Globalization of Waldorf education: an ethnographic case study from the Philippines
Schie, T.J. van

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of Waldorf Education

An Ethnographic Case Study from the Philippines

Thijs Jan van Schie

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of Waldorf Education
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Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden

op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr. S. de Rijcke,

volgens besluit van het college van promoties

te verdedigen op vrijdag 6 februari 2026

klokke 11.30 uur

door

Thijs Jan Romero van Schie

geboren te Haarlem,

in 1980

"A healthy social life is found only,

when in the mirror of each soul

the whole community finds its reflection,

and when in the whole community

the virtue of each one is living."

R. Steiner

PHILIPPINE
SEA

LUZON

Baguio ●

SOUTH
CHINA SEA

Quezon City ●
● MANILA
● Santa Rosa
● Batangas

SAMAR

PANAY

Iloilo ●

Gamot Cogan Waldorf School

● Cebu

Puerto Princesa ●

SULU SEA

MINDANAO

● Davao City

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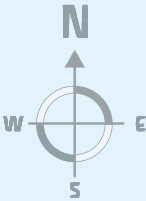W   E
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Preface

At a close friend's wedding, I struck up a conversation with his father, who regularly visited a Waldorf school in the Philippines in an advisory role. He spoke vividly about his experiences, and I was fascinated. I had not realized that Waldorf schools existed outside Europe and began to wonder what Waldorf education might look like in a different cultural and social context. In the Netherlands, I could always recognize a Waldorf school the moment I walked in – the atmosphere, the wooden furniture, the scent of beeswax and wool, the sound of recorders and children reciting in chorus. Would I find that same feeling in a Philippine Waldorf school? What would have to be adapted to make it meaningful there? And how different would Philippine Waldorf education be from what I knew in the Netherlands?

As I listened and asked questions, a quiet thought formed: this might be a compelling theme for future doctoral research.

I had already been considering a PhD. At the time, I was teaching at Marecollege, a Waldorf secondary school in Leiden, and lecturing at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University – the very institute where I had trained as an anthropologist. That moment at the wedding brought both worlds together: my everyday life as a Waldorf teacher and my academic identity as an anthropologist. Until then, they had run parallel without really intersecting.

As an anthropologist, I had worked in Malawi and Vietnam, helping to establish and shape anthropology programmes. As a teacher, I deeply valued the creative, meaningful work with adolescents. Pursuing a PhD became a natural extension of both roles – perhaps best described as becoming an educational ethnographer. I hoped to bridge these two previously separate worlds, to bring them into dialogue and to see what new perspectives might emerge from their connection.

What a privilege – and a beautiful challenge – it was!

That said, the journey was not without difficulty. Balancing teaching with research is demanding; each role requires a different kind of energy. Teaching calls for flexibility and creativity; research demands reflection and time – something not always easy to find. All of this unfolded alongside major life events: I got married, we had children, we bought a house. A global pandemic struck. And my dedicated supervisor, Sabine Luning, passed away. Each of these moments marked and shaped this journey.

But – I did it! The dissertation you have before you is the result, and I am proud of it. What began as a personal learning trajectory is, I hope, clearly relevant to others as well. I hope it inspires teachers to engage in research themselves – something still made possible by the wonderful NWO Promotiebeurs voor Leraren *(Doctoral Grant for Teachers)*. And I hope this work contributes to a deeper understanding of Waldorf education – emphasizing a living, contemporary approach in which all students, regardless of background, feel at home.

Above all, I hope this work strengthens our motivation, as educators, to keep working with energy and dedication – day by day and hour by hour – for and with the students entrusted to our care.

Introduction

This dissertation contributes to educational ethnographic knowledge by examining an underexplored phenomenon: the ethnography of global connections[1] with respect to an educational approach, in this case Waldorf education. Focusing on the emergence of Waldorf education in the Philippines, it uses an ethnographic case study to trace how this educational approach 'travels' and is reconstituted in a new local setting. The study especially investigates the extent to which Waldorf education can be made locally meaningful, and where frictions arise in that process.

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[1] The term 'ethnography of global connections' as well as other terms in the introduction, i.e. 'frictions' and 'zones of awkward engagement' were introduced by Anna Tsing (2005)

What emerges is a contradictory picture of a school with ambitious ideals and a strong identity that can, at the same time, feel alienating to those outside it because of zones of awkward engagement produced by these global–local encounters. This awkwardness surfaces in the school's ideological underpinnings and curriculum, which are continually renegotiated – in a complex and dynamic process – in search of new engaged forms of Waldorf education that may ultimately enrich and diversify the Philippine educational landscape.

Before examining how Waldorf education emerged in the Philippines, I will briefly define what Waldorf education is. Waldorf education is education based on the original pedagogic and didactic ideas – as well as the anthroposophical worldview – of its founder, the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner.[2] Offering a single, fixed definition is difficult because, as I will argue, concepts that appear universal are always locally reformulated and revalidated. Nevertheless, as a starting point, the following aspects can be considered typical of Waldorf schools (from Sagarin 2011, 184-196):

1. Waldorf pedagogy is development-oriented, focusing on developing human beings.
2. Waldorf didactics strive for a balance between learning by head, heart, and hands.
3. At the basis of Waldorf education is a social ideology, striving for social health and reverence for the world, including the natural environment.

Waldorf education has long been a 'Western' phenomenon, with schools predominantly in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Since the turn of the century, Waldorf education has been introduced in an increasing number of countries in the Global South (Boland 2015, Göbel 2019, Rawson 2021, Stehlik 2019),[3] including in Latin America, Africa, and, particularly, Asia (Johnson 2014, Kurz 2011).[4] The Philippines is one of the countries where Waldorf education is relatively new within the local educational landscape.[5]

A central question for Waldorf pioneers worldwide is how to integrate the philosophy and practices of Waldorf education into local educational systems and cultural contexts. European aspects of the Waldorf system do not self-evidently blend into non-European sociocultural, political, religious, geographic, and climatological contexts. For example, the seasonal festivals celebrated in Waldorf schools are mostly rooted in European folk traditions – some with pre-Christian, pagan origins – as well as in Christian feast days, such as St John's Day (24 June) or Michaelmas (29 September). The curriculum

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[2] In the extensive body of literature by Rudolf Steiner on Waldorf education, *Study of Man: General Education Course* (2004) is generally considered the most comprehensive standard work.

[3] Current numbers worldwide: 1283 Waldorf schools, 1987 Waldorf kindergartens (Waldorf World List, 2024).

[4] In Asia, there are 88 Waldorf schools and 181 Waldorf kindergartens (Waldorf World List, 2024, which is >50% increase compared to the Waldorf List 2014).

[5] Manila Waldorf School, "How it all started", school website visited 29 May 2024, https://www.manilawaldorfschool.edu.ph/how-it-all-started

also reflects and is influenced by processes in nature in the Northern hemisphere and draws on ecliptic rhythms and symbolic patterns of light and darkness, associated with outward and inward movement, or the 'breathing of the earth' (Hoffmann 2016). Another example of the European orientation within the Waldorf curriculum is the incorporation of European mythology, such as the Norse myths of the *Edda* (Boland 2015, Fong 2017, Sagarin 2017). Moreover, Waldorf education is typically associated with a particular lifestyle that encompasses specific notions and habits related to food and health, as well as spiritual elements, such as the belief in reincarnation. In certain contexts, this lifestyle is so pronounced that it can be described as a 'culture in its own right' or 'an international Waldorf subculture'.

While awareness of the need for inclusive[6] and localized[7] Waldorf education, i.e. Waldorf education where all students can feel at home, has increased extensively within international Waldorf networks in recent years,[8] discussions on this issue have tended to focus on the curriculum rather than on foundational anthroposophical principles. These anthroposophical principles are often incorrectly characterized as value-free and universal and are therefore less likely to be questioned. Yet these foundational principles raise the complex question of what, ultimately, binds Waldorf schools together. How much can schools differ from each other while still forming an international educational movement? This question underscores the need to address these underlying principles as well, since they are likely to have locally and culturally different manifestations – or, in other words, to engage differently with the new localities where they are introduced. After all, these ideas originated in a specific place and time, namely Central Europe around the turn of the 20th century. This was a highly ideologically charged and turbulent era with, among other things, large-scale industrialization in Europe and the dramatic events surrounding the First World War. Even at the inception of Waldorf education, these ideas did not develop in isolation but were influenced by broader intellectual and cultural movements of their time. Anthroposophy, the underlying philosophy of Waldorf education, emerged

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[6] Inclusive education is an approach where all students, regardless of differences in abilities or cultural backgrounds, learn together, providing them with equal chances. Inclusive education is also sometimes referred to as adaptive education, education in which individual needs of all students are taken in to account.

[7] Localized education is an approach where the curriculum and teaching methods are tailored to reflect and incorporate the specific cultural, social, and economic context of the local community. In the context of this research, localization of Waldorf education can have different scales and can mean different things, including Asianization, Filipinization, localization to the local context of the island of Panay or the province of Iloilo (Ilonggo culture), or the rural village community of Libongcogon (as opposed to the city culture).

[8] This is witnessed in (international) conferences and publications related to Waldorf education, but also in adjusted guidelines for the Waldorf curriculum provided by the International Forum for Steiner Waldorf Education (Hague Circle, 2016), which now state: "(The curriculum) is continuously being developed taking account of the geographical and cultural location, the political as well as general and global lines of development of the time […] the use of Rudolf Steiner's specifications for lessons which relate, for example, more to western cultural values could be supplemented or replaced by cultural content of corresponding value as long as the educational effect is maintained."

from Theosophy, a spiritual movement that sought to unite all world religions. It was also strongly inspired by Asian spiritual notions such as karma and reincarnation. Just as they do today, these 'travelling' concepts and ideas took shape within a new local setting. In fact, Waldorf education – as well as anthroposophy – is continually evolving with changing times and contexts. Stakeholders in international networks constantly redefine what these changes mean and how they continue to constitute Waldorf education (or how and why they do not). This study makes these dynamics especially visible. Precisely these ongoing redefinitions make it compelling from an anthropological perspective to evaluate how Waldorf education is adapted in new local settings, such as in the Philippines.

Research Outline

The main objective of this dissertation is to evaluate the question of how Waldorf education, through networks of global connections, has been introduced to a new locality in the Philippines. The research assesses how seemingly Eurocentric elements are negotiated and applied in the school under study and how this type of education is received by direct outsiders. Later in this introduction – *under structure of this dissertation* – I will explain how specific sub-questions are addressed in the various chapters. Before doing so, I first describe *the field*, making note of important sociographic and contextual information, followed by the *theoretical approaches* that are relevant for analysing the research outcomes, and finally the *research methodology*, describing how the research was done, including a reflection on my own role as a researcher.

The Field

The Philippines is a good example of an Asian country where Waldorf education has established a firm foothold in recent years. Since the first Waldorf School opened in Manila in 1994, a growing number of Waldorf initiatives have emerged across the country. Most started as kindergartens but have gradually expanded into private primary and secondary schools.[9]

One such school is the Gamot Cogon School. It opened in 2005 and is located in a rural area in central Philippines and forms the case study for this dissertation. Although it is a private school, it explicitly aims to include underprivileged and poor children alongside pupils from relatively wealthy, middle-class families. The school is located in a small rural community on the central island of Panay, attracting students not only from the village itself and the surrounding communities but also from the nearby city of Iloilo. The diversity of the student population is thus twofold: firstly, there are notable socioeconomic differences, and secondly, there is a distinction between urban and rural children. However, these two categories largely overlap. This diversity in the student

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[9]   See Chapter 3.

population as well as the location of the school means that this school exemplifies – perhaps even more than other Waldorf schools in the Philippines – the social ideology formulated by Rudolf Steiner (2018) in the aftermath of the First World War. These ideals, regarded within international Waldorf networks as fundamental to Waldorf education, have been reinterpreted for a contemporary Philippine setting by one of its pioneers, Nicanor Perlas (1999). The underlying idea is that one of the main objectives of Waldorf education is to provide good education to underprivileged children. Most other Waldorf schools in the Philippines are located in urban areas and draw their student population primarily from a relatively wealthy and highly educated urban middle class. This is more in line with a trend seen in other Asian countries, where the emergence of alternative forms of education goes hand in hand with an upcoming conscious and critical middle class searching for meaning beyond materialism and looking for alternatives to the traditional educational system.[10]

In the absence of a national Waldorf school association in the Philippines, the school under study is monitored by the international Waldorf community. Mentors from Europe are sent by the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum[11] to the school to assess and advise on its adherence to international Waldorf guidelines (International Forum for Steiner Waldorf Education/ Hague Circle 2016). As a result, the school regularly receives international guests and is officially recognized and administrated as a Waldorf school.[12] Besides European mentors, the school also functions within an Asian Waldorf network, mainly through international Waldorf conferences, such as the biannual Asian Waldorf Teachers Conference.[13] Within such networks, it is articulated that many Waldorf schools in the region face similar challenges and dilemmas, such as difficult interactions with authorities, problems regarding financing and facilities, and finding, training, and keeping teachers.

The Philippines forms an interesting locality for this study, because it is historically characterized by 'an eclectic mix of influences and institutions' (Symaco 2013, 192). Waldorf education is not unique in its quest for new local identities. To some extent, this is true for Filipino culture and identity as a whole (Zialcita 2005). The Philippines can be characterized as a country with a rich diversity of ethnic minorities, languages, and cultures. Moreover, abundant external influences have played their part in enriching and transforming cultural practices. As a former colony of Spain and the United States, cultural hybridities with Spanish and American influences have emerged. Moreover, the country has a strong international orientation and an appreciation for many foreign elements, partly due to a rich migration history (Tyner 2009). Migration is also prevalent in the local environment of the school under study. Many people leave the island of Panay and the province of Iloilo to find work elsewhere in the world, for example in global shipping or as domestic helpers or nannies, particularly in the Middle East. Processes of localization and

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[10] Such an example is provided by Johnson (2014) in a Chinese context.

[11] Seat of the General Anthroposophical Society, in Dornach, Switzerland.
https://www.goetheanum-paedagogik.ch/en/

[12] see Waldorf List 2024 for all officially recognized Waldorf schools.

[13] https://www.anthroposophie.ch/en/education/news/article/waldorf-education-on-the-move-in-asia.html

enculturation are ubiquitous in Filipino society. Sometimes, external influences become so Filipinized and culturally appropriated that they are exported as 'typically Filipino' to other countries, such as the United States, where a large Filipino community exists. Examples include the Iglesia ni Cristo, a Filipino religious organization (Reed 2001), and Jollibee, a Filipino fast-food chain (Dumlao-Abadilla 2017). These examples, though vastly different in nature, illustrate processes of cultural appropriation and enculturation. Each originated from foreign influences but has become deeply integrated into Filipino culture and is now recognized internationally as 'typically Filipino phenomena'. The Iglesia ni Cristo, initially a product of American Christian missions in the Philippines, now operates as a Filipino-centric religious organization with localized practices and rituals, actively sending out missionaries worldwide. With over 7,000 congregations globally, the church has a presence on every continent (Reed 2001). Similarly, Jollibee has also travelled from the Philippines to other places, with this fast-food chain found in over 30 countries. While fried chicken, burgers, and fries are on the menu, as in many American-style fast-food restaurants, there is a distinctly Filipino twist to the Jollibee menu, offering dishes such as *pancit palabok, adobo rice*, or sweetened spaghetti alongside its burgers (Dumlao-Abadilla 2017).

The Philippine education system has also been shaped by successive external influences that have been repeatedly internalized. Mass education was introduced under American rule, along with the English as the main educational language. The current system is primarily shaped by the Department of Education and is partly aligned with international trends in education. Although there is a general mandate for compulsory education in the Philippines, with 13 years of education provided prior to tertiary education (the so-called K12 system),[14] there are many structural problems, including a lack of resources, well-trained teachers, and good facilities (Durban and Catalan 2012). As a result, dropout rates remain relatively high, as does the illiteracy rate (Termes, Edwards, and Verger 2020). The current education system in the Philippines continues to struggle to compete internationally, as reflected in global assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Schleicher 2019; Trinidad 2018). Nevertheless, within the region, the system is comparable to that of neighbouring countries with an emphasis on competitiveness, striving for excellence, and a cognitive approach aimed at creating skilled manpower to achieve optimal economic growth for the nation (Reyes 2015; Symaco 2013). These characteristics seem difficult to reconcile with educational attitudes that promote individual development in the broadest sense, as does the aim of alternative educational philosophies such as Waldorf education (Rawson 2019). There is a distinction between private and public education in the Philippines, which traditionally has a relatively large sector of private educational institutions, with private education placing a greater emphasis on individual development (Termes, Edwards, and Verger 2020). Although Waldorf education brings a unique approach in certain respects, its preferred and practiced methods also share notable similarities with those found in other Philippine private schools.[15]

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[14] Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines, "K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum", https://www.deped.gov.ph/k-to-12/about/k-to-12-basic-education-curriculum/.
[15] See Chapter 6.

Theoretical Approaches

This dissertation draws extensively on the groundbreaking work of anthropologist Anna Tsing and, in doing so, contributes to a vivid academic debate amongst educational scientists about globalization processes in education – whether trends and policies in education do in fact globalize, and if so, how. I will first outline general approaches to globalization within the educational sciences before turning to Anna Tsing's specific perspective. After discussing her approach, known as the 'ethnography of global connections' (Tsing 2005), I will examine the importance of localized curricula, both from a social-psychological and a sociological/anthropological viewpoint. Finally, I will consider a more emic approach to the globalization of Waldorf education. How do stakeholders within Waldorf education themselves view the trend of the international spread of Waldorf education?

Globalization in education

First, I will address the theoretical perspective of globalization in education, which I have used to outline general globalization theory in education. This is important because the case study of this dissertation can be seen as the result of a globalization process. After all, an educational concept – Waldorf education – is being introduced in an increasing number of contexts worldwide, including the Philippines, and is continually reshaped through international flows and networks.

Appadurai's authoritative globalization theory (1996), which emphasizes the complexity of interconnected global cultural flows and interactions and their impact on local contexts, conceptualized through a framework of 'scapes' (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes) has been translated to the field of educational studies by Rizvi and Lingard (2010), who introduced the concept of 'eduscapes'. Spring (2015, 7-13) subsequently distinguished three theoretical perspectives that have been especially influential in shaping the field of global eduscapes. The first perspective is based on World Culture Theory and points at a growing uniformity within the field of education due to globalized discourses. This perspective emphasizes homogenization in education over time, witnessed in globalized school models and policies, instructional strategies, and school assessments by international agents such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) through its Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) through Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The second perspective originates from the World System Approach and considers the hegemonic Western position in education not only as a cause of growing uniformity, but also as a source of the constant reproduction and even amplification of social inequalities. The third perspective, coined by Spring as the Culturalist Approach (2015, 11-3), emphasizes cultural diversity and local uniqueness within education. From this perspective, globalization is understood as a dynamic process that is perceived, adopted, and resisted in many ways. The educational anthropologist Anderson-Levitt (2003) is the key representative of this third perspective, which stresses the personal

experiences of local stakeholders in relation to globalization processes, as well as the cultural diversity within education. Her perspective focuses more on heterogenization, including the globalization of competing ideas in education and alternative educational approaches (Spring 2015, 14-26).

In conclusion, we can say that globalization in education – within so-called *eduscapes* – can be interpreted in multiple ways, leading either to homogenization or to heterogenization. In the case of Waldorf education, one could argue that its globalization, on the one hand, leads to a diversification of the local educational landscape in the regions where it is introduced, while, on the other hand, its international growth can itself be seen as the result of broader globalization processes. Given the first perspective, the international spread of Waldorf education does not necessarily lead to homogenization. As educational trends globalize, so too do educational alternatives. The question, then, is whether homogenizing processes also occur within Waldorf education: are Waldorf schools worldwide becoming increasingly similar as this educational model is embedded in global networks? If so, might this homogenization reflect a form of education that is dominated by Western ideas, carrying a sense of neo-colonization or Eurocentrism? Or are trends of homogenization overstated, with most Waldorf schools worldwide remaining distinctive because of their specific settings and student populations, where cultural, societal, and geographical adaptations are always needed to make this educational concept work? Consequently, it becomes crucial to ask to what extent Filipino Waldorf education differs from Waldorf education elsewhere? In other words, whether there is also heterogenization within the Waldorf school educational approach? And if so, how far can this heterogenization go? How long can we continue to speak of cohesion within this educational movement? How much commonality is needed for a shared identity?

Ethnography of global connections

Having outlined a general perspective on globalization theories in education, I now turn to a specific approach, as well as a critique of globalization theory, namely Anna Tsing's (2005) ethnography of global connections. I chose this perspective because, in my view, Tsing convincingly demonstrates that general theories of globalization are often too coarse and abstract. For a genuine understanding of globalization processes, it is essential to accept that each process is unique and often highly chaotic and illogical. Tsing's approach legitimizes this study's focus on an in-depth examination of a single case – one Waldorf school in the Philippines.

The anthropologist Anna Tsing, whose work centres not so much on education but primarily on environmental issues, has strongly criticized the aforementioned perspectives and grand theories on globalization for their high level of abstraction and simplified narratives. She argues that they present globalization too much as an autonomous process or superstructure (Gluck and Tsing, 2009, Tsing 2000, Tsing 2005), turning it into what she calls "globalist fantasies" (Tsing 2000, 69). In response, Tsing offers a more practical conceptual framework to better account for the unpredictable, complex, and messy practice of globalization (Tsing 2005). Globalization – or global connections as Tsing terms it – is about more than social structures or global forces; it is about real encounters,

networks, ideas, and actions, which often result in unanticipated outcomes (Tsing 2005). She suggests that to understand processes of global connections, we must trace concrete trajectories of particular globalizing projects (Tsing 2000, 85). The emergence of Waldorf education in the Philippines can be perceived as one such concrete trajectory, in which certain knowledge is presented as cosmopolitan and universally applicable, but is, in fact, locally charged with meaning. Tsing's term global connections emphasizes the interconnectedness of global and local scales (Tsing 2005, 55-77), showing how local practices are influenced by and contribute to global processes. This viewpoint challenges the notion of globalization as a one-way imposition of global forces on local cultures, instead highlighting the dynamic and reciprocal relations between the local and the global. Tsing also introduces the idea of 'friction' (also the title of Tsing's 2005 book), which occurs in so-called 'zones of awkward engagement' (Tsing 2005, XI). These frictions create new possibilities and constraints, highlighting the complexity and unpredictability of global connections. They demonstrate how global ideas and practices are transformed and reinterpreted in different local settings and create so-called engaged universals. The term 'engaged universals' (Tsing 2005, 8) underscores the importance of examining how seemingly universal concepts are interpreted, negotiated, and contested in various localities. Such concepts might therefore be understood as 'locals dressed up as universals'. These engaged universals do not have fixed meanings, since they are brought to life and made meaningful through their application in particular local settings. The meaning and implementation of these universals are negotiated through interactions between global discourses and local practices. This interaction is not straightforward; it involves adaptation, reinterpretation, and sometimes resistance. They are shaped by the cultural, political, and economic realities of the places where they are engaged. The concept of engaged universals contributes to broader theoretical discussions about globalization, suggesting that the global and the local are mutually constitutive rather than oppositional.

An important realization in these global–local interactions is that relationships are unequal and power dynamics are at play (Ferguson 2006). Because Tsing emphasizes that every situation is specific, she also draws on classical anthropological insights regarding research methods, where participant observation in case studies and thick description of the research data are integral parts of the methodology (see methodology). Following Tsing, this study applies an ethnography of global connections to understand the specificities of unique localities and trajectories of globalizing projects, in this case in education.

The importance of localized curricula

Next, I want to emphasize the importance of localized curricula. I selected this perspective because, in my opinion, researchers should not merely act as passive describers of social phenomena; their academic insights should also aim to contribute to societal improvements. In this case study, it is essential to address the importance of inclusive curricula and pupils' sense of school belonging as outcomes of localized curricula. From both socio-psychological and educational–sociological viewpoints, there is ample theoretical support for the value of localized curricula. Observations from the field serve not only as research descriptions but also as a basis for recommendations for the school under study (see the discussion section at the end of this dissertation).

If we delve deeper into the experiences of stakeholders within the concrete trajectory of globalizing Waldorf education – focusing on how Waldorf education is locally interpreted and adapted in the Philippines – essentially a process of enculturation or localization – it becomes crucial to examine the extent to which the school is able to create a place where students feel at home and can learn effectively. This is closely related to the social-psychological concept of school belonging (Goodenow 1993, 80), "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment", as well as to the concepts of inclusiveness and localization of the curriculum (i.a. Ekins 2017, Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011, Ladson-Billings 1994).

School belonging is widely regarded as an important foundation for students' academic achievement, general development, and well-being. In pluriform cultural settings, it may be even more important than other recognized predictors of educational outcomes, such as linguistic background, socioeconomic status, or even IQ (see i.a. Baysu et al. 2022, Konings et al. 2023, and De Leersnyder et al. 2022).[16] This contention is substantiated by a meta-analysis of more than 80 studies (Korpershoek et al. 2020). Moreover, the aforementioned studies make clear that the approach a school takes to foster a sense of school belonging matters (Konings et al. 2023, De Leersnyder et al. 2022). Aiming for equality through assimilation into a dominant school culture that does not align with students' home cultures is counterproductive, as is a colourblind approach that neglects cultural differences. A pluralistic approach is needed, where ideas arising from global interactions and dominant cultural perspectives are enculturated in such a way that there is room and appreciation for diversity and local interpretation. Furthermore, in an ideal situation, school belonging is not only related to a school environment that positively acknowledges students' home backgrounds, but also in a connection to contemporary youth culture (El Hadioui 2015). This entanglement of school, home, and youth cultures should be expressed in an inclusive, localized, and non-colonized curriculum (see Chapter 4).

Alongside the socio-psychological factor of school belonging, structural determinants also play a role in discussions concerning equitable educational opportunities. Classical sociological theories of education underscore the importance of a school curriculum and school culture that aligns well with its locality and is grounded in the social norms and values of a school community, as well as those of the broader society.

For example, from a functionalist perspective (as articulated by Durkheim, among others, see Ballantine 2017, 18-21), schools contribute to social stability by reinforcing the social order (Parsons 1937). A sense of togetherness and belonging is promoted by the teaching of shared cultural values, norms and practices, as well as a common history. Moreover, by imparting knowledge and skills, schools stimulate good citizenship and help to create an educated workforce that serves society, reflecting meritocratic principles: "Those who work hard and achieve good results will advance!" These principles are reflected in many current-day educational practices and policies in the Philippines and elsewhere, such as

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[16] Although their research is grounded in data from Dutch and Belgium settings, the theoretical basis of their ideas is assumed to have a broad applicability.

the formulation of a national curriculum or uniform educational quality standards. From this perspective, a curriculum and school culture that do not accommodate a certain level of school belonging leads to problems.

From critical theoretical perspectives as well (Ballantine 2017, 21-24), it is considered highly problematic when school curricula and cultures do not align with the social and cultural backgrounds of students. Critical educational theorists have stressed that education reproduces inequalities and amplifies class differences in society, because curricula are aimed at a dominant majority or elite group (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Collins 1979). Eurocentrism in a curriculum can exacerbate these issues (Amin and Moore 1989). In Western countries, Eurocentric curricula have been linked to existing inequalities between ethnic groups in multicultural societies (Banks 2016). Such curricula reconfirm cultural differences and – often unintentionally – marginalize minority groups. In settings in the Global South, Eurocentric curricula also exist, often representing a form of colonized curricula,[17] sometimes referred to as hidden curricula (Snyder 1970), which reconfirm the status quo in society, including hegemonic (capitalist) values (Apple 1979, 1982). According to critical theorists, meritocracy is a myth (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). In reality, an elite benefits from the education system (Collins 1979).

One author articulates these ideas particularly well is Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 2010), who develops them through the concept of cultural capital. An ostensibly value-neutral and personal concept like 'taste', for example, understood as part of that cultural capital, in practice serves primarily to produce *distinction* and class reproduction (Bourdieu 2010). Breaking this cycle requires a pluralistic cultural approach that takes into account cultural diversity within the school, foregrounds local identities, and situates them in relation to dominant cultural perspectives, including those reproduced through international networks.

In conclusion, it can be stated that localized and inclusive curricula are likely to foster a sense of school belonging, which is beneficial for students' academic achievements and well-being, as well as for equal chances of success.

An emic perspective

Finally, I chose to highlight several emic perspectives. This decision was driven not only by my own position as an insider – as a Waldorf teacher – but also by the need to capture the complexity of the research material. From an outsider's perspective, issues such as formulating a localized curriculum may seem straightforward, yet insider views reveal the complexities involved. For example, curriculum adaptations may be perceived as compromising the Waldorf identity (Oberman, 2008). Conversely, deliberately choosing not to adapt to the school's social context, or even to protect children from that context,

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[17] This term has its origins in the critical pedagogy of Freire (1970) and the work of Fanon (1961), among others, although they do not use the term literally. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o discusses the term literally in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), which examines how colonial power structures impact language and education.

can also be a conscious strategy in children's upbringing (Biesta 2022). Overall, insiders' perspectives – internally formulated theoretical perspectives – provide a distinct view that closely aligns with the lived experiences of the informants in this study, making them essential for a thorough understanding of the subject matter.

In addition to the above theoretical approaches to global connections and localized curricula, the relevant processes and products can also be examined from a more 'emic perspective', from within an international Waldorf network, from what one could call 'the international Waldorf movement'. The distinction between emic (subjective, insider perspective) and etic (objective, outsider perspective) has deep roots in anthropology (Headland et al. 1990). At Leiden University, for example, P.E. de Josselin de Jong, was already emphasizing the importance of incorporating an insider's view in the 1950s, as shown in his article *Visie der Participanten op hun Cultuur* (1956).[18] Today, the distinction is viewed more as a spectrum than a dichotomy, based on the assumption that researchers themselves operate within a particular cultural frame and are therefore, in some sense, subjective and part of their own cultural biases. Nonetheless, it is still generally accepted that both viewpoints – emic and etic – are necessary for a thorough analysis: emic insights offer depth into cultural practices, while etic perspectives provide analytical distance, allowing for cross-cultural comparisons. This dual approach enables a comprehensive understanding of complex cultural realities (Headland et al. 1990). Moreover, within an emic perspective, one can also distinguish between descriptive, operational, and ideal models for cultural analysis (Goodenough 1964). The descriptive model captures how cultural realities are perceived and interpreted from within the culture, the operational model focuses on human action, and the ideal model addresses the normative aspect of culture, or, in other words, how people think things ought to be. This tripartite division is interesting to consider in the context of this study: How do stakeholders in Waldorf education view the current situation of globalizing Waldorf education? How do they interpret it? What are their ideals, and what actions are they taking to realize those ideals?

In the following section, I will discuss ideas that were formulated within the Waldorf community about processes of globalization in Waldorf education, focusing in particular on insiders' viewpoints – so-called emic perspectives.

Firstly, I want to introduce the ideas of Oberman (2008, 270) and Boland (2015, 197-8), who are both part of the international Waldorf movement. They have proposed a typology of Waldorf schools characterized by varying degrees of curriculum flexibility.[19] This typology consists of three categories: purist, accommodationist, and evolutionist schools. These categories correspond with major currents within the anthroposophical movement since the death of Rudolf Steiner in 1925. The first category of purist schools adheres to a curriculum that remains largely unchanged over time and space, closely

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18 Later translated into English as *The Participants' Views*.

19 See the popular book of Avison and Rawson (2014), which was mainly directed to an Anglo-Saxon public, for a topical impression of what Waldorf education could look like in practice.

resembling the curriculum of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart in 1919.[20] This category corresponds with the opinion of Marie Steiner-von Sivers, Steiner's wife, who wanted to preserve his legacy. The second category of accommodationist schools adapts original principles to fit the societal, political, and cultural contexts of the specific time and place in which schools are situated. This category resembles the practical approach of many schools, as proposed by the German Waldorf teacher Hermann von Baravalle, who was involved in the establishment of Waldorf education in the United States in the first half of the 20th century (Sagarin 2011). The final category, evolutionist schools, promotes the continuous development of the school, allowing it to take on new forms as its social and cultural setting changes. This category corresponds with the view of Ita Wegman, mistress of Steiner and co-founder of anthroposophical medicine, who advocated for the continual development of anthroposophy.

This typology is reminiscent of Bourdieu's concept of doxa, which overlaps and moves between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (Bourdieu 1977). It can also be related to the more theosophical term dogma. It raises the question of the extent to which there is a prevailing doxa or dogma within Waldorf schools. In other words, which implicit beliefs are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness within a Waldorf community and which prescribed core principles must be present for a school to be considered a Waldorf school? In this context, it is also interesting to look at the identity and profiling of Waldorf schools. To what extent do Philippine Waldorf schools identify as Filipino, and to what extent do they position themselves rather as part of an international movement?

