



The following represents the translation of a synopsis of a study of Waldorf graduates from Switzerland and Germany. This study is to be compared with the recently completed “Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II” for North America from the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. Together they represent a snapshot of the typical Waldorf graduate, areas where Waldorf education shows is strength, and areas where schools need to be proactive.

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**Alumni of German and Swiss Waldorf Schools
– An Empriric Study On Education And Creative Living –**

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Methodology and Sample

- 24 qualitative interviews were conducted with 8 persons each of the following three age brackets: 62 to 66, 50 to 59 and 30 to 37 years of age
- 6 group discussions held by two groups each of the same three peer clusters: 62 to 66, 50 to 59 and 30 to 37 years of age
- 1,124 written surveys were sent to former Waldorf students from the three age brackets. (48.5 female; 51% male, average age 46 years. Return ratio of 32.9 %). The discussion topics were:
 - Professional biography and satisfaction with one’s profession (edited by Anne Bonhoeffer and Michael Brater, GAB Munich)

- Contextual orientation of personal life (edited by Thomas Gensicke; TNS Infratest Munich)
- Faith and Religion (edited by Michael N. Ebertz, Katholische Fachhochschule Freiburg)
- Health (edited by Arndt Büssing, Thomas Ostermann, Frank Jacobi and Peter F. Matthiessen; University of Witten/ Herdecke)
- Personal experience of the time in school (edited by Dirk Randoll, Alanus Hochschule, Alfter)
- Analysis of interviews and group discussion results (edited by Heiner Barz and Sylvia Panyr, University of Düsseldorf and Munich)

Core Results

Completed School Level

- 61% of former Waldorf Students have graduated with the *Abitur* (German full academic track graduation diploma)
- (67% of the 30 to 37 year-olds, which is more than double the rate of attendees of public schools), 7.7% graduated in the restricted academic track (Fachschulreife), allowing them to attend Specialized, Technical and Arts Colleges.
- 21.2 % passed the graduation for intermediate vocational tracks (realschule) and
- 2% finished on the basic vocational track level (Hauptschule)

[Comment – these levels are intrinsic to the multi-layered German School system)

Profession/ Career

A comparison of the profession one learned and the profession one actually works in with the Microcensus [Note: general population statistics] yields the following results (taking into account the comparability of graduation levels):

- There is a significant higher number of teachers, engineers, medical doctors/pharmacists and artists among the former Waldorf students. On the other hand there are significantly less business people and office administrators among them.
- Former Waldorf students show a high degree of satisfaction regarding their profession; they place less importance on making money and on ambitious career goals than on personal fulfillment in their profession and doing work that is meaningful to them.
- Only 2.4% of the alumni have chosen a typical anthroposophical profession (e.g. Eurythmy specialist or class teacher at a Waldorf School)

Contextual orientation in life

- The profile of former Waldorf students and that of the general population are similar in regard to their values and orientation. The goal of life consists of one's personal well being within the context and network of family and one's circle of friends.
- However, sophistication of culture and creative aspects of life play a more significant role for Waldorf alumni than for the general population, while the usage of electronic devices and other media is lower – especial on entertainment levels.
- Former Waldorf students show a higher spiritual orientation over and above the conventional-parochial forms of organized religion
- Furthermore, they show comparatively more social engagement and have a higher rate of volunteers .

Religion

- Former Waldorf Students do not tend towards institutional forms of religion; we can discern a high ratio of those who do not belong to a formalized church or are Protestants; the percentage of Catholics distinctly increases with growing age brackets.
- The number of members in the Christian Community is shrinking
- The majority has an indifferent, sceptical to negative attitude towards Anthroposophy.
- The Waldorf School is not seen as an active propagator of anthroposophical concepts, but proves to promote a high degree of openness in regard to religion and world views.
- The Waldorf School enriches the soul and spiritual life in such a way that the majority of the respondents found they were able to be open towards different questions of faith and to develop their own “spiritual path.”

Health

- The hypothesis, that former Waldorf Students show are healthier than the general population because of the particular pedagogical concepts guiding their education, can only be validated under restrictions. We need further specific research, especially in regard to health behavior, which was not a topic of this study.

School

- Former Waldorf students show a high degree of identification with their school: 87% felt a sense of belonging and 80% have felt very well [comfortable] there. Also, the majority of them would elect to go to a Waldorf School again. 47% of those who have children enrolled them too in a Waldorf school. Reasons for choosing a different kind of school for their child were: “No Waldorf Schools close-by,” “Other schools are also offering good pedagogical approaches,” “Too expensive/I couldn’t afford it.”
- The instruction was assessed to be interesting and diversified as well as meaningful, but the content was not necessarily thought to be reflecting current social issues. (The latter assessment was particularly prevalent among the 30 to 37 year-olds). Every second respondent indicated that Waldorf Schools are not very open to newer pedagogical developments.
- The assessment of the methodical-didactic competence of the teachers was tendentially critical, while the evaluation of the relationship between students and teachers was positive. That means: the relationship between student and teacher no longer is defined by grades and points, but by the quality of human encounters. Most respondents experienced their teachers as permanently overwhelmed, a result which should be taken very seriously in connection with the aspect of “Psychological hygiene in the teaching profession.”
- 74.1% are in favor of the class teacher concept with a decreasing tendency across the age brackets.
- The Waldorf School is seen to exert a favorable influence on the development of the personality (e.g. personal sense of worth, self-assurance, creativity, flexibility) of social competency (e.g. empathic faculties, consideration, ability to cooperate) as well as the unfoldment of the ability to form their own opinion and become self-reliant.
- In contrast, Waldorf Schools are associated with only a small, yet personally relevant, influence in regard to the following aspects: assessment of one’s own achievement abilities and their boundaries; learning to learn; developing practical skills; and conveying general knowledge.

Further problem areas were determined:

- Most respondents indicate that there was too little demand on [academic] achievement in their school and that the feedback concerning their achievement level was frequently not commensurate with their actual individual performance. Correspondingly, many alumni later, after their school years, had trouble adjusting to the demands of a society geared towards achievement. Not a few of them think that they could have accomplished more if the demand on their accomplishments and efforts had been higher.
- Boys seem to have more problems socializing in school than girls. A similar phenomenon can be observed in state elementary schools. The artistic and musical focus of instruction and the fact that competition plays a subordinate role at Waldorf Schools together with the fact that Waldorf teachers are mostly female, may be causing this result.
- The alumni clearly see the instruction in foreign languages in Waldorf schools as unsatisfactory and inadequate. With some reservations that is also true for classes in natural sciences and in physical education.
- 38% indicate that they had tutors or obtained additional instruction. That is significantly more than among students who attended public schools (2004/05: Full Academic track (Gymnasium) attendees – 30%; higher vocational track attendees (Realschule) – 29%) Vocational Track (Hauptschule) attendees – 14%). Therefore the question arises: Can the Free Waldorf School today only fulfill its mandate with support from the outside (from parents and tutors)?

Conclusion

Waldorf schools are, in the assessment of their alumni, tendentially good schools. However, they have to more fully meet the demands of today's society and have to overhaul their own curriculum, especially pertaining to foreign languages and natural sciences. Furthermore, the qualification of the teachers urgently has to be improved, in particular their professional qualification and didactic-methodological abilities.