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Strand B: Teaching and Learning in South Australia: Historical Perspective.

Abstract

Teaching and Learning in a Waldorf School
A Founding Teacher's Perspective

Waldorf schools are relatively recent newcomers to SA and contribute to the State's otherwise meagre menu of alternative educational options. This movement of independent private schools is chosen to highlight the specific challenges facing teachers working outside State education or the Systemic schools. Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy is placed in the context of the history of progressive education. An outline is given of its origin, when it came to Australia and how it spread, current size, and Waldorf teacher training opportunities. Data arises from the author's experience as a Waldorf school founding teacher and research for a MEd Studies Special Project (1995) and a PhD thesis (1999).

Teaching and Learning in a Waldorf School: A Teacher's Perspective

In the context of considering the problems involved in teaching and learning in South Australia, this paper points to the dearth of alternative educational options in this State and notes the important role played by one alternative school movement in partially filling this gap. This movement promotes Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy and the Waldorf schools that put it into practice. I will:

- Point to the obvious absence of fundamentally different educational options in South Australia
- give a brief background to Waldorf education, locating it within the Progressive Education tradition, and indicate its origin and development
- describe its arrival and growth in Australia
- outline some key characteristics of Waldorf educational philosophy and practice
- indicate the *status quo* of Waldorf school development in Australia, including giving an indication of the academic results of some of its graduates
- focus on the history of the Mount Barker Waldorf School, which is the first of two Waldorf schools in South Australia, and one in which I have been intimately involved
- highlight the 'greatest challenges facing Waldorf teachers today' as identified by questionnaire and interviews of the teachers themselves
- point out the risks resulting from the fact that Waldorf teacher demand far exceeds the supply.

What are the alternatives available in schooling?

Apart from the Waldorf schools, the only other alternative schools that I have visited are the Montessori school and Marbury school (both in Aldgate). The rest are either very small (such as Kirinari school in Unley which emerged as a breakaway from the catholic Mercedes College), or religious or ethnic based or both, such as the Islamic school. There are also a number of Christian but non-systemic schools (such as the Hills Christian Community school in Verdun) and a number of Christian fundamentalist schools (such as Tabor? College in Mile End) which have specific sectarian specialisations in the curriculum and/or a religious ethos which includes use of prayers and the promotion of 'Christian values' but no specific regard to alternative curriculum or methodology. In the case of these later named schools I am only surmising, based on verbal reports or comments, as I have not been inside the schools to observed them in action. In addition to these there is quite a notable Home Schooling network which supports families who adopt this option.

The Progressive Educational Origins of Waldorf Schools

The history of Western education in general has been described as being, in large part, the record of creative innovation in the face of conservative tradition.[1] The major advances in educational thought and practice, from the 18th century, were introduced and carried forward by philosophers and educators like Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel and the schools they inspired or founded, introduced creative innovations in both the way that children were viewed and treated, and how they were taught.

[1] James Bowen, *A History of Western Education* (3rd ed.) London: Methuen, 1981, p. 403.

The origins of Waldorf Education can be placed in the context of the general educational awakening that took place towards the end of the 19th and in the first third of the 20th century. The most appropriate context in which to locate the Waldorf schools seems to be that of the progressive education movement. The trend of progressivism in education was towards respect for the individual and the use of a child-centred approach. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, progressivism became more urgent because the interests of the individual appeared to diminish in the interest of mass education as governments increasingly provided schools, trained teachers, and legislated school codes. In the years leading up to the First World War there were very few progressive schools in Europe. Most were in England, of which the first well known was Cecil Reddie's "Abbotsholme". Those that did exist were fully residential and costly and therefore only reached a small group of children, usually those of the well-to-do, *avant garde* parents.

Thus the educational milieu, at the time when the founding of the first Waldorf school was imminent, can be characterised by increasing formality in and dominance of State education, and a newly emerging wave of progressive educational ideas. While some of the progressive ideas, notably those of Froebel and later Montessori, became very influential in State early-childhood education this was not so in the secondary sector. The often radical innovations of the progressives were unworkable in large numbers, perhaps even inimical to them, and therefore highlighted the conflict between *progressive* but elitist and *state* but mass education.

