

IASWECE Training Working Group Report and the International Teacher Education Forum

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For the past three years, an international group of teacher educators has been meeting online approximately monthly, with the impulse to share, discuss and develop teacher education practice. This group has developed into ITEF: the International Teacher Educator's Forum. The format is that someone is chosen to bring a presentation and then this is developed in discussion groups according to preferred language.

Over this time, various themes have been explored and one conference has been held (April 2024 in Dornach). IASWECE has its own Trainers Network, and the group members overlap. Each meeting of ITEF is followed up by a meeting of the IASWECE Trainers Network, taking the same theme from an early childhood perspective. These international online discussions allow us to share ideas as we all endeavour to help our trainings to meet today's fast-changing needs and to prepare for future possibilities.

The ITEF/IASWECE themes have included the following:

- Heather Church from WECAN (January 2024) presented her thoughts and experiences on how to build capacities and skills in our students for working with parents. For the IASWECE Trainers Network group, this led into the concept of our students as our co-researchers who will, in future, accept and collaborate with parents as co-researchers.
- Colleagues from Italy (June 2024) brought their practice for structuring research. The IASWECE Trainers Network colleagues went on to discuss how we nurture a research culture in part-time trainings where time is so short. We shared our thoughts on how to create a mutual learning space.
- Jost Schieren from Alanus University in Germany (September 2024) brought a presentation on Waldorf education and research from a scientific perspective, in which our endeavour is to work out of spiritual science using a phenomenological approach. He referred to the tension between the engagement and

passion necessary in teaching and the objective distance regarded as necessary for scientific research. In our IASWECE follow up meeting, we looked at the question of how consciousness has changed over the past one hundred years and what it means to do action research and inquiry, working out of practical questions.

- Paula Eddelstein from Argentina (October 2024) presented to ITEF colleagues a research question which she is engaging in with colleagues: how does Waldorf education find a place in the South American reality of such a diversity of cultures and communities? This includes involving those who see Waldorf from the outside. The discussion went deeply into our concern with supporting students to localise their pedagogical approach. In our IASWECE trainers' discussion, we followed the themes of honouring the local and preparing children for the world.
- Paula Lévy from Brazil (November 2024) brought a presentation to ITEF of great interest to us in the early childhood movement. She had researched the roots of the Waldorf kindergarten, finding both mysteries and paradoxes in what has come to be known as "Waldorf". She found strong evidence of Froebelian practice which has not been acknowledged. In our follow-up IASWECE meeting, the comparison was brought with how we are similarly taking many ideas from Emmi Pikler into our work with children under three: and hopefully acknowledging them. As Paula remarked, Rudolf Steiner gave us a strong image of the human being and the developing child, but did not provide for early childhood educators the wealth of detailed indications given, for example, to the class teachers. The details of practice developed by Froebel, such as the value of free play, the adult as a model for imitation, and even the presence of the Sistine Madonna on the wall, have become well established in Waldorf kindergartens and seen as "Waldorf", as now the Pikler approach and equipment is in our groups for children under three.

Every theme has been stimulating and we have all enjoyed not only the presentations and the opportunity to explore themes with our colleagues across the Waldorf teacher education spectrum, but also the chance, in our IASWECE Trainers Network meetings, to take the aspects most relevant to our early childhood interests and develop them further.

Colleagues engaged in Steiner/Waldorf early childhood teacher education and training are warmly invited to join the IASWECE Trainers Network by writing to lasweceTrainersNetwork+subscribe@groups.io. We also look forward to an in-person meeting in May in Bratislava, Slovakia, to which all Steiner/Waldorf early childhood trainers are invited.

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