

Excerpt taken from:-

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON CREATIVITY

A Study prepared for the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) June 2009

Steiner-Waldorf education

The Steiner-Waldorf education is a pedagogical method based on Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy. The first Waldorf School opened in 1919. It is nowadays one of the largest independent educational systems in the world with about 1000 schools and 1400 kindergartens. A main characteristic of Waldorf schools is the interdisciplinary nature of the learning process which integrates practical, conceptual and artistic elements in each lesson. Imagination plays a central role. Waldorf education systems aim at developing thinking that is both creative and analytical. One of Waldorf education's central principles is that schools should be self governing and that a high degree of creative autonomy should be left to teachers.

The UK Department for Education and Skills, which conducted a report²²⁸ on the differences in curriculum and pedagogical approach between Steiner-Waldorf and mainstream schools, recommended that schools in the state sector would benefit from some Waldorf strategies, especially with regard to the Waldorf approach to art and creativity. A 2008 report by the Cambridge-based Primary Review found that Steiner-Waldorf schools achieved superior academic results to English state schools. An international study was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the creative thinking ability of Waldorf students and state school students in England, Scotland, and Germany. The sample consisted of 1,165 third through sixth grade children.²²⁹ The findings obtained from administration of the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Ability, suggested that Waldorf students were more creative than their state school peers.²³⁰

Two additional surveys complete the picture of the impact of creative learning. In the US, a survey shows that Waldorf alumni are three times as likely as the general U.S. college population to have studied arts and humanities. Also, up to twice as many go on to study science in college, including both life sciences and physical sciences²³¹. Their primary characteristics are the integrative quality of their thinking and their creative and imaginative capacities. Another survey was conducted amongst former Waldorf students (in the age brackets 30-66 years old in Germany and Switzerland²³²). It shows that there is a significantly higher number of teachers, engineers, medical doctors/pharmacists, and artists among the former Waldorf students (in comparison with the general population statistics). Sophistication of culture and creative aspects of life play a more significant role for Waldorf alumni than for the general population. 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) and of social competency (e.g. empathic faculties, consideration, ability to cooperate) as well as the development of the ability to form one's own opinion and become self reliant.

²²⁷ Arnstine, *Democracy and the arts of schooling*, State University of New York. Press, 1995.

²²⁸ 2005 report *Steiner Schools in England* by Philip Woods, Martin Ashley and Glenys Woods of the University of the West of England, *Steiner Schools in England*, University of West of England, Bristol: Research Report RR645.

²²⁹ 479 English, 193 Scottish, and 493 German students.

²³⁰ Ogletree, *The Comparative Status of the Creative Thinking Ability of Waldorf Education Students: A Survey*, 1996.

²³¹ Mitchell D. and Gerwin D., *Standing Out without Standing Alone: Profile of Waldorf Graduates*, Profile of Waldorf School Graduates. Research Bulletin · Spring 2007 · Volume 12 · #2.

²³² Mitchell D. and Gerwin D., *Alumni of German and Swiss Waldorf Schools, An Empirical Study on Education and Creative Living* VS-Verlag Wiesbaden, 2000.