In mainstream education in Germany the 'ruling force' was Herbartianism.[2] This movement was promoted by the neo-Herbartians such as Stoy and Ziller [3]who, at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th, extended its influence throughout Europe and America. As a philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner was very familiar with the German philosophers and their educational ideas, including those of Herbart and his followers.[4] Steiner clearly selected elements of the contemporary education which corresponded to his own thinking and incorporated them into his comprehensive pedagogy. Among his contributions to the search for a truly child-centred curriculum was a detailed account of children's physical, psychological and spiritual development; many features of which have subsequently been confirmed and elaborated by the developmental research of Piaget and the child studies of Gessel and others. However, Steiner's perspective on spiritual development is unsurpassed. Further and equally important he gave an approach to a curriculum designed to support this development. This curriculum is still, in its conception and detail, unique among progressive educators. See below for a brief outline of key characteristics of Waldorf education.

The first Waldorf school had its beginning in the context of economic, social and cultural renewal in the aftermath of the First World War. Among a number of Steiner's contributions to this renewal was a social theory in which he reinterpreted the ideals of the French Revolution - *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* - towards a restructuring of the cultural, political and economic spheres of society.[5] Emil Molt, the

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[2] Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) Professor of Philosophy and Pedagogics at Gottingen, who combined an interest in metaphysics and ethics with one in psychology and pedagogy.

[3] Karl Volkmar Stoy (1815-1885) Professor of Pedagogy at Jena in 1843, and Tuiskon Ziller (1817-1882) Professor of Pedagogy at Leipzig in 1864.

[4] Rudolf Steiner, *The Riddles of Philosophy* (N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1973), originally published in 1914 as *Ratsel der Philosophie.*

[5] Rudolf Steiner, *The Threefold Social Order*, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1972. Alduino Mazzone, Rudolf *Steiner's Social Theory: How the Waldorf Schools Emerged Out of the Threefold Social Movement*, in Proceedings ANZHES 97 Conference, Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society, University of Newcastle, 1995, pp. 414-426

managing director of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany, was among the many supporters of Steiner's initiative for social renewal. With regard to the renewal of education it was Molt who took the initiative and asked Steiner to take on the planning and leadership of a school for the children of his employees. [6]

The request was readily taken up by Steiner and on 7 September 1919, in his opening address Steiner declared that if humanity was to live in a socially right way in the future, it must educate its children in a socially right way, and that a small contribution in this direction was to be made by *Die Freie Waldorfschule* in Stuttgart.[7] Thus the educational movement was launched with the hope and intention that it would play its small part towards social renewal. By the time of Steiner's death in 1925 a second Waldorf school had been founded in Germany, at Hamburg, another at The Hague in Holland, and two in England: at Streatham, London, and at Kings Langley, Hertfordshire. Gradually the Waldorf school movement spread, and other schools opened; in 1928 the first American school was founded in New York City, and by the outbreak of World War II sixteen schools in all were operative, most of them in Europe.

All independent schools in Germany, including of course the Waldorf schools, and those in the occupied countries were closed by the Hitler regime, so during the war years the only Waldorf schools to remain open in Europe were those in Switzerland and the United Kingdom. However, within about a year of the ending of the war in Europe, twenty four schools in what had become West Germany had been newly founded or re-established. Since then growth in the number of schools worldwide has accelerated. With the post-war European migration the movement spread further. New schools were founded in North and South America, South Africa and eventually Australia.[8]

Worldwide expansion followed rapidly. By 1962 there was a total of sixty six schools.[9] In 1973 it was reported that "some 40,000 pupils attend the ninety-odd Rudolf Steiner schools all over the world."[10], while in 1975, there was a "sum total of just over one hundred." [11] The list of Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner) Schools, published in the periodical "Child and Man"[12], contains a useful record of the growth of schools. In the past decade Waldorf Schools have been founded in Asian countries including India, Japan, Thailand and The Philippines.

The development from the five schools (up to the time of Steiner's death in 1925) to nearly 800 in 1998 reveals an almost exponential rate of growth. The Waldorf schools have become a world-movement for the education of children from nursery to university entrance. However, the word "movement" needs to be clarified, for it is in no sense organised or directed from any given centre. It is a cultural phenomenon, a movement sustained in its growth by independent and spontaneous efforts wherever the ideas underlying Waldorf education fire human imagination.