Secondly, I would like to briefly focus on the notion of world-centred education, a term coined by Gert Biesta (2022). Strictly speaking, Biesta does not offer a full emic perspective, since he is an educational philosopher whose ideas extend far beyond the Waldorf community. On the other hand, Biesta is an open sympathizer of Waldorf education, and his work is often cited in Waldorf schools to provide for the contemporary language it offers to explain ideals and principles of Waldorf education. Biesta is mainly known for his tripartite division regarding the goals of education: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Within Waldorf networks, this division is often compared to the threefold Waldorf ideals of thinking, feeling, and willing. In his book *World-Centred Education: A View for the Present* (2022), Biesta offers a clear perspective on the dilemma of how far a school should adapt to the society it is situated in. Interestingly, Biesta adopts a different position from the one that I have sketched above, suggesting that the localization of curricula is important. He argues that schools should be careful about conforming too closely to the societies in which they are situated, since they are also responsible for carrying the ideals that will shape the societies of the future. In this mirrored line of thought, which I offer here as a nuance to the above approaches, it can be concluded that it is not schools that have to adapt to society, but rather society that, in a sense, should conform to schools by allowing them to function as protected practice spaces for students. Ideally, according to Biesta, the school does not fully admit the world

[20] See Stockmeyer's account (2015) for a more 'traditional' or 'original' image of the Waldorf curriculum. Stockmeyer was a teacher at the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany.

but provides subtle openings to it. In this process, in which the school is a place for practice, students gradually become aware of themselves and can then choose how they want to manifest themselves in the world. Biesta argues that schools are allowed to be 'stubborn' towards society by protecting students from its influences so that they can later learn to function well within it and, eventually, participate in society as mature, self-conscious, creative, and autonomous individuals capable of changing society in positive ways.

Methodology

Ethnographic case study

The overarching research method of this study is the *ethnographic case study* (i.a. Hammersley and Atkinson 2019; Van Maanen 2011). The method positions the research as being qualitative, inductive, explorative, interpretative, and descriptive. This method is considered most appropriate for effectuating Tsing's (2005) *ethnography of global connections* and for achieving the research objectives of this study, namely to gain insight into the emergence of Waldorf education in the Philippines as a concrete trajectory within the broader project of globalizing Waldorf education.

Ethnographic case studies have a long tradition in anthropology (i.a. Hammersley and Atkinson 2019, Van Maanen 2011). Where anthropologists traditionally adopted a holistic style of ethnographic inquiry, this eventually led to methodological problems when less isolated communities were studied and urban anthropology was introduced (Eriksen 1995, 236). In response, anthropologists of the Manchester School developed the method of ethnographic case study research (i.a. Fortes 1945; Gluckman 1940). Since then, this method has been extended to all major subfields in the discipline, including education (i.a. Woods 1986). The method is deemed naturalistic rather than rationalistic (Lincoln and Guba 1985), because it involves an in-depth, long-term investigation of a particular social setting or group, in this case a Waldorf school in a rural Philippine setting. Today, the long-term approach of this research method is under pressure due to a lack of time and resources for many researchers, including myself. I have combined this research with an intense teacher's job and a busy family life. Although some scholars have called for a more pragmatic, short-term approach in ethnographic research (i.a. Vidrola-Padros 2020), the general credo still applies: the longer, the better. The method makes use of a broad range of ethnographic techniques, including in-depth interviews and the classic anthropological method of participant observation (Agar 1980; Spradley 1980). An ethnographic case study is a particularly good method for the in-depth understanding of one specific case. It allows us to gain insight into the dynamics and complexities of the case, including the social interactions and cultural practices within the school, while situating these within broader societal structures and global connections. By extending the analysis beyond the immediate fieldwork site, it is possible to connect the specific and local observations and experiences of the school under study with larger social theories, as well as broader trends and typical phenomena. Ultimately, this provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of emerging Waldorf education in the Philippines, in connection with a network of global interactions. The inductive and explorative character of this research

method involves the processing of field notes according to the method of *thick description* (Geertz 1973); in other words, providing a detailed account of social actions, meanings, and observations within their context.

In ethnographic case studies, generalizability and researchers' reflexivity are major concerns. A common criticism of ethnographic case studies is the allegedly limited potential for generalizability, due to the complex data sets and challenging replicability. Because this method focuses on a detailed study of a specific group or context, the findings are often difficult to generalize to other groups or contexts. This contrasts with the contextual depth that is provided: although the findings are not easily generalizable, the method offers deep insights into specific social settings that are valuable for understanding complex social phenomena. Additionally, although empirical generalization might be difficult, theoretical generalization is possible: researchers can use the results to develop broader theories and refine existing ones, which allows for indirect generalization to other contexts.

Reflexivity and positionality are also important considerations in ethnographic case studies. Close and prolonged interaction with the study group can lead to researcher bias, whereby the researcher's own beliefs, values, or personal connections influence the interpretation of data. Reflexivity is therefore crucial. Researchers can apply reflexive practices, such as continually evaluating their own biases and influence on the research, seeking feedback and peer review, and being self-critical and transparently reporting their position and perspectives (Davies 2008).[21]

As part of the overarching ethnographic research method, various types of data have been collected and analysed in multiple ways during four periods of fieldwork, in 2017, 2018 (2x) and 2020:

1. *Participant observation* (Agar 1980, Spradley 1980), by hanging around in and around the school, in the teachers' lounge, the classrooms, and the school yard, while chatting with teachers, students, parents, supporting staff, and casual passers-by. Partly participating, partly observing. In many ways and during many events: while teaching, being in a teachers' meeting, supervising class outings and camps, joining school-related events, participating in anthroposophical study groups, going to the barangay fiesta, dancing, eating, and singing karaoke at birthday parties, stroll in the nearby shopping mall, observing daily village life in front of a sari sari shop, improvising in the local drama club, cycling through the rice fields, just walking through the village (barangay), visiting the neighbouring public school, shop and chat at the local market, participate in conferences, etc.
2. *A desk study of relevant documents*, including the school's mission statement, school policies, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings, student reports and students' work.
3. *Class observations:* I visited classes from most year levels and observed most teachers

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[21] See below for my own reflections on positionality.

to obtain a broad impression of the educational practice in the school. Often, I just sat in the back of the classroom, observing and making notes.

4. *In-depth interviews* with members of the school community, including teachers, support staff, parents, and students. I also conducted interviews with key informants, including the school director and leading persons within the Philippine Waldorf movement as well as representatives of other schools, especially of the nearby public school.

5. *Focus group discussions* with teachers and students at the school, as well as at the nearby public school, on issues that need deeper understanding, especially issues requiring clarity regarding how certain arguments relate to each other.

6. *Questionnaires* were used for Chapters 5 and 6, as well as a standardized test on spelling (Schonell test) to explicitly and quantitatively compare Waldorf educational results with those of a public school nearby.[22]

Positionality of the researcher

I now want to address my position as a researcher. As both a Waldorf school teacher and an anthropologist, it may seem logical, given my personal biography, for me to focus on this research topic, approaching it almost as an auto-ethnographic project (Ellis et al. 2011). However, this dual role also raises questions. Can I write impartially about Waldorf education when I am also a proponent of its underlying philosophy? How do I guard against blind spots? It is indeed challenging to avoid the suspicion of partiality in such a position (See also Dhondt et al. 2015). Interestingly, I have faced accusations from opposite ends of the spectrum. I have been labelled, on the one hand, a cold scientist lacking passion for Waldorf education, and, on the other, someone engaged not in scholarship but in propaganda. This contradictory criticism was directed at the same text, which is now Chapter 4 of this dissertation. I have been seen as either too critical or not critical enough. In Chapter 2, I discuss the dilemmas of conducting research in a familiar context. While my positionality can raise questions and may come with certain challenges, I argue in Chapter 2 that becoming a teacher-ethnographer in a familiar educational setting is an asset.

I can wholeheartedly say that I am enthusiastic about my work as a Waldorf school teacher and see much value in Waldorf education, both in my own teaching environment in the Netherlands and in the Philippines. I have also learned a great deal from the pioneering spirit in the Philippines, which has been a source of inspiration for me. At the

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[22] This quantitative research technique is the odd one out in the list. I chose it because it makes triangulation of data possible and it provides a benchmark for comparison with the nearby public school. Moreover, it fits the multidisciplinary nature of this research, since it was carried out under the supervision of two academic institutes with different academic traditions. The qualitative ethnographic approach fits into the tradition of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, the institute where I was trained and supervised by Prof Gerard Persoon and Dr Sabine Luning, whereas the use of quantitative methods, as seen in Chapters 5 and 6, is more common in the Institute of Education and Child Studies. My supervisor there, Prof Paul Vedder, became co-author of these chapters and assisted me with the quantitative data analysis.

same time, this research has allowed me to highlight significant challenges facing Waldorf education today. Although I have avoided excessive use of quotes from Rudolf Steiner in this dissertation, I will include one now:

'We must be aware of the great tasks we face. We must not be mere pedagogues; we must be people who live with the culture, who stand in the midst of the culture of our time. We must have a lively interest in everything that is happening in our time, otherwise, we will be poor teachers for this school. We must not only devote ourselves to our special task area. We will only be good teachers if we have a lively interest in everything that is happening in the world. It is precisely this interest in the world that can give us the enthusiasm we need for our school and for our work. This requires a flexible mind and dedication to our task.'

Rudolf Steiner in *Study of Man: General Education Course,* 20 August, 1919.[23]

On this point, I strongly agree with Rudolf Steiner. The interest in our time and world has ultimately driven the formation of this research. In Waldorf schools, as elsewhere, we must be careful not to become rigid but to move with the times and meaningfully connect with our students to bring them into contact with the world.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation provides a comprehensive view of emerging Waldorf education in the Philippines through a case study of a Waldorf school in Central Philippines. Divided into seven chapters, it aims to present a rich and diverse portrait of the school under study. Chapters 2 to 6 were each previously published as an article in an academic journal or book and correspond to important sub-domains – or research questions – related to the main research objective. With the exception of a few minor corrections, these chapters are identical to the original publications. Intermezzos are included between the chapters. These intermezzos are intended as ethnographic enrichments – small vignettes from the field – each providing a glimpse of an aspect of the research, both visually and verbally, in the form of photographs and short stories.

The second chapter contributes to the methodological foundation of this research as it provides the rationale for doing ethnographic research in a Philippine Waldorf school. It can be read as a justification of the overall research approach. Why would a teacher want to conduct ethnographic research in a school, especially as a Waldorf educator in a familiar environment? The chapter explores issues of positionality and dilemmas

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[23] For this quote I used the Dutch version of Steiner's Study of Man: General Education Course: R. Steiner (2010). Algemene Menskunde als Basis voor de Pedagogie. 4th ed. Zeist: Vrij Geestesleven. The quote can be found on pages 15-16 in the introduction lecture, held on the eve of the first Waldorf teacher course on 20 August, 1919. I translated it from Dutch. This lecture has not been included in the English translation of the course.

faced by educational ethnographers, ultimately supporting the argument that teacher-ethnographers bring a unique perspective to educational research due to their grounded, insider view and close engagement with stakeholders.

Note: Although this chapter has a reflective character – especially in relation to Chapter 4 – and therefore could well have been placed at the end of the dissertation, I have chosen to begin with it, as it also sets out a condition that forms an important premise for all the chapters that follow.

The third chapter delves into the following question: What defining stories, views, and experiences related to the emergence and early dissemination of Philippine Waldorf education are conveyed by key actors? Through biographical narratives of three school founders, this chapter tells the history of Philippine Waldorf education from within. The protagonists' narratives illuminate the meanings they attributed to life events and the pivotal actions and encounters in establishing Waldorf schools. Following Anna Tsing's (2005) proposed method, the chapter traces concrete trajectories of globalizing projects and analyses zones of awkward engagement. It also examines differences among various Waldorf schools in the Philippines, linking them to school missions and underlying anthroposophical principles, reflecting engaged founders' ideals.

The fourth chapter tackles the question: How, in a globalizing context, are the educational ideals and practices of Waldorf education adapted in a local Philippine educational setting and, as part of that process, how does the staff of one particular school deal with Eurocentrism in the curriculum? It investigates the extent and manner in which the curriculum of the studied Waldorf school, which mainly aims for personal development, reflects Eurocentrism. One example discussed is a series of history lessons on the Age of Exploration, intertwining students' developmental phases with historical figures like Magellan, 'the discoverer of the Philippines'. The chapter discusses how such Eurocentric elements are perceived as problematic by teachers within a Waldorf educational context, but it also highlights the complexities of addressing and negotiating these issues.

The fifth chapter addresses the question: What is the educational quality of Philippine Waldorf education compared to Philippine public education? What is the added value? Drawing grounded conclusions proves challenging; however, the perception of Waldorf schools as academically deficient is not supported by this research. Yet, it is also not conclusively demonstrated that Waldorf schools significantly outperform other schools, even regarding so-called soft educational goals, such as being more motivated for school and learning. The chapter concludes that while quality differences cannot be made easily, Waldorf education certainly approaches certain aspects differently and therefore it enriches the local educational landscape through diversity and providing students and parents with the choice of an alternative pedagogical approach and curricular contents.

Note: This chapter stands out from the previous ones due to its partially quantitative approach, stemming from the interdisciplinary background of this research, which, in addition to being grounded in cultural anthropology, is also rooted in the field of

pedagogical sciences. The quantitative research component responds to the research tradition of that institute, while at the same time representing an attempt to ground ethnographic knowledge quantitatively.

The sixth chapter explores the question: What is the identity and image of Philippine Waldorf education? Does the Waldorf school succeed in gaining a sustainable foothold in the Philippines and in putting its educational and social ideals into practice? The paradox emerges that urban success distances the school from its rural community, contrary to its ideal of serving that community. Like the fifth chapter, this chapter discusses Waldorf education's potential impact on the broader Philippine education landscape, indicating a limited impact despite diversifying it. Its limited popularity within the village community, stemming from a sense of alienation, means that the school largely remains an educational niche, albeit a beautiful one for those in it. This chapter, like the previous one, partly relies on quantitative data.

Finally, the seventh chapter provides for an overview and discussion of the preceding chapters.

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Visual Impressions of the Village of Libongcogon

The village of Libongcogon is home to the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School. Libongcogon is a barangay in the municipality of Zarraga, in the province of Iloilo, in the Central Philippines (the Visayas), on the island of Panay. It has approximately 1000 inhabitants (2020 census). The Gamot Cogon Waldorf School attracts students from Libongcogon and nearby barangays, from the town of Zarraga (about 4 kilometres away) and from neighbouring towns, and from Iloilo City (around 20 kilometres or a 30-minute drive away). Gamot Cogon means grassroots, alluding to the school's origin and mission: a school that emerged from this community and aims to serve it as well. Cogon refers to a local type of grass with an extensive, interconnected root system. Gamot can also refer to a medicine, an apt metaphor given the school's desire to provide education with a healing quality for individuals, as well as the community thry live in.

Figure 1 | Libongcogon, 11 January 2017. Houses in the village centre, in the main side street off Jalandoni Street, with puddles after the rain and a small sari sari shop and tricycle in front.

Figure 2 | Libongcogon, 11 January 2017. House in Jalandoni Street, the main road to Zarraga.

Figure 3 | Libongcogon, 11 January 2017. A kalabaw (water buffalo), the traditional working animal in the Philippines. Libongcogon is in an agrarian landscape of rice fields and fishponds.

Figure 4 | Libongcogon, 11 January 2017. Side road off Jalandoni Street leading to the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School. Children going to school by tricycle.

Figure 5 | Libongcogon, 11 January 2017. Jalandoni Street. Some houses are built on stilts to protect them from flood damage. Entering the village, a warning sign reads 'Flooding Area'. The nearby Jalaur River regularly floods. The school area has also been flooded several times.

Figure 6 | Aerial photo of the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School in Libongcogon, retrieved 8 November 2025, from www.gamotcogon.org. The photo shows the location of the school in relation to Libongcogon village centre.

Figure 7 | Aerial photo of Gamot Cogon Waldorf School in Libongcogon, retrieved 8 November 2025, from www.gamotcogon.org. The photo shows the heptagonal structure of the buildings, characteristic of an organic, anthroposophical architectural style. This style is also reflected in the use of natural materials and the building's harmonious integration into the natural environment.

Teachers as Ethnographers in Schools

Reference With the exception of the abstract below, this chapter has been previously published as a book chapter:

Schie, Thijs Jan van. 2021. "Teachers as Ethnographers in Schools: Research Dynamics at a Waldorf School in the Philippines". In *Doing Fieldwork at Home: The Ethnography of Education in Familiar Contexts*, edited by L. Sarroub and C. Nicholas, 135-147. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 135-147.

Abstract This chapter provides for a rationale for ethnographic research by teachers in schools, drawing on fieldwork in a Waldorf school in the Philippines. It explores how teacher-ethnographers navigate the dual role of educator and ethnographer, and how this influences access, perspective, and data collection. Using personal vignettes and fieldnotes, the chapter highlights classical ethnographic dilemmas, such as the tension between insider familiarity and analytical distance, the influence of professional biases, and the risk of homeblindness. It argues that while objectivity may be challenged, the insider position enables deep engagement and potential for educational transformation. Reflexivity and defamiliarization are presented as key tools for ensuring critical distance and research validity.

Keywords Educational ethnography, ethnography in familiar settings, teacher-ethnographer, insider/outsider perspective, defamiliarization, reflexivity

Introduction

This chapter discusses challenges and opportunities that arise when teachers become ethnographers in schools. The discussion draws on examples of ethnographic research dynamics, presented as vignettes, from fieldwork in a school setting in the Philippines. Central questions are: Is it possible to do research while teaching? What are the challenges and opportunities that emerge from a dual role in the field? And is it desirable or not that teacher-researchers become co-producers of data and are active agents for change in their research settings?

These interrelated and overlapping topics are linked to classical dilemmas related to the ethnographic method of *participant observation* (as described by many scholars, for example Spradley, 1980; Agar, 1980; and Bernard, 2006). In many ways, all participant observation – whether it is done in a remote tribal community or in a high school classroom – shares similar characteristics and requires similar skills and techniques. Researchers are always striving to "experience the lives of the people you study as much as [one] can," (Bernard 2006, 343–344) but, at the same time, "being able to switch back and forth between the insiders' view and that of an analyst" (Bernard 2006, 371). The primary dilemma, presented in the first vignette, is about becoming a participant observer, instead of an ordinary participant (Spradley 1980, 53–58); in other words, becoming a teacher-researcher instead of just a teacher. The second dilemma, in the next vignette, is about gaining access to the field. How does one present him- or herself and how does one deal with the multiple roles that are ascribed in addition to the researcher's role? (Agar 1980 54–62). Lastly, the third dilemma, in the final vignette, is about forging a research partnership with research participants and working together to improve education. This chapter argues that the teacher-ethnographer is uniquely positioned to carry out ethnographic research from and insider perspective, including eliciting in-depth information from multiple perspectives, and with great potential for empirical impact.

Ethnography in Familiar Educational Settings

The strange-familiar dichotomy has a long tradition in anthropology and beyond (Myers 2011). Traditionally, ethnographers aimed "to make the strange familiar" by doing fieldwork in faraway exotic cultural contexts, distinct from their own backgrounds, and, once back in their home context, by introducing unknown cultural practices to home audiences. In these classic colonial ethnographies, the strange was made familiar by focusing on universal human themes such as ritual, kinship, and exchange. They showed us that, despite cultural differences, people everywhere deal with similar issues in life.

Current ethnography also tries "to make the familiar strange." This concept is especially important in the growing number of ethnographic studies carried out in more or less familiar settings to the ethnographer, such as the ethnographer's own locality or one's own workplace (Gmelch and Gmelch 2018, 238; Shore 2012, 90). Underlying structures, assumptions, and values are pointed out in order not to take things for granted (Delamont

2016, 34–37). In educational research, for example, designing better tests without questioning the assumption that standardized mass testing is valuable should be avoided, as should coming up with recommendations for classroom management without any discussion of the underlying structure of uniformly graded classes.

The trend for ethnography in familiar settings coincides with another tendency: the *professional as researcher*, as opposed to the *researcher as professional* (Mosse 2006, 938; Shuttleworth 2004, 46). Undertaking such *insider-ethnography* provides an interesting new perspective (Brannan et al. 2007, 399–400), also in education (inter alia Klippel, 2017; Bakbie and Provost, 2004), with teachers positioned as ethnographers in education as opposed to ethnographers of education. The doctoral research that this chapter is based on is an example of the professional becoming a researcher. It is funded by the Doctoral Grant for Teachers of NWO, the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research.

Ethnographic Research Dynamics at a Waldorf School in the Philippines

The examples used in this chapter originate in a research project on the globalization of Waldorf education. Waldorf education is an alternative educational approach based on the pedagogic and didactic ideas of its founder, Rudolf Steiner, who espoused a specific spiritual worldview called anthroposophy. Since the turn of the century, Waldorf education has spread globally; consequently, its educational philosophy and practice was transformed and adapted to fit the new local contexts (see e.g. the studies of Boland, 2015 or Hoffmann, 2016). The research project investigates this process, the local manifestation of Waldorf education as a globalizing phenomenon, via an ethnographic case study in the Philippines.

The fieldwork at the basis of the research project was planned in several short periods (of about one to two months) in 2017 and 2018, and it continued into 2020. In practice, doing ethnographic fieldwork in a specific Filipino Waldorf school means hanging out in the teachers' lounge; chatting with students in the school yard; sitting in the back of classrooms observing; interviewing teachers, parents, and students; participating in various school activities, such as school camps, festivities, and teacher meetings; taking notes of casual conversations with parents and villagers; and, also, teaching occasionally.

Despite the fact that the research location used as an example in this chapter, namely the Philippines, is not home to the teacher-researcher (who lives and works in the Netherlands), the research setting is familiar, in the sense that research about Waldorf education is combined with the profession of being a Waldorf teacher. The notion of Waldorf is de-territorialized in the sense that ideas about it circulate within an international Waldorf network. It is also territorialized, in the sense that it is practiced and reformulated in a particular school in a particular locality. De-territorialized and territorializing notions of familiarity therefore go hand in hand in international (educational) networks (Inda and Rosaldo 2008, 12–15).

In the case study used in this chapter, the research setting is familiar to the teacher-researcher insofar as numerous school practices at the Filipino Waldorf school show similarities with Waldorf schools in the Netherlands. To some extent, the researcher and the research participants (especially the Filipino teachers) share the same knowledge and experiences. They are both familiar with the Waldorf philosophy and with numerous practices in the school, including curricular content, pedagogical principles, and didactics.

More generally, many aspects of school life are more familiar and thus easier for the teacher-researcher to identify with than those of non-teacher-researchers, including typical classroom and schoolyard dynamics and efforts and struggles of teachers and students.

However, the assumption of such familiarity may also mask seeing potential differences and distract from the fact that day-to-day school practices are undeniably embedded in their local context and that Filipino culture is evident in teaching, in working together, and in interacting with students.

Research Setting 1: Studying Oneself

When teachers do research, it might be the case that – sooner or later – they study themselves. That is to say, they study the pedagogical and didactical approaches they use as well as educational ideologies that they themselves follow and put into practice. This may occur in the school setting in which they are employed or in a different school. For example, teachers may be asked to temporarily replace a teacher or to participate in other occasional work activities, such as guidance during a school camp or class trip, making or grading tests, etc.

This was the case during the research on Waldorf education in the Philippines, when a request was made to co-teach a series of geography les-sons on the topic of meteorology. As a result, participant observation partly turned into self-observation.

Diary excerpt:
Every day we start the lesson with a morning verse. Because the students were rattling off that verse quite monotonically and mechanically, the co-teacher of the course, John [note that all names in this article are pseudonyms] asked me to experiment a bit to gain more awareness of the verse lines. So, we tried various things. For example, just saying the word "I" out loud but reciting the rest of the verse in our heads. Or standing backwards, while reciting. Today, we stand in a circle.
After the verse, the lesson usually proceeds with an inspiring story. Today, it is the story of the photo "earth rise," the first photo of the earth made from space. It is supposed to make the students aware of the vulnerability of our planet. It is typical of the Waldorf way of teaching, to use images and stories without being explicit about the underlying message of those images and stories. John does that very well. A bit too extensive perhaps, but the scope is clear: We must be careful with our planet.

> *[. . .] Now it is my turn to elaborate on the revolutions of the earth in space, causing day and night, different seasons, and different climate zones on earth. As difficult as it may be to distinguish four seasons in the Philippines, students still have to learn about the tilted axis of the earth, the angle of incidence of solar radiation, the solstice, and the latitudes of the tropics and polar circles. Everyone listens attentively, even when I use students to demonstrate the earth's revolutions in space by walking these movements through the classroom or when I let someone shine the torch on his smartphone on the blackboard to depict the bundling of the sun's rays in different angles.*
>
> *But, no matter how animated the lesson, or how great the enthusiasm and attention of the students, when they have to process their notes into their lesson books, they apparently find it difficult to articulate things well. This is partly due to some students' low-level knowledge of English, which isn't their native tongue, while it is the language of instruction in almost all lessons at school. They also seem to experience a heavy homework burden, even though, in my opinion, they get little homework compared to my Dutch students. Apparently, they are not used to it.*

In the example above the teacher has become a participant observer while teaching. That means that he has a dual purpose, both engaging with his work as a teacher and observing like an ethnographer (Spradley 1980, 54). In addition to the dual purpose, the role of participant observer also requires *explicit awareness* of the class situation, a *wide-angle lens*, and personal skills in order to distance oneself from one's own teaching practices and allow for being introspective (Ibid, 55–58). Lastly, and obviously, one should *record objective observations and subjective feelings* (Ibid, 58). One has become an *active participant*, but should guard against becoming a *complete participant* (Ibid, 60–61).

The many challenges related to the method of participant observation, and to becoming or being a participant observer in an educational setting, include incidental confusion about what is observed, biases related to one's educational ideology and frame of reference, and suffering from the so-called homeblindness, meaning that certain blind spots are neglected. Three related examples to these challenges from the diary entry are explained.

First, the diary entry above provides an example of confusion about what is observed, as noted when the teacher-researcher was asked to think about experiments to make students more aware of the contents of a morning verse. Do these experiments such as standing backward or in a circle reveal anything about the educational practices of this particular school because they resulted from a pedagogical question raised by one of the teachers at the school? Or should they be seen as the outcome of a creative approach by the teacher-researcher; in other words: an observation of the self?

Similarly, the above example also reveals potential biases related to being a Waldorf teacher. Agar (1980) suggests that biases are not only personal and cultural, but "[they] also have been programmed with some powerful professional ones" (42). Inevitably, one has profound ideas about professional competence: about good or bad lessons, capable or non-capable teachers, and so on.

It was stated in the diary excerpt, for example, that the Filipino teacher used a typical

Waldorf way of teaching and that he did this *very well*. One must inquire on what basis the teacher-researcher is observing and judging certain professional competences and on what basis is teaching *well done* in *a Waldorf way*? To some extent, it can be said that the use of strong images is typical for the Waldorf pedagogy, since it is mentioned in many Waldorf resource books that are used both in the Philippines and in the Netherlands. On the other hand, this judgment is also one of personal taste and interpretation.

Third, there may be *homeblindness*, a classical anthropological concept referring to a very small analytical distance between observer and observed, causing certain blind spots. A famous analogy attributed to Kluckhohn (1949) is that of a fish forgetting about the water around it because the water is always there. Spradley (1980) is especially cautious of home-blindness in cases of ethnography in familiar settings: "The more you know about a situation as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer" (61).

In the diary entry, such a blind spot can be observed in relation to the contradiction between the students' enthusiasm for and involvement with the subject matter and the difficulties they experienced with processing their notes and managing their homework. Does this say something about a specific learning culture, or does it instead speak to the learning abilities of the students? Does the teacher's non-native background make him simultaneously interesting and difficult to understand, for example? In fact, there can be many reasons, but certain blind spots can easily influence analysis of such a contradiction.

How should teacher-ethnographers approach these challenges of potential confusion, biases, and blind spots? It is important to understand that ethnographic research is subjective by definition, and its quality does not depend on neutrality, but rather on a reflexive epistemological stance. "[Ethnography] has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self [. . .] as the instrument of knowing" (Sherry Ortner 1995, in Shuttleworth 2004, 47) in which "subjective experiences and selfhood are part and parcel of fieldwork and its results" (Robben and Sluka 2007, 63).

Reflexivity, then, includes the art of "making the familiar strange," meaning that one is able to see oneself from a distance when operating in the field and navigate between different identities, for example, teacher or researcher, man, white, European, a father, Dutch. Another method for transcending one's own viewpoints is to imagine new viewpoints by empathizing with the other actors in the school, that is, students, parents, or support staff. Thus, defamiliarization is not just a technique, it provides a range of new experiences and perspectives.

Above all, studying one's own familiar educational context provides opportunities. Specific professional competences and knowledge not only provide the teacher-ethnographer with easier access to the field but also allow for a more profound exploration: "The insider is potentially better positioned [. . .] to reveal the 'true story'" (Alvesson 2003, 178). The positioning of ethnographers in familiar settings facilitates in-depth research, allows for an easier grasp of sensitive issues, and grounds theories in practice in a more or less natural way, resulting in thorough empirical accounts (Ibid. 2003, 181).

In addition to easy access and in-depth information, there are a number of practical advantages to ethnography done in familiar settings, compared to ethnography in less familiar settings: It is usually less costly, easier to set up, and less time-consuming (Ibid. 2003, 172).

Research Setting 2: Dual Roles

The previous example in which the researcher is submerged in his own research setting as a result of teaching practices, clarifies how teacher-researchers can take on dual roles in the field. To a certain extent, all ethnographers deal with multiple roles in the field and must continuously navigate between them. There are many more possible roles in addition to those of researcher and teacher. For example, the teacher-researcher might have and/ or might be perceived as having the role of project manager, advisor, colleague, coach, trainer, supporter, donor, policymaker, sparring partner, confidante, and/or friend. As the diary excerpt below illustrates, there was confusion about the role of the researcher in the Filipino research setting.

Diary excerpt:
After I had introduced myself during the plenary meeting, I wondered how people saw me: As a Waldorf teacher? A Waldorf consultant? A supporter of the school? A potential donor? Or as a researcher? I had the feeling that my background as a Waldorf teacher was more valued than my intended role as researcher. [. . .]

I even wondered if everyone really realized that I was a researcher. I had stressed the fact that I – unlike most foreign visitors [the school had been frequently visited by foreign advisors and sympathizers] – did not come to bring things, such as money or advice, but that – instead – I had come to get things from them, namely research data. [. . .]

Despite my firm and clear introduction, I noticed, quite quickly, that teachers regularly saw me as an advisor and colleague rather than as researcher. They also asked for feedback about their teaching after I had observed their classes. They pretty much expected it. They asked, for example: Did I do it right? How would you do it? Do you have any tips? I repeatedly reminded them that I was not here to judge. But that didn't stop them from asking time and again for my opinion. [. . .] Like Ms. Kristine. Based on my casual feedback of the day before, she had chosen a different approach in her lesson today.

The example above deals with the theme of entering the field and presenting oneself as a researcher, an issue of access that all ethnographers are confronted with. Agar (1980) explains that what one is doing in the field is very important in relation to research ethics, but people initially "will draw on their own repertoire of social categories to find one that fits [them]" (54). Sometimes, research participants value other roles more than that of the researcher.

In the context of ethnography in familiar educational settings, and especially in cases of dual roles in those settings, entering the field is often relatively easy. But such a smooth

connection to the field comes with its own set of challenges. The challenges inherent to having dual roles include fostering multiple loyalties and having an engaged insider's perspective, making it difficult to distance oneself analytically. Moreover, if the role of the researcher is overruled by other roles, dual roles can conceal the fact that there is actually research being conducted for those who are part of it. These challenges will now successively be discussed on the basis of the above example from the field.

First, multiple loyalties relating to multiple roles can come into conflict with each other. The loyalty of the researcher towards research outcomes, for example, can be in conflict with the loyalty of the professional towards the institution in which she or he works or is associated with. In fact, "the more roles and statuses ethnographers occupy in relation to their informants, the higher the likelihood that conflicts of interest, ethical dilemmas, and/or points of contention will occur" (Shuttleworth 2004, 46). Moreover, some roles could lead to "too strong of an identification with one's research subjects" (Ibid, 51). This can result in self-restraint with respect to research outcomes, such as omitting sensitive information in order to prevent the organization from being shown in a bad light (Alvesson 2003, 167).

Furthermore, critique of Waldorf education can be marginalized in the research, even unconsciously, in order to present a positive image of the Waldorf school under investigation. This happens especially when one identifies too strongly with the educational ideology of Waldorf education as a core element of one's professional identity. This is not obvious in the example above, but it is applicable to the research literature on Waldorf education, which is often accused of being biased. It is seen as being too positive about the educational approach or too negative, with almost no middle ground or neutral considerations (Dhondt et al., 2015).

