

IASWECE Study Work on Diversity October 2020

Dear colleagues of Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

***There is a knighthood of the 21st century
whose riders do not ride through the darkness of physical forests, as of old,
but through the forest of darkened minds.
They are armed with a spiritual armor,
and an inner sun makes them radiant.
Out of them shines healing,
healing that flows from the knowledge of the human being as a spiritual being.
They must create inner order, inner justice,
peace and conviction in the darkness of our time.***

by Karl König

Seeing the urgency of staying aligned with current issues, IASWECE is looking once again at the theme “cultural diversity”, which includes how we relate to ethnic minorities, different races, diversity in the scope of gender, religion, and other diversities. How in the 21st century do we position ourselves in relation to a world in constant movement and so diverse? Do we have paradigms that need reviewing?

IASWECE starts its work from the following point of view taken from the document:

The Universal Human Spirit of Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

“The International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) provides a meeting place for early childhood educators from the many countries striving to uphold, deepen and renew Steiner/Waldorf early childhood education. Our shared task is to ensure that Waldorf pedagogy becomes neither a theoretical system, nor a collection of outer methods, but a wellspring of living insight.

To serve the healthy development of childhood is to develop the potential to perceive, through our own self-directed inner activity, not only the physical nature, but also the soul and spirit of each child. Through this ongoing study and research we deepen our appreciation of the spiritual individuality of all human beings, as distinct from but working within and through the sheaths of their given gender, temperament and personality, as well as through the traditions and values of their particular family and cultural community.

Every culture contributes uniquely towards the evolution of anthroposophy and Waldorf education, and we honor the way Steiner/Waldorf early childhood educators work within their specific cultural contexts. At the same time, we would like to express our hope that, by encouraging the autonomy and initiative of each individual, Anthroposophy and Waldorf education may contribute to the evolution of the “whole,” such as family, community, nation, and humankind.

“Upholding, deepening and renewing” Waldorf education is a basic premise of our performance. Based on this statement we would like to carry on our work.

Several countries have reported that in their territories racism is present in different ways: towards black people, gypsies, Muslims, hostility towards immigrants, difficulties between different political positions, among others.

In the October 2020 meeting we dedicated some time each day to work on these issues. We had as a line of thought the [Ted talk](#) by Chimananda Ngozi Adichie, “*The danger of a single story*”.

She alerts us that knowing only one point of view through “a single story”, one can bring stereotypes and therefore a picture becomes incomplete. Chimamanda describes the following term: “Nkali” which means being more than the other. A position of power. It can steal the dignity from the ones that are under “the power.”

A single story can be connected with “Nkali”. Without being aware we can build up an education showing that a certain point of view has more power than the other. Chimamanda says “When we reject a single story we gain a kind of paradise”

The following are some of the questions that have arisen within us;

- How do I deal with my limitations?
- Who points out where I am limited?
- Am I diverse enough in my thinking, feeling and doing?
- Do I contribute with a “single story” in the education of the children? (In my storytelling, ring time, pictures on the wall, festivals, dolls, food etc.)

We also worked with a story from Ethiopia, [*“The Two Kings of Gondar”*](#). Through the images that this story brings we can see that to receive the other, the new in our lives, we need to make space within ourselves and to make time and have time, we need to open our heart, “our house”.

“Love is higher than opinion. If people love one another the most varied opinions can be reconciled-thus one of the most important tasks for humankind today and in the future is that we should learn to live together and understand one another. If this human fellowship is not achieved, all talk of development is empty” Rudolf Steiner.

We did the following process:

First step, we painted the mood of the story, only colors and atmosphere



Second step, we were told to bring a tree on the right side of the paper



Third step, we were told to bring a triangle in the left side of the paper.



What to do with the “new” element?

What do I need to do to form a connection to the ‘new’?

Am I open enough to be able to include what it is asking of me?

What do I need to transform in myself to embrace the ‘new’?

The verse of Rudolf Steiner can be a support for us:

“Imbue thyself with the power of imagination.

Have courage for the truth.

Sharpen thy feeling for the responsibility of soul.”

Fourth step, how can I incorporate the triangle in my drawing?



Considering the universal nature of the small children, how can we introduce changes related to diversity?

We ended our exploration together with the following words:

‘We started off with the single story. Our diversity exploration and our whole meeting this week has felt like the journey of the hunter and the peasant in the story “*The Two Kings of Gondar*”. We have come together and gone through the forest of our own inner souls and encountered our own shadows. Sometimes a precipice was next to us, but we had to carry on. We had an umbrella, which was the connection to each other, our good intentions and the child which binds us together. Everyone is invited to keep hold of this umbrella so that we can meet and embrace the ‘other’ along the way.

We have come to the door of the castle, (the triangle could represent the door.) When we come to moments of thresholds, within ourselves and in our daily lives we often ‘shiver in our boots’ and ‘quiver in our souls’, however through connection to ourselves and to each other we gain the courage to step into the unknown and to challenge our presumptions and assumptions. The children from the future are urging us to take this step. The picture of the triangle is a possible mirror; we need the other to show us ourselves. Although the human journey asks of us to “know thyself, it is not easy and not always possible to see it for ourselves clearly, however, the ‘other’ can show us. We can each work with the question; deepen the question, of where am I limited? and ask, what do I need to be able to recognize this?

“When we find many stories we gain a kind of paradise”.

We as early childhood educators work in the realm of the ‘Will’ and so we commit to transform our questions and discoveries into deeds.

In our next meeting we will continue our work on this theme

Greetings, Silvia Jensen from Brazil, Michal Reshef from Israel and Mary-G Häuptle from South Africa