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[6] Emil Molt and Christine Murphy, *Emil Molt and the Beginnings of the Waldorf School Movement; Autobiographical sketches* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1991) 137-8.

[7] Gilbert Childs, *Steiner Education in theory and Practice,* Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1991, p.17.

[8] A. B. Mazzone, *'Islands of Culture': Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner) Schools in Australia: Their origin and development*. Unpublished Master of Educational Studies Special Project, University of Adelaide, 1995

[9] Johannes Hemleben, *Rudolf Steiner : A Documentary Biography*, East Grinstead, Sussex: Henry Goulden, 1975, p.126

[10] John Davy, "The Movement that Everyone tries to Forget", *The Times Educational Supplement,* March 23, 1973

[11] Francis Edmunds, *Rudolf Steiner's Gift to Education: The Waldorf Schools,* London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1975, p.138

[12] *Child and Man: Journal for Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Education*. Vol. 28 No. 2 July 1994, Published by Steiner Schools Fellowship, Forest Row, E.Sussex, UK.

YEAR	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WORLDWIDE
1979	177
1980	193
1981	257
1985	351
1989	447
1994	619
1998	800

Table 1: Growth of Waldorf Schools Worldwide 1979-1998

The growth in Australia mirrored that of the European and world development. Beginning with the first school in Sydney in 1957, further growth began slowly and then accelerated. Two more schools were founded in the early 1970s in Sydney and Melbourne, another two in 1979 (including the Mount Barker Waldorf School), and then an average of two schools per year in the 1980s, so that by 1998 there were Waldorf schools in all the capital cities (except Darwin) and many others scattered in country towns totalling about 50 schools in all States and Territories.

Key Characteristics of Waldorf Education

A brief outline of the key characteristics of Waldorf educational philosophy and practice will be given to indicate why it captivated people's imagination to such an extent that the movement spread across the world.

Waldorf pedagogy has its basis in a picture of the human being that is described as comprising of body, soul, and spirit. The term 'body' refers to the physical result of the hereditary forces of the past, while 'spirit' refers to that which bears the child's potential. This spiritual potential may become more accessible as the child grows towards adulthood. Teachers are not primarily concerned with these aspects of the child's being because the body is given and already fixed, and the spirit must be left free to unfold its own destiny. However, the 'soul', a tripartite entity incorporating the faculties of will, feeling and thinking, is the substance and content of the human being which is engaged in the educational process. A thorough understanding of the process by which the soul unfolds provides the basis for both the content of the curriculum and the educational methodology.

Steiner's views on child development stress a seven-year cyclic evolution. The first seven years is complete with the change of teeth; it is characterised by the predominance of the forces of the will, which is exercised and directed through imitation and strengthened by repetition and rhythm in an environment imbued with goodness. The cycle from seven to fourteen extends over the period of primary education; it is characterised by the predominance of the forces of imagination, exercised through the cultivation of the feelings predominantly through artistic activities in an environment imbued with beauty. The cycle from fourteen to twenty-one, introduced by the changes of puberty and embracing the years of high school, is characterised by the birth of the capacity to think abstractly and to reason logically; is exercised through disciplined academic pursuits, artistic self-expression, and practical work in an environment imbued with the ideal of striving for truth.

The divisions from early childhood into primary and secondary education are seen to be based, not on social convention, but on the realities of human development, and Waldorf education aims to lay the groundwork for the development of a healthy soul-life, characterised by creativity in thinking, a feeling for morality, and willingness to be a socially responsible member of the community, or in Steiner's own words: "The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility - these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education".

Some of the key features, as well as common organisational and methodological practices that have emerged from Steiner's ideas include the following:

(1) Waldorf schools are non-denominational and non-sectarian. They invite students of any race, ethnic or religious background. They are co-educational and all students do all subjects.

(2) In the years of their primary education, the class teacher accompanies the same group of students for the full cycle from 7 to 14 years, providing a loving authority, stability, consistency, strong interpersonal relationships between the teachers, children and their families. This form of primary class organisation provides a realistic opportunity to attend to individual needs of children while encouraging the social development of the class.