In classical ethnography, when an amalgamation of roles occurs, it is sometimes referred to as going native (Bernard 2006, 348–349). When one is too close, one might become reluctant to talk about sensitive issues or taboos. And even when one tries to be as neutral as possible, sometimes research environments or participants put pressure on the researcher – explicitly or implicitly – to choose sides in a conflict. This occurred, for example, in the research of Forsey (2004), *He's Not a Spy; He's One of Us.*

Teachers who conduct research in schools are already familiar with or are "native" in their research setting. Their challenge is to adapt a non-teacher lens in their research setting by questioning everyday commonalities, underlying structures, assumptions, and values. Instead of getting close by "breaking into" their "field," they might distance themselves by "breaking out" (Alvesson 2003, 176), by simultaneously being "immersed and estranged" (Ybema and Kamsteeg 2009, 103), and alternately "social" and "anti-social," in order to be able to be both socially connected to research participants and be analytical towards the research outcomes (Mosse, 2006). "In fact, closer relations in the field [. . .] have made exit rather than entry the significant shift in location" (Ibid, 936).

The diary excerpt shows how difficult this is in practice. Despite the researcher's conscious attempts to present himself as a researcher, people continued to treat him as a colleague,

as another teacher, or as an advisor. On the one hand, this is about how one presents oneself. Bernard (2006) is clear about the rules related to such presentation: "Be honest, be brief, and be absolutely consistent [and] understand that not everyone will be thrilled about your role as researcher" (358). On the other hand, it is also about how people understand your message. Agar (1980) noted: "I tried to tell everyone who I was, but [. . .] the message does not always get across to everyone" (1980, 60).

How can these challenges of multiple loyalties and identities, sufficient analytical distance, and an unambiguous presentation of the self be overcome? First, a balance must be found between issues that require openness and those issues that require prudence. On the one hand, it is useful to reflect openly on one's role in the research, including the personal sympathies, intentions, loyalties, and complications that emerge with multiple roles in the field and becoming a participant observer. On the other hand – also from an ethical perspective – one must be aware of power differences and be prudent about sensitive information that could possibly harm research participants.

Second, there must be a combination of closeness and distance. Closeness is essential to be able to empathize with research participants in order to obtain in-depth information and even to "understand what goes without saying" (Ybema and Kamsteeg 2009, 101). However, in order to analyse and theorize research outcomes, a degree of distance must also be maintained, and the researcher must also avoid "staying native," by "breaking out" (Alvesson 2003, 176) or by becoming involved in a way that has been characterized as "detached involvement" (Nash 1963, in Agar 1980, 50–51).

Third, voluntary and prior informed consent must always be pursued, and it must not be assumed that one's role as a researcher is immediately clear to anyone in the field. Therefore, however frustrating it may be, repetition is necessary. One should constantly be clear and open about one's role as a researcher.

The challenges linked to having multiple roles in the field may have down sides, but they certainly also entail excellent opportunities for good ethnographic insight. Multiple roles imply that there are also multiple perspectives. Indeed, the research topic is then approached, in a relatively natural way, from different angles and through multiple, bottom-up, "insider" views.

Research Setting 3: Co-producing Data

Dual roles can be confusing not only for research participants but also for researchers themselves. When researchers switch smoothly between their roles in the field, boundaries may become blurred and more hybrid. A possible result is that researchers become co-producers of research data as a side effect of being active agents attempting to improve and their research and educational settings as they move towards the participant side of the participant-observer spectrum. This is almost inevitable in any research in which participant observation is used as a method (Spradley 1980, 58–62; Bernard 2006, 347).

This occurred in the Filipino research setting when a group of Dutch Waldorf consultants joined a trip to the Philippines. They were responsible for a series of Asian Waldorf Teacher Training sessions. This event turned out not only to be an opportunity to meet Filipino Waldorf teachers from all over the country, but it was also a way to discuss various aspects of Waldorf education with them and to think collectively about improvements in teaching practices and the curricula in their schools. In such a situation, a researcher could easily act as a consultant, even if one is not officially assigned to that role. Or one may even be asked to substitute for a trainer who suffered from sunstroke in the tropical heat at the end of the Philippines dry season.

> Diary excerpt:
> *Trainer Henk invited me to his workshop in order to facilitate a discussion on the history curriculum in grade 7 and 8. Teachers from different Filipino Waldorf schools joined the discussion. All participants considered the discussion relevant, and it became clear that most of them were not fully satisfied with the current history curriculum, which was evaluated as being too general, too unspecific, and too Eurocentric in relation to the national and local contexts of the schools. Various options for change became part of the conversation.*
>
> *Gradually, I joined the discussion by making suggestions and coming up with alternative ideas. I did so partly because my opinion was asked for by the participants, but also partly due to my own enthusiasm for the topic. After all, I am a teacher myself and I know the Waldorf history curriculum of grade 7 and 8 quite well.*

This third and last example deals with the dilemma of forging a research partnership with research participants. Could one cooperate with them to make things better? Why would one do this? "Increasingly, anthropologists today involve the people whom they study in their fieldwork" (Gmelch and Gmelch 2018, 240). Such questions relate to the increase of anthropological studies in familiar settings, in which close proximity between researchers and research participants makes cooperation easier.

Usually, ethnography is more focused on describing social realities rather than on changing them. But the researcher's influence on the research setting is considered implicit to the research process, not something to be avoided per se, but something to be open about and reflect upon. Anthropological knowledge is always "inseparable from their relationship with those they study" (Mosse 2006, 935) and "socially negotiated" (Ibid, 946). Furthermore, research plans are usually open to change during the research, since the data are collected inductively and there is a certain openness to serendipitous (unintentional) findings.

In the example above, the possibility to co-produce a newly adjusted history curriculum can be considered serendipitous because it had not been anticipated. Like the Three Princes of Serendip, ethnographers find all kinds of things they weren't looking for. So, even though an action-oriented method is less conventional in ethnographic research, it leaves the option open, often in cooperation with research participants (Down and Hughes

2009). The challenge in such research is not necessarily to minimize one's influence as a researcher, but to ensure that all participants recognize their contributions.

Ultimately, all social researchers strive for validation of their research outcomes. This usually happens by giving critical accounts of underlying structures, that is, ethnography of education, or by action-oriented cooperation from the inside, that is, ethnography in education. Teachers who study schools are able to be ethnographers in education, since they are familiar with teaching and research practices. This gives them the tools to rapidly convert research outcomes into practical change. This is illustrated by the third vignette, which shows how the researcher is readily drawn into potential curricular change.

A Rationale for Ethnographic Research by Teachers in Schools

What opportunities are provided by ethnographic research conducted by teachers in schools? This question must be asked taking into account that teachers-ethnographers partly study themselves, play multiple roles in the field, and often co-produce data with research participants.

There are clearly a number of challenges related to ethnographic research conducted by teachers in schools, but there also some good reasons to make a case for it. First, an insider perspective is founded on an organic closeness to research participants and offers a considerable chance to yield in-depth information. Second, the research is approached from multiple grounded insider perspectives. Lastly, it implies the potential for practical empirical impact.

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Visual impressions
from Gamot Cogon Waldorf School

Figure 1 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 14 February 2017. The school's reception building. Every Monday morning, the flag ceremony takes place here – at other schools in the Philippines, this is done daily – with the flag raised and the national anthem sung before the children go to their classrooms. The reception building is elevated due to flood risk. Underneath the reception area, the teachers gather to start the day with a verse and to wish one another a good day.

Figure 2 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 11 January 2017. Main building of the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, built in an organic anthroposophical architectural style with heptagonal forms but adapted to the Filipino context with organic architecture, *nipa*-hut-style structures, and local natural building materials. The kindergarten and classes 1 and 2 are located in separate structures. The buildings are surrounded by greenery. There is ample space to play, a large schoolyard, school gardens, and a basketball court. The school is located on a five-hectare site with forest and agricultural land.

Figure 3 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 27 January 2020. Outdoor lessons. There are many art classes (like drawing, painting, music, and theatre), movement classes (like physical education), and nature classes (like gardening) in the curriculum, and lessons often take place outdoors.

Figure 4 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 14 February 2017.
Olympic Games in class 5, the sports activity parallels the main
lesson topic of Ancient Greek culture.

Figure 5 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 23 January 2020. In the classroom during a main lesson in class 6. Each class begins the day with a main lesson. During these lessons, students work thematically in three-week blocks. The themes correspond to the age of the class, thereby serving not only cognitive goals but also social and personal development objectives.

Figure 6 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 4 June 2018. The Rose Ceremony, a tradition at the beginning of the school year in which class 12 students receive class 1 students with a rose. The ceremony takes place on the outdoor school stage. Many gatherings take place here, including seasonal festivals, plays, or regular *kamustahans*, thematic meetings with parents.

Bringing a Universal Impulse to Filipino Localities

Abstract Based on three biographies of key actors, this article discusses the introduction of Waldorf education – an alternative educational approach rooted in an early twentieth-century European spiritual philosophy, called anthroposophy – in the Philippines. It examines which encounters, networks, ideas, articulations, and actions have been decisive in these biographies. It adopts a combined biographical and ethnographic approach, called *ethnography of global connections* (Tsing, 2005), focusing on *concrete trajectories of globalizing projects* in so-called zones of *awkward engagement*. Waldorf education in the Philippines can be seen as such a globalizing project, in which certain knowledge is presented as cosmopolitan and universally applicable and is advanced to new Filipino localities by enthusiastic school founders.

Introduction

When I first arrived at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, in rural Panay, I was struck by the beauty of the green oasis that surrounded it, full of bamboo bushes and flower gardens, in the middle of almost fluorescent green rice fields. Scenic footpaths meandered between the classrooms, organically designed in a hexagonal nipa hut style. Sounds emitted from the classrooms, where the morning rituals had started. Children were singing and reciting poems and tongue twisters; I heard clapping and stamping and laughter; the shrill and tentative sounds of recorders, and a guitar; it was a joyful and lively cacophony, cutting through the morning calm.

I reached the school by bicycle, over a bumpy dirt road pitted with rain puddles. I had to cross the nearby barangay, a streetscape of sleepy dogs, scurrying chickens, and curious goats complementing ramshackle stilt houses with corrugated iron roofs, some of which hosted small sari sari stores with tricycles parked outside. People gave me friendly greetings or just gazed at me. I wondered why some of these people had chosen to send their children to a Waldorf school. This poor barangay of farmers, fishermen, and construction labourers was an unexpected location for such a school. How should it be seen: as an anomaly or as a precursor of innovation in the Filipino educational landscape?

This article deals with the question of how Waldorf education was established in the Philippines. Waldorf education, founded by the early twentieth-century Austrian thinker and innovator Rudolf Steiner, refers to an alternative educational approach based on a spiritual philosophical framework called anthroposophy. It was introduced in the Philippines fairly recently – in the mid-1990s.

The arrival and spread of Waldorf education in the Filipino archipelago can be considered part of a globalizing trend that has seen Waldorf education introduced in several countries in recent decades. But general theories of globalization cannot fully explain the trend, because they do not consider the specificity of cases, in which coincidental events and personal efforts and actions play decisive roles. This article therefore follows a specific ethnographic approach promoted by the Anna Tsing (2005). She calls for a study of real encounters, networks, and actions in order to understand global connections and encourages scholars to follow concrete trajectories of ideas and to look for places of change with unexpected, sometimes uneasy connections, so-called zones of awkward engagement. In this article, the story of Filipino Waldorf education is personalized using three biographical accounts of key players in the country's Waldorf movement. These accounts provide an intimate insider's perspective, replete with idealism and strong beliefs that the Waldorf approach provides a positive social impulse to Filipino society. These stories narrate a remarkable new phenomenon in the educational landscape of the Philippines. They reveal how Waldorf education arrived in the archipelago and how it is gradually transforming, its identity becoming more pronounced, through increasing engagement, sometimes awkwardly, with local and social contexts.

Theories and Methods

Ethnography of global connections

Filipino Waldorf education can be imagined as part of a global Waldorf *landscape* – including *flows* of people, money, and ideas (Appadurai, 1996) and including an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983) with shared images about what Waldorf education should be and should strive for. Such an imaginary derives from an abstract debate on globalization theories in education (e.g. Spring, 2015), including the idea of so-called eduscapes (e.g. Forstorp & Mellström, 2018). Anthropologists have criticized such theories on globalization for exaggerating the abstract and autonomous nature of the globalization process. They prefer to study globalization in an ethnographic way, from below and from within, i.e. researching local perspectives on global trends (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008: 7). They have shown that global trends are perceived, adopted, and resisted in multiple ways at a local level (e.g. Anderson-Levitt, 2003) and that 'the local' is informed by 'the global' and vice versa. Global trends can even be seen as successfully internationalizing local cultural expressions. *Indigenous education*, for example, is such an expression of the 'local' dressed up as 'global': Despite international consensus, the meaning given to it is always very specific and local[1] (Gluck & Tsing, 2009). Waldorf education can also be seen as a locally constructed approach with universal pretensions. Its roots are European, it is inspired by Asian spiritual notions such as karma and reincarnation, and it is reformulated in each locality where it gains a foothold.

Tsing, a critical anthropologist (Tsing, 2000; Tsing, 2005; and Gluck & Tsing, 2009), emphasizes the messiness and unpredictability of globalization. She urges scholars to study real encounters, networks, ideas, articulations, and actions in order to understand global connections (Tsing, 2005) and to describe concrete trajectories of circulating globalizing 'projects' (Tsing, 2000: 85). She warns us against *globalist fantasies* (ibid.: 69) and *scale-making dynamics* (Tsing, 2005: 55-77), in which cultural claims are made about expansive categories, such as 'globality' or 'locality', which are often far from neutral (ibid.: 58). Her method, an *ethnography of global connections* (ibid.), focuses on "new places with changing events", which she calls "zones of awkward engagement" (ibid.: XI), i.e. places where unexpected connections between people and ideas take place. Implicit to these connections is a degree of *friction*, *awkwardness*, and misunderstanding. A Waldorf school that builds upon a European alternative educational tradition in a modern-day Filipino context, is a prime example of such a place of unusual international encounters. In order to describe the emergence and early dissemination of Waldorf education in the Philippines as a concrete and specific process, this article describes thoroughly the views and experiences of three main actors in the Filipino Waldorf community. Their stories – including ideals and expectations, confusions and doubts, successes and failures, and negotiations with their respective social and cultural contexts – describe in a tangible and personal way how this alternative educational approach has been traveling to – and through – the Philippines.

Biographical method

This study makes use of the *biographical method* (e.g. Merill & West, 2009; Roberts,

2002), also known as *oral history, narrative, life story, or life history approach*, in which: "a person chooses to tell about the life he or she lived, told as completely and honesty as possible [...] usually as a result of a guided interview" (Atkinson, 1998: 8).

The *biographical method* recalls specific histories and narratives. Of course, these narratives describe 'a history', and not 'the history' of an event, since they are constructed from personal reflections. What they do is "offer rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individual and history" (Merill & West 2009: 1) and they reveal personal experiences and thoughts in relation to social and historical events, emphasizing the specificity of social events and grounding historical processes in social contexts. Biographies can also help to reconstruct stories that cannot be reconstructed in other ways, for example because of the limited availability of resources.

All of the above applies to the study of the emergence of Waldorf education in the Philippines. Key to understanding this process is 'walking in the shoes' of the main actors and trying to empathize and sympathize with them. What motivated their actions? What did it mean to them? What sustained their motivation?

In this study, three key informants were interviewed in 2017 and 2018 in face-to-face in-depth biographical interviews. My interlocutors were selected for their leading roles in the Filipino Waldorf community and for their different insights about Waldorf education. They are all founders of Waldorf schools, and their stories are interconnected, overlapping, and chronological. The stories represent an imagined journey from the north (Manila) of the country to the south (via Panay to Davao). Of course, many others have played and continue to play significant roles, but I have limited the study for the sake of coherence, text length, and manageability of data. All research participants were very open and willing to talk about their respective biographies, perhaps reflecting the fact that one's biography is promoted within the Waldorf philosophy, whose core elements include *personal development* and *biography study*.

Writing the stories up, I tried to stay close to the original narratives, but I also had to negotiate them in order to keep them readable, coherent, and of respectable length. Some parts have been summarized, re-ordered, reformulated, or omitted. There was certainly a tension between my desire for ethnographic *thick description* and a limited word count. In addition, there was a more general tension between the complexity of social reality and the rhetorical forms available for writing about that reality (Atkinson, 1992). I have adopted an impressionist style of writing, as described by Van Maanen in his typology of ethnographic writings (1998/2011).

Role of the researcher

Many anthropologists have stressed the importance of reflexivity and transparency towards their own role and position in the field without 'over-revealing' themselves. Some personal aspects should be noted here. Firstly, I should mention that Waldorf education is very much part of my own biography. Currently, I combine research about Waldorf education with being a Waldorf teacher in the Netherlands. So, although Filipino

society is relatively unfamiliar to me (I work and live in the Netherlands), the research setting is familiar in the sense that Waldorf education fits my frame of reference. In a way, I am part of the same imagined global Waldorf community as my Filipino respondents. This implies both opportunities and challenges and it heightened awareness of my ethical responsibilities: to be critical about my data, open about my intentions, and reflexive towards the research process.

Concepts and Context

Waldorf education

Waldorf education is an educational approach – rooted in early twentieth-century Germany – based on specific pedagogical and didactical ideas, as well as a spiritual philosophy, called *anthroposophy*, formulated by its founder, the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925).[2] Its pedagogical aim is broad *individual development*, including – besides cognitive development – social, moral, artistic, and even spiritual development. This development is thought to follow specific stages linked to anthroposophical images of man (see below), as described by Steiner and other thinkers of the Waldorf movement (Lievegoed, 1987/2005). In the didactics, Waldorf schools pursue a method of so-called *artistic teaching*, meaning that learning activities try to balance activities of *thinking*, *feeling*, and *doing*, and are done in creative ways, including storytelling, singing, crafts, and festivals.

Anthroposophy

Anthroposophy provides for a philosophical, spiritual, and ideological framework for Waldorf education. Rudolf Steiner preferred to define anthroposophy as a way of doing science, which includes, in contrast to conventional science, metaphysical aspects. He criticized conventional science for being reductionist and warned against a materialistic culture that could result from such paradigm (Heuser, 2016). Steiner's logic can be explained as: "The realization that the universe is lawful and potentially understandable is of course implicit in ordinary science. But thought itself is not a physical object. Steiner equates thinking and intelligence with spirit" (Evans, 2018: 44). According to Steiner, thinking is a spiritual act that can help people gain esoteric wisdom and fulfil personal aims. These aims are thought to transcend one's lifespan, since ideas of reincarnation and karma are included in anthroposophy as well.[3] In that sense, anthroposophy has many antecedents in both European and Asian spiritual philosophies. In contrast to other philosophies, anthroposophy has generated many practical initiatives, of which Waldorf education is an example.

Inherent to anthroposophy are specific images of man and society, which I will briefly describe. These images, which I describe briefly below, are reflected in Waldorf schools, in their curricula, their pedagogical aims and practices, their didactics, and in their visions and mission statements.

Anthroposophical images of man

Images of man include the so-called *threefold image of man* and the so-called *fourfold*

image of man. The threefold image of man assumes that people have spirits, souls, and bodies, related to, respectively, the spiritual world, earthly life, and their interplay. Corporeally, this 'threefoldness' is thought to be found in the head, torso, and limbs, analogous to spiritual activity, soul activity, and body activity. In Waldorf pedagogy, this is translated into activities related to *thinking*, *feeling*, and *doing* and into the slogan 'education for *head*, *heart*, *and hands*'. The *fourfold image of man* divides humans into a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, and an 'I'. The physical body refers to material components of the body, whereas the etheric body refers to life forces. Astral bodies refer to desires and feelings and the 'I' refers to our autonomy, unique personalities, and consciousness. The fourfold image of man has multiple applications in Waldorf education and is reflected in its theory on child development, in which every seven years another of the four bodies is thought to be dominant, which requires specific pedagogical approaches. For the first two seven-years-phases, play and imagination are key ways of learning. Only in the third phase are students thought to be ripe for academic learning, abstract thought, and ethical judgment as a result of their awakening 'I'.

Anthroposophical image of society

Steiner's social ideology of *Social Threefolding* presents an anthroposophical image of society.[4] It imagines society as a whole as three interconnected sectors: the judicial-governmental sector; the economic sector; and the cultural sector. Each sector has a leading ideal. In the judicial-governmental sector it is equality. In the economic sector, the leading ideal should be brotherhood or cooperation. Finally, in the cultural sector, freedom is considered the most important ideal. Like civil society and the art sector, education is seen as part of the cultural sector. The *Social Threefolding* ideology is put into practice in Waldorf schools via a strategy that aims for independence from government interference. This sometimes results in disagreement about curricular content, pedagogical approaches, and didactical practices. Moreover, *Social Threefolding* has traditionally inspired Waldorf schools to strive for the provision of good education for underprivileged groups in society as well as for social change in a broader sense, often explicated in schools' visions and mission statements.

History and globalization of Waldorf education

The first Waldorf school was founded in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany, by Emile Molt, director of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory. He admired Rudolf Steiner's spiritual thought and social ideology and asked him to devise an education plan for his workers' children. The school's mission was to provide good, state-independent education for the children[5] of poor factory workers, managed and designed by teachers, as an alternative to what Molt saw as the harsh German school system at the time. It had a clear emancipatory mission, aiming for an innovative societal impulse.

Until World War II, when most Waldorf schools were forced to close by the Nazi regime, Waldorf education had already spread to other parts of Germany and Europe and to the United States. After World War II, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, Waldorf education became popular in most European countries, as well as in North America and Australia, as an important niche of alternative education with related alternative lifestyles, including

a biodynamic diet, anthroposophical medicine, and typical 'Waldorf products' – like beeswax crayons, wooden recorders or woollen dolls – as well as a variety of spiritual elements – such as the belief in reincarnation, angels, and a spiritual world.

Since the 2000s, Waldorf education has spread to countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This trend partly coincides with emerging middle classes (e.g. Johnson, 2014), who embrace new lifestyles (Van Leeuwen, 1996), including eco chic consumption patterns (Barendregt and Jaffe, 2014), interest in sustainability, social responsibility and spirituality (Boland, 2015: 194), and critical views on national education systems. Currently, there are about 1100 Waldorf Schools worldwide in 64 countries.[6] New Waldorf schools are confronted with multiple challenges, including the development of localized curricula (e.g. Boland, 2015 or Hoffmann, 2016), the attraction and training of staff, difficult interactions with authorities, problems of recognition and financing, and the risk of becoming elitist. There has been a notable increase in the number of Waldorf schools in Asia,[7] particularly in China. The Philippines is a prime example of a country where Waldorf education has been established in recent years.

Waldorf education in the Philippines

Waldorf education first appeared in the Philippines in 1994 in Manila. Presently, there are six recognized[8] Waldorf schools in the archipelago. Four in Luzon: Manila Waldorf School (Metro Manila, est. 1994); Kolisko Waldorf School (Metro Manila, est. 2008); Acacia Waldorf School (Santa Rosa, Laguna, est. 2003); and Balay Sofia Waldorf School (Baguio, est. 2009). And two schools in the Visayas and Mindanao: Gamot Cogon Waldorf School (Iloilo/ Panay, est. 2005) and Tuburan Waldorf School (Davao, est. 2012). All are private non-profit schools. Despite limited cooperation between the schools, the absence of national conferences and a functioning umbrella organization[9], the schools are clearly connected in their networks and histories. They are also actively involved in common international Waldorf events and networks, such as the Asian Waldorf Teacher Trainings (ATT in Santa Rosa, Laguna) or the Asian Waldorf conferences (AWC). Aside of the schools mentioned, there are several places where Waldorf activities have been initiated and Waldorf kindergartens and home-schooling initiatives have started, including Batangas, Cebu, and Puerto Princesa (See map on page 4). Alongside the emergence of Waldorf schools, other anthroposophical initiatives have emerged in the Philippines. The history of Filipino Waldorf education is strongly connected to a few key players, including the ones below.[10]

Bella Tan and the First Waldorf School in Manila

The first story is about the idealistic Manileña Bella Tan, who became acquainted with Rudolf Steiner's philosophy in 1987 following a chance meeting with Nicanor Perlas, a Filipino anthroposophist and activist exiled in the US during the years of martial law under the Marcos regime. Anthroposophy provided a framework for her numerous ideals and thoughts. Together with another enthusiast, Mary Joan Fajardo, she founded the first Filipino Waldorf kindergarten in 1994 followed by a school in 1996.[11]

I met Bella Tan, a woman in her 60s, in her house in Quezon City. The house had been built by Bella and her husband Jake. "It took us two years to make the soil-cement bricks, lay them and finish the house. Everything is self-made!" We sat down with a cup of coffee in an outbuilding, which was otherwise used for lectures, meetings, and courses, adjacent to Mr. Tan's clinic for anthroposophical medicine. "This is the room where it all began," she whispered rather mysteriously. Mr. Tan was also around. After I told him about my research – about the globalization of Waldorf education and about the story of Waldorf education in the Philippines – he responded positively: "It is really important to remind us that globalization isn't only an economic process, but that it includes social transformation as well!" It was a subject that Bella Tan liked to elaborate enthusiastically about too. At times, she laughed loudly during the interview; at other moments she was clearly moved, as if she was reliving experiences. As the interview evolved, I was impressed by the passion and perseverance that shined through. It was not difficult to imagine that her story had been an inspiration for others. Tan clarified an important motive for becoming an initiator of the Filipino Waldorf movement: "I wanted to be a good parent [...] It were our children who took us to the path of Waldorf education."

According to Tan, two chapters can be distinguished in her life story: Chapter one is about social activism and idealism and is symbolized by her son's birthday, 10 December, International Human Rights Day. Chapter two is about her devotion to anthroposophy and Waldorf education. It was symbolized by her daughter's birthday, 27 February, also Rudolf Steiner's birthday.

Chapter One

Tan recalled that she and her husband were activists during the 70s and 80s.[12] They met at the University of the Philippines, where Bella studied Sociology and Jake studied Fisheries. After graduating, they worked for an NGO in rural communities, committed to environmental issues and social justice. Through their work, they encountered and espoused numerous alternative and idealistic ideas, such as the practice of permaculture, organic farming, eco-friendly building techniques, vegetarianism, and alternative medicine. Despite their critical attitude towards the Catholic Church and their Marxist inspiration, they "never lost the intuition for things beyond the materialistic." They were interested in spirituality too. "We were searching. And there are so many paths that you can follow."

After the birth of their children in the 80s, they strengthened their idealistic lifestyle. They wanted to "give a positive social impulse to the world" through good parenting and by advocating a lifestyle that was considered healthy, both for them and the environment. This lifestyle included a vegetarian diet without refined sugars and alternative natural medical remedies. The TV – "the idiot box" – was banned because of its assumed negative effect on their children's temper, fantasy, and energy level. And they refused to take a nanny, instead choosing to educate their children in household-tasks in a class- and gender-neutral way. Friends and family were critical: "Everybody was saying: 'You are crazy!'" Mrs. and Mr. Tan had difficulties in finding a suitable school for their children. They viewed most kindergartens as too academic, with little space for fantasy and play.

They decided to delay sending their children to kindergarten and grade school, to give them more time to play. As an alternative to the mainstream academic curriculum by engaging in various artistic, musical, and practical activities at home as a family.

Chapter Two

1987 was a turning point. Mrs. and Mr. Tan met Nicanor Perlas, a former exile who had lived in the United States. Through him, they learned about Rudolf Steiner, anthroposophy, and Waldorf education. They found a framework for their ideas in Steiner's theories. Tan remembers the first dinner with Perlas as a magical moment: "Due to a brown-out we had to light candles. We spoke about Steiner in the dark. [...] We felt a deep connection to him. It was as if we found a friend [...] We were surprised that we were not the first ones to think the way we did."

From that moment, Mrs. and Mr. Tan studied anthroposophy intensively. They started a study group: "Steiner gave answers and context to a lot of our questions." Soon, new members joined, and the group registered at the General Anthroposophical Society in Switzerland: "We registered in Switzerland, because we saw anthroposophy as a social movement, where we wanted to be part of." Mary-Joan Fajardo was one of the new members. In 1988, the NGO CADI was established, *Center for Alternative Development Initiatives*, in order to bring anthroposophy into practice. Jake Tan focused on health, nutrition, and medicine, Nicanor Perlas on social and environmental issues including biodynamic agriculture, and Bella Tan and Mary Joan Fajardo on Waldorf education. The Tans were awarded training scholarships in Australia and Germany. Fajardo went to New York and Hawaii. Perlas stayed in the Philippines, where, in 1991, Tan and Fajardo had weekly meetings about their dream to set up a Waldorf kindergarten and school. They didn't rush, because they were aware of pitfalls: "You cannot simply transplant practices. You have to adapt it to local conditions." Tan specialized in kindergarten education and early childhood and set up courses on mindful parenting. Fajardo specialized in primary education. After intensive preparations, in 1994, the time was ripe for the first Filipino Waldorf kindergarten with ten children; and in 1996, the first grade of the *Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School* in the Philippines, currently known as the Manila Waldorf School, was established. This was too late for Tan's own children: "I did it for others. And for the Philippines. To give people a choice. Because our educational system [...] is not friendly." Initially, Tan and Fajardo were the only teachers and – until there was a proper school building – the students were hosted in a garage. International mentors, or consultants, were regularly invited to the school during its initial phase. "For us, it felt as a moral responsibility to invite foreign mentors. So that we were truly authentic to the original intention and the original practice of Waldorf education." When the school started to grow, foreign experts were also invited to give public lectures and teacher training in order to prepare new teachers. These were inspirational to initiatives elsewhere. On the initiative of parents, the first level of high school began in 2004 and a full K-12 school programme[13] was achieved in 2008.

Filipino Waldorf education took off gradually. It took seven years (1987-1994) to go from inspiration to implementation, and about 14 years to become a full K-12 school (1994-

2008). The numbers of new initiatives elsewhere were modest. Tan saw this slowness as the result of anthroposophy being the starting point for Waldorf education in the Philippines: "all daughter initiatives come from the same mother source: anthroposophy [...] anthroposophy itself resonated." Tan argued that this sequence, from philosophy to practice, instead of the other way around, is typically Filipino and could even be related to what she calls the *Filipino developmental stage*: "We are in the sentient soul, not yet in the conscious or intellectual soul, like Europeans. We are strong with our feeling [...] A planted seed of spiritualism resonates." According to Tan, angels and spirits, common in Steiner's lectures, were not strange entities to Filipino's, who, she explained, hypothetically are quicker to embrace a spiritual framework to education than other nationalities.

Since 2003, Tan has been lecturing about anthroposophy and Waldorf education in the Philippines and abroad: "In every country Waldorf schools are slightly different." Yet, despite efforts to include local content "whenever appropriate", the curriculum in the Manila Waldorf School remains largely European. Tan does not consider this problematic: "There is a universal principle in the stories that we use for pedagogical aims. Therefore, stories can easily be used outside their cultural context. We could search for local stories with similar meanings, but this will be a big effort. So far, we rely on the work that is done in European Waldorf schools." Tan is proud of her role in the birth of Filipino Waldorf education. Despite limited numbers of schools and students, she hopes its impact, its social impulse, is substantial. Waldorf's goal "to make sure that students can take hold of their own destiny" is, according to Tan, of great social importance. In response to critics, Tan says: "In the end, our children prove that we were right".

Jim Sharman and Grassroots Waldorf Education in Rural Panay

The second story is about the American engineer Jim Sharman, director and co-founder – together with his wife Teresa Jalandoni and Nicanor Perlas – of a community-based Waldorf school in rural Panay. How did he end up here? In retrospect, Sharman sees great coherence in his life story; as if "everything was leading to this barangay." Sharman translated Steiner's social ideology into a Filipino school context.

I interviewed Jim Sharman at his home, located near the school, just outside the rural barangay of Libongcogon.[14] From the school, it was accessible via a small, winding path traversing densely overgrown terrain. From the village, it could be reached by an unpaved road pitted with holes and puddles. The house was his own design, built in cooperation with an architect. The style was recognizable from the school structures. It was surrounded by flower and vegetable gardens, where his staff were at work. The living quarters were situated on the second floor because of the risk of flooding. The interview took place in Sharman's office on the first floor. Screens on the windows protected us from flies aroused by slaughter time at a chicken farm further down the road. Together with the constant noise of water pumps in nearby shrimp pools and enormous ghetto blasters in the village, setting the mood for an upcoming fiesta, the flies and flooding formed little cracks in this

otherwise paradisiacal place. Sharman, a slender American in his fifties, was an endearing man who talked with passion. His eyes lit up when telling the founding story of the school. He came across simultaneously as a dreamer and go-getter, always producing new ideas: "What if we build a solar panel park in the shrimp ponds? A part of the profit could be for the school." His enthusiasm was contagious. Without explicitly asking for it, the interview quickly took the form of a biographical account: "The story of this school is a personal story. It is very much intertwined with my biography. Everything that happened in my life was leading me to this barangay. It sounds not logical that an American guy starts a school here, so I really have to tell my life story to understand the beginning of the school."

