

Report on IASWECE Teacher Training Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, October 16th to 19th, 2016

Ruth Ker



Estonia is the birthplace of both Helmut von Kügelgen and Herbert Hahn. Here, within the old walled city of Tallinn with its cobblestone streets, church spires and ancient walls and towers, there was an opportunity to honor Helmut von Kügelgen and to participate in a conference attended by more than 60 Waldorf early childhood trainers from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.

The purpose of the conference was to explore ways to meet the needs of the modern day student/teacher/learners in our early childhood programs. There were presenters from innovative teacher education programs and opportunities to take the pulse of the commonalities and differences with our EC training colleagues worldwide.



There were also opportunities to look at burning issues and explore the questions that each training center was bringing.

Some of the themes of the conference were:

- How is each student engaged in his/her own self-education and how can we emphasize this as teacher trainers?
- Awakening capacities of imagination and inspiration for the student and the teacher
- Activating ourselves and our students as independent, future-oriented practitioners
- Self-education for the teacher and the student – how do we develop the right attitude towards research and attain imagination and intuition in the process?
- Connecting theory and practice
- How do we support the students' strivings to develop their spiritual organs and capacities to truly "behold" the child
- Sensory Integration – how awareness and development of the 12 senses strengthens the presence of the educator
- Developing the element of play in our teaching
- Workshop reports from German training seminars
- How do we support students to become spiritual researchers and what does that mean?
- How do educators awaken interest for art and artistic activity in the students?



There were also opportunities to participate in discussion groups with people from many different countries in the world, including Austria, Romania, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, India, Poland, Estonia, USA, Switzerland, Ireland, UK, Israel, Argentina, South Africa, Taiwan.

I definitely came away with growth in new directions, valuable new connections and deepened understandings. New questions have arisen and some of our ways of working in my training centre have been affirmed. I can also see areas that we could transform and refine.

I went to the conference hoping to harvest some practical tools. I wasn't disappointed and there was an added bonus of making contacts and agreements with others to go on working together and sharing ideas. The harvest of these five days will carry me in many directions as I follow through on the suggested Rudolf Steiner readings and the links to worldwide research. I look forward to finding ways to share these with my colleagues here in North America.

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