(3) The teaching of subjects occurs in integrated block periods (called 'Main Lessons') in the first two-hour period of the day, for the whole of the twelve years. Each Main Lesson lasts a minimum of three weeks, making possible more in-depth treatment of subject matter and promotes continuity and concentration.

(4) A balance of academic, artistic and practical activities is provided in the belief that all the faculties of the soul should be nourished and exercised. The organisational form to support this aim is the three-fold division of the day whereby the morning period emphasises more formal academic learning, the middle period of the day focuses more on artistic subjects, and the afternoons are devoted to practical activities.

(5) The 'College of Teachers' is responsible for the educational policy making and administration. This means that, rather than a principal, deputies and seniors making the decisions, all teachers participate in and are responsible for decisions made and therefore are clearly accountable for their implementation. Committees of the 'College' attend to specific portfolios of management. All teachers, whether working in the kindergarten or high school, are considered to be of equal status as members of the 'College'.

(6) The school, while being a reflection of the wider community, is also a place of shelter where children are permitted to be children and allowed to progress at their own rate without competitive pressure. Ideally, each school should contain the age range from the little children in kindergarten to the young adults of year twelve, so that the different stages of consciousness are represented in a total school community.

(7) Anthroposophy, both as a body of knowledge and a path of inner development, underlies the educational philosophy. However, Waldorf schools have never sought to indoctrinate their students into Anthroposophy, the majority of parents are not adherents of Anthroposophy, and teachers are not required to be. Like the contemporary Catholic schools of Australia, Waldorf schools do not restrict their staff to Anthroposophists, but expect all teachers to be ‘in sympathy with the aims and values’ of Steiner-Waldorf education. It is quite possible to accept Steiner’s ideas on the nature of humanity and on child development, and the broad elements of the curriculum he designed, as the foundation for a type of schooling, without necessarily assenting to every aspect of Steiner’s philosophy.

These are some of the major features of Waldorf education, and while most of these practices were unusual in the early decades of this century, many are now common-place, even in mainstream schools, at least in theory. However, the unifying force which keeps the Waldorf schools on track all over the world is the interpretation of the nature and development of the human being which Steiner's Anthroposophy inspires. That the relevance of an educational method based on Anthroposophy was appreciated early this century, and continues to be adopted by an increasing number of

people around the world, is testified by the growth of the movement which took place since the founding of the first school.

The *status quo* of Waldorf schools in Australia

As previously noted, every Waldorf school is a separate educational entity. There is no 'System Headquarters' which directs, evaluates or controls them. At present (1999) the approximately fifty Waldorf school initiatives around Australia include:

- Playgroups intending to develop into kindergartens
- Kindergartens intending to proceed into primary
- Primary schools intending to remain as primary schools
- Primary schools intending to progress into high school
- Primary and Junior High schools (say up to class 10)
- The full K – 12 schools

The largest number of schools is the 'Primary only' but over time demand for high schooling has increased and this has provided new challenges for school communities. Among the K-12 group are schools, especially in NSW and Victoria, which have accepted the State syllabus for achieving a matriculation via the HSC or VCE. Consequently they have modified the Waldorf curriculum accordingly at Years 10–12 to prepare for exams. However, there are several K-12 schools which have made no such compromise and are committed to providing a comprehensive Waldorf curriculum. Some have negotiated tertiary entry individually for each student applying. The case of the Mount Barker Waldorf school is of particular interest in this regard. The first Year 12 graduate negotiated entry into Flinders University's Associate Diploma based on a folio of work completed and the assessment and recommendation of the High School Faculty. Based on excellent results at the end of the first year, the student transferred into a BSc degree stream, later transferred into Medicine and is now a practicing GP in Darwin. Several students have taken this pathway from Associate Diploma to other degree courses. The academic results of Waldorf school graduates have generally been outstanding.

Waldorf schools provide a broad, comprehensive education whereby relatively equal emphasis is given to academic, artistic and practical subjects. Students are not streamed on principle. While there is only one class at each year level at the MBWS, there are Waldorf schools with two parallel classes in primary and high school, both overseas and in Australia, which nevertheless have students with a wide range of abilities in each class group.