Sharman was born in Texas, in the USA. As graduate engineer he travelled to Europe and Asia. In 1987, he applied to the Peace Corps[15] in Asia, where he was given a volunteer assignment in the Philippines. Initially, he was disappointed with the invitation to the Philippines, because it didn´t seem to be as "exotic and mystic" as other Asian countries: People were Christian and spoke English, and the culture seemed to be a hybrid mix with a considerable Western touch. But he accepted the assignment and had a great time. He learned Tagalog and got interested in agriculture and sustainability. After a Master's in ecology and watershed management in the USA, he returned to alternate consultancy work in watershed projects with work for the Peace Corps' training programme.

"And then I met Nick!" Sharman had heard of a course on biodynamic farming, led by Nicanor Perlas. The course would be a turning point in his life. It showed him how different things were interconnected. It involved arts, philosophy, and religion. He was so impressed that he offered to work for Perlas and took a position at Perlas' NGO CADI:[16] "It was an exciting and dynamic time. CADI was involved in the country's ban of pesticides and in awareness raising about biotechnology and sustainability. We published reports, organized conferences, wrote newsletters [...] We were very active." The passion for his job (1994-2001) convinced him to stay in the Philippines: "In the US life was predictable [...] Here I could really live and contribute. This job gave me satisfaction and freedom." Through Perlas, Sharman met his wife Teresa Jalandoni. Perlas invited him to visit his family in Iloilo, to advise on water supply issues. There, Sharman met Jalandoni, who lived in Manila, but whose father was originally from Iloilo. They fell in love and married. Jalandoni was older than Sharman and had children who were already in college, but she felt that "the universe will provide another child." She was right, a son was born in 1996. Subsequently, Sharman's motto became: "the universe will provide." Through his wife, Sharman learned about anthroposophy. She introduced him to the study group of Nicanor Perlas and Bella Tan. "Nick brought anthroposophy to the Philippines. But he did not often use that word. [...] I was surprised to meet him in the study group." Because of the study group and their experiences of parenthood, Sharman and Jalandoni got involved in Waldorf education. They became members of the board of trustees of the Manila Waldorf school and participated in Bella Tan's courses. When their son turned six, they wanted him to have the experience of nature. They moved to Panay, where they could live on land belonging to Jalandoni's family. The land was swampy, but big, 18 ha, which made Sharman's mind work overtime, thinking of possibilities for usage: "Then the idea emerged to put up a community school." Also for their son, who thus far had been homeschooled.

A study group was formed in preparation (2002-2005). Initially, this group sought cooperation with the local public school, but the public school considered their ideas too different from the prescribed government curriculum and approach. They decided to put up a new school, a Waldorf school with a clear mission to be accessible for underprivileged community children. "We explicitly wanted to work from an anthroposophical frame, particularly from Steiner's social ideas."[17] They founded the Gamot Cogon Institute (GCI), an umbrella organization with a broad mission to make other initiatives possible as well.[18] Cogon refers to a grass species; gamot means 'root' in Hiligaynon.[19] Together grass roots reflects the pursuit of rootedness in the community. In Tagalog gamot means medicine: "The name also refers to our aim to provide a healing kind of education." Thus, the school is meant to be community-based with a social mission:

From the official mission statement of the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School:

"Working out of the spiritual impulse of Steiner Waldorf Education, our mission is to educate children from Pre-school to Class 12 using a balanced, innovative, and health-giving curriculum. We make this education accessible to all children, regardless of economic or religious background. [...] We strive to become a healing social force that works outward to build community and renew society.'

There were many obstacles to overcome. There were no students, teachers, buildings, or money. Sharman's persistence and his mantra – "the universe will provide" – moved him forward.

People seemed to just 'show up' at the right moment: A banker, who was willing to give scholarships. A teacher, "from a faraway island, but willing to commit ten years to the school." A Norwegian philanthropist, who donated money to build the first classroom. A well-known Slovenian geomancer, who studied the "spiritual secrets and energies" of the school terrain and ascertained that the place had many child-friendly elementals. Teacher training started: "We tried to include community members [...] but I realized that you cannot make Waldorf teachers, they have to choose themselves". Finally, students were needed: "When we started the school [in 2005] the room was packed at our first orientation [...] But at the end of the day we opened up the class with just four children." Over the years, numbers increased, up to 265 students in 2017. The school stood out for its mix of poor community children and urban middle-class children.

In retrospect, Sharman acknowledges that it was not always easy. Even now, there are many struggles: critical authorities; weak finances; a lack of qualified teachers.

"There have been many, hundreds, thousands of moments that challenged me, that it was more logical to stop [...] but on an inner level I dedicated my life to the initiative. [...] There are countless instances of impossibilities coming together [...] and the universe had provided."

But the work is important and, according to Sharman, not limited to this community:

"Sometimes we forget to see the bigger picture. Every initiative that is done consciously can become a portal for what wants to emerge in the future. That is why we are always open to visitors. I personally believe that Waldorf education isn't just nice or fancy. I believe [it brings] a new civilizational impulse."

Kate Estember and Mundane and Inclusive Waldorf Education in Mindanao

The third story is about Mindanao-based Kate Estember, who co-founded a Waldorf school in Davao instead of going to a convent, following an inspirational meeting with Nicanor Perlas in the aftermath of his failed presidential campaign in 2010. Together with colleagues she successfully translated Steiner's fourfold image of man into a school profile, and she is currently exploring ways to innovate the curriculum and make it more inclusive.

I met Kate Estember at West Visayas State University, in Iloilo, at a conference on anthroposophical medicine that brought together an interesting hodgepodge of people, including some well-known persons from the small, but vivid Filipino anthroposophical community. There were also many teachers, who believed that their educational practice held healing qualities. The full eight-day programme included lectures, discussions, and artistic exercises. We studied texts, discussed human development, and evaluated our personal life courses. That year, the theme was 'biographies'; it did not feel strange, therefore, to conduct biographical interviews during the breaks. Estember was keen to tell me that it did not really matter whether we talked about the genesis of the school or about her biography, since both were intertwined. I was impressed by the wilfulness of this apparently strong and autonomous woman.

Kate Estember was the youngest of twelve children in a rural family in South Cotabato, Mindanao. As a child, she was impressed by her mother, who combined volunteering for the community with work on the land and within the household. Her example gave Estember strong sense of service. Moreover, from a young age, she was often checking people for what she called "true intentions" and "true love".

Sadly, she did not find sincerity and love in school. "I always had the feeling that [the teachers] were doing things because they had to keep to their agenda or just had to finish a lesson." She was rebellious and often bored in the classroom and she did not feel that teachers cared about her. Despite her aversion to the educational system, ironically, she chose to work in education in 2003, first as a student counsellor and then as university lecturer, after studying psychology in Iloilo. Two sources of inspiration awoke her interest in education: Firstly, Paolo Freire's book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972). Secondly, a lecture by Nicanor Perlas at her university on Artificial Intelligence (AI). "I told myself education is the way to contribute to society, because it shapes perspectives and cultures." Despite her choice to work in education, her concerns about insincerity remained. She felt uneasy about being part of an educational system that, in her eyes, contributed to a society driven by commercialism and materialism. She resigned in 2011 and was considering entering a

convent, which she imagined a good place to deal with her life questions.

Meanwhile, she got involved in the 2010 presidential campaign of Nicanor Perlas. Perlas lost, but a group of supporters had organized themselves – in order to continue the work they envisioned for the country – in a movement named MISSION (*Imaginals for Sustainable Societies through Initiatives, Organizing, and Networking*): "'Imaginals' typically bike, walk, and grow their own food or buy them organically and biodynamically. They patronize green businesses, prefer homemade products, take only natural remedies when they get sick, and support the visionary education of Steiner/Waldorf schools."[20] MISSION organized courses and gatherings, such as the *Aletheia* meeting in 2011, in Iloilo, in which Estember participated. She considered it a turning point in life, because it made her decide – without prior knowledge of Waldorf education – to found a Waldorf school in Mindanao instead of going to a convent, in order to initiate educational and social transformation: "One of the nights [Perlas] asked [Sharman] to share the story of Gamot Cogon. [...] it felt as if it was the first time that I met someone who was authentic in his work. [...] The idea for the school was born there and then. The impulse that had grown throughout my biography found its trigger point at Aletheia." At *Aletheia*, Estember started to imagine the possibility of a Waldorf school with Maya Flaminda Vandenbroeck, also from Mindanao. They decided to cooperate in "[bringing] Waldorf education to Mindanao". They chose Davao as location, believing it to be a good place to initiate such an educational innovation. They registered the school despite having "[n]o money, no building, no parents, no children, no knowledge." They began with courses on Waldorf education at the Gamot Cogon Institute and in Manila (Tan's course). Then, with some seed money and support from friends and family, they were able to build a school.

In June 2012, a year after their radical decision to start a school, the first class opened its doors to twelve children from an interesting mix of backgrounds, professions, and statuses – "[...] a tricycle driver, a rock musician, and a lawyer" – from all over the city. Vandenbroeck handled external tasks such as fundraising and legal issues, while Estember worked and lived in the school, carrying out a variety of functions:

"Normally, I got up at 4am. Then I did exercises, cleaning, gardening, finance work, communication for carpooling, and preparations for class. Then from 9am to 1pm I had class. We started late because children came from far and we lunched at school. After 1 [...] I was janitor and cleaner and did a nap. I journal my observations and prepare for the next day. I had a full agenda."

In the second year an extra teacher was hired, and the school reflected on its organization and identity. It had changed its name to the *Tuburan Waldorf School*, or, officially, the *Tuburan Institute*. *Tuburan*[221] means wellspring or source and refers to the purifying and healing qualities of water, related to "a healing kind of education". It also refers to a spiritual source, i.e. its anthroposophical base. A model based on *social threefolding* was used for the management, with one person responsible for business aspects (Vandenbroeck), one for cultural aspects and curriculum (Estember), and one for administration (a volunteer parent). The school's identity was envisioned in the

anthroposophical *fourfold image of man*, in order to support the development of the students in the school, and expressed in *four pillars of the school*:

The four pillars of the school (paraphrased from the interview)
1. *The physical pillar*, related to the physical environment of the school: "We are a nature school with quality of environment, and with eye for biodiversity and sustainability [...] and stimulating [...] the sensory development of the children."
2. *The etheric pillar*, related to the 'life forces' of the school. "We are a community school, where children work and learn together in a learning community."
3. *The astral pillar*, related to the feelings and culture within the school. "We have a contribution scheme,[22] based on capacity and willingness, to make it possible to have students from different backgrounds. We aim for diversity and in dealing with differences, feelings are involved, that relate to astrality."
4. *The 'I' of the school*, related to its distinctive core identity: "The core of the school's identity is being a Steiner-Waldorf School, based on anthroposophy. That is the I of the school."

According to Estember, *Tuburan* can be characterized by its sense of community. Since Davao is a hybrid and diverse patchwork of cultures and religions, the school's first concern was to build a school community in which differences were valued and respected. Therefore, Estember believed it important to rethink the curriculum, which, in her view, should be informed by cosmopolitan, as well as local knowledge. She tried to incorporate local features into the curriculum, even though it took a lot of time and research "to make them fit in a Waldorf way." "For example, this year we included an *indigenous track*. Because there are so many indigenous groups in Mindanao. We want children to be aware of that." On the other hand, Estember explained that this did not mean doing away with European aspects in the Waldorf curriculum, including Grimm's fairytales, fables of La Fontaine, Nordic and Greek myths, and stories of historic events in Europe. It prompted her to ask, what is local? Many local cultural practices appeared exotic to city dwellers in Davao ("not practiced and not known anymore"). Estember based her considerations on a grand tour that she made around Mindanao: "I have visited the Maranao in Iligan and Marawi, the Talaandig in Bukidnon, and the T'boli in Lake Sebu, in South Cotabato. And I plan to visit the Yakan in Tawi Tawi and the Sama. [...] I observed their dances, stories, and crafts." Estember judged many practices she observed as unsuitable or even "unhealthy". "The very core of the culture relates to the understanding of who they are as a tribe. It is true to them. [I wonder] how to deal with these indigenous aspects. We shouldn't copy it, because it doesn't resonate with who we are or want to be. For me it is about the now. What is the existing culture? What is our culture? What is the culture in the school?"

After numerous initial challenges, the school now seems to have a solid base. Both the school and Estember were starting a new life chapter. Indeed, Estember has planned a sabbatical and a journey to Germany, to learn even more about Waldorf education and anthroposophy.

Analysis and Discussion

Firstly, I must point out that there are limitations to the approach of this article. While biographical accounts can offer insight into lived perspectives of events, they may simultaneously imply one-sidedness and limited analytical distance. By staying close to these stories, a particular view on the history of Waldorf education in the Philippines is presented, one that is neither objective, nor complete. The inclusion of other perspectives – both from the inside (such as teachers', parents', or students' views), as well as from the outside (such as outsiders', opponents', or officials' views) – would have led to additional insights. Consequently, the article's scope is rather narrow. Moreover, the chosen approach for analysis – based on the writings of Anna Tsing – has obviously influenced the outcomes and considerations discussed.

That said, I will now focus on what the extraordinary stories in this article do say, despite the above-mentioned limitations:

1. They are unique and personal and offer insight into the interplay between the biographies of Filipino school founders and the introduction of Waldorf education in the Philippines.
2. Following Tsing (2000; 2005; Gluck & Tsing 2009), the stories provide insight into a concrete trajectory of a 'globalizing project', in this case globalizing Waldorf education, including concrete encounters and networks, ideas and articulations, and actions.
3. The stories provide us with a picture of places experiencing changing events, or, in Tsing's vocabulary, "zones of awkward engagement" (2005: XI), in which local constructions of what Waldorf education should be are presented as 'universal knowledge', especially in relation to the Waldorf philosophy – anthroposophy – and curriculum. On the one hand, the stories show successful integration of school visions and practices with corresponding biographies and contexts. On the other hand, they reveal occasional friction, related to processes of localization to Filipino contexts.

Ad 1.   Three biographies on the history of Waldorf education in the Philippines
The specificity of each story can be found in the guidelines and arrangement of the stories and the backgrounds of the school founders that shine through in the respective school identities. Tan's story is ordered into two chapters, one about idealism and social activism and another about anthroposophy and Waldorf education. Chapter two can be seen as a continuation of Chapter one and the central role for anthroposophy in 'her' school can be seen as the result of Tan's view of anthroposophy as a '*framework for ideas*' and '*a social movement*'. The guideline in Sharman's story seems to be the idea of destiny ('*the universe provides', 'everything was leading to this barangay*)' and his NGO background might have motivated a school mission aimed at social justice, poverty reduction, and community development. Estember's storyline is about her quest for sincerity and love, and her critical stand towards the educational system motivated her to establish an alternative school, in which a caring learning community is central, in which differences are respected and celebrated.

Ad 2.   The trajectory of Filipino Waldorf education as part of a globalizing project

In addition to their singularity, the stories are connected, overlapping, and chronological. Together, they give an insight into a how 'global' Waldorf education established itself in the Philippines, geographically spreading southward, encompassing encounters and networks, ideas and articulations, and actions.

Encounters and networks

The stories are literally connected through encounters. Sharman learned about Waldorf education from Tan, whereas Estember was inspired by Sharman and trained by both Sharman and Tan. Perlas played an important role in every story, albeit in different ways. All schools were operating in international Waldorf networks and were advised by international Waldorf advisors, called mentors. Over time, the reliance on these networks seemed to decline somewhat and the desire for autonomy and national cooperation grew. This is reflected in, among other things, the schools' identities, which have become increasingly pronounced and grounded.

Ideas and articulations

In anthroposophical terms, the schools' identities seemed to develop from a *one-fold* via a *three-fold* to a *four-fold* model. *Anthroposophy* has been central to the identity of Tan's school. This aspect was adopted by other schools. With Sharman, *social threefolding* emerged as a key identity feature. This principle was adopted in Davao, where the school identity was consolidated in the 'four pillars' of the school, modelled after an anthroposophical *fourfold image of man*. A *nature school*-pillar, linked to nature and sustainability, and a *cultural inclusive school*-pillar, committed to a diverse school community, were added. This crystallization of school identities is linked to other Waldorf schools in the Philippines, which have illuminated these identity aspects in different ways, either stressing a green image, community or inclusiveness, or anthroposophical spirituality.

In terms of articulations, anthroposophy provided for specific jargon. Notable is that Waldorf education was repeatedly typified as healing education or as a social impulse to society (or a *spiritual* or *civilizational impulse*). *Development* and *community* are also among the buzzwords. Sometimes, the multiple meanings of these words led to confusion. *Development* and *healing* could refer to individuals or society for instance, community to a school community or society at large, and *a social impulse* to individual social contributions or to Waldorf education as a whole. These double meanings were sometimes consciously connected. For example, development of society was believed to be linked to personal development. This is illustrated by Tan's quote on Filipino development – "We are in the sentient soul; we are strong with our feeling" – which is confusing and stereotypical.

Actions

From the establishment of CADI (*Centre for Alternative Development Initiatives*), GCI (*Gamot Cogon Institute*), and TI (*Tuburan Institute*) as precursors of the schools, we can conclude that Waldorf education was seen as part of a broader set of anthroposophical

initiatives. This implies that, alongside a Filipino Waldorf community, a broader anthroposophical community was formed. It has an outspoken lifestyle, including an organic diet, natural medical remedies, and typical 'anthroposophical products', as well as a variety of spiritual elements, such as the belief in reincarnation, angles and a spiritual world. Altogether, this led to a specific 'anthroposophical identity', functioning as a subcultural niche and linked to a broader 'global imagined community'. This identity is expressed in, for example, the definition of so-called *imaginals* in Estember's story, or seen in the do-it-yourself mentality of Tan and Sharman (who built and co-designed their own houses).

Moreover, we must consider the apparent reliance of new schools on the strong personalities of school founders and the speeding up of the implementation process: For the first school it took seven years to prepare for the opening (1987-1994), in Panay three (2002-2005) and in Davao only one (2012).

Ad 3.   Filipino Waldorf schools as zones of awkward engagement

Filipino Waldorf schools can be seen as places with unexpected connections between people and ideas. Each school struggled – in its own way – with the question of *how to make Waldorf education fit* in its new contexts, involving processes of spiritual, social, and cultural embedding, and implying – despite its obvious successes – a certain amount of misunderstanding or friction.

Firstly, spiritual embedding took place, because of the spiritual philosophy of anthroposophy. According to Tan, anthroposophy was central in the founding process of Filipino Waldorf education. The anthroposophical ideas of a spiritual world with spirits and angels coincided well with widespread Christianity in the Philippines. Tan even thought that Filipino's embraced a spiritual framework to education more easily than others. On the other hand – despite the statement that anthroposophy is not a religion – a number of Filipino teachers, parents, and students struggled with the incorporation of anthroposophical spiritual ideas like karma and reincarnation into their Christian belief.[23]

Secondly, social embedding took place, which was easier in urban settings than in rural settings, where a middle-class subgroup felt attracted to Waldorf education and its associated lifestyle and ideology, even though incidentally there might have been social friction within personal networks (as was noticed in the story of Tan for example: "Everybody was saying: 'You are crazy!'"). In Panay, the school is unique for its rural setting and the constitution of classes, in which students of different social backgrounds study harmoniously together: the farmer's daughter with the doctor's son, the rural kid beside the urban kid, the rich and the poor together in the playground. This can be judged a huge social achievement. On the other hand, the school was an anomaly in the area, which led to misconceptions and suspicion in the community as well. Some even jokingly called the school *skuelahan sang kano*, 'American school', a term that probably did not refer to the schools' director so much, but to its international vibe, its *awkwardness* in the village, and its regular international visitors, such as of Waldorf advisors.[24] Despite the aim to be a grass-roots community school, it was difficult for the institution to be fully accepted

as such. This is illustrated at various points in Sharman's story, for example, the failed cooperation with the local public school, the initial difficulties in attracting community students, and the unsuccessful attempt to train and hire villagers as teachers.

Finally, all schools had to embed Waldorf education in a cultural way, especially in relation to the curriculum. On the one hand, *awkwardness* and *friction* in this domain is related to a broader Filipino context, with diffuse and hybrid images on national identity (e.g. Zialcita, 2005) and continuous debates on the localization of the national curriculum (e.g. Maca & Morris 2015; Mendoza & Makayama 2003). On the other hand, it is related to the perceived universality of Waldorf guidelines. This was especially noticeable in Estember's story. 'Her' school was committed to a diverse school community, reflecting the cultural context of Davao and Mindanao. Consequently, she wanted to combine cosmopolitan knowledge with local knowledge, in which – interestingly enough – 'cosmopolitan knowledge' referred to an internationally shared Waldorf curriculum, which, when examined closely, is quite European, including European stories, European historical events, European cultural festivities, and references to European nature and seasons. The other school founders shared similar ways of thinking. Anthroposophical principles and European curricular aspects were considered to have universal applicability, compared to local Filipino stories and materials, which were considered difficult "to make them fit in a Waldorf way". In discussions on the localization of school practices, the underlying philosophical framework of Waldorf education, anthroposophy, as well as the curriculum – which had been shared and reformulated constantly in international networks but still encompassed many European aspects – was barely questioned as being 'culture specific', despite its specific roots. Although, in fact, 'local', it was acting as 'universal'.

Notes

1. See Article 14, UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), 2007.

2. Steiner's work encompasses over 350 books, including collections of about 6,000 public lectures. His most famous work on education is *Study of Man, General Education Course* (1919).

3. See, inter alia, Rudolf Steiner (1901), *Reincarnation and Karma*.

4. See, inter alia, Rudolf Steiner (1919), *Towards Social Renewal; Rethinking the Basis of Society*. Steiner considered his ideology a good alternative to all the major ideologies of his time: capitalism, communism, and fascism.

5. Boys and girls were in the same classroom, which was still uncommon in 1919 in Germany.

6. ´*The Waldorf World List´ (2018), www.freunde-waldorf.de; unrecognized initiatives are excluded.*

7. The Waldorf Movement in Asia' (2011), www.freunde-waldorf.de.

8. The schools are all officially recognized by the Philippine authorities. Five of them are also internationally recognized by the General Anthroposophical Society, in Dornach, Switzerland. The Kolisko Waldorf School is not.

9. The existing organization RStEP [*Rudolf Steiner Education in the Philippines*] is not accepted by all schools. Currently there are negotiations of setting up the Association of Waldorf Schools in the Philippines.

10. Of course, there are other important people. One of them is Nicanor Perlas, who is a key actor in all stories. He wrote a book on present-day social threefolding (Perlas, 1999) and is a known environmentalist. He led an NGO that was precursor of the first Filipino Waldorf School. In 2010 he ran for president.

11. Both Nicanor Perlas and Mary Joan Fajardo passed away during the course of this research project.

12. Roughly the period of martial law in the Philippines (1972-1986) and the Marcos -dictatorship, which ended with the so-called EDSA Revolution, or People's Power Revolution (a series of popular demonstrations in 1986).

13. K-12 school means from kindergarten to grade 12. In 2011 the department of Education started to implement the K-12 system in the Philippines. www.officialgazette.gov.ph/k-12/

14. The barangay Libongcogon is part of the municipality of Zarraga, in the Province of Iloilo, located on Panay.

15. Peace Corps is a U.S. government run volunteer programme for cultural exchange and development aid.

16. Centre for Alternative Development Initiatives, see also in the story of Bella Tan.

17. Although CADI hadn't worked with the concept of anthroposophy, the ideology of social threefolding was actively promoted. Sharman was influenced by Perlas's ideas on social threefolding.

18. CADI served as an example to GCI (Gamot Cogon Institute).

19. Hiligaynon is the local language in the province of Iloilo. Also, Ilonggo.

20. From the school's website, see http://tuburaninstitute.org/the-friendships-that-started-it-all/

21. In Bisaya (also Cebuano or Visayan), which is the main language spoken in Davao.

22. The contribution scheme goes even beyond the socialized tuition fee at Gamot Cogon Waldorf School. It means that parents contribute on the basis of capacity and willingness. Contributions do not only include money, but also services, expertise, and materials.

23. > 90% of the Filipino's identifies as Christian (approx. 80% Catholic), <5% as Muslim.

24. As international researcher I am also part of that foreign entourage of the school.

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The Story of Sisidlan

From my research notes:[1]

An interesting addition to the previous chapter is the Sisidlan School (Metro Manila, founded 2019), which I visited in 2020. It provides a complementary perspective, especially in view of the next chapter on Eurocentrism in the curriculum. Among Philippine Waldorf schools, the Sisidlan School is arguably the most distinctly Filipino. It places great importance on ensuring that pupils feel at home and grounded in their own culture, combining Waldorf ideals with an explicitly Filipino curriculum and adopting Tagalog (the official national language of the country) as the language of instruction. These choices have given rise to a form of Waldorf education unique within the Philippines, yet they also raise questions.

Using Tagalog as the medium of instruction proves complex in practice. Most pupils speak English at home – and with one another. Yet, Tagalog – whose influence in the urban middle-class milieu is declining – offers them new possibilities for connection, a sense of belonging, and pride in their heritage and identity. Pupils also learn the traditional script, Baybayin, which they read and write fluently.

The localized curriculum serves as an addition rather than a replacement of existing content. For instance, in the first and second grades, local fairy tales and fables are told alongside the tales of Grimm and the fables of La Fontaine. In the third grade, the stories of the Old Testament remain part of the programme, but during the farming and building blocks, children engage in typically Filipino activities such as rice cultivation and traditional building techniques like *sawali* (woven bamboo). In the fourth grade, local mythology – such as the oral epic *Sugidanon* from Panay – is introduced alongside the customary Norse mythology of that year, and so on.

Across all grades, a subject called *Sining ng Bayan* runs as a continuous thread; it roughly translates as *folk art* or *art of the people*. In this class, students learn about indigenous stories, songs, musical instruments, dances, cuisine, arts, and traditional crafts. The teacher who leads this subject maintains contacts with various ethnic minority groups – partnerships, as she calls them. Sometimes, guest speakers are invited to the classroom, since mere imitation of their traditions would feel disrespectful and risk cultural appropriation; at other times, classes visit these communities (for example, the fifth grade goes on a camp with an Aeta group in the north).

Finding suitable Filipino teaching materials for each grade level is an enormous undertaking, yet the teacher pursues it with great passion. Precisely in this metropolis – where such practices can also feel like an *awkward engagement* – she believes it is vital that pupils remain connected to the wisdom of traditionally living minority groups. I ask her how long she thinks it will take to complete this project. "I don't know," she says. And then, laughing: "Probably a lifetime!"

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[1] I have shortened, merged, and rewritten parts of the original notes for the sake of readability and length.

Figure 1 | Sisidlan Waldorf School, Metro Manila, 13 February 2020. Classroom at the Sisidlan Waldorf School, with a lesson on Philippine geography.

CHAPTER 4

Being a Discoverer or Being Discovered?

Abstract Waldorf education is known for its outspoken ideas on personal development. The recent globalization of Waldorf education raises questions about how it is adapted locally. This article addresses Eurocentric elements in the curriculum on the basis of a case study of history education in Grade 7 at a Philippine Waldorf school. Here, the students' development is mirrored in stories about the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. But can Filipino students identify with Christopher Columbus or Ferdinand Magellan? Are they the discoverers or the discovered in these stories? These are precarious questions in the Philippines's hybrid cultural context.

Introduction

"The main lesson in a Waldorf school is about making connections. We help children to connect with what they are and what they will be. We help them to connect with themselves and with others, including their teachers and classmates [. . .] We help them connect with the now by teaching out of head, heart, and hands. We help them connect with their futures by teaching them subjects that help their development. And we help them connect with their pasts by reminding them about who they are, and who they wanted to become [when they were still in a spiritual world]."
– paraphrased from a lecture at a Waldorf teacher training in the Philippines

"There was once a man called Ferdinand Magellan. He was a mariner [. . .] He successfully passed the deadly and narrow channel of Tierra del Fuego, passed Guam and landed on Cebu. He made friends with the local chief, and he discovered that they were fighting another tribe. Magellan tried to help them but was killed in the battle of Mactan. Only one ship survived, led by Juan Sebastian Elcano and he was the first man to circumnavigate the world."
– excerpt from student work on the travels of Ferdinand Magellan, *"discoverer of the Philippines"*

Waldorf education, an alternative educational approach known for its outspoken ideas on personal development (Avison and Rawson 2014; Lievegoed 2005; Rawson 2019), is globalizing (Boland 2015; Boland and Demirbag 2017; Gidley 2008; Göbel 2019; Hoffmann 2016; Stehlik 2018). Given its European roots and European curricular aspects, the following questions arise: How, in a globalizing context, are the educational ideals, discourses, and practices of Waldorf education adapted to new non-European local contexts? How do schools and teachers deal with Eurocentrism in the curriculum? This paper addresses the complexity and frictions of this process based on a case study in a Waldorf school in the Philippines, in which, as an appealing example of the matter, the History curriculum of a Grade 7 class is evaluated.

The case study describes how Waldorf theories of development and pedagogical aims are linked to the lesson content and take shape in a Filipino context. In addition, it discusses teachers' perceptions of Eurocentrism as well as their initial discussions and attempts to create a more inclusive and localized curriculum. The presence of Eurocentric elements in the curriculum culminates in a number of pressing questions: Can Filipino students, for instance, identify with the life stories of European seafarers, such as Ferdinand Magellan, who "discovered" the Philippines and, consequently, prefigured Spanish colonialism in the archipelago? How does this story help students develop and connect with their pasts and futures, as suggested in the opening quote?

The article makes use of three theoretical approaches to get a better understanding of the subject: (1) a typology of a purist, accommodationist, and evolutionist Waldorf curricula (Boland 2015, 197–98); (2) assumed universal applicability of Waldorf education and Waldorf schools as zones of awkward engagement (Tsing 2005, xi; Van Schie 2020), and (3)

Waldorf curricula in light of cultural inclusiveness. I will elaborate on these approaches later in the section "Three Theoretical Approaches to the Globalization of Waldorf Education."

In addition, the article identifies three main challenges in relation to the innovation and localization of the Philippine Waldorf curriculum: (1) the specific cultural and ideological background of Waldorf education; (2) the multiple intersections within the Waldorf curriculum that make it difficult to adjust only parts of it; and (3) a complicated Filipino educational context that includes an ambiguous attitude towards national identity and localization in the curriculum.

Despite the challenges, there is hope that Waldorf education, in all contexts, can provide inclusive curricula that foster broad development and help students to achieve their full potential and become their best selves. But much has still to happen.

Methodology

This article is based on case study research. Case studies are used widely within the qualitative research tradition, typically with a broad set of data collection tools (Merriam 1998). Case study research is specific in the sense that its focus is on "the particularity and complexity of a single case" (Stake 1995, xi). A case can mean many things: a group of people, an event, a locality, etc. In this research the case is a specific series of lessons (Grade 7 History lessons) taught at a specific school with a specific educational approach (a Philippine Waldorf school) in a specific location (central Philippines). Yin (1984) states that case study research is best used for "how" or "why" questions in "real-life contexts." The understanding and specific in-depth contextualized information that derives from the case study can then be placed in broader theoretical or empirical discussions, such as in this case the discussion on the globalization of Waldorf education and the Eurocentrism within Waldorf curricula. Data for the case study were collected in the following ways:

1. *By participant observation*. Much of the data, including data on teaching practice and teachers' opinions, was collected during ethnographic fieldwork using the method of participant observation (as described by many scholars, e.g., Spradley 1980; Agar 1980; Bernard 2006) at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, Iloilo Province, in the central Philippines, between 2017 and 2020. The fieldwork was organized in several short periods of three to seven weeks and included, among others, more than twenty-five interviews with teachers and other actors in the school, as well as about thirty class observations. Note that in reference to these interviews the teachers are randomly numbered (teacher 1, teacher 2, etc.) in order to anonymize them. Moreover, because the method of participant observation implies the inclusion of numerous day-to-day conversations and observations in and around the school (Van Schie 2021), the following spaces and events became sources of ethnographic data: in the teachers' lounge, in the playground, in the classroom, and during school events, camps, festivals, etc. As a researcher I became an active member of the school community for a time, sometimes even teaching classes myself.

2. *By curriculum evaluation*. Specific data on the curriculum were also gathered during class observations and interviews. I frequently discussed lesson content with teachers and students. Moreover, I evaluated textbooks used in the school, students' work, as well as a few important teacher handbooks, such as the widely used reference book by Avison and Rawson (2014), *The Tasks and Content of the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum*, and the famous book by Stockmeyer (2015), *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Steiner-Waldorf Schools*, which collects key quotes from the founder of Waldorf education. The findings were supplemented by teachers' opinions gathered from group discussions during a teacher training programme run by international Waldorf trainers, the Asian Waldorf Teacher Training, in Santa Rosa, Laguna, in 2018. Teachers from other Filipino Waldorf schools also attended this programme.[1] Note that in reference to the participating teachers in the group discussions, they are randomly coded by capital letters (teacher A, teacher B, and teacher C), in order to anonymize them and distinguish them from the teachers who participated in the interviews.

