

Trainers meeting on research issues in Ireland in October 2018

Almuth Strehlow, Kassel



From 11.10. to 14.10.2018 85 trainers from 36 different countries met in Kilkenny/Ireland. Our common theme at this fourth international meeting of Waldorf educators was research. How do we succeed in being researchers ourselves, how do we combine academic research with research in the humanities? How do we stay with the flow of time and question the most diverse scientific research? How do we ourselves work as researchers in the natural sciences, social research, educational science ... and above all as people who are researching within anthroposophy - how do we work with the night? The introductory lectures - which included exercises and exchange - were given by Florian Osswald, Head of the Pedagogical Section in Dornach.

Many conversations in and beside the various working groups continued to move the topics of the morning. I would like to tell you a bit more about one of the strands of thought.

In one of my two working groups eight people were represented who brought experiences from many different countries, mostly from different countries and at the same time still teaching in different countries. In the first step we collected our individual research questions:

1. In a country (Ethiopia) in which very many different cultures and religions meet, how is it possible to arrange the training in such a way that Waldorf Education and its implementation is imparted vividly and developed from an anthroposophical view of the human being?
2. Which phenomena - individually and in humanity as a whole - lead to the fact that the inner flexibility and further development of pedagogy - and our own flexibility - are often lost?
3. Are there methods to keep images inwardly in motion, to recognize images as imaginations? Archetypes in adult education.
4. how do we design the trainings so that we become socially capable - based on our inner images and imaginations for the future?
5. What does freedom mean, since transgenerational transmissions influence us and some experiences through structural violence in childhood have shaped our development? How do we deal with that which has "become" in an adequate way?

6. Methodology - intercultural learning? How do we make the invisible speakable - how do we work with the night? How can we achieve a balance between academic research and research in the humanities?

7. What does "education for freedom" mean in different cultures - in the first step self-reflecting within ourselves?

8. From where do I start my training - what is the basis of community?

After presenting and explaining our research questions, we decided to pick out one question to use as a starting point for a research design. Since we are all experiencing cultural diversity around us, we took on the first question.

In a country in which many different cultures and religions meet, how is it possible to arrange the training in such a way that Waldorf Education is imparted alive and developed from an anthroposophical view of the human being?

- It quickly became clear that we, as participating observers within qualitative social research, must as a first step self-reflexively present our own point of view - our own starting point - in detail.

- The terms culture / socio-culture need to be discussed and defined. For this purpose we could use writing conversations, questionnaires, narrative conversations, group discussions or guideline interviews within our circle.

- Then it became clear that the topic had to be clearly defined, focused more narrowly, i.e. broken down to "my" training situation.

- It also requires an intensive examination of religion. In accordance with our topic we discussed Rudolf Steiner's statement (study of literature) that the child experiences a "bodily religion" in the first seven years as a citizen of the world. A further research assignment is to fathom the significance of this in greater depth.

- From the resulting expert discussion we came to a thesis that needs to be further explored:

Could it be that through the study of human being, which we constantly develop anew in the team on the basis of successful child studies (developmental dialogues of a child), we learn to live the art of education in such a way that the didactics for every child from every culture in every religion enable development to oneself? That in the age of the consciousness soul there can be no judgement about right and wrong in the implementation of methodical didactics, that there educational prescriptions are no longer in demand, but that we individually research through the child individualities of "my" group, that I live as "facilitator" and provide the environment for the other?

- Within the path of Research Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss) a new strand would begin here...

This summary is very succinct and may awaken ideas and motivate you to start your own research.

*Almuth Strehlow, Mother and grandmother, Waldorf educator, MA in Education
Faculty Member at the Rudolf Steiner Institute in Kassel since 1992, author, with lectures and seminar
courses
travel domestically and internationally*