Some students find their vocational interests met by entering a trade or apprenticeship, others are better suited to academic study. At MBWS students elect at the end of year 11 the pathway they will pursue. Thorough counselling is provided by the school and only those whom the High school faculty determines stand a good chance of succeeding at tertiary study are recommended to apply for university entry.

The Academic and Student Services office at Flinders University has recognised the validity of the Waldorf school's selection criteria. Based on the very good academic performance of 25 ex-Waldorf students enrolled at Flinders University from 1991 to 1997, it confirmed its willingness to continue consider applications for admission from students of the Mount Barker Waldorf School.[13] Now all students

[13] University records indicate that since 1991 FU has admitted 25 students from the MBWS. These students have enrolled in a variety of courses including Arts, Commerce, Education, Medicine (transfer after initial enrolment in another Flinders' course),Nursing, Science and Speech Pathology. The performance of these students has been very good as demonstrated by the following statistics:
Number of topic enrolments: 306

seeking admission do so through the Tertiary Admissions Commission (SATAC) special provisions. Waldorf students are accessing courses at the Universities of Adelaide and of South Australia (though not with the same ease or openness in some faculties). Some students are studying at the Art School in North Adelaide, others are doing a range of TAFE courses.

This case study was intended to highlight the point that there are alternative ways to gain access to tertiary education after high school (apart from the adult entry pathway). Some students can avoid the traditional schooling pathway which generally involves examinations, streaming, competitiveness, and a narrowing of subject options at senior secondary level. The traditional approach should not be considered the only acceptable or even desirable way for all students to receive an education. The example of the students at the Mount Barker Waldorf School is one local case amongst many all over the world where a broad comprehensive and liberal education is offered without compromising students' vocational options.

Brief History of the Mount Barker Waldorf School

The Adelaide Waldorf School, as it was initially called, began classes with 37 children in Kindergarten and Classes 1, 2 and 3, and five teachers[14], including a eurythmist in February 1979 in Beulah Road, Norwood. The school's first site was an Anglican church hall which had previously been the venue for "Spring Park", one of a number of alternative schools which had sprung up during the liberal "Dunstan Decade"[15] but which ceased to operate due to 'lack of cohesion and direction within the teaching and parent body'.[16]

The hall, being a temporary location, was vacated at the end of 1979 and in the following year the Waldorf school relocated under a stand of old blue gums on twenty acres of gently-sloping farmland on the outskirts of the small, sleepy and conservative country town of Mount Barker. The Anthroposophical Society was instrumental in bringing this school into being. The land, on the southern outskirts of Mount Barker, was donated by one of its members [17] and the money to buy the first portable buildings came from a group of anthroposophists[18] which had established a Rudolf Steiner School Trust Fund into which its members had been contributing. It was also a group of members of the Anthroposophical Society who decided on the need to establish a school based on Steiner's indications in Adelaide[19]. Most of them were

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Number of High Distinctions awarded:	29
Number of Distinctions awarded:	111
Number of Credits awarded:	105
Number of passes awarded:	55
Number of Fails awarded:	6

Twelve students had grade point averages in excess of 5 on a scale of 1 to 7 (highest).
Correspondence to Mt Barker Waldorf School from Academic and Student Services, 21 Oct. 1997.

[14] The founding teachers were Milton Mellor (K), Jennifer Bundey (Class 1), Jennifer West (Class 2), Alduino Mazzone (Class 3), and Thomas Ludescher (ex-Lorien Novalis class teacher and recently trained Eurythmist), and some part-time teachers such as Doreen Mellor (Painting and Craft)

[15] The period in which Mr. Don Dunstan was Premier of South Australia, noted for its innovativeness and support of alternatives in all fields.

[16] From a discussion with an ex-parent of the school.

[17] The donor, Mr. George Sickel, had married into the Mount Barker German community of established land owners and in the 1960s had also been instrumental in the founding of Saint Mark's Lutheran Church in Mt. Barker. He later became a member of the Anthroposophical Society and supported the school venture.

[18] The Novalis Group, under the leadership of Mrs. Charlotte. Schwenczner.