Waldorf Education

In this section I describe the concept of Waldorf education and its specific notion of personal development. I also briefly sketch the history of Waldorf education and its recent globalization and introduction in the Philippines.

Waldorf Education: A development-oriented educational approach

Waldorf education is an alternative educational approach. It emphasizes development-oriented education, based on a specific development theory formulated by its founder, the Austrian spiritual philosopher Rudolf Steiner, who gave form to the curriculum of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919. His spiritual philosophy, which is at the heart of Waldorf education, is called anthroposophy.

What are the pillars of this development-oriented form of education?

Firstly, Waldorf pedagogy envisages broad development, encompassing cognitive, social, creative, moral, and even spiritual development. In other words, Waldorf education focuses on the subjectification function of education, alongside its qualification and socialization functions (Biesta 2013), and, in this way, aspires to a contemporary approach to the pedagogical principle of *Bildung* (Rawson 2019, 2). To this end, activities that require thinking are combined and balanced with those that involve feeling and doing. This pedagogical approach is commonly summarized as education for head, heart, and hands, a threefold didactical approach based on an anthroposophical threefold image of a person in which people are believed to have spirits, souls, and physical bodies. This "threefoldness" is related to three leading Platonic educational principles that are interrelated and connected with different age groups, namely: goodness (the leading principle for ages 0–7), beauty (the leading principle for ages 7–14), and truth (the leading principle for ages 14–21) (cf. Lievegoed 2005; Rawson 2019; Steiner 1986[2]).

Secondly, Waldorf pedagogy assumes that there are specific developmental phases that

can be related to an anthroposophical image of human beings,[3] which follow a fairly fixed pattern but are influenced by the uniqueness of an individual's developmental path. Consequently, the organization of education in age groups, i.e., the context of a class comprising pupils of the same age that functions as a community of practice (Wenger 1998), is an important element in Waldorf schools. It is important to note that the word class is often used as a synonym for a specific grade level. Instead of Grade 7, for example, Waldorf teachers and students often use the term Class 7. Developmental stages are divided into seven-year phases. In the first phase, from 0 to 7 years of age, which includes preschool and kindergarten, children are thought to learn best from imitation and play. They need a secure, caring, and enabling environment, and educational aims include the stimulation of good habits, memory, reverence, listening, and joy of nature (Avison and Rawson 2014, 22–24). Formal education begins in the second phase and encompasses primary education. Education is focused on feelings and experiential learning, and the teacher is a natural authority in the class (ibid., 24). Key ingredients in the lesson plan include art, music, narratives, and visual thinking. Only towards the end of this second phase are children thought to be ready for more rationalist approaches, including logic, abstractions, and causality (ibid., 24). In the third phase, which corresponds with secondary education, students are deemed ready to learn academically, including independent thinking, critical reflection, and judgement (ibid., 28). The seven-year phases have been extrapolated for later life phases (i.e., 21 to 28 years of age, 28 to 35 years of age, etc.). These phases are less relevant for educational purposes, but teachers and parents sometimes use them to monitor their own development, and they are also used for biographical coaching of teachers within schools (Stehlik 2018, 216–18; 2002). The students' developmental stages are reflected in both the learning method and the subject matter of the lessons.

Thirdly, the development theory used in Waldorf education links individual development and the development of humanity as a whole. More specifically, development is sometimes conceptualized according to the principle that "ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis" (Stehlik 2018, 219). Whether this principle has been part of the Waldorf curriculum from the outset is debatable, but it is posited in many Waldorf lesson plans, either explicitly or implicitly (Barkved 2018). Following this principle, not only do individuals become increasingly independent in their thinking and acting, but so does the whole of humanity. This perception of history is also referred to as "the culture epoch theory," or, in more emic anthroposophical terms, "the evolution of consciousness" (ibid.). Steiner had a profound idea about the course of this evolution of consciousness for both the past and future, which he based not only on insights from literary and philosophical sources but also on esoteric experiences (Barkved 2020). Waldorf teachers sometimes find this line of thought – in particular, in relation to ideas of reincarnation and karma, which play major roles in anthroposophy – helpful for fostering a respectful attitude towards students and for seeing the students as more developed versions of "a human being"; or, to phrase it more esoterically, seeing them as "the last blueprints from the spiritual world," to quote an international Waldorf advisor in the Philippines. In the curriculum the principle that personal development follows the history of humanity is expressed in the use of historical narratives and symbolic images, as well as in certain themes and

Table 1. Themes and typologies for different age groups within Waldorf education		
Class and Age	**Themes/Narratives**	**Images/Typology**
Class 1, 6–7 years	folk and fairy tales	
Class 2, 7–8 years	fables and legends of saints	
Class 3, 8–9 years	Biblical stories	
Class 4, 9–10 years	Nordic mythology	
Class 5, 10–11 years	Greek mythology	
Class 6, 11–12 years	the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages	
Class 7, 12–13 years	the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery	discoverer
Class 8, 13–14 years	the Industrial Revolution	pioneer/inventor
Class 9, 14–15 years	the French Revolution	revolutionary
Class 10, 15–16 years		scientist
Class 11, 16–17 years		philosopher
Class 12, 17–18 years		idealist

Source: Drawn from research data, combined with my work experience as a Waldorf teacher

typologies that encourage students to recognize the struggles of their age (Avison and Rawson 2014; Stockmeyer 2015) (table 1).[4]

It is believed that students do not recognize this link between the content of the lessons and their developmental stage in a rational way, but rather organically and implicitly. The first Waldorf school in Stuttgart designed a development-oriented curriculum that sought to incorporate story material related to every age and developmental stage. What is striking is that in many, if not all, Waldorf schools the current curriculum shows many similarities to the original curriculum of 1919 (Stehlik 2018, 223).

These narratives and images are especially expressed in the so-called main lesson:

"Each day begins with a two-hour period known as the main lesson. This teaching unit is integrated and cross curricular and includes activities to awaken and focus the children's attention, oral and written practice of basic skills, mental arithmetic, music and drawing, presentation of new material, recall and discussion of the previous day's (or earlier) work, individual working, conversation, narratives, and practical work." (Avison and Rawson 2014, 29)

Until Class 8 there are usually no textbooks used in the main lesson; rather, the class teacher gives shape to a theme in a dynamic process with the students called artistic teaching or teaching as an art (e.g., Stehlik 2018, 220–22). This theme is based partly on the school's curriculum requirements and partly on the specific (developmental) needs and questions of individual students and/ or the whole class. This puts the onus

on teachers to continuously monitor the developmental stages of classes and individual students. Main lessons usually do not stand alone but are linked to other parts of the curriculum: "connections are made across subject areas and between main lesson themes" (Avison and Rawson 2014, 30). Main lessons are organized in blocks of three or four weeks, during which the same subject is worked on every day. The students process the content of the main lesson in so-called main lesson books, which are basically notebooks made by the students themselves and usually become very individualized and artistically designed reference works. All classes, from Class 1 to 12, follow main lesson programmes.

A short history of globalizing Waldorf education

The first Waldorf school, established in Stuttgart in 1919, was initiated by the director of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory, Emil Molt. The social mission of the school was to give poor factory workers' children a good education and to offer an alternative to Germany's rigid state education at the turn of the twentieth century. The school began after a nine-day teacher training given by Steiner.[5] This course has been the foundation of Waldorf education until today (Stehlik 2018, 215).

Through the decades, Waldorf education has spread worldwide, initially in Europe and the United States and eventually, since the 2000s, to countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Currently, there are about 1,250 Waldorf schools in seventy countries,[6] including the Philippines.

As in other countries, Philippine Waldorf schools were initiated by a few determined and idealistic individuals, each with their very specific personal story (Schie 2020),[7] who were searching for educational innovation, partly as a critique of the national education system with a strong emphasis on cognition, mechanical rote learning, and competition rather than on a broader and more personal approach to education that includes socializing and artistic and self–development-oriented activities. As in numerous other countries where Waldorf education was introduced, many of its core principles, such as the specific development-oriented approach based on anthroposophical insights, as described above, as well as many of its educational practices and its curricular content, seem to have stayed relatively close to the ideas and practices, as they were formulated in 1919 in Stuttgart (Stehlik 2018, 223).

The first Philippine Waldorf school was established in Manila in 1994. Currently, there are seven Waldorf schools throughout the country[8] and several initiatives in the making. In many countries, including the Philippines, the globalization of Waldorf education coincides with the emergence of a middle class (Johnson 2014) that embraces new lifestyles and consumption patterns (Barendregt and Jaffe 2014), including conscious and critical views and choices in relation to education.

Three Theoretical Approaches to the Globalization of Waldorf Education

In this section I introduce three theoretical approaches to the process of globalizing Waldorf education. These theoretical approaches form a starting point for analysis and discussion at the end of this article.

Purist, Accommodationist, and Evolutionist Waldorf Schools

One theoretical approach in analysing the globalization of Waldorf education is by categorizing Waldorf schools according to the degree to which each school adapts to local conditions and deviates from the original curriculum, as it was formulated in Stuttgart in 1919. According to Neil Boland (2015, 197–98), who follows a typology formulated by Ida Oberman (2008), the implementation of Waldorf education can take three forms that correspond to the level of parity with the "original Waldorf curriculum."[9] Firstly, there is the purist way. Purist Waldorf schools stick to the traditions of Waldorf education and follow the original curriculum closely. They return to the "original sources" of Steiner and other Waldorf pioneers to draw inspiration to formulate curricula. They argue that educational practices have proven themselves over the years and should therefore not be adjusted too much. Secondly, there is the accommodationist way. Accommodationist Waldorf schools develop hybrid curricula, combining aspects of "original Waldorf education" with modern educational trends, government requirements, and cultural adjustments, reflecting the sociocultural context of the school community. Lastly, there is the evolutionist way. Evolutionist Waldorf schools adapt to local, cultural, and contemporary contexts. They aim to translate Waldorf principles and practices, especially the content of the curriculum, to current situations and specific contexts of school localities. Since these principles have evolved over time, there is little need to consult original resources in relation to current school curricula. The difficulty with evolutionist Waldorf schools, however, is that, at a certain point, they have adapted so much that there is little left to connect them with other Waldorf schools.

Assumed universal applicability of Waldorf education

A second theoretical approach assumes that the classification formulated above – schools divided into purist, accommodationist, and evolutionist categories – is incorrect because it ignores the particularity of each school. This approach is related to the work of cultural anthropologist Anna Tsing. Tsing (2000, 2005; Gluck and Tsing 2009) points out that, in relation to global connections, culture-specific knowledge is often incorrectly presented as universal knowledge. In fact, what is perceived as universal knowledge is locally formulated and reformulated via international networks in so-called zones of awkward engagement (Tsing 2005, xi).

To gain an understanding of this process, one should evaluate actual and specific trajectories of globalizing projects. The introduction of Waldorf education in many countries is an example of such a globalizing project, in which certain underlying ideas and practices are presented as universal while they actually have a clear European origin (Schie 2020). Whether the developmental stages of students, as formulated by Steiner,

have universal applicability often goes unquestioned.[10] Moreover, in terms of curricular content, European stories remain central in Waldorf curricula, even when taught in Waldorf schools outside Europe. Educators in and outside Europe argue that stories told in the classroom have universal value because of their implicit universal archetypal images.

Filipino Waldorf teachers, for example, exhibit this belief in the universal value of stories told in the classroom, as evinced by how they explained to me why they use the Grimm's fairy tale "The Bremen Town Musicians." This fairy tale is clearly situated in Germany, and not all the animals in the story are known by Filipino students (young pupils often do not know what a donkey is). Despite this limitation, the teachers continue to use the story because of its archetypes, which are believed to be universally recognizable to children. In this case the four animals in the story – the donkey, the dog, the cat, and the rooster – are supposed to represent either the four "bodies" of a human being (based on an anthroposophical fourfold image of the human being: the physical body, etheric body, astral body, and the I or ego) or a classical humoral classification of people into sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic types. Because of this assumed universal power in many of the stories used in Waldorf schools, the use of alternative local stories is limited and sometimes perceived as unnecessary. On a practical level, it is convenient for teachers to use the stories featured in Waldorf resource books; it is considered difficult to find local alternatives that hold the same archetypal symbolism and connect sufficiently with the Waldorf developmental stages.

Imagined universalism is found in all subjects, even in those that are indicated as "culture-free." Often, Eurocentrism stays unnoticed and is practiced unintentionally because of its imagined universal value. Powell and Frankenstein (1997, 2), for example, demonstrate how Eurocentrism plays a role in "even a supposedly neutral discipline like mathematics." The inclusion of the ancient civilizations of India, Persia and Egypt in the Waldorf curriculum is sometimes hailed as an international, multicultural educational approach. However, Barkved (2018, 114–15) argues that such an approach remains Eurocentric because it presents ancient societies as precursors of European civilization: "The red thread that runs from theocratic societies to incipient democracies, individualism and autonomy, is spun from a Western/European mentality; it is, in other words Eurocentric" (ibid., 115).

The image of the universal applicability of Waldorf education is reproduced in an imagined (international) Waldorf community that supports a specific Waldorf identity, including a specific spiritual thought (anthroposophy) and a distinctive lifestyle (often including organic food, alternative medicine, awareness of nature and sustainability, celebrations of seasonal festivals, and certain "anthroposophical" products).

Waldorf education in the light of cultural inclusiveness

Lastly, as a more practical application than the two theoretical perspectives presented above, Waldorf education can be evaluated in the light of cultural inclusiveness. How culturally inclusive are Waldorf schools when they stick to a century-old curriculum and perceive their core principles as universalistic?

Still, Waldorf schools can be viewed as inclusive schools in many ways. For example, socialized school fees – richer parents pay more than poorer ones – help avoid elitism and create social inclusion. In addition, the rich learning environments provided by Waldorf schools, which assign a key role to artistic activities, are often promoted as a positive precondition for many forms of inclusiveness (Woolley 2018, 158, 169). Also, the importance that is given to storytelling is potentially an asset for inclusiveness. Avison and Rawson (2014, 25) state: "Through storytelling, children become participants in their community and culture."

Nevertheless, cultural inclusion in Waldorf schools in non-European contexts can be questioned due to the Eurocentric focus of the Waldorf curriculum: "Many of the Steiner schools worldwide, even in Australia and Southeast Asia, continue to use primarily Eurocentric content rather than local, culture specific material, at best severely limiting the richness of educational experience, at worst contributing to cultural colonization" (Gidley 2008, 252). It is often argued that cultural capital is reproduced within educational settings (Bourdieu 1986, 241–58), and the discrepancies between cultural norms at home and at school can result in low achievement rates (Woolley 2018, 31–32). An inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011) is needed to overcome these discrepancies, which "should involve a historical perspective on oppression and inequality" (Mitchell 2017, 170). Key questions related to inclusiveness are: Who has to be included, and where should one be included? Often, there is a dominant norm to which one must be included, which means that one is simultaneously excluded from other marginal norms. By making stories and curricular content from other places – in this case, Europe – central to one's own curriculum, schools – Waldorf schools in this case – effectively marginalize their own local norms, which can be seen as "an exclusion of the self" (Ekins 2017, 40–42). Arguably, not recognizing one's own cultural context is almost an "othering" of oneself.

Localized curricula can counter this alienation and also increase study outcomes, as shown by Egcas et al. (2017) in a study about a localized learning programme for English in a Filipino context. In the Philippines's multicultural and hybrid society, the localization of a curriculum means adjusting content not only to a national context (Filipinization) but also to a local cultural context (indigenization), and a broader regional one (Asianization). Schools that accomplish this adjustment may also succeed in partly decolonizing curricula by doing away with hegemonic American and European influences. Inclusiveness, decolonization, and localization in relation to curricula involve complex processes not least because "[s]ome [inclusive] practices, whilst deemed to be inclusive within the context of that setting at that particular time in response to a particular need, may, in a different school, or at a different time, or in response to a different need, actually appear exclusionary" (Ekins 2017, 7). Thus, certain narratives and images deemed suitable in European contexts for stimulating individual development may be questionable in other contexts, as shown in the case study of this article.

A Complex Filipino Context

That Philippine Waldorf schools use "out-of-context" curricular content is not unique. Other schools in the Philippines also have Eurocentric or Americanized curricula despite continuous political attempts to Filipinize, contextualize, localize, and indigenize the national curriculum and promote more "patriotism" through the Makabayan curriculum (Mendoza and Nakayama 2003).[11] The call for nation building and strengthening of national identity is anchored in educational acts and numerous official documents, including the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which states: "The curriculum shall be flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts. The production and development of locally produced teaching materials shall be encouraged" (Official Gazette 2013). The Makabayan subject is a significant part of the Basic Education Curriculum, which aims at "a healthy personal and national self-concept founded upon adequate understanding of Philippine history and a genuine appreciation of local culture, crafts, arts, music, and games" (Mendoza and Nakayama 2003, 15). The importance of the role of education in relation to national identity is even mentioned in the Philippine constitution: "[All educational institutions] shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster . . . appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country" (Official Gazette 1987). Despite these firm official statements, educational practices are quite different and continue to have a relatively foreign outlook.

Unsuccessful attempts in the Philippines to put education at the service of national identity formation correlate with a diffuse relationship with the colonial past. Whereas in other Asian countries, anticolonial struggles have often been employed in education for nation-building purposes, former colonial rulers in the Philippines are portrayed in ambiguous ways, as both dominant foreign intruders and as "benign paternalists" (Maca and Morris 2015, 138) who brought important developments to the country. Colonial struggles receive little attention in History textbooks, in contrast to the positive results of colonial domination. Maca and Morris (ibid., 139) provide revealing and insightful examples in which Spaniards are praised as bringers of Christianity and numerous enriching cultural features: "by absorbing the best of Spanish culture, we have become the most socially advanced of Asiatic peoples." Meanwhile, Americans are honoured as bringers of democracy and economic prosperity: "We are forever indebted to [America] for our democratic system . . . [Because of them] the Philippines has become an outpost of democracy in the orient." Maca and Morris (ibid., 139) also argue that History has only a marginal position in the curriculum, whereas in other countries "[h]istory education in schools is often one of the primary curricular instruments through which states attempt to construct a shared sense of national identity." In the Philippines history education is part of the subject Araling Panlipunan (AP), which literally means social studies and involves, other than History, Social Studies, Geography, and Economics. Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Values Education) is another subject in the Basic Education Curriculum that contributes to national identity formation (Almonte 2003). Moreover, the Catholic Church, a significant political actor in the Philippines, advocates for teaching

shared values in relation to nation building instead of stressing the country's colonial history, an era in which the church sometimes played a dubious role (Maca and Morris 2015, 134).

Earlier unsuccessful attempts to put education at the service of national identity formation correlate with weak, negative, hybrid, and ambiguous notions of Filipino identity. Research in the 1980s has illustrated that some sections of the Filipino youth would rather have another nationality if they had the choice (Doronila 1989). Modern discourses on identity, which relate to the enormous number of overseas Filipino workers, often focus on the Filipino as a global (Tyner 2009)[12] rather than a national citizen. The ambiguity of Filipino identity, described profoundly by Fernando Zialcita (2005), is partly the result of entanglement with the cultural features of former colonial powers. It is impossible to deny Spanish and American influences on Filipino identity and culture. Ancient churches and modern shopping malls, for example, can be seen as both very Filipino and colonial. Filipino culture comprises a mix of influences. Its cuisine, fiestas, music, vocabulary, social customs, etc. are part of a mixed, mestizo culture. In particular, hispanicized lowland urban Filipinos struggle with the "Spanishness" of their identity. Issues of cultural identification are different for indigenous peoples or rural upland communities, who often feel a strong ethnic or local identity, contributing to a multiethnic and multilingual Filipino society.[13] Hybrid and ambiguous notions of Filipino identity make it challenging to distinguish between seemingly contradictory categories such as "Filipino"/ "Asian" versus "Western" or "colonial" versus "noncolonial."

The limited localization of Filipino education has a long history. For much of the Spanish era, education was available solely to the elite, who became Hispanicized within Spanish educational institutions. A local educated elite, called the ilustrados, got acquainted with European ideas, including ideas of the Enlightenment, which were a catalyst for the Philippine Revolution of 1896–1898. José Rizal, a national hero, is probably the best-known ilustrado. Mass public education was introduced in 1901 under US rule by American "Thomasite" teachers (named after the USS Thomas, the ship that brought one of the first contingents of American teachers to the Philippines). The Americans introduced English as the language of instruction, and they made use of imported American schoolbooks, "replete with American narratives, heroes, and cultural referents" (Constantino 1975 in Maca and Morris 2015, 129). The colonial administration used education to Americanize Filipino citizens and make them model colonial subjects (Maca and Morris 2015, 132). Despite attempts by the Japanese occupiers between 1942 and 1945 to Asianize Filipino education – by introducing Tagalog as a national language and including local literature in the curriculum, among other things – many Filipinos ultimately viewed these efforts as "ideas of the occupier" (ibid., 129). In fact, Americanization did not stop after independence in 1946, which, according to Constantino (1970), led to the "miseducation" of the Filipino youth, who were taught that Filipino culture was inferior to American culture.

This context of an ambiguous national education is important for understanding why Philippine Waldorf schools tend to copy an internationally formulated Waldorf curriculum

rather than design a specific Filipino variant. Moreover, those Waldorf schools wanting to localize the curriculum will likely encounter difficulties in their quest for culture-specific stories, as will be demonstrated in the case study.

Case Study:
History Education in Class 7 at a Philippine Waldorf School

In this section I present a case study of History lessons at a Philippine Waldorf school. It is important to note that, in contrast to how it is taught in Philippine public schools, History is dealt with as a separate subject in Waldorf schools. Before examining particular Filipino lesson practices and student work, I will describe the specific developmental stage of seventh graders described in authoritative Waldorf resource books and how this takes shape in the curriculum, especially in History class.

The developmental stage of seventh graders

In the Philippines, as in Waldorf schools elsewhere, seventh graders are classified as "discoverers." Aged 12, they are about to leave the safe zone of childhood and enter puberty, a confusing period due to rapid physical change and mental development (Avison and Rawson 2014, 27). Waldorf educators see puberty as a phase in which students attempt to renew their grip on the world, or even "'conquer' the world around them" (ibid., 27).

This phase can be seen as a self-centred developmental phase in which students try to progress without the help of adults (who remain important in the background), which is often characterized by struggles with authority (parents and teachers), changing habits, and new social connections (e.g., friendships sometimes suddenly change).

The discussion of real issues and social contradictions in the classroom helps students get a grip on the world. Reality is the starting point, presented by the teachers in a factual and pragmatic way. In the Science subjects, this reality-centred way of teaching can be done through precise empirical observation and abstract models. In History lessons, reconstructions of historic events replace myths, and biographies provide students with examples of other people's "inner worlds." Empathizing with important historical figures is supposed to help students reflect on themselves (ibid., 71).

The curriculum, especially the main lessons, which are organized in teaching blocks of three to four weeks, for seventh graders thus comprises themes that mirror the outer and inner discoveries of early puberty. For example, the main lesson block on "Creative Writing, Mood, and Style" helps students to express "inner discoveries" and their own moods and thoughts, whereas "outer discoveries" are embodied in new perspectives on the world, with lessons on, for example, astronomy or the geography of the Americas.

History education in Class 7: pedagogical aims and content

In Class 7, students learn to place historical events in broader contexts. According to

Steiner: "The period from the end of the Middle Ages to the beginning of Modern History is now at the centre of History lessons . . . This period of time is of utmost importance, and must be treated with great care" (quoted in Stockmeyer 2015, 151–52). In European history this period is characterized by growing independent thinking among urban elites, reflected in the arts (e.g., the Renaissance), science (e.g., the Scientific Revolution), geography (e.g., the Age of Discovery), religion (e.g., the Reformation), and politics (e.g., Enlightenment philosophy), comparable with the evolving autonomous thinking of the seventh grader.

The first History main lesson block in Class 7 is about the Renaissance, an era characterized by a great curiosity among people, interest in understanding the world based on direct empirical observation (instead of on the basis of faith), growing autonomous thinking, and individualism (e.g., expressed in the Renaissance motto carpe diem), and many major artistic and scientific developments. As a historical period, the Renaissance symbolizes the enormous curiosity observed among seventh graders. Through biographies of Leonardo da Vinci, for instance, students learn to empathize with the struggles of people from other times, as well as their own inner struggles. A typical example would be an individual's struggle with an authoritarian other, primarily embodied during the Renaissance – and in subsequent periods in European history, such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution – by the church.

The second History main lesson block is about the Age of Discovery, an era parallel to the Renaissance, in which Europeans literally broadened their worldview by "discovering" new continents and sea routes. Stories about, for example, Henry the Navigator, Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortes, Francisco Pizarro, and Magellan are discussed, in particular their courage and perseverance, but also their fears, doubts, and hardships. Their biographies are seen as a useful mirror for seventh graders: "Since the pupils in Class 7 are going through a similar shift of relationship, history does not take place outside of themselves, in a museum, but is always topical and contemporary" (Avison and Rawson 2014, 261–62). These biographies are supplemented with factual knowledge, transforming these historical actors into real humans with whom one can identify. Henry the Navigator, for example, was important in initiating the first great Portuguese voyage of discovery, but he did not dare sail by himself. Meanwhile, Columbus, who "discovered" America by trying to reach Asia in a westward direction, often demonstrated medieval thinking.

The main lesson blocks in Class 7 are interlinked in many ways. The themes of the History blocks are also dealt with in the block on astronomy, in which the biographies of the astronomers Nicolaus Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, and Galileo Galilei are discussed. On the one hand, their discoveries influenced navigation at sea and thus the voyages of discovery; on the other hand, their biographies provide an interesting perspective on how to deal with authority. Copernicus, for example, published his famous heliocentric theory on his deathbed when the wrath of the church could no longer harm him. Galilei disclaimed his own scientific findings to evade severe punishment from the church. And Bruno was burned at the stake for refusing to recant his unwelcome ideas. A few other

cross-connections between the main lesson blocks of History and the other subjects in Grade 7 include the following: In Mathematics, insights that reached Europe from India via the Arab world at the end of the Middle Ages are discussed; Biology is about nutrition and, among other things, "discovered" products from all over the world; in Physics the themes of aerodynamics, hydrodynamics, and mechanics are related to Da Vinci's scientific findings; and in Geography the focus is on areas explored during the Age of Discovery.

History Education in Class 7 at a Waldorf School in the Central Philippines

At the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, the location of the case study for this article, the curriculum does not differ substantially from the outline sketched in the above sections. History education in Class 7 is divided into two main lesson blocks: one about the Renaissance and another about the Age of Discovery (see the examples of student work on pp. 380–82).

The teacher's lesson plans are largely based on a well-known Waldorf textbook, The Age of Discovery by Charles Kovacs (2004), who taught at a Waldorf school in Edinburgh from 1956 to 1976. The lesson series at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School includes a biography of Magellan, who is presented as "the discoverer of the Philippines," but he receives no more or less attention than the other explorers discussed.

Teachers' Voices

"Think about [the curriculum] like an invention. Usually, the inventor tweaks someone else's idea and makes it work. We just started the tweaking stage."
– teacher 10

How do teachers deal with Eurocentrism in the curriculum?[14] If they see it as problematic, what can they do about it? Below, I present a spectrum of opinions on Eurocentrism in the curriculum, followed by a summary of a discussion among teachers on how the Age of Discovery History lessons could be adjusted to a Filipino context while maintaining the underlying principles and interesting cross-links between subjects in the Waldorf curriculum.

Teachers' opinions on Eurocentrism in the curriculum

Most teachers at Gamot Cogon Waldorf School recognize Eurocentrism in the curriculum, as well as in the resource books that are used. As teacher 10 sums up: "We tend to follow the époques as laid out by Steiner. Grade 4 is Norse. Grade 5 is India all the way to Greece. Grade 6 is Romans. Grade 7 is explorers. Grade 8 is Industrial Revolution." Teacher 8 adds: "Most of our resource books are European or American."

Only a few of the teachers deny Eurocentrism in the curriculum. They perceive the curriculum as universally applicable, relevant everywhere, and therefore "culture-free." Teacher 19 is such a teacher, who comments:
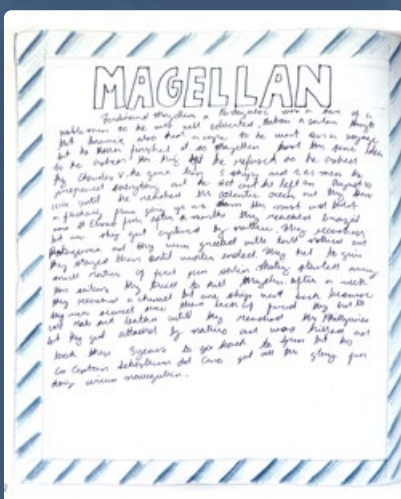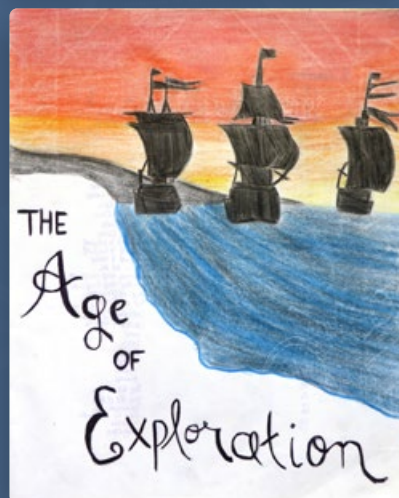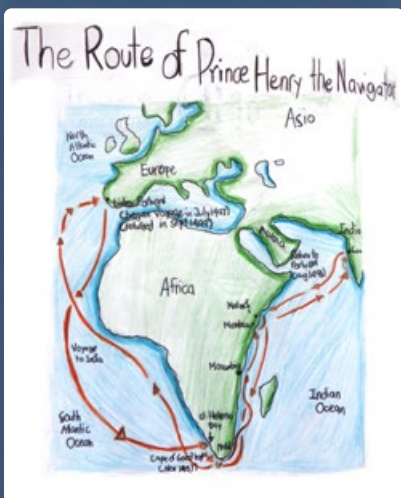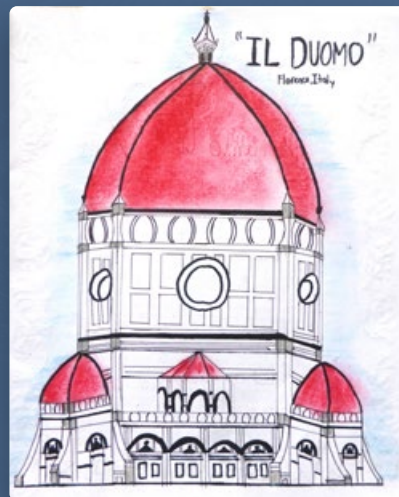
Student work from the Grade 7 history classes. Source: Pictures of main lesson books of students in Grade 7, taken by the author during fieldwork in 2018.

"[Waldorf education is not Eurocentric, because] it represents universal values [. . .] [When students learn about Ancient Greece for example] it is about the evolution of the consciousness [and] general human development. What happened in Greece was important for the whole of mankind. The Greeks of that era are just representatives of a certain developmental stage. Talking about Greece can be done in the Philippines as well for that reason."

Despite the general recognition of Eurocentrism, the majority of teachers do not perceive this as problematic, even in relation to the main lesson block on the Age of Discovery. Teacher 7 states it as follows: *"The important thing is that the values of these stories are linked to the developmental stage of the students. The characters or the settings of the stories are less important [. . .] My students actually like the biographies of the discoverers. So I don't see it as a problem."*

Teachers underline the universal applicability of the lesson content, as illustrated in the following quote from teacher 9: *"It doesn't matter whether you are European, Asian, or American, the universal aspects of stories can be applied in any context. I always try to go back to the universal underpinnings in a story."* Some teachers, therefore, even perceive Eurocentrism in the curriculum as an important Waldorf asset. Teacher 20, for example, puts it as follows:

"[The students] learn all these advanced subjects, which they will never learn about in mainstream schools. Like Norse mythology or about the Greeks. Sometimes people ask me, when I say what I did in class: Is this high school? Then I say: No, just Grade 6 [. . .] About Greek mythology you would only learn in college normally, I think. So, the children here are very lucky to learn all these things [. . .] Greek mythology can be taught anywhere, and it learns [sic] us general insights. Like Bathala, an upper god in Filipino mythology. Somehow that God is related to Zeus."

