades. Usually this number is complemented by a comment such as quite good, good, very good and even well-done! Such teachers will say, when asked what this information is supposed to communicate, “it tells the pupil how many answers she got right or wrong and then they can see how well they did”. However, it tells them nothing about learning or what they can do. It simply labels them. If you regularly get top grade, what incentive is there to do more? If you continuously get a low grade, getting better seems impossible. If you continuously get a middle grade, then you are mediocre.

One of the common concerns that parents have is that Waldorf education does not prepare the children for the harsh competitive conditions in the world. Obviously those most concerned with this don’t even choose Waldorf in the first place. However, those who do soon begin to worry and teachers have to have very convincing arguments against grades and notes and tests to withstand this pressure. I suggest that getting the highest possible grades and passing the exams is uppermost in the minds of most upper school students. I say that as an upper school teacher and parent. I don’t like it but I have to acknowledge it.

None of this however, should blind us from the real relevance of assessment in pedagogical practice. It is indicative that there are so few publications on assessment in Waldorf education. Either it has no priority, is not considered important or it is ignored for other reasons. As I have pointed out previously in an article on pedagogical evaluation (Rawson 2005), this problem is partly one of terminology in the English-speaking and German speaking worlds. In German Waldorf discourse, many aspects that are part of assessment, such as, assessing school readiness, observing pupils, pupil studies, written reports and report verses are not considered part of assessment, which is generally understood as evaluation, which is seen as a form of categorizing and establishing or worth (value has positive and negative connotations). Generally Waldorf teachers dislike and avoid labelling children and treat one as an individual case. This is a laudable attitude and pedagogically meaningful. However, this does not prevent the widespread use of tests and grading. There is something ambivalent in this attitude.

Instead of being ambivalent about assessment, we should be clear and proactive. Done in the right way and for the right reasons, assessment is an essential part of Waldorf education. People have always attached signs and symbols to the things they consider important, that they express the values they align themselves with. In the Middle Ages the Guilds guaranteed the quality of the work of their members through a system of apprenticeship and evaluation by a master. The origins of bachelors and masters degrees like in these traditional qualifications or forms of certification, applied in the fields of medicine, law, the arts and crafts.

Our fear of assessment is a fear of failure and of the failure of others to recognize us and our qualities. Assessment is a way of recognizing people and enabling them to be better at what they do. It can be about, sitting beside the learner.

Conclusions

There is much work to be done in the field of assessment in Waldorf education, if methods are to be developed that really reflect the Waldorf approach. If this doesn't happen, schools will have adopt methods practiced in mainstream, which is obviously not necessarily a bad thing- but it might also be a limitation. Without generative principles and criteria, there is risk of diluting Waldorf practice by simply adopting methods from other approaches. This article is designed to prompt thinking in the field.

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Appendix: two examples of upper schools main lesson block criteria.

Class 11 February 2015: English Block

Theme: Shakespeare's times, drama and theatre

We will learn about the historical times Shakespeare lived in and about the theatres in London during his life time. We will also work on scenes from Shakespeare's play Hamlet. We will recite some Shakespeare texts together.

Learning outcomes:

- To know about the historical background of Shakespeare's life.
- To understand how the theatre developed during his life time.
- To be able to speak some Shakespearean language.
- To be able to perform a scene from Hamlet
- To be able to describe why Shakespeare's plays are still being performed today all over the world.

Assessment criteria

You have to:

- Describe the historical background of Shakespeare's life in the form of an essay or illustration. This can take the form of a letter, information leaflet or eye witness account.
- Explain some of the main features of Elizabethan theatre using text and illustrations.
- Rehearse and perform a scene from Hamlet with a written reflection.
- Give your interpretation why Shakespeare's plays are still performed today in the form of a newspaper article.
- Actively participate in the lessons and group work, speaking English.
- Submit of a completed portfolio on time.

Documentation

- The block will be documented in a portfolio of your own design. It should include a self-evaluation of your participation in the lessons and in working on the scene. Compile a portfolio over the block. This will be viewed each week and handed-in on the last day of the block.

Checklist at the end of the block: Are these documents in my portfolio?

| | |
|--|--|
| Historical background essay/illustration | |
| Shakespeare's theatre text and images | |
| Newspaper article on Shakespeare's continuing popularity | |
| Copies of scene performed | |
| Reflection on acting the scene | |
| Portfolio completed and handed in on time | |

Christiane Niemeyer Martyn Rawson

Feedback to Shakespeare Block
November 2015

Name

| | In folder | - | + |
|--|-----------|---|--------------|
| | Yes/no | Level of attainment from weak to strong | |
| Description of the historical background essay/illustration/eye-witness account/letter | | | |
| Presentation of Shakespeare's theatre in text and images | | | |
| Newspaper article on Shakespeare's continuing popularity | | | |
| Active participation in lessons and working on the scenes | | | |
| Reflection on acting the scene | | | |
| Portfolio completed | | | |
| Self-assessment | | Included | not included |
| Overall grade at Realschulniveau | | | |

Feedback comment:

Class 11 English morning lesson block: the post-colonial experience

January 2019

Teacher Dr. Martyn Rawson

Aims

In this block we will work with texts by authors from different countries writing in English who describe life in their country since colonial times, in other words, in post-colonial times. The first text we will read is *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah. For each text we will explore the background of the country and the authors. As well as understanding the texts, stories and poems we will try to understand how colonialism has affected those countries and how people's attitudes have been formed.

Specific criteria

- Active participation in the group work and class discussions.
- Speaking English as much as possible in the lessons.
- Understanding and commenting of texts
- Understanding the main characters, plot, narrative voice of each stories and what this tells us about the country in which the story is set.
- Showing evidence of learning from mistakes.
- Keeping a portfolio of texts, short stories and notes.
- Choosing one author or country and researching this and making a short written or verbal presentation.

Class 11. Post-Colonialism feedback sheet

Name

| Criteria | -(minus) +(plus) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Active participation | |
| Speaking English | |
| Understanding texts | |
| Evidence of corrections | |
| portfolio | |
| Level of English (MSA) | |

Comment

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