[19] The initiative group comprised Paul Rubens, Alduino Mazzone, Sue Laing, Caroline Verco, Patricia Sutcliffe, David and June Kew, Ron Savage, Sylvia Debski and a visiting Dutch anthroposophist, Coen van Houten, who chaired the meeting. (Attendance from minutes of first meeting 29th July, 1977.)

teachers already and some had young children. This group became the committee that from 1977 steered events leading to the founding of the school eighteen months later.

After the initial three classes, the school grew by one class each year until class 10 in 1986 when a pause was made for two years, to consolidate the work in the high school, before adding the final two classes and establishing in 1990 a full twelve year programme. There are currently about 350 students in the school receiving a single-stream comprehensive Waldorf education from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Among its strategies to publicise its intentions to found a school, the Steering Committee hosted some public lectures[20] which over three nights attracted over 100 people. Names were taken of people interested in supporting the founding of a Waldorf school, and a total of 120 names were collected. These prospective parents and friends formed the Waldorf School Association. With this step taken, the original steering group of anthroposophists disbanded and became a part of the larger newly formed Association.

Waldorf education was not altogether unknown in South Australia because of the initiative of Paul Rubens and later Patricia Fuss, two lecturers in Education at Torrens College of Advanced Education, at the Underdale Campus (later to become part of the University of South Australia). Rubens and Fuss conducted elective and special unit courses on the Principles and Practice of Steiner (Waldorf) Education from the mid 1960s, and therefore when the Education Group of the Waldorf School Association had no success in attracting trained teachers from elsewhere[21], it was from the considerable number of teachers who had taken this course that the first two of the class teachers were drawn.

When the school was "up and running" the Association disbanded: The teaching staff formed the College of Teachers [22]and the parents formed a Parent Association. This situation has remained mostly the same up to this day, and is consistent with the other schools except for the fact that although the school does have parent representation on its management committees (except the Education Committee) it is the College of Teachers which owns the school and has the constitutional powers to decide on educational policy and the conduct of its affairs.[23] From this we see that Waldorf schools implemented a management approach which predated by 80 years the current attempts in State education, to decentralise some administrative powers to school boards.

Challenges facing Waldorf teachers today

By the use of a questionnaire and interviews information was solicited about what practicing Waldorf teachers experienced as their greatest challenges in the schools in which they teach or have taught.[24] For the purposes of analysis, the responses to the relevant question in the questionnaire were grouped into seven major categories which seemed to encompass the variety of ‘challenges’ mentioned by the teachers. Respondents identified a range of challenges which they perceived their

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[20]From writer's diary entry: "Waldorf Education and Your Child", "Education Towards a New Society", and "The Goals of Waldorf Education: A New View of Man".June 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, 1978 respectively; and *Newsletter for Members; Anthroposophical Society (S.A. Branch)* "News and Announcements", p. 1, May 1978.

[21] It should be remembered that the school movement was growing rapidly all over the world, and any available teachers soon found employment.

[22] Alduino Mazzone maintained a continuity of presence as a member of the steering committee, Chairman of the Waldorf School Association, and member of the first College of Teachers.

[23] Unlike Glenaeon where the Board of Management is made up of teachers and parents.

[24] Alduino Mazzone, *Waldorf Teacher Education: The implications for teacher education of Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy and its practice in Waldorf schools*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1999, Chapter 8.

colleagues to be facing, or were themselves facing. The categories in which the challenges were framed are outlined.

1) ***Children*****:** How to continue to preserve the 'forces of childhood' in our contemporary materialistic culture (including some formal schooling practices) which largely ignores, and in some areas seems to negate, spirituality, creativity and human integrity. 62% or responses referred to issues connected with children.
2) ***Curriculum*****:** How to provide a relevant curriculum for the modern child. 21% commented on this point.
3) ***Colleagues*****:** How to develop a healthy working-together with peers who value professionalism, accountability and empowerment of each other. 21% identified the need to strengthen skills for working with colleagues.
4) ***The school organisation*****:** How to effectively manage the educational, social and economic aspects of the school. 51% mentioned this area as a major challenge.
5) ***The philosophical basis*****:** How to deepen understanding of and commitment to Anthroposophy. 33% considered this area as fundamental to the healthy survival of Waldorf education.
6) ***Maintaining 'healthy' working conditions*****:** How to develop commitment to and maintain effective strategies for teachers' physical, emotional and spiritual health. 43% mentioned their concerns about teacher stress, 'burnout' and the support needed to maintain a balanced life.
7) ***Teacher supply and in-service training:*** 16% of respondents identified the provision of both Waldorf trained teachers and adequate on-going in-service training as a major challenge.