In addition, some teachers argue that there is still enough space in the curriculum to discuss Filipino values. European history does not replace Philippine history, which is dealt with in AP classes, albeit as an extra. Teacher 6 stresses this: *"They learn enough about Filipino culture. And they learn important Philippine values too. And love for their country. Examples of values they learn include a pledge for loyalty after the singing of the national anthem."*

Eurocentric elements in the curriculum do not mean that the school is not Filipino. Teacher 2 notes: *"Filipino culture is very evident in the school community and in the very fabric of the school. In other words: It would be impossible to not be typical Filipino."* Despite the international character of the curriculum, Filipino culture is considered to be omnipresent, especially in the way of teaching and dealing with each other. Teacher 18 confirms this, adding, *"the Filipino part is in the pedagogic style."*

Moreover, lesson content is often embedded within a Filipino context. Stories are adjusted, and local examples are added to make the subject matter understandable,

as attested by teacher 13: *"It is difficult to find local stories, because our textbooks are not from here. But sometimes we adjust stories. And I also make up stories myself. I also change for example plants in certain fairy tales. I include trees that grow here."* And sometimes a Filipino perspective is taken, like in teacher 8's lesson series on the Age of Discovery: *"When the Spaniards came here, we also highlight that the Filipinos fought against them. In some way, there is another side of the story. We try to make the main characters Filipinos instead of the discoverers."*

Given the challenges of formulating local equivalents with similar pedagogic value, teachers, like teacher 2, question the viability of alternatives to the current curriculum:

"If we are able to weave in Filipino stories that would be nice. But it is difficult. [Stories we use] have already proven their universal value. Filipino stories haven't done that. The Philippines was under colonial rule for a long time. It is hard to find real Filipino stories. They are already mixed with external influences [. . .] I don't problematize our use of European stories, because it's the best we have right now."

A few teachers, such as teacher 10, openly question Eurocentrism in the curriculum, as well as the apparently rigid Waldorf principles:

"I remember [a colleague] came back from a conference where one of the mentors had said: Steiner never said do Norse in Class 4. A teacher approached him apparently and asked, "Should I do Norse mythology in Class 4?" And he said: "Try it. If it works for you, then good." Something like that you know. But out of that statement this whole dogma was built. Like: Norse [mythology]. That's Class 4 [. . .] So yeah, the question then is whether we should focus more on Southeast Asian myths and legends, Southeast Asian culture, Southeast Asian nature in all our lessons. Or are we by doing so giving up the true Waldorf system? That is an interesting question."

Some see it as a temporary but necessary evil, a phase during which an anthroposophical base is laid out. This is explained by teacher 9:

"We definitely have gone through a dogmatic phase. And now we are a kind of stepping out of it slowly [. . .] In the beginning we didn't want to compromise at all. [. . .] There is more space for experiments now. But the challenge is to experiment with a basis, with consideration of the anthroposophical foundation."

But according to teacher 11, this is not considered an easy task: *"Courage is needed to change the curriculum. When we can fit things more into the Philippine context, we should do that. Sometimes there are Filipino events that resemble historical events in Europe. Then we can decide to use the Filipino example. To make it more relevant to our students."* Localizing the curriculum is also considered a process that needs time. Teacher 10 compares this with doing inventions:

"We are trying to build up from what is supposed to be done. And I think that once the

buildings are built and all the resources are there, we can start developing Philippine Waldorf education. [. . .] Think about it like an invention. Usually, the inventor tweaks someone else's idea and makes it work. We just started the tweaking stage. Like Edison's phonograph. That was actually the idea of someone else. Or the Wright brothers. Someone else was already fiddling around [with the idea] before they did. But the heroes are the ones that make it their own. And something new comes out."

The bottom line here is that there is no real consensus among the teachers on the topic of alleged Eurocentrism in the Waldorf curriculum. For most teachers, it is not an important issue. But as the following section illustrates, there is a small group of teachers that wants to discuss this subject within their school and take action.

Teachers' discussion on the History curriculum in Class 7

A teachers' discussion on the main lesson block on the Age of Discovery occurred during the Asian Waldorf Teacher Training in Santa Rosa, Laguna, in 2018. Three Class 7 teachers from three different Philippine Waldorf schools joined the discussion. They all had misgivings about the curriculum, which they were trying to overcome in different ways in their own schools.

Most receptive to change was teacher A, who was encouraged by her school to revise the History block as part of a broader policy to introduce more local and Asian aspects to the curriculum. As part of the Renaissance block, they had started a lesson series on Rizal, the most famous representative of the Filipino Renaissance, and as part of a block on cultural differences (in Class 8), they started a lesson series on ancient China in an attempt to include more Asian history in the curriculum. She included in the block on the Age of Discovery precolonial stories of Malay seafarers[15] who discovered and inhabited the Philippine archipelago, as well as lessons on the Chinese discoverer Zheng He, who explored large parts of the Southeast and South Asian coastline, as well as the Middle East and the African coast.

Teacher B was less radical in her amendments, but she had included Filipinized aspects by stressing precolonial Filipino culture and focusing on the Filipino side of the story, i.e., "being discovered" rather than "being the discoverer." Compared with teacher A, she was less supported by her school to make adjustments to the lesson content and modified the lesson series mainly on her own initiative.

Teacher C said that she did not get any support from her school management in adjusting the curriculum. She, therefore, had not really made any changes to the block on the Age of Discovery despite interest in the initiatives of her colleagues in the two other schools. But she stressed the fact that the theme of colonialism was dealt with during AP lessons, during which an active connection was made with the Age of Discovery block so that students also learned another side to the stories of discoverers.

In a lively conversation among the three teachers, it became clear that they were all concerned with this issue and wanted to do more in this regard. All three agreed that there were at least two barriers that complicated a more localized design for the main lesson block on the Age of Discovery:

Table 2. Advantages and disadvantages of localized elements in the main lesson history blocks in class 7		
Alternatives/Additions	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
stories about Malay migration to the Philippine archipelago	• These stories are related to a local and national Filipino context. • Students will find it easy to identify with these stories. • These stories provide a springboard for teaching precolonial culture. • The migration angle of these stories can be related to a modern global-minded Filipino identity.	• These stories are exclusionary to some indigenous groups, including the Agta, Ati, and other Negrito indigenous groups. • It is questionable if these stories still fit well to the developmental stage of a seventh grader. • It is more difficult to relate these stories to other the themes of other lesson blocks of the curriculum.
biographies of Asian travellers, such as the Chinese explorer Zheng He	• These biographies relate better to an Asian and Southeast Asian context when placed in a broader historical perspective of commercial and political journeys in precolonial Asia. • These biographies demonstrate that exploratory aspirations were not exclusive to Europeans.	• It is questionable whether students identify more easily with a Chinese seafarer than a European one. • The Filipinos in the stories are still the "discovered," instead of the "discoverers," because some Chinese explorers also depicted as the "discoverers" of the Philippines.
lessons about the trans-Pacific galleon trade between Acapulco and Manila	• This important trade route of the Age of Discovery is specifically related to the Philippines and had a great impact on Philippine history. • This trade route demonstrates that there was a Filipino connection with Latin America and that the Philippines was actively involved in the global economy of the time	• Stories about the trans-Pacific galleon trade are still strongly connected with colonialism and underline mostly the strength and wealth of the colonial power. • It is questionable whether students identify more easily with (mostly European) galleon traders than other (European) seafarers.
lessons about the "other side of the story"; talking about Filipino society during the Age of Discovery: who were the "discovered"?	• Students learn about colonialism and can identify with "their side of the story," for example, through alternative biographies of native historical figures, e.g., LapuLapu.	• The connection between the developmental stage of the seventh graders and the image of the discoverer is unclear because the lesson portrays them as victims rather than active historical actors who explored the world.
lessons related to the nineteenth-century Filipino Renaissance, including biographies of famous Filipino ilustrados, such as José Rizal.	• These lessons demonstrate a historical parallel with the development of the human consciousness in Renaissance Europe and the developmental stage of seventh graders as described by Steiner.	• The ilustrados were Europeanized because of their Western education and therewith partly alienated from local Philippine culture. • There is a risk that "localization of the curriculum" becomes confused with the "promotion of nationalism"

Source: Based on fieldnotes taken during discussions with teachers

1. Many teachers and school managers perceive "localization" as complicated in a Filipino context due to the country's colonial history, which had resulted in a hybrid and diverse Filipino culture, with Asian, European, and American influences. In education, American and European cultural influences are noticeable in "Western"-oriented school curricula. This cultural hybridity and "Western" orientation in education was perceived as a complicating factor by Filipino educators in localizing the curriculum because: "What does localization mean when it is unclear to which local culture one should refer?"

2. Finding local equivalents for the Waldorf curriculum with similar pedagogical quality was also perceived as difficult given that they also needed to correspond with the developmental stage of seventh graders and link with other parts of the curriculum. Alternative suggestions that came out of the discussion were mainly additions to the existing curriculum, rather than forming a new "Filipino" or "Asian" block. Despite multiple ideas for change, all suggestions seemed to have obvious advantages but also serious disadvantages, which are summarized in table 2.

In conclusion the three teachers questioned whether the traditional Waldorf main lesson block on the Age of Discovery was appropriate in a Filipino context since being discovered is fundamentally different from being a discoverer. Despite their intentions to continue thinking about new adjustments to this particular main lesson block, they all agreed that making changes was complicated.

Conclusion: Being a Discoverer or Being Discovered?

The case study presented in this article confirms that the lesson content in the Philippine Waldorf school under study is mainly formulated from a European perspective in order to serve the developmental aims of Waldorf pedagogy. This European perspective raises the question of whether these developmental aims are sufficiently consonant with a Filipino context. It could be that instead of identifying with heroic "discoverers," seventh graders identify with those who are "discovered," i.e., those who are not the heroes in the stories, but rather the "victims" or the "losers."

If we evaluate the case study alongside the theoretical perspectives of Waldorf education as a globalizing phenomenon, as presented in the article, we must note the following:

1. Framed using the typology of Waldorf education based on the level of parity with the original curriculum, the evaluated lesson series is rather purist. The question is whether that purism represents a status quo or just a necessary phase towards more accommodationist or evolutionist phases. In other words, do schools stick with a century-old Eurocentric Waldorf curriculum, or do they adjust it to a Filipino context? The teachers' discussion presented earlier shows that at least a group of teachers is moving towards a more localized version of the Waldorf curriculum.

2. The case study can be perceived as an example of Waldorf principles and practices being

presented as universalistic or cosmopolitan, whereas its foundations are actually culture-specific. Both the actual stories used in the classroom and the ideas behind them derive from a European context. Steiner's theories on personal and social development were formulated within an early-twentieth-century (central) European context. Localization to new local contexts will only be possible when it is recognized that Waldorf education itself derives from a particular time and local culture.

3. In terms of inclusiveness, the case study raises the suspicion that Filipino Waldorf education can be, at least partly, exclusionary. Stehlik (2018, 223) notes the cultural inflexibility of globalizing Waldorf curriculum: "Despite its apparent successful transition to most countries and cultures for almost 100 years, Steiner education comes under some criticism for the very fact that the curriculum has been adapted and applied fairly unchanged in most instances and in most situations, since its introduction in 1919." Despite the "one size fits all approach," he also observes an interesting contradiction, namely that Waldorf schools are mostly founded through "grass-root networks by parents and teachers who are looking for something new for their children" (ibid., 223). Thus, on the one hand, there is an attraction to Waldorf education by parents who are looking for alternative and innovative education for their children, as evidenced by the opening of new Waldorf schools in many places in recent years; on the other hand, there is limited curricular flexibility to accommodate new cultural contexts. This raises the question of whether Waldorf education could be even more meaningful in new contexts if its curriculum were more flexible and inclusive, not only as a movement in educational innovation but also and especially with respect to its own educational aim of stimulating individual development.

If we now consider the identified challenges, we must conclude that they all apply to the case studied here:

1. The specific cultural and ideological background of Waldorf education means that teachers are hesitant to adjust the curriculum. They feel that they lack in-depth knowledge about both the sociocultural context that the lesson content must be adjusted to and the anthroposophical background of the specific developmental stage of the students. In other words, they feel that they have to be simultaneously educated anthropologists and anthroposophists.

2. The multiple intersections within the Waldorf curriculum also make it difficult to adjust lesson content. For example, any changes to the Age of Discovery block necessitate a re-evaluation of all the connections with other main lesson blocks, such as the block on astronomy or the block on mathematics, to name a few. It is almost as if one adjustment would lead to more adjustments in the entire curriculum, for which schools lack knowledge, skills, and time.

3. The Philippine context is a complicating factor. Questions are raised about what exactly Filipino Waldorf education is, if it must take shape in the context of a culturally diverse society such as the Philippines, which demonstrates cultural hybridity and mestizo cultural

expressions, as well as a strong international outlook. Eurocentrism within the Waldorf curriculum is not an isolated issue but connects with a broader debate on localization processes in Filipino education.

This article has shown that, even when there are multiple ideas about adjusting lessons to make them fit better into the Filipino context, it remains challenging to do so due to serious disadvantages, such as those shown for the History lessons in Grade 7 (see table 2). Is it, therefore, impossible to localize Filipino Waldorf curricula? Discussions and enthusiasm among Filipino Waldorf teachers provide hope for change. There is certainly much to gain.

Notes

1   Waldorf education is a familiar educational context to me since I am both a researcher on Waldorf education and a teacher in a Waldorf school in the Netherlands. Combining research and teaching produces challenges and opportunities, and demands that I should be extra reflexive, open, and critical about my own findings. For an extended reflection on this double role, see Schie 2021.

2   This publication is based on a lecture by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, Switzerland, on 19 January 1923 and is part of Steiner's extended oeuvre, which consists of more than 350 books, most of which are collections of public lectures written in stenography (more than 6,000). Key works fundamental to anthroposophy are *Theosophy* (Steiner 1904), *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*. *How Is It Achieved*? (Steiner 2011, first published between 1904 and 1905 as a series of articles in the journal *Lucifer Gnosis*), and *An Outline of Esoteric Science* (Steiner 1910). Steiner's most renowned book on Waldorf education is *Study of Man: General Education Course* (2004), which was first published in 1919.

3   The anthroposophical images of humans are extensively described in Steiner's oeuvre, as well as in secondary anthroposophical literature. For the sake of clarity, I have used a limited number of sources. I lean especially on the book by Avison and Rawson (2014) since it is also used in the school under study.

4   The information mentioned in table 1 can also be found in numerous school documents and websites. Note that there are many subtle and less subtle variations of this scheme. Also, note that Class is used as a synonym for Grade. In the lower classes, thematic narratives told by the class teacher have a central place in the curriculum. In the higher years, when there is no longer a permanent class teacher, students are just typified in a way that corresponds with their developmental stage.

5   The nine-day teacher training given by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, at the start of the first Waldorf school, was summarized in three books, based on notes taken by participants of the course: *Study of Man: General Education Course* (Steiner 2004), *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Steiner 2000), and *Discussions with Teachers* (Steiner 1997).

6   This piece of information is based on the so-called Waldorf World List (Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen et al. 2021), which is an updated list of all Waldorf schools in the world, including kindergartens, that are recognized by the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, and the international headquarters of the General Anthroposophical Society (https://www.goetheanum.org/en).

7   In Schie 2020, 70–85, I explore the in-depth genesis of Filipino Waldorf education, based on three biographies of school founders.

8   These are the seven Waldorf schools in the Philippines: Manila Waldorf School (San Mateo, Rizal, est. 1994), Acacia Waldorf School (Santa Rosa, Laguna, est. 2003), Gamot Cogon Waldorf School (Zarraga, Iloilo, est. 2005), Kolisko Waldorf School (Quezon City, est. 2008), Balay Sofia Waldorf School (Baguio City, est. 2008), Tuburan Waldorf School (Davao City, est. 2012), and Sisidlan Waldorf School (Quezon City, est. 2019).

9   This typology builds on an old debate among anthroposophists after Rudolf Steiner's death in 1925. Some people thought that there was nothing to develop within anthroposophy from that point (they formed a group led by Steiner's wife, Marie Steiner-von Sivers). Others thought that anthroposophy needed further development (this group was led by Steiner's Dutch mistress and famous anthroposophic physician Ita Wegman).

10 In more general terms: One may wonder, do children worldwide develop and learn in similar ways? Like other cognitive anthropologists, Henrich et al. (2010) suggest that developmental psychologists, pedagogues, and educational scientists base their studies too often on Western data sets that are not representative of children and pupils in other cultural settings. The study by De Gracia et al. (2016) seems to substantiate this claim in a Filipino context.

11 The Tagalog word *makabayan* refers to patriotism or nationalism.

12 "The Philippines are the world's largest exporter of government-sponsored temporary contract labor" (Tyner 2009). It is estimated that about 8 million Filipinos work overseas in about 190 different countries.

13 The Philippine archipelago counts more than 7,000 islands, of which about 2,000 are inhabited. Additionally, there are over a hundred indigenous peoples and an equivalent number of minority languages.

14 This paragraph is based on interviews with teachers at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School.

15 However, such stories of precolonial Malay seafarers migrating into the archipelago are based on conjectures and have been essentially disproven by recent scholarship (cf. Aguilar 2005).

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Classroom Stories About (Not) Forgetting
The Local in a Global Curriculum

From my fieldwork notes:[1]

Today's lesson (see photo, left) follows a set pattern. The students take off their outdoor footwear and greet the teacher at the door with a handshake and a short chat. In a circle, they perform eurythmy exercises, followed by the verse: "I look into the World…". After this, individual verses are recited by the students who have their birthdays on that day of the week, each one crafted specifically for them by their teacher. Then comes a brief class discussion and some rhythmic exercises. Only after this does the actual lesson begin, and the students arrange the desks into the 'Main Lesson position'.

Today's lesson, part of the main lesson block on chemistry, is about sugar. Chemical experiments await, but first the teacher tells a story about the history of sugar. The students listen attentively and take notes in their Main Lesson Book. The story is told in English, with occasional explanations in Hiligaynon. On the blackboard is a drawing of sugar beets and sugarcane. A whole history unfolds: how sugar travelled from Asia through the Arab world to Europe; how Venice became a major trading centre for the 'white gold'; how the French came up with the idea of extracting sugar from sugar beets during the Napoleonic wars; how saccharin was invented in Germany; how sugarcane plantations emerged in the Americas; and the appalling labour conditions of the slaves who worked on these plantations.

As this history unfolds, I am struck by the absence of any mention of Iloilo, the city where some of the students in this class come from – a city that was the trading hub for sugar during the colonial period in the Philippines and which is full of beautiful old villas paid for with sugar money. Nor is there any mention of sugar cultivation on this island, where people worked under harsh conditions on sugarcane plantations. Why is this not addressed? When I later discuss it with the teacher, she simply says she hadn't thought of it. She thanks me for the suggestion…

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[1] I have shortened, merged, and rewritten parts of the original notes for the sake of readability and text length.

Figure 1 | Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, 28 January 2020. Classroom at Gamot Cogon Waldorf School, with a chemistry lesson on sugar.

Figure 2 | Iloilo, 20 June 2018. Music teacher Aeon. It is safe to say that Aeon and I have become friends. I'm impressed by his lessons. They model how to give 'local music' a deliberate place, but always in combination with music from elsewhere in the world. Songs in the local language – and in other Philippine languages – sometimes accompanied by traditional Philippine instruments, are combined with internationally known songs, well-known Waldorf songs, and songs from distant cultures. A good mix. In his lessons, students feel at home due to the familiarity of the songs yet are also amazed and challenged through their encounter with 'the other' and 'the world' via music.

Different Pedagogies, Equivalent Results

Abstract This chapter has been previously published as a journal article:

Schie, Thijs Jan van, and Paul Vedder. 2023. "Different pedagogies, equivalent results: a comparison of language skills and school attitude between Waldorf school students and public school students in the Philippines". *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1-14. DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2023.2248902

Abstract Waldorf education is globalizing and has been introduced as an alternative educational approach in numerous countries, including the Philippines. This raises questions about its added value and quality? This research compares the educational outcomes of two schools – a Waldorf school and a public school – in a rural community in Central Philippines. Spelling abilities and attitude towards school of Grade 6 and Grade 8 students were evaluated and compared. In the end, results of both schools could be considered equivalent, but, due to its different pedagogy, Waldorf education still adds value, by providing for diversity and choice within the Philippine educational landscape.

Keywords Waldorf education, public education, quality comparison, Philippines

Introduction

Waldorf schools in the Philippines aim to be a meaningful alternative to Philippine public schools. Waldorf educators believe in fostering positive social change by stimulating personal development, including creativity, independence, and social responsibility (Rawson 2019, 2021; Stehlik 2018, 2019). In response, critics have stated that these abstract ideals are difficult to measure. Moreover, critical scholars in other countries – including the Netherlands and the UK (e.g. Bus and Kruizinga 1986; Cunningham and Carroll 2011; Steenbergen 2009) – have noted that Waldorf education has scored below par when it comes to educational outcomes that are measurable, such as literacy achievements. No such comparative research has yet been concluded in the Philippines. This article evaluates the quality of Philippine Waldorf education, based on measurable educational outcomes, compared to Philippine public education. The following question is central:

How do important educational outcomes – English spelling competence and school attitude – of Philippine Waldorf students differ from those of Philippine public school students?

To find out, this article zooms in on one rural community in Iloilo Province, in Central Philippines, where a Waldorf school and a public school were compared. The two schools are a stone's throw from each other, but differ in many ways, including the pedagogical approach, educational culture, and student population. Based on questionnaires, interviews, and language tests in Grade 6 and 8, the differences in school outcomes and school attitudes are examined.

Waldorf education in the Philippines

Waldorf education has its origins in Germany in the early twentieth century (Stehlik 2019). At the centre of Waldorf's pedagogy is a specific notion of personal development (Rawson 2019; Van Schie 2021). Specific developmental stages of students are deemed important and therefore subjects should be offered at the appropriate time, i.e. when a child has reached a particular developmental stage (Avison and Rawson 2014, 22-8). Young children, for example, are not expected to engage with academic and abstract tasks to the same degree as older children. For that reason, reading and writing instruction begins later than in public schools. Also typical for Waldorf pedagogy is a balanced approach in which 'thinking, feeling, and willing' activities are combined and alternated (Rawson 2021). The specific theory of development, as well as the pedagogical approach, are drawn from insights from a spiritual philosophy called anthroposophy. Waldorf schools have only recently become part of the Philippine educational landscape. To date, seven schools have been established in the country (Van Schie 2020).

The quality of education in the Philippines

Nationally, the Department of Education determines quality standards that must be met by Philippine schools and provides for standardized tests to evaluate whether these levels are met. Private schools and home schoolers are allowed to deviate from the standard

curriculum as long as they abide regulations and laws and meet the standards of the mandated National Achievement Tests (NATs). NATs, which measure both students' competency and quality of schools, have to be completed in Grades 6, 10, and 12. They are not used as tool for selection for the transfer of students from elementary school to junior high school, from junior to senior high school, or from senior high school to tertiary education. Usually, the flow of students from elementary to senior high school is automatic. Students are required to take entrance exams to enter colleges and universities.

Additionally, the quality of educational outcomes in the Philippines is evaluated internationally through participation in PISA and TIMSS. International education evaluations such as PISA and TIMSS are part of globalization efforts within education and meet an implicit desire for comparability of educational systems and outcomes. Available reviews show relatively low scores for Philippine students and, consequently, have led to criticism of the Philippine educational system (Trinidad 2020; WB 2020). The low quality of Philippine education is often attributed to weak state institutions, deficient policy implementation, and a lack of coherence between educational reforms (Maca and Morris 2012, 476). In comparison to other educational systems in the region, the Philippine educational system is largely decentralized and privatized (Maca and Morris 2012; Termes, Edwards, and Verger 2020; Yamauchi 2005) and various interest groups, such as the Catholic Church, commercial enterprises, and international institutions, have played relatively important roles in education (Maca and Morris 2012, 473; Termes, Edwards, and Verger 2020).

In the 2018 PISA report, the Philippines scored lowest of all participating countries in reading and second lowest in mathematics (Schleicher 2019). The poor quality of the system had previously been demonstrated in international reviews such as the TIMSS, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) (WB 2020: iii). The PISA report also reveals a great inequality between different types of schools and students (Trinidad 2020). Specifically, rural schools score much lower than urban schools; public schools score lower than private schools; and students of low socioeconomic status score lower than those of high socioeconomic status (Trinidad 2020, 1). These outcomes demonstrate that inequality and poverty, which are deeply rooted in Philippine society (McDoom et al. 2019; UNESCO 2015), correspond to an inequality of opportunity in education (McDoom et al. 2019, 926).

Quality standards for Philippine public schools and Waldorf schools

For Philippine public schools, the most important quality standards are those set by the Department of Education. For Philippine Waldorf schools, an additional set of quality standards is at play, namely, standards formulated in an international Waldorf network. In countries without a national Waldorf Schools' association, such as the Philippines, the quality of schools is usually evaluated by the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum, the international headquarters of the General Anthroposophical Society, in Dornach, Switzerland. The Pedagogical Section recruits senior teachers from Waldorf schools to be international mentors, who monitor whether schools successfully follow Waldorf

guidelines, including a conventional Waldorf curriculum. These mentors provide for training and advice in the schools they visit and identify points for improvement.

Inherent to the international Waldorf discourse, which is reproduced through the Goetheanum's mentor system, is a specific attitude towards testing. Due to a pedagogical focus on broad personal development, there is often a reticence within Waldorf schools towards abundant cognitive testing (Rawson 2005, 27). Traditional cognitive tests may be used, but they are supplemented with a range of formal and informal methods of student evaluation, some of which, such as written reports and child studies, may be typical for Waldorf schools (Rawson 2005, 28). Written reports, which often substitute grades, provide students and parents with feedback on how students perform in class. This includes feedback on cognitive progress, but also on motivation for learning, social roles within the group, personal struggles, etc. It may even include poems, stories, or images, which somehow are indicative of a student's progress and development at a certain point in time. A child study is an intensive anthroposophical study on the personal development of a particular student by a group of teachers. It includes a biography provided by parents, photographs, a physical description (including appearance, locomotion, clothing), behavioural observations, and a collection of student work. 'The aim of a child study is to gain as comprehensive a picture as possible of the child's being and development' (Rawson 2005, 32). As a result, a specific pedagogical or guiding plan is made for the student under study.

For the current research, we observed that the National Achievement Tests (NATs) played an important role in the public school. Lists of high-achieving students were kept and framed in the classroom, and the best-scoring students were rewarded for their good test results. Overall, the school's test results were displayed in the teachers' lounge. While the NATs are external quality standards imposed on the school, there seemed to be no real friction between these external standards and the school's own internal measures. The Department of Education's guidelines were followed closely, with detailed objectives for each subject. The curriculum had been worked out in detail by the Department, down to the teaching level, and largely prepared students for the NATs. The results from the NATs are supposed to show whether the school had succeeded in achieving the intended educational goals.

In the Waldorf school, by contrast, the National Achievement Tests (NATs) were not considered very important. Moreover, it was unclear whether the NAT standards were actually met, since NATs were not conducted at the time of the current study. The school had done NATs in the past, but was currently exempt from the testing, possibly as a result of good relations with the local education department, or due to the Waldorf curriculum's asynchronous structure, compared to the mainstream national curriculum. Whatever the reason, the exemption was welcomed as congruent with a common critical view in Waldorf schools on testing and examinations. The Waldorf school denounced both the nature of NATs, which – in their view – focused too much on one-sided cognitive and rote-learned knowledge, and the content of the NATs, which was deemed not to be in line with the Waldorf curriculum. Thus, despite a potential tension between the NATs and

Waldorf guidelines, this tension was hardly felt in practice, simply because NATs were not administered. Instead, peer evaluation within an international Waldorf network, as well as international quality guidelines for Waldorf schools, were appreciated and applied. Several international Waldorf mentors, as representatives of an international Waldorf community, were involved in the school's quality assessments and development. Although the quality standards used are not less external than the NATs, these standards were not experienced as bothersome, because of the school's strong wish to function as a Waldorf school. Rather, they were viewed as necessary and welcome help in achieving this goal.

The language issue in the Philippine educational system

The Philippine educational system is confronted with an important language issue, viz., multilingualism. The Philippines is a multilingual nation with more than a hundred languages (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 761; McDoom et al. 2019, 927; Young 2001, 221). Two languages are recognized as official national languages: English and Filipino. Filipino, or Tagalog, is mentioned in the constitution as the first national language and functions as an important symbol of Filipino national unity. English, introduced under American rule (1898-1945), is the second national language and has always been the most important language in education. It is the main language of government, business, academia, media, and literature, and is associated with wider communication and international relationships (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 761; Young 2001, 221). Despite their status as national languages, Filipino and English play marginal roles in the daily lives of many Filipinos, especially in rural areas, where people rather speak their own local languages (Young 2001, 221), such as Hiligaynon in Iloilo Province, the location of the current study.

The lingual diversity of the Philippine archipelago is reflected in the educational system, making language use in schools a complex and delicate issue. In most schools, there are at least three languages that play a major role: English, Filipino, and a third, local language. Since 2012, a mother tongue-based multilingual education policy (MTB-MLE) has been in place, which mandates schools to provide education in the vernacular of the school setting, in line with the many studies that have shown that 'learners tend to learn more when lessons are taught in a language they are familiar with' (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 761), such as the famous longitudinal study of Aguilar in Iloilo (cited in Bernardo 2004, 19). The mother tongue is used as the prime language of instruction until Grade 3 (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 773). Pupils are mandated to learn the alphabet in kindergarten and must be able to read and write in their mother tongue in Grade 1. From Grade 1, lessons in English and Filipino are also introduced and students are expected to become orally fluent in these languages by the end of that grade. From Grade 4, formally, English and Filipino remain the only official languages of instruction. From that moment, subjects are divided into English-instructed and Filipino-instructed subjects (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 773). Mathematics and science, for example, are taught in English, whereas araling panlipunan (social studies), which includes national history and geography, is taught in Filipino. In practice, however, the vernacular often continues to play an important role. This language is spoken in the corridors of the school, in the school yard, in the teacher's lounge, and often also in the classroom. Contrary to public schools, many private schools choose for an English-only policy, and sometimes even make other languages, especially the vernacular,

'forbidden languages' on school premises. The idea is that English-language proficiency is more decisive for future professional success than other languages (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 773-4).

National trends are also witnessed in the two schools of this study: English is the main language of instruction in the private Waldorf school for almost all subjects. Hiligaynon continues to be the main language in the school yard and within art and sports classes, but in theoretical lessons students are supposed to talk English, at least to their teachers. In the public school, Hiligaynon is the main language in and outside the classroom. In most classes, at least a part of the instruction is given in Hiligaynon, in order to achieve better comprehension of the lesson concepts. This happens even in classes where English or Filipino are the prescribed language of instruction.

Literacy education in Philippine public schools and Waldorf schools
The way language education is designed in the two school differs significantly, in line with their different pedagogical and didactical approaches. In the public school, the alphabet is already presented in kindergarten, and pupils start to read and write at the age of 4 to 5. By the age of 6, pupils are supposed to be able to read and write, in line with the policy goal to make 'every student a reader and a writer by grade 1' (Jorolan-Quintero 2018, 762). The Waldorf students, in line with Waldorf guidelines (Avison and Rawson 2014, 60), start later. Typically, the names of letters, as well as the uppercase alphabet, are introduced, playfully, in Grade 1. In Grade 2, children learn the sounds as well as the lowercase alphabet (Cunningham and Carol 2010, 486-7), and when they are about seven the Waldorf students are able to read and write. In terms of the national curriculum, this is one to two years later than public school students (Cunningham and Carol 2010, 475).

The Waldorf approach has earned both praise and criticism in relation to literacy education. Praise for the Waldorf pedagogical approach (e.g. Burnett 2007) includes the lively way in which sound and form are brought together, the use of images in relation to letters, and the provided 'experience of wholeness' (Burnett 2007, 325), in which the learning of letters is embedded in a broad range of artistic lesson activities, including listening to stories, clapping, singing, reciting poems, movement, and games (Burnett 2007, 327-8). It also seems to correspond with international studies stressing the importance of 'emergent literacy' (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Critical studies, on the other hand, such as those by Bus and Kruizinga (1986) and Steenbergen (2009) in the Netherlands, report lower reading and spelling outcomes for Waldorf schools than for public schools. These studies have contributed to an image of Waldorf education as academically underperforming, not least because higher learning results could be expected given the relatively high socioeconomic status and educational level of the parents – an extensive body of literature links these features to school success (i.a. Bradley and Corwyn 2002; Davis-Kean 2005; Li and Qiu 2018; Stevenson and Baker 1987; White 1982).

Current study
In the current study, we examine whether – and how – we can compare the educational

outcomes of a Philippine Waldorf school and a nearby public school. This is a complicated undertaking, not least because of the different quality standards and quality perceptions in both schools. In practice, the quality standards set by the Department of Education, which stress the cognitive achievements of students, are mainly used in the public school, whereas international Waldorf standards, focused on broad personal development, are applied in the Waldorf school.

Before we start comparing, we must first define what we mean by educational outcomes and understand how they relate to quality perceptions. Conceptually, we distinguish two categories of educational outcomes: 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes. Both relate to a different kind of quality perception. 'Hard' outcomes imply a quality perception based on cognitive achievements. In the current study, we focus on students' English spelling competence, which is considered an important predictor of educational success (Kertjens and Nery 2000). Moreover, 'hard' outcomes could contribute to: the confirmation or rejection of the assumption that exists about Waldorf education, based on the evaluation of some scholars, that the pedagogical approach leads to academic underachievement; the confirmation or rejection of the assumption about poorly performing Philippine public education, based on international reviews, especially in rural areas, due to a shortage of means and the implementation of a complex language policy. For the current study, and based on the evaluations we referred to earlier, we hypothesize that English spelling achievements are better in the Waldorf school than in the public school.

'Soft' outcomes, on the other hand, allow for a broader perception of educational quality, including aspects of social and personal development. In the current study, these 'soft' outcomes were evaluated by measuring students' school attitude, i.e. being either positive or negative about school and learning. By looking at 'soft' outcomes, we can also evaluate the quality aims put forward by Waldorf educators, which focus on broad personal development, including creativity, self-development, and self-awareness. We expect that in a school where these aims and ideals are presented as important, students' school attitudes must be more positive than in a school where this is not the case (c.f. Dahlin 2007; Dahlin 2010; Steenbergen 2009). ⁻

Materials and Methods

Participants

This study was carried out among students and staff in two neighbouring schools – one Waldorf school and one public school – in the same rural community in Iloilo Province, in Central Philippines. It must be said that contact between the two schools was minimal. Most students and staff only vaguely knew teachers and students at the other school.

Students

Despite the schools being in the same village, the student populations at both schools differed significantly, mainly because the Waldorf school attracts students from a wider catchment area than the public school. In total, 99 students in Grades 6 and 8 participated,

School	Grade	N	#♀/♂	x̄ age (+SD)*	Distance to school **	Means of transport ***	'High'/ 'low' professions father/ mother ****	
Waldorf school	6	22	♀ = 13 ♂ = 9	11,7 (.53)	Close: 28% Far: 72%	Foot: 14% Tricycle: 27% Bus: 18% Car: 36%	Father	Low: 9% High: 41%
							Mother	Low: 0% High: 41%
	8	22	♀ = 11 ♂ = 11	14,2 (.49)	Close: 41% Far: 59%	Foot: 9% Tricycle: 27% Bus: 32% Car: 32%	Father	Low: 14% High: 41%
							Mother	Low: 5% High: 64%
Public school	6	30	♀ = 16 ♂ =4	11,5 (.96)	Close: 100% Far: 0%	Foot: 42% Tricycle: 50% Bus: 0% Car: 8%	Father	Low: 71% High: 0%
							Mother	Low: 4% High: 4%
	8	25	♀ = 14 ♂ = 11	13,7 (.61)	Close: 100% Far: 0%	Foot: 38% Tricycle: 58% Bus: 0% Car: 0%	Father	Low: 76% High: 0%
							Mother	Low: 0% High: 4%

Table 1. Characteristics of student participants

* Ages were filled out in full years; they are only expressed in decimals to calculate the means.

** Close ≤ 5kilometres (this includes local community of the school and surrounding rural communities, as well the two closest towns), Far > 5 kilometres (this includes other surrounding towns and Iloilo City).

*** Short distances are covered by foot or tricycle. These means of transport are also the cheapest. Longer distances are covered by car or bus. Bus means 'private school bus'. This bus is managed by parents of the Waldorf school. A fifth category, the jeepney, was excluded from the above table, since very few students used it. The jeepney is a cheap option for longer distances and is comparable to 'public transport'.

**** We used the *Philippine Standard Occupational Classification*, based on the ILO's *International Standard Classification of Occupations*, to classify professionshttps://psa.gov.ph/classification/psoc/?q=psoc/major. We merged categories to create two main categories, 'high professions' and 'low professions'. Some professions could not be classified, such as OFW (Oversea Filipino Worker), housewife, and businessman/woman, and were therefore left out of the statistics. For that reason, the percentages in the final column do not add up to 100%.

44 students from the Waldorf school and 55 students from the public school. For the sake of comparability, students of the same age and grade were selected in both schools (see information on students in Table 1, above).

We have tried to combine the socioeconomic status indicators presented in Table 1 to develop a scale for socioeconomic status (SES). We wanted to combine information on distance to school, means of transport, and parents' professions. The idea was that, on average, students who live further away from school come by car or bus, and have parents with 'high' professions, have higher socioeconomic status than students who live closer to school, come by foot or tricycle, and have parents with 'low' professions. However,

although Spearman's correlations between these variables were in the expected direction (range .058 - .720), we did not succeed in combining all scores or selections of scores into a single SES score. As an alternative, we explored the possible value of each of these as covariates in the main analyses.

Staff

The school directors were also interviewed: one director from the Waldorf school and two from the public school. In accordance with its pedagogical approach, the Waldorf school makes no distinction between elementary school and high school whereas the public school distinguishes these as two separate sections, each with its own director. All school directors were middle-aged; two are men (at the Waldorf school and the public high school) and one is a woman (public elementary school). The school director of the Waldorf school is American and was the only person interviewed for this research who was not a Filipino. Unlike the other directors, he was a founder of his school and therefore involved since its inception. In addition to the directors, the Grade 6 and Grade 8 class teachers at both schools were interviewed, in order to provide background information. All the class teachers were women. Three of them were in their late twenties/early thirties and one was slightly older, in her fifties (Grade 6 teacher at the public school). On average, the age of teachers at the Waldorf school was lower than at the public school. This lower age corresponded to lower salaries. In addition, teachers at the Waldorf school had less job security and worse secondary terms of employment than the teachers at the public school. This may account for yet another difference, viz., a high staff turnover at the Waldorf school. These differences between Waldorf school teachers and public school teachers are not unique to these two schools, but correspond to general trends in Philippine education, when comparing private and public schools (Termes, Edwards, and Verger 2020, 105).

Materials

Contextual information

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with class teachers and school managers were done in order to provide background/contextual information to the findings. General information about the lesson programme, the respective classes, and the students was exemplified. The first author spent time in the classes. Classroom observations were checked and discussed, and information relating to the study's topics, such as the application of quality standards and testing, was exchanged in order to discern how teachers keep track of their students' development. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a topic list. These same topics were also discussed with the school directors but with a focus on policy matters.

English spelling

Students were assessed using the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test (Schonell and Goodacre 1971). This is a well-validated, highly reliable standardized test to evaluate general spelling ability (Devonshire and Fluck 2010, 367). It is meant for 5 to 15 years old students and consists of word lists featuring sets of 20 words, which increase in difficulty.

We used both students' raw scores (the number of correctly written words) and calculated students' spelling age using the following formula: (number of correctly spelled words: 10) + 5. In the research setting in the Philippines, we chose to read all 100 words aloud and had the students write them all down. Based on the collected data, we found a high reliability estimated by Cronbach's alpha (.97).

We also conducted a validation study. Students were invited to write a short essay in English in which they described a day in school. Irrespective of spelling errors, we counted the number of words and the number of characters used. We used these two totals to calculate the average word length for each student. We then calculated Pearson PM correlations between the number of correctly written words on the Schonell test, on the one hand, and the number of words in the essay and the average word length, on the other hand. In terms of the number of words the correlation amounted to .51 and for word length to .32. This shows that students' spelling scores are indicative of the quality of students' broader writing skills in English.

School attitudes[1]

We developed our own school attitude scale inspired by other scales, like, for instance, a Dutch school climate list (Smits and Vorst 1990). Available scales tended to be long. Our scale contained 14 items. Students evaluated 14 propositions using a five-point rating scale running from 'Yes very much' to 'No, not at all'. An additional option was for students to tick 'I don't know'. A sample item is 'I like school'. Based on the collected data, we could then construct a seven-item scale. Items that did not contribute to the scale were either negatively keyed or led to a relatively high portion of participants ticking the 'I don't know' box. Recoding the negatively keyed items did not improve the scale. For the seven items we found a satisfactory reliability estimated with Cronbach's Alpha (.72).

Procedure

The first author conducted the interviews with each of the three school directors, as well as with the four class teachers. Interviews were recorded and processed into interview reports, which were later categorized and analysed. The interviews were conducted in school during school hours and lasted, on average, an hour. The questionnaires on student background and students' school attitude were filled out by students in all participating classes, during school hours. Students were instructed and supervised by the main researcher and a trained research assistant. For the spelling test, the recitation of the words was done by the class teachers of the respective classes. Neither the principal researcher nor the research assistant was Filipino. The idea was that their teacher's voice would be familiar to the students and would also do justice to the pronunciation of Filipino English.

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[1] The school attitude scale was part of a longer questionnaire (see appendix), which was also used for the next chapter. Despite its focus on the concept of school attitude, it also indirectly provides for insights into the related concept of school belonging. This concept was used in the next chapter, as an analytical tool.

Data analysis

This study includes both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data from the interviews with school directors and class teachers were transcribed and processed into interview reports. The interview reports were read closely, and relevant information was integrated into the already presented text. The student data were mainly quantitative data. These were entered in SPSS statistics 27 and analysed using Analyses of Variance and Crosstabs with Chi^2-tests.

Results

English spelling

The results of the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test by grade and school are shown in Table 2.

We compared the spelling scores between grades and schools with an analysis of variance. This resulted in an overall difference between schools/classes ($F(3,97) = 23.695$, $p < .001$). The test results show a notable difference between the two schools, namely, a significant higher mean of test scores, as well as corresponding spelling ages, for the Waldorf school students compared to the public school students. Including each of the earlier presented SES indicators as covariate in the analyses did not change the results.

Using Bonferroni tests, we also compared each class with each of the other classes. We saw that Grade 6 of the Waldorf school scored about the same as Grade 8 of the public school. Grade 6 of the Waldorf school had lower scores than Grade 8 of the Waldorf school but higher scores than Grade 6 of the public school. Grade 8 of the Waldorf school did better than all other classes. Grade 6 of the public school achieved lower testing results than all other classes. And Grade 8 of the public school scored better than Grade 6 of the public school, but worse than Grade 8 of the Waldorf school.

Table 2: Schonell scores by school/ grade				
Variable	**Schools and grades**	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Schonell scores	Waldorf School, Grade 6	22	55.32	21.24
	Waldorf School, Grade 8	22	78.86	10.72
	Public School, Grade 6	29	39.03	17.76
	Public School, Grade 8	25	59.92	15.72
Spelling ages (in decimals)	Waldorf School, Grade 6	22	10.54	2.19
	Waldorf School, Grade 8	22	12.89	1.07
	Public School, Grade 6	29	8.90	1.78
	Public School, Grade 8	25	10.99	1.57

Table 3: School attitude scores by school/grade			
Schools and grades	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Waldorf School, Grade 6	19	1.67	0.60
Waldorf School, Grade 8	19	1.77	0.56
Public School, Grade 6	27	1.43	0.32
Public School, Grade 8	22	1.99	0.60

For spelling ages, we found common differences between classes/schools. In addition, we compared the average spelling ages with average actual ages. We used available American norms to calculate students' spelling ages. When compared to these American norms, students in Grade 6 of the Waldorf school lagged 1.2 years behind in spelling proficiency; students of Grade 8 of the Waldorf school lagged 1.3 years; students of Grade 6 of the public school lagged 2.6 years; and students of Grade 8 of the public school lagged 2.7 years behind.

The test results reveal a notable similarity between both schools. That is to say, in both schools the mean spelling age between Grades 6 and 8 had risen about two years, which is what we would expect to find when comparing the two grade levels.

School attitude

Table 3 presents the mean school attitude scores by school/grade. An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant difference between schools and grades ($F(3,86) = 4.846$, $p < .005$). After conducting Bonferroni tests, only the contrast between Grade 6 of the public school and Grade 8 of the same school appeared to be significant, i.e. students of Grade 6 of the public school had better school attitudes than the Grade 8 students. The other possible differences between means were non-significant, meaning that no differences were found between the two schools, or between Grade 6 of the Waldorf school and Grade 8 of the Waldorf school.

Earlier we commented that seven of the original 14 items did not contribute to the quality of the current scale. We nevertheless examined three of these more closely: 'Classmates sometimes bully'; 'School feels like an obligation'; and 'Teachers are interested in me'. Students who experience bullying in school generally do not enjoy going to school (Gini 2008). Feeling that school is an obligation is usually indicative of less school pleasure. The final item is of interest because Waldorf pedagogy intends to stress personal development, and, as a result, it would be logical that students experience their teachers as being interested in them. Table 4 (next page) presents the ratings per item by school and grade and, in addition, presents whether the distribution of actual ratings differ from chance, using a Chi^2-test.

Table 4 shows that both schools and all classes experience problems with bullying, but that Grade 8 of the Waldorf school is doing better in this respect than the other classes. Grade 6 of the public school is also rather positive in that almost half the students report that classmates do not bully. Students of Grade 8 of the Waldorf school also rated 'School

feels like an obligation' relatively positively insofar as they evaluate that they experience school less like an obligation than students from other classes. Students from both schools experience school as an obligation, but students from the public school, particularly students in Grade 8, feel this much more than students from the Waldorf school. The third statement is, in a sense, exceptional, because of the relatively high percentage of students reporting that they do not know whether their teachers are interested in them. Grade 6 of the public school is most positive about their teachers showing interest, whereas Grade 8 of the public school rated their teachers most negatively in this regard. In Grade 8 of the Waldorf school a high percentage of students reported not knowing whether their teachers were interested in them.

Table 4: Student ratings by school/class of three school attitude related statements						
	Rating	Waldorf, grade 6	Waldorf, grade 8	Public, grade 6	Public, grade 8	Chi2 (df), p
# students		22	20	27	25	
Classmates sometimes bully.	Yes, very much	9.5%	0.0%	11.1%	4.0%	32.558 (15) p < .01
	Yes	47.6%	18.2%	33.3%	52,0%	
	Neutral	23.8%	27.3%	7.4%	16.0%	
	No	4.8%	18.2%	44.4%	12.0%	
	No, not at all	4.8%	22.7%	3.7%	16.0%	
	Don't know	9.5%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	
School feels like an obligation.	Yes, very much	27.3%	5.0%	11.1%	4.0%	43.095 (15) p < .0001
	Yes	36.4%	20.0%	74.1%	84.0%	
	Neutral	18.2%	30.0%	11.1%	0.0%	
	No	9.1%	10.0%	3.7%	8.0%	
	No, not at all	9.1%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Don't know	0.0%	15.0%	0.0%	4.0%	
Teachers are interested in me.	Yes, very much	4.5%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	36.333 (15) p < .01
	Yes	13.6%	23.8%	40.7%	12.5%	
	Neutral	45.5%	9.5%	29.6%	37.5%	
	No	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	
	No, not at all	4.5%	4.8%	0.0%	20.8%	
	Don't know	22.7%	61.9%	18.5%	25.0%	

Discussion

The research question that this study set out to answer is:

How do important educational outcomes – English spelling competence and school attitudes – of Philippine Waldorf students differ from those of Philippine public school students?

The answer gives us the opportunity to reflect on our hypothesis that Waldorf education succeeds in attaining relatively high English spelling outcomes compared to public school students, and that Waldorf school students will report better attitudes towards school and learning than students from the public school.

Comparison of educational outcomes

We have seen that – in practice – different quality standards are significant in both schools. In the public school, the National Achievement Tests (NATs) and guidelines set by the Department of Education are leading standards, whereas in the Waldorf school internationally formulated Waldorf guidelines seem to be the prime quality standards. Because both schools have their own standards and monitor and control these in different ways, a comparison of educational outcomes or educational quality is not self-evident. Since there was no data, such as NAT outcomes, available at the time of our study, we had to find an alternative way to compare school outcomes. The difficulty of objectively measuring and comparing the quality of school outcomes lies, on the one hand, in the fact that a difficult choice had to be made about which indicators are deemed most important with regard to the quality of education (Biesta, 2010) and, on the other hand, in finding an adequate method for measuring those indicators. In this study, the choice was made to compare English spelling proficiency as a competence that is basic to many academic skills taught in schools in the Philippines. We used the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test. In addition, we constructed a school attitudes scale using a set of statements related to either positive or negative views towards school and learning.

English spelling

On the one hand, the test scores clearly show higher scores for Waldorf school students. On the other hand, both schools show an equally fast progress of about two years between Grade 6 and Grade 8. The relatively high test scores for Waldorf students could be considered a high-quality educational outcome, as well as a confirmation of our hypothesis. At the public school, students are, on average, almost two years behind the average spelling age of students at the Waldorf school. Such a conclusion, however, would be too simple and premature. Although we did not succeed in constructing a single valid SES score and the individual SES indicators chosen did not contribute to the statistical explanation of the differences between the schools, it is clear from the presented information that students between the schools differ with respect to home background and living circumstances. We also observed and described important differences in the way schools deal with the language policy in their respective multilingual contexts. Moreover, such a conclusion would not take into account an important similarity that can

be observed in the test results, viz. both schools succeed in improving students' spelling competence from Grade 6 to Grade 8 at a largely similar rate.

In short, the above presented findings are not sufficient to conclude that the educational outcomes of Waldorf education are of a higher quality than those of public education, although they may eventually help students from the Waldorf school to be more successful at higher levels of secondary and tertiary education than students from the public school. The findings also do not substantiate an argument against the evaluation of Waldorf education as an academically underachieving type of education, as has been suggested by some scholars in educational debates in other countries (see the introduction). A similar evaluation seems premature for the Philippine context. The current study also found no confirmation for the idea posited that public education in rural areas performs poorly.

School attitude

Students at both schools show an overall positive attitude towards school and learning. We found no significant differences between the schools. We must therefore reject the hypothesis that Waldorf students would score better than public school students in this area. In an attempt to find possible explanations for this unexpected finding we examined specific items more closely. Waldorf schools seem to score somewhat better on some points, such as the smaller number of students who are bullied or the extent to which school feels like an obligation to students. In other areas, however, there is a lack of clarity. Why do so many students say they do not know if their teacher is interested in them, for example?

Limitations of the study

A number of important factors played a role in the research context of this study that could have influenced the results to a greater or lesser extent, and which must be taken into account when analysing data. Most importantly, as already mentioned (see participants), the two schools attract different students, with a more diverse selection of students at the Waldorf school, where a majority of students come from outside the local community and probably have a higher SES status. These factors are likely to have an impact on educational outcomes.

A number of specific limitations must be taken into account, especially in relation to the Schonell test results. We draw here on observations and discussions that we had with students and school staff. Firstly, it must be said that the students at the Waldorf school more often came from an English-speaking home situation or a home situation where English was stimulated more than as the case for the students from the public school. Secondly, the teachers at the Waldorf school generally seemed to have a better proficiency in English than the teachers at the public school. They were also spoke English more consistently in when teaching and were stricter about not mixing English and Hiligaynon in the classroom, although outside the classroom Hiligaynon was the dominant language in both schools. Thirdly, we noticed some tension within the schools to perform well at this test. Both schools had done their best to perform well at the test. We heard that

the students had practiced spelling a lot in the weeks prior to the test, since they knew a spelling assessment was coming up. It is difficult to determine the influence of this on the results. They did not know which test would be used, so they were not able to practice the exact test. It should also be noted that spelling is a usual part of the study programme.

Suggestions for future research

Future research should consider the above-mentioned limitations of this research and could focus more specifically on the influence of background variables, such as socioeconomic status and level of education of the parents, on the actual performance, attraction, and design of Waldorf education in the Philippines. This would obviously require a larger sample of participating students. Furthermore, future research could include comparisons with other private schools in the Philippines, which probably share more similarities with Waldorf education than public education in the Philippines does, e.g. the central focus on personal development or the use of English as major language of instruction.

Conclusion

The Waldorf school in Iloilo succeeds in attaining relatively high English spelling outcomes compared to public school students, but its students do not report better attitudes towards school and learning than their public school peers. Although our data confirm higher test scores for spelling skills than the Waldorf students, we cannot prove that this is due to an effective pedagogical approach, because we cannot exclude that the findings were the result of the children's home situation and the complex multilingual situation that schools have to deal with in the Philippines. Equally, there is not enough evidence to prove that Waldorf students are happier, more self-confident, or even more motivated to learn. Consequently, we also cannot judge the quality of Waldorf education in comparison to Philippine public education on the basis of this so-called 'soft educational outcome'.

Following this study, we are more conscious than before of the huge amount of information we are still missing in order to draw firm conclusions on the findings and their explanation or attributions. That said, based on what we know, we can at least say that Waldorf education is not a bad choice for children, either cognitively or with respect to school attitudes. What remains, however, is an obvious and serious substantive difference between the approaches of Waldorf and public schools; not necessarily better or worse, but different. The real asset of Waldorf education is its distinctive pedagogical approach, which is, in a sense, hard to measure and subjective. Waldorf education has an alternative pedagogical view based on specific philosophical and spiritual foundations (rooted in anthroposophy) and a broad focus on learning (by head, heart, and hands, and with a focus on personal development). In this way, Waldorf education certainly adds value to the Philippine educational landscape, since it contributes to the diversity of this landscape and provides an alternative option in terms of school choice for parents and students.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Students in Class 8 [2]

Libongcogon, January/ February 2020

Introduction

My name is Thijs Jan van Schie. I live in the Netherlands, where I am a teacher at a secondary Waldorf school and a researcher at Leiden University. The research title is: The Globalization of Waldorf Education; An Ethnographic Case Study from the Philippines. In my research I look at the spread of Waldorf education around the world, and I take the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School as an example of how Waldorf education could be different in different places.

I am here together with Sophie Westhoff, who is a student in educational science at Nijmegen University in the Netherlands. She is assisting me in my research.

With this questionnaire we want to find out about your opinion about school in general and about the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School more specifically. We also would like to compare Waldorf education at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School with mainstream public education, such as is taught at the Don Benjamin School.

The results of this questionnaire will be treated confidentially and are only used for research purposes.

Thanks for your cooperation!
Thijs Jan van Schie
contact: vanschie@marecollege.nl

Instructions

- Read the questions carefully and please be honest and complete.
- Write as clear as possible. If we cannot read your handwriting, the information will be useless to the research.
- If you have any questions, for example when questions in the questionnaire are unclear to you, please ask me or Sophie about it.

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[2] Questionnaires show some small variations according to the target group.

A.   General information

1. I am a   ☐ boy   ☐ girl

2. I am   ☐ years old

3. My hometown/ barangay   [_____]

4. Profession of my father   [_____]

5. Profession of my mother   [_____]

6. I go to school   ☐ (mostly) by school bus
                                     ☐ (mostly) by tricycle
                                     ☐ (mostly) by car
                                     ☐ (mostly) by foot
                                     ☐ Other, namely…..

7. I am at GCWS since   ☐ kindergarten
                                     ☐ class 1
                                     ☐ later, namely since [_____]

8. I have brothers/ sisters?   ☐ no   ☐ yes
If yes,   ☐ brother(s) ☐ sister(s)
Do they also go to GCWS?   ☐ no   ☐ yes

9. The reason that my parents/ I chose for the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School:

[_____]

B.   About school and learning?

About school	Yes, very much	Yes	Neutral	No	No, not at all	I don't know
1. I like school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I have to work hard for school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I am happy with my classmates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I am happy with my teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. My classmates and my teachers feel almost like 'family'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I rather stay at home than going to school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Schoolwork is boring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Schoolwork is easy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Classmates sometimes bully	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Teachers are interested in me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. School feels like an obligation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. At school everyone is equal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. To the teachers everyone is special	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. School helps me to be successful in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. What I like most about school is	Please write down in your own words in this textbox….					

16. In school you learn many things. Put the things you learn in the right sequence, from most important to least important (to your opinion).

    Put a 1 behind the most important thing, a 2 behind the second most important etc. Behind the least important thing you learn you put a 10.

Things you learn in school:	N0 (1 to 10)
Important skills, such as reading, writing, math	☐
Knowledge to be successful in your future career	☐
How to behave well	☐
How to respect differences between people	☐
How to be compassionate and take care of each other	☐
How to connect and appreciate nature	☐
How to find purpose in life	☐
How to be independent and confident	☐
How to be curious and eager to learn more	☐
How to be a good Filipino/ a good citizen	☐

17. Other important things you learn at school include:
    Please write down in your own words in this textbox

18. I know that I'm successful at school when…. (tick the best option):
    ☐ I learn new things
    ☐ I get good grades
    ☐ I am in the class top 5
    ☐ I have fun
    ☐ Other, namely

C. Typical Waldorf education and typical Gamot Cogon Waldorf School

In the following section you find aspects of Waldorf education in general, of education at the Gamot Cogon Waldorf school, and of education in general. Tick the box you find most suitable. If you don't understand the question please ask Thijs Jan or Sophie or your teacher about it. If you still don't know what to fil out then tick 'I don't know'.

What is so typical about Waldorf and GCWS?	Typical Waldorf education	Typical GCWS	Typical in all kinds of education	I don't know
1. Having a main lesson and making a main lesson book	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Having specific stories each year (such as about the Roman Empire)	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Having the same class teacher for many years	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Having no textbooks	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Doing many art activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Having circle time in the morning	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Saying a morning verse	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Having gardening as a school subject	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Celebrating seasonal festivals (such as Martinmas or Saint John)	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Having a nature table in the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Eating healthy	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Being together with children from the city and the village in one class	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Limit the use of modern means of communication (computers, TV, cell phones, games etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Waldorf education is different from public/ mainstream education.
    For me the most important difference is:
    Please write down in your own words in this textbox…

15. I have friends at the Don Benjamin School (public school in Libongcogon)
    ☐ yes   ☐ no

16. I have relatives at the Don Benjamin School (public school in Libongcogon)
    ☐ yes   ☐ no

17. I have friends or relatives in other public schools
    ☐ yes   ☐ no

18. The Don Benjamin School (public school in Libongcogon) or other public schools are different from the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School. The most important difference is:
    Please write down in your own words in this textbox….

19. People sometimes have a wrong image of the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School. Often they make the following mistake about our school:
    Please write down in your own words in this textbox….
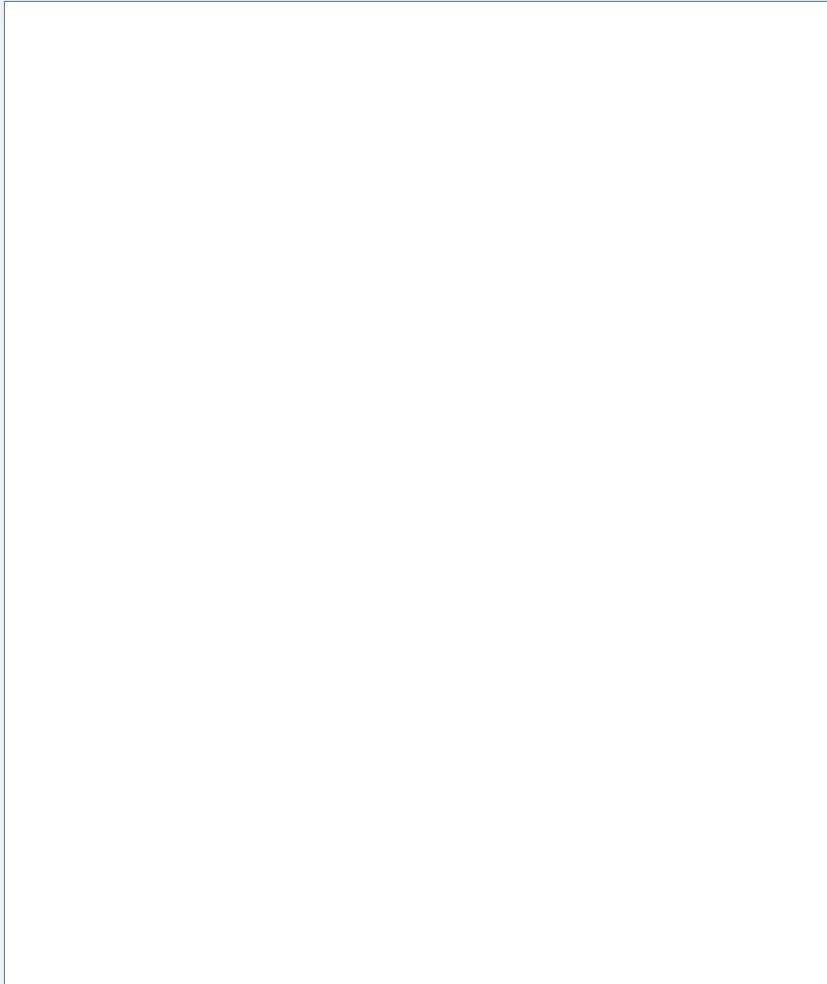
D.   Short essay

Instruction

Write a short essay (which fits in the textbox below) about *a day at school*.
If you don't know what to write think of a day last week at school and answer the following questions:

• What does this day look like? What is the programme of the day?
• What do you do? What do you learn? How do you feel?
• How do you get along with your teachers and classmates?
• What do you like about school? What do you dislike?

A day at school…

Classroom Stories About When Imagination Is (Not) Engaged

From my fieldwork notes:[1]

In the photo next to this text is a three-step plan for saying 'no' to alcohol and drugs. It looks artificial, and I wonder whether it really sticks. Yet the teacher manages to capture the students' imagination. Together, they calculate the costs of drug use. Curiously, some students seem to know the exact prices of beer, rum, and cigarettes. "What could you buy if you skipped a bottle of rum every day?" "365 × 65 pesos equals 23,125 pesos." "A cell phone!" someone shouts.

In many lessons that I observed, imagination was far less engaged. Although I saw genuinely good lessons and deeply dedicated teachers in the public school, I also witnessed examples of rote learning – knowledge detached from everyday life, and, in that sense, at odds with the Waldorf ideal of imaginal and experiential learning. In a history lesson, for instance, I saw a teacher firing questions at the students about the two World Wars, to which the class responded in unison with answers that seemed meaningless to them: *"How many reasons were there for the second war to begin?" "Seven!" the class chanted. They kept shouting answers: "1931!" and "1933!" "Do you know Hitler?" the teacher asked. Most students responded as if it meant little to them. "Hitler was the leader of…" The teacher looks out over the class, waiting for their response: "Nazi!" they called out loudly, in chorus.*

During my first stay in the Philippines, I regularly chatted after school with a ten-year-old child, Alex.[2] We would talk about all sorts of things, including about school (Alex attended a public school). Alex was curious, eager, smart, and talkative, and provided me with glimpses of school life: *Alex is studying for a test, learning the concepts 'brainwashing', 'stereotyping', 'points of views', and 'propaganda'. Alex knows how to rattle off the definitions of the terms but when I start a conversation it turns out that Alex doesn't really know what these ideas mean. It's good that the school pays attention to these important themes, but isn't Alex too young to truly grasp such abstract concepts? Alex cannot give me a single example of any term. We talk and come up with a few together. What are stereotypes of rich people. That they are fat. I imitate a very fat man. Alex laughs loudly. What are stereotypes of farmers? I ask. That they cultivate land or keep animals Alex answers, quickly and wisely. Now I'm getting confused myself. Is that a stereotype? No, that's just a fact. We try a few other examples, but Alex struggles to get the point, and has no idea what these concepts mean. Despite this, Alex can recite the textbook definitions flawlessly. The next day, Alex proudly tells me that the grade achieved on the test was high. "I knew all the answers!", Alex says, with a smile.*

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[1] I have shortened, merged, and rewritten parts of the original notes for the sake of readability and text length.