Most teachers experience difficulties in some aspects of their work and it was not surprising that most teachers identified more than one challenge. For example, the majority of respondents identified challenges in three categories.

- 14% of teachers identified a challenge in only one category
- 27% identified challenges in two categories
- 40% identified challenges in three categories
- 17% identified challenges in four categories

These figures may be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example; they may indicate weaknesses in teacher training, or highlight the increasing problems involved in teaching generally or in a Waldorf school specifically. While the majority of the challenges identified by Waldorf teachers would most probably be shared in common by most teachers in whatever system of education they are employed, there are several areas in relation to categories 2, 3, and 4 above, that are featured in Waldorf schools in a unique way. Refer to the section on 'Key Characteristics of Waldorf Education' above for the broader context.

Regarding c*urriculum*: This is a most complex area because a 'true' Waldorf curriculum cannot be given as a recipe and ideally is created by each teacher based on his or her relationship with the children, including the age of the children and their individual abilities, interests and needs. It is a highly creative process to evolve a curriculum out the reality of each particular class group. It is inimical to the use and application of statements and profiles to specify what should be covered and at what standard by what time. Education is largely concerned to bring about healthy human development. Human growth is highly individual and attempts to bring about standardisation of human development are antithetical to Waldorf educational philosophy. It is a problem because it is human to want 'the easy way out.'

Regarding *Colleagues*: Waldorf schools are run by a colleagueship of teachers. As there is no Principal or deputies or any such hierarchical administrative structure in the school a well developed ability to work together is necessary. This is very

challenging because with new staff and changing needs of existing staff commitment to the management process and building of trust is an ongoing endeavour. Skill development in decision making, conflict management and empowerment are crucial. It is a problem because there is never enough time to do it.

Regarding *the school organisation*: This is related to the previous challenge because the effective management of the three major aspects of an organisation such as school (mainly the educational, social and economic) requires judicious application of professionalism, commitment, and good people skills. Teachers are expected to participate, according to interest and ability, in a range of sub-committees which are given mandates by the College of Teachers or Board of Management (depending on the school's constitutional structure) to carry out specific administrative tasks. Hence on top of regular teaching responsibilities teachers are also involved in school administration. This can be a problem especially when the pressure builds up at peak times. These management duties can be immensely satisfying because the decision makers are also those who have to execute them, or it can lead to overload, stress and 'burnout'.

In Conclusion

In considering some problems involved in teaching and learning in South Australia, the special demands of teaching and learning in an independent private school such as the Mount Barker Waldorf School was considered from a number of perspectives. A group of founders, having decided to connect with an educational movement whose approach to child development, curriculum, methodology and school management styles were almost completely at odds with what was considered to be conventional schooling; then had to meet the challenges of founding a new school; including public education, attracting students, becoming registered, achieving equitable government funding; deciding on appropriate fees; teacher salaries and working conditions (this was before union awards became mandatory) attracting teachers; training teachers; building up a committed staff; agreeing on educational and other policies; conducting a curriculum that approximates the educational philosophy; ensuring that students' and parents' aspirations for a 'good' education that led to jobs were met; satisfying the teachers' needs for suitable teaching spaces and resources and a healthy physical, social and cultural environment; convincing employers and tertiary institutions about the quality of the education and the achievements of students; and more ensuring adequate in-service training so that the ongoing implementation of the educational philosophy was fostered, and the teaching approach was not watered down. These latter challenges are ongoing but there is no cause for concern because the schools have not only survived, they are thriving and the waiting lists indicate that the education is wanted. Parents want a choice of education for their children and a range of options can enrich the educational climate of the State and inspire improvements in the quality of education generally.