[2] Alex is not the child's real name. For privacy reasons, I have anonymized the child's name and gender, which could make the child easier to identify.
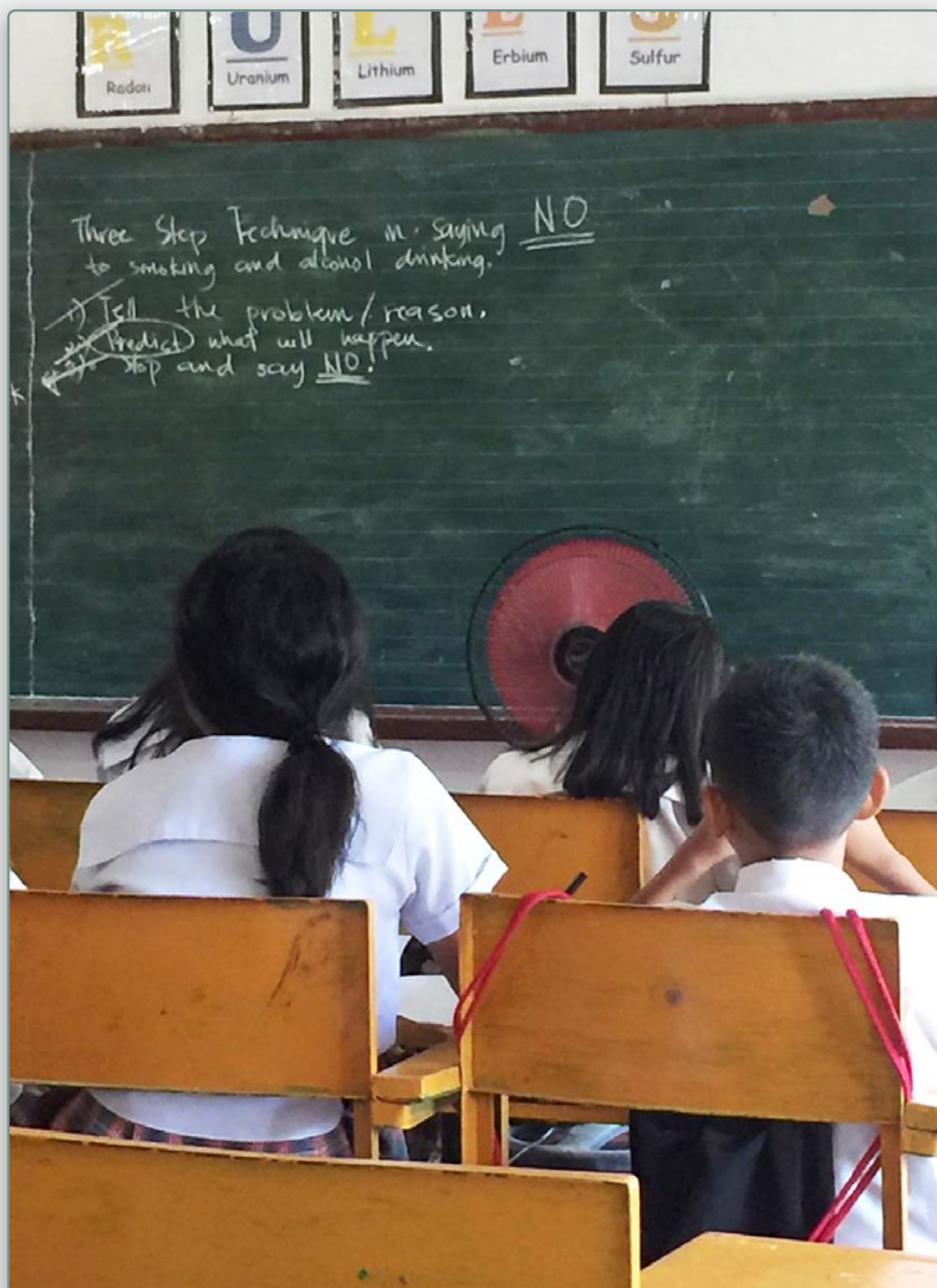
CHAPTER 6

Two Different Worlds on the Same Road

Abstract This article explores the identity and image of a Waldorf school in a poor rural community in Central Philippines. The school strives for great ideals. The article examines whether these ideals are supported and implemented by its teachers and students (identity), and how they are perceived by outsiders, e.g. teachers and students at a nearby public school (image). The internal identity appears to diverge from the external image. Within the Waldorf school, the ideals are known, lived by, and reproduced (as cultural capital), but beyond its boundaries the school remains the odd one out. The sustainability of one particular ideal – to have students from different socioeconomic backgrounds in the same classroom, all feeling at home (school belonging) – is coming under pressure. While the Waldorf school is situated on the same village road as the local public school, they are, in a way, worlds apart.

Introduction

Waldorf education – founded in Germany in 1919 and known for its alternative educational approach – is globalizing and recently has been introduced in numerous countries in the Global South, including the Philippines (Van Schie 2020). This article evaluates how a Philippine Waldorf school identifies and profiles itself in the local Philippine educational landscape and how this type of education is imagined and perceived by insiders and outsiders. The Philippines offer an interesting location for such research, because of its hybrid and diverse cultural setting (Zialcita 2005). Part of this cultural hybridity and diversity is a predominantly positive attitude towards globalization (Tyner 2009), a centuries-long mixing of cultural influences, as well as the multiple diversities within the Philippine society, including regional cultural and lingual differences, noticeable differences between rural and urban communities, as well as class differences. Especially the latter are associated with school choice (Termes et al. 2020) and school success due to presence or absence of relevant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 2010). Traditionally Waldorf schools are attractive to urban middle class and elite groups (Johnson 2014; Wiechert 2021), but in the setting of this research a Waldorf school is examined that strives specifically for good education for an underprivileged rural community.

The article zooms in on a rural community in Iloilo Province, in Central Philippines, where a Waldorf school is located next to a public school. Based on questionnaire outcomes, in-depth interviews, and group activities with students and teachers, the school's educational ideals and self-perception are compared to the images held by outsiders as well as the experiences of the students themselves. The dilemma the school faces is that, on the one hand, it needs to connect to the values and norms, as well as the referential frameworks of the students of the community where the school is located, in order to create a sense of belonging, while on the other hand, it wants to pursue lofty cosmopolitan ideals, associated with educational ideals of urban middle classes, and therewith with their cultural capital, in order to provide students with new futures and insights. The balance that needs to be found in this dilemma ultimately determines how successful the school under study can be in bringing into practice its educational ideals, without losing sight of the specific place where it is located. This is not only relevant for the school under study – to know its potential and impact – but serves as an example for many other private schools, with outspoken educational approaches and ideals, that undergo similar processes.

In sum, the research question is:

How does a rural Philippine Waldorf school identify itself and how do images and perceptions of in- and outsiders consequently influence the fragile balance for rural students between feeling at home at school (school belonging) and bringing into practice lofty alternative educational ideals (associated with the cultural capital of urban middle classes)?

Waldorf education in the Philippines.

Waldorf education promotes an educational approach based on the spiritual philosophy of anthroposophy, which aims for broad personal development (Rawson, 2019; Stehlik 2019). Since the end of the 20th century, Waldorf education has been part of the educational landscape in the Philippines (Van Schie 2020). Philippine Waldorf schools mainly follow an internationally formulated curriculum, with a relatively strong European outlook (Van Schie 2021a).

From the outset, Waldorf education has been part of a social movement that is broader than education. It is based on the ideology of social threefolding and on broader principles of anthroposophy. Social threefolding assumes that society is comprised of three sectors – the economic sector, the political-judicial sector, and the cultural sector (including education) – which should be guided respectively by the ideals of brotherhood, equality, and freedom. Education should therefore be free from state influence (Steiner 2018). Inherent to social threefolding is the idea that education should contribute to a better society. It is assumed that by providing students with a free, high-quality education, they develop into autonomous, self-thinking, creative, responsible, and caring humans who play a positive role in society. The school also contributes by catering for the educational needs of poor and underprivileged students, like the first Waldorf school in Germany did. This school, in Stuttgart, was specifically established for the poor children of factory labourers at the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory (Murphy 2019).

Identity and image

Identity and image are central concepts in this study. Here, the concept of identity refers to the perception of members of the organization about what the organization is or should be (internal perception), and the concept of image refers to the perception of outsiders about the organization (external perception) (Ravasi 2016, 65).

A school's identity is often summarized and formalized in a mission statement. Usually, this is not a fixed phenomenon; it is always under construction due to a dialectical relation between the members and stakeholders of the organization, including management, teachers, students, and parents, and the outside community, which includes teachers, students, and parents of other schools. A mission statement is generally actively communicated, both internally and externally, as part of a process of conscious and unconscious organizational profiling. This process includes a selection of characteristics, values, educational practices, pedagogical ideals, and cultural characteristics to create a recognizable profile or identity that distinguishes the school from other schools. A clear mission statement allows a school not only to define its own identity but also to create an appealing image that resonates with parents, students, and the wider community. It shapes the perception and portrayal of the school in society, influencing its attractiveness and reputation. The question is whether or not these desired images correspond with the images that exist among students and staff within the school, as well as with the images that exist in the community, including neighbouring schools.

Cultural capital and school belonging

Two other important concepts related to this study are cultural capital and school belonging. Both concepts were mainly used for analytical purposes.

Firstly, cultural capital, a term most notably associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 2010). Bourdieu uses the sociological concept of cultural capital to illustrate how education often aligns with the culture of the elite, enabling that elite to achieve success in educational settings. This alignment perpetuates and exacerbates inequality over time. What appears to be a neutral concept, such as 'taste,' actually contributes to distinction and class reproduction (Bourdieu, 2010). The idea of having 'good taste' is, in fact, defined by the elite.

The concept of cultural capital can help understand the social dynamics behind the impact of Waldorf education in the Philippine educational landscape. Although Waldorf education is relatively unknown to the majority of the Filipino urban elite, this alternative form of education aligns with educational ideals of self-development and individual growth – ideas that are popular among the urban middle class. Hence, the 'Waldorf culture' within Waldorf education subtly aligns with the values of an urban elite. In that sense, Waldorf education in the Philippines, shares characteristics with other private schools, and is likewise associated with higher social classes and better career opportunities (Termes et al 2020). This is also reflected in the use of English as the primary language of instruction and an internationally oriented curriculum that has Eurocentric, and perhaps also unintended neocolonial or un-decolonized, aspects (Van Schie, 2021a). It is, therefore, no surprise that most Waldorf schools in the Philippines are located in urban areas. Although the Waldorf school featured in this study is located in a rural area, it is also particularly popular among urban middle-class families.

Secondly, the social psychological concept of school belonging (Goodenow 1993), can also be related to this study. School belonging refers to inclusion and feeling at home at school (Goodenow 1993: 80). Logically, school belonging only occurs when the school culture is somewhat congruent with the home culture of the students. It is easy to imagine that in a school where cosmopolitan ideals, reproduced as part of cultural capital of an urban elite, dominate, it would be difficult for rural students to feel at home, let alone attract new students from the village to this school, who are not yet familiar with the school.

The Philippine educational context

Formal compulsory education in the Philippines takes 13 years. This so-called K-12 system was enacted by the Enhanced Basic Education Act in 2013, when the system was renewed and extended, including an updated national curriculum (Okabe 2013; Sergio 2012). Private schools often add extra subjects to the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum (Department of Education, n.d.), such as religious education, extra language classes, or special subjects such as computer skills.

Despite the provision of free and accessible basic education for everyone in the Philippines, in practice schools charge for basic items and services, making education an

expensive matter for the poorest groups. This partly explains the high drop-out rates (Pilar 2018) and low literacy for these groups (Termes 2020, 93), and it comes on top of other issues such as a lack of physical and human resources (Durban and Catalan 2012; World Bank 2020, i) (for more information on this matter, see also Van Schie and Vedder, 2023).

In addition to financial barriers faced by disadvantaged groups in society, cultural capital also plays a role in the inequality within the Philippine education system. Local cultural expressions are often not, or only minimally, integrated into the curriculum, partly due to the marginal role of regional languages in education. English, associated with the elite (see Van Schie and Vedder, 2023), is predominantly used as the language of instruction in Philippine education, reinforcing class differences. The regional is undervalued compared to the national and international, and the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism in Philippine education, including the use of American-style educational materials, are hardly questioned. Former colonizers are often portrayed in textbooks as bringers of civilization rather than oppressors, contributing to a negative perception of everything local (see Van Schie 2021a for an extensive reflection on this topic). This can lead to a sense of inferiority among local rural lower-class communities, with the urban, cosmopolitan, English-speaking elites often perceived as intimidating by the former.

The structure and curriculum of Philippine Waldorf education differ from the general Philippine K-12 system. In accordance with its slogan "education for head, heart and hands" (Stehlik 2019, 137), Waldorf pedagogy tries to balance cognitive academic activities with artistic and practical artisanal ones. This is reflected in the curriculum. (for more information on the Waldorf curriculum, see also Van Schie 2021a).

Private education in the Philippines

Waldorf schools in the Philippines are private schools. The Philippines traditionally has a relatively high percentage of pupils who enrol in private schools. About 30% of elementary schools and 40% of high schools are private (World Bank, 2020: ii). Within the Philippine educational system, private schools outperform public schools (Yamauchi 2005, 960). Yet, private schools are not doing better in all respects. In fact, teacher quality tends to be better in public schools because many private schools reduce costs by hiring less experienced teachers who work under less favourable labour conditions for lower salaries (Termes et al. 2020, 105). Nevertheless, private schools have the advantages of a better pupil–teacher ratio (less students per teacher) (Termes et al. 2020, 94-5) and the possibility to select more "high-ability students" (Yamauchi 2005 and Termes et al. 2020).

Most private schools emphasize career chances and personal development in their marketing strategies, for example through the use of English – the language associated with upward social mobility (Young 2001, 222) – as the main language of instruction. Students with higher-educated parents, who strive more actively for educational opportunities for their children, are overrepresented in private schools (Termes, et al. 2020).

Current study

In the current study on the identity and image of Philippine Waldorf education, we take one Philippine Waldorf school as an illustrative example. To put this case study in context, we compare this Waldorf school to a nearby public school.

Formally, the identity and profile of the school under study are anchored in the school's mission statement, which is communicated to interested parties through the school's website, its Facebook account, and on a blackboard in the school's corridor.

The mission statement of the Waldorf school in this study is:

Working out of the spiritual impulse of Steiner [Waldorf] education, our mission is to educate children from pre-school to class 12 using a balanced, innovative, and health-giving curriculum. We aim to be inclusive and accessible to children from diverse backgrounds. We work together to help them to become creative, compassionate, responsible, and free human beings able to find purpose in their lives and to prepare them to meet the challenges of the modern world. In partnership with parents and supporters, we strive to become a healing force that works outward to build community and renew society.

In this study, we will evaluate whether this school mission is reflected in the images and experiences of Waldorf teachers and students, and whether it is compatible with the images that outsiders have of the school. Moreover, in the analysis of this study, we evaluate how cultural capital related to the school's profile, has an influence on school belonging.

Method

Research setting

Central in this study is a Waldorf school in a rural community in Iloilo Province in Central Philippines. Iloilo's rural areas are characterized by lush rice fields and small fishing communities. The landscape is dotted with traditional villages, often with stilt houses in order to deal with regular floodings, where agriculture is the primary livelihood. Despite modernization in urban centres, rural Iloilo retains a focus on subsistence farming and community-based living. In the community where the school is located, there are also many construction workers, many of whom are day labourers. The area is also characterized by emigration flows, mainly seeking work in international shipping and domestic labour. This means that many families are not complete. A few hundred metres apart from the Waldorf school, on the same road, which runs from the closest town to the village, there is also a public school. Students and teachers from this public school were included in the research to give context and comparison to the data from the Waldorf school.

The first school to pass on the road – coming from the nearest town – is the public school.

The school complex is divided into two parts: a primary school sited close to the road and a junior high school that is a little off the road, behind the primary school. Both sections of the school comprise yellow-painted building blocks, around a neat and green school yard, with a flagpole at its centre, on the spot where the daily flag ceremony starts each school day. Students arrive, one by one or in small groups, in a long continuous procession along the road, most wearing tidy school uniforms. Some arrive by tricycle. The students come from the community where the school is, as well as the surrounding communities.

A little further along the road – at the end of a short, unpaved path through the rice fields – one finds a Waldorf school, situated behind a big bamboo gate, with hexagonal, Nipa-style buildings scattered around a green and flowery terrain, with in the middle a two-storey administration building next to a flagpole, where, every Monday, a flag ceremony takes place. Vehicles – a school bus, cars, and many tricycles – drive back and forth over the bumpy road to bring the students to school, most of whom do not wear uniforms. The majority of the students come from outside the community, mostly from the City of Iloilo, or from the surrounding towns, neighbourhoods, or villages. New students are only admitted to the Waldorf school after parents subscribe to the mission and ideals of the school, which includes above the educational ideals a number of very tangible aspects to students, such as, among others, a healthy lifestyle without junk food and without abundant use of media devices.

Research participants

Students and teachers from both the Waldorf school and the public school participated in the research. Our data was collected from students in grades 6 and 8 at both schools: 44 students from the Waldorf school and 55 students from the public school. Grades 6 and 8 were selected because they are thought to be the last year of primary education: In public education grade 6 is the last year of primary education and in the Waldorf school primary education continues until grade 8 (see Van Schie and Vedder 2023 for more detailed information on this sample). The class teachers of the classes that were included in the research were interviewed individually, so two class teachers at the Waldorf school and two class teachers at the public school. The respective school directors of both schools were also interviewed. Beside these in-depth interviews, group interviews and group activities were organized at both schools. These took place during the teacher meetings at both school and – in principle – included all teachers from both schools (about 20 teachers in each meeting). The teachers at the schools did not meet each other. In student activities a meeting between the students at both schools was arranged (see below). Lastly, as part of participant observation, class observations took place as well as numerous informal conversations with people in and around the school, as well as in the village community. These conversations were mostly unstructured and partly based on serendipity.

Design and materials

The findings in this study are based on data collected during ethnographic fieldwork between 2017 and 2020 (see Van Schie 2021a, 384), making use of the classical

ethnographic method of participant observation (described by many scholars, including Spradley 1980 and Agar 1980). The primary reason for choosing an ethnographic approach in this research is that such method offers the best opportunity to gain an in-depth insider perspective on the research question: how Waldorf education is shaped and how perceptions and images of it are formed by both insiders and outsiders in this specific rural community in the Philippines. It also helps to understand how students have a sense of school belonging – or not – within this type of education and how cultural capital is reproduced. Ethnographic fieldwork encompasses the other methods of data collection, as well as all conceivable places and events related to the research setting, including "the teachers' lounge, the playground, the classroom, and school events, camps, festivals, etc." (Van Schie 2021a, 364). Observations and experiences were worked out in field notes (see also Van Schie 2021b).

As part of the overall ethnographic research approach, the following methods of data collection, data processing, and analysis, were used:

1. *Individual interviews and group activities*
   In-depth interviews were conducted with the class teachers of grade 6 and 8 and school managers to provide context to the field observations, especially class observations, as part of participant observation, as well as context to the questionnaire outcomes (see below). By gaining a better understanding of the context, we also gained more insight into how mutual perceptions contribute, on the one hand, to a strong identity within the Waldorf school, and on the other hand, to an intimidating or alienating image for public school students in relation to the Waldorf school (see results below).

   In addition, group activities were organized with teachers and students, which allowed us to observe how certain viewpoints emerged and were related. For the teachers, these activities took place during the weekly teacher meetings and were a follow-up of similar activities three years earlier. The focus was on the mission and ideals of the schools. Teachers worked in small groups and made posters, which they presented to each other. On the posters they mentioned issues they were seeing as the main purposes of their education, desired results for students and the main points related to the school's identity. With the students, only those of grade 8, we discussed their mutual images of and between the two schools. The student activity took place at the Waldorf school and included a tour and conversations about differences and similarities between both schools. It became a heartwarming activity that dispelled prejudices.

   For both the individual interviews and group activities, data was processed in transcripts for later categorization and analysis, which has been done through the comparison of inductive answer categories (Bernard 2002, 464-465) and the use of exemplar quotes (Bernard 2002, 471). These quotes were selected carefully to reflect the main lines of thought, concepts, and theories arising from the evaluation of interview transcripts and fieldwork experience.

2. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were also used in this study.[3] The questionnaires were used to collect background information of students, as well as information on images they have of their school and images they have of the other school in the village. The questionnaires allowed us to substantiate and quantify insights we had already gathered during informal conversations in the field. On the one hand, the structured data from the questionnaires quickly confirmed the dominant perceptions held by students, and on the other hand, it gave us the opportunity to include and consider less commonly mentioned perceptions in our analysis as well (see results below). The questionnaire included the following sections: a) Background information of the students, where we aimed to learn more about their home situations and socioeconomic status (SES). We assessed SES by asking about their parents' occupations and the mode of transportation they used to get to school, assuming a correlation with income. b) A section on images and perceptions: How they viewed their own school and the other school in the village. These questions included both closed-ended responses and open-ended questions. The analysis of these sections was primarily descriptive (see below under results). Other parts of the questionnaire focused on school motivation and language proficiency (these sections were statistically analysed and described in another article, see Van Schie and Vedder, 2023). Students in the Waldorf school and the public school were asked to fill out the questionnaire forms in their class. Their class teachers were allowed to give additional explanation to help the students fill out the forms. Data processing and descriptive analysis was done with the help of statistical computer software (SPSS-29).

Positionality of the research team

Data collection in the field was carried out by the first author of this article. He was assisted by an educational science student from the Netherlands, Sophie Westhoff. The first author is both a PhD student at Leiden University in the Netherlands and a Waldorf teacher at a Dutch Waldorf high school. This dual role requires careful consideration in the execution of the research. The complexity and value of this dual role have been extensively discussed in another article (see Van Schie 2021b). A complicating factor related to this is the perception in the village of the school as an internationally oriented institution, partly due to the frequent visits of international guests. The research team was also part of this foreign entourage and was therefore also part of the very image it was investigating.

Results

A closer look at both schools in this study

Many of the differences between public and private schools in the Philippines, presented earlier, also apply to the schools under study. Foremost in this regard is the difference in the average socioeconomic status and educational background of the students' parents. This Waldorf school, however, deviates from other private schools insofar as

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[3]   See appendix previous chapter

the composition of its classes is mixed in terms of socioeconomic status. The children of the doctor and lawyer from the city sit together in class with the children of the farmer, day labourer, and tricycle driver from the local rural community. This is in line with the school's social threefolding ideology. The same level of diversity is not found at the public school, which, in many ways, is a typical rural public school with relatively low educational performance and a relatively poor student population.

Many of the earlier depicted advantages apparently afforded to private school students in comparison to public school students (see, for instance, Trinidad 2020) also apply to the students in this study:

Firstly, the Waldorf school has a better teacher–student ratio with smaller classes (20 to 25 students instead of approximately 30 at the public school).

Secondly, the Waldorf school is able to attract more high-ability students than the public school. We identify two reasons for this: On the one hand, parents' higher socioeconomic status corresponds to higher student ability levels. On the other hand, there is a selection effect, namely, that students at the Waldorf school cannot repeat classes. If they fall behind and tutoring does not help them then the ultimate consequence may be a school transfer. The public school does not have this 'luxury'. It has to provide education for all students.

The language of instruction substantiates a third difference between the schools. At the Waldorf school, most lessons are provided in English to stimulate students to become more proficient in this language. For most Waldorf students, English is either a foreign language or a second language. At public school, the vernacular is the main language of instruction used to support pupils' understanding (Van Schie and Vedder 2023). This difference underlines that English is associated with a wealthy elite, which some people from the local community may perceive as 'intimidating'. Unlike the public school, the Waldorf school asks for school fees. The fees are income-related. In addition to teacher salaries and maintenance of premises, the school fee covers the costs of materials and activities. The public school is free of charge, but parents are asked to make financial contributions for numerous materials and services (cf. Termes et al. 2020, 94). Waldorf school parents from the community assured us that they did not pay more than their neighbours who sent their children to the public school. The Waldorf school is certainly not a rich school. There is probably more financial security in the public school, despite the complaints about a lack of resources, as a minimum of government support is assured. The Waldorf school is constantly looking for extra resources, including donations from international contacts. Moreover, as with other private schools in the Philippines, the teachers at the Waldorf school earn considerably less than their colleagues in the public school. This poses a problem for the continuity of education because it mainly means young teachers come to work at the school but subsequently leave at the point in their lives when they are seeking greater financial security.

Self-images about school and learning at the Waldorf school

Teachers

The Waldorf teachers' opinions and behaviour demonstrate a strong commitment to the school's mission. This is evident from the posters produced during teacher meetings on the purposes and outcomes of their educational efforts, which included statements such as: "Striving for confident, independent, curious, appreciative, responsible, compassionate, conscious, and connected students"; "Give tools to young people to find their place in the world"; "Educate children to become free and responsible human beings"; "Educate the whole human being instead of producing walking-talking 'one terabyte heads'". References were also made to the threefolding ideology: "We want to blur boundaries between classes"; "We want to be accessible to students from diverse backgrounds"; "We want to work for and with the community". Some comments underlined the school's local identity, thus distinguishing itself from other Waldorf schools, such as those in Manila, which were thought to be more urban and less gentle and family-like.

The exercises carried out in 2020 were a repetition of those conducted in 2017. Analysis of the data from both events shows that the emphasis has shifted slightly from the social threefolding ideal of helping the local community to more general anthroposophical principles and practices. In relation to this observation, the term 'community' turned out to be confusing (see also Van Schie 2020, 83), since it can refer to the village community – or even to society at large – as well as to the school community. In 2020, the idea of community in the sense of the village was expressed less emphatically than during the first round of data collection in 2017.

The individual interviews also show that the school mission is known and pursued. New teachers are intensively trained and introduced to the school's ideals. As a consequence, most teachers are enthusiastic about the school and its mission. Even supporting staff – such as the janitor or cleaner – seem to have a clear image of these ideals and feel part of the school community. At the same time, there are variations in interpretations. For some, the philosophical and pedagogic underpinnings of Waldorf education are also a bit of a personal quest or even a struggle. This is the case, for example, in relation to the spiritual elements related to anthroposophy, such as notions of 'a spiritual world' and 'reincarnation'. Such notions are clearly at odds with the Christian beliefs held by most Filipinos. Pedagogically, there is sometimes doubt about the notion of age-appropriateness in this regard, namely, the idea that students should not be pushed too soon into abstract thinking. Some teachers fear that students will fall behind, despite lacking evidence (see Van Schie and Vedder, 2023).

Students

The images and experiences of school and learning presented by Waldorf students also correspond significantly with the school's ideals and mission. These images can be categorized into four themes: (1) the way of teaching; (2) the curriculum; (3) student–teacher relations; and (4) expectations towards students.

1. Students praise Waldorf education's 'unique way of teaching'. This statement is exemplified with references to particular characteristics, such as: the organization of lessons into main lesson blocks of three weeks; the making of main lesson books as individualized and artistic learning books; storytelling as important teaching method; art activities as integral part of all lessons; the many (anthroposophical) verses and songs throughout the day; circle time and games in the classroom; a nature table; and the absence of text books. More abstract matters are also mentioned, such as characterizing Waldorf education as development-oriented, or mentioning the balance between thinking, feeling, and willing.

2. With regard to the curriculum, art classes and gardening are often mentioned as typical Waldorf school subjects, in addition to main lesson blocks. More generally, there is an emphasis on nature in the curriculum, including many outdoor activities and the celebration of seasonal festivals like Michaelmas or Saint Martinmas (see Hoffmann, 2016 for more information), which coincide with the natural rhythm of the year and often come with a general human theme, such as courage or compassion.

3. Many students stress the good relations with teachers, exemplified by the following quotes: "The education is different because the teacher really connects with the student"; "I like school because for me everyone is equal and the teachers care for us and know us. They don't pressure us or say bad words to us". Students find their teachers kind, competent, hardworking, respectful, helpful, and they emphasize the personal attention they receive from them. On the one hand, this school community is described as diverse (emphasizing the mix of city children and village children, rich and poor). On the other hand, the community is described as united or even as 'family'. The school community is especially felt and reproduced during communal celebrations, such as seasonal festivals or the so-called paambittanay, gatherings in which classes present what they have learned to other classes.

4. Students mention the school's expectations in relation to media and healthy food. These issues are tangible differences with other schools and youth. Mobile phones, computer games, social media, televisions, fast food, snacks, and soft drinks are omnipresent in society. An awareness of a healthy lifestyle is fostered by reducing the use of multimedia on the school premises and not eating unhealthy food. In addition, students point out that their school provides for rest and less stress in comparison to other schools, especially the nearby public school, which – according to them – pushes students to perform well and achieve high grades. In contrast to the public school, few tests are taken at the Waldorf school, hardly any grades are given, and certainly no lists of the best-performing students are kept, let alone shown in the classroom. Being relaxed and learning without too much pressure is mainly presented by students as a positive point. However, some students suspect that the Waldorf school programme is, consequently, easier than that of the public school. A grade 7 student responded: "Here, we don't have any pressure, but we learn how to be responsible".

Remarkably, some students (and parents) also noted the good manners of Waldorf students as a typical Waldorf feature. This observation was unexpected, considering the non-authoritarian approach taken by teachers and the emphasis on freedom and individual development in the lessons. The loose adherence to rules regarding the wearing of a school uniform is an example of this ("we are free to wear what we are comfortable with"). It is possible that the perception of good behaviour among Waldorf students arises from the educational focus on collective activities and social dynamics in the classroom. Additionally, it might be a way to counteract negative stereotypes associated with public school students. These negative images of public school students held by Waldorf students include images of an unhealthy lifestyle and abundant multimedia use (opposite to the ideals of Waldorf school): "They eat unhealthy food, including snacks, junk food, candy, and chocolate. And they use cell phones, play computer games, binge watch television series, and use social media". Other examples of bad behaviour that were often mentioned include: smoking; fighting; drinking; bullying; making noise; showing disrespect; being mean; and using swear words (all opposite to the self-image of Waldorf students as behaving well and being responsible). Bad behaviour was also projected on public school teachers. They were thought to not show up during classes, to be disrespectful or uninterested, to use 'bad language', and even 'throw chalk'. Moreover, they were thought to be stricter or even authoritarian. Lastly, stereotypical images of 'the other' also included the idea that public school students had more homework, bulky schoolbooks, more grades, and more pressure, for example, to be in the top-10 list of students, or to gain medals and honours related to school achievements.

Finally, when students pointed out what they liked about school, they mentioned the friendships among each other: the school as a social meeting place. The nice schoolyard was also mentioned as well as the breaks. In this respect, Waldorf students did not differ from public school students. They also mentioned friendships as the most important thing at school, in addition to good lessons, great teachers, and a beautiful schoolyard.

Images about Waldorf education by public school teachers and students

Teachers

In general, despite several joint school annual activities in the village community, there seemed to be very limited contact between both schools. There had been mutual visits in the past, but only a few teachers remembered those encounters. These teachers recalled that there were many creative activities at the Waldorf school, but they also suspected that students might be academically underperforming as a result of this creative approach.

It was clear that public school teachers have at least some knowledge of Waldorf education, but that it is often a bit distorted. For example, one teacher was impressed by the Waldorf approach because of the development of "13 kinds of intelligences, instead of one [like the public school]". This statement seems to be an exaggeration of the ideal to strive for broad personal development, which entails more than just cognitive development. Another teacher thought that 'age-appropriate' meant that all students work at their own pace.

Aside from the pedagogical approach, there is also the impression that Waldorf school students, and therefore also the school itself, are much wealthier. This is partly true for the student population, with a significant portion coming from urban, middle-class families. For the school, however, the reality is more complex, given the constant financial struggles and the relatively low teacher salaries compared to the public school. In fact, neither school can be easily classified as wealthy.

Related to the image of being a rich school for wealthy students the idea is that the Waldorf school is there for children from the city and not for the village children. This point is related to discussions about school fees at the Waldorf school, which are, according to the public school teachers, high. Most people in the village community are aware of the fact that there are also village children at the Waldorf school, but still they perceive it as a place for outsiders from the city – an elite. This is a persistent thought, one reinforced by the expensive cars that rush by on the village road, on the way to the Waldorf school, to drop off children. Children at the public school come on foot or by tricycle. Their parents cannot afford a car.

Students

Waldorf students are thought to be rich, pay higher school fees, speak better English (and worse Filipino), have better facilities at school – such as a basketball court or air conditioning – and regularly receive international visitors to the school. The images that public school students have of the Waldorf school and of Waldorf students are less negative than vice versa. For example, they think the premises of the Waldorf school look nice. Not much is said about the content of the lessons, but what is said is quite interesting and also corresponds quite well to reality. For example, a student states that there is less emphasis in Waldorf education on knowledge and more on skills. Another comments that there is more attention for art subjects. Nevertheless, overall, there seems to be little knowledge about what Waldorf education exactly entails.

In general, Waldorf students are not described negatively. It is mentioned that they come from the city, speak good English, are spiritual – but not Catholic – eat vegetarian food, and that they are friendly. In part, the images of the public school students confirm the stereotypes that Waldorf school students have about themselves by presenting them as well-mannered, less bullying, less often absent from the classroom, and hard-working in their studies.

A meeting between Waldorf school students and public school students

In an arranged meeting between students from both schools, many of the mutual stereotypes were countered. Students got along well and were genuinely interested in each other. Alleged negative images were not confirmed and curricular differences turned out to be smaller than expected. For example, Waldorf students found out that they were not unique in having seasonal celebrations, saying a morning verse, singing during the school day, or learning how to garden, although these things manifest differently at both schools. For example, at the public school, the barangay fiesta or several beauty contests are important celebrations, unlike seasonal Waldorf festivals, such as Saint John

or Michaelmas. And, the Lord's Prayer is recited at the beginning of the day, instead of a verse written by Rudolf Steiner, which is repeated by Waldorf school students. And there is also singing going on, as was demonstrated during our visit, in which karaoke acts were performed in the classroom – albeit no polyphonic canons accompanied by clap rhythms or recorders, as is more typical for the Waldorf school. Finally, the public school students also do gardening, as was shown to us when a large-scale clean-up of the school yard was organized in preparation for a visit by the education inspector. Yet, besides the different output of these corresponding things, there remain many notable differences, which were much talked about by the students during the meeting. To mention a few examples of things that are virtually absent at the Waldorf school but commonplace in a Philippine public education setting: uniforms; top-10 lists of well-performing students; and National Achievement Tests.

An intimidating image

In sum, the outsiders' image of the Waldorf school – wealthy students, fast cars, English – adds up to an intimidating image. This image is strengthened by the fact that the school regularly invites foreign guests. All the things the school stands for – an innovative educational approach, a mix of city and village children in the classroom – feels strange to the *barangay* (village) inhabitants. The *barangay captain*, who unlike most villagers sends his children to the Waldorf school, explained that the supposed high tuition fee is not the main reason that few people opt for Waldorf education: *"It is simply the fact that people are not familiar with the Waldorf system. They want to choose for a school system they know and that feels familiar. They think it is not for them. And they feel ashamed when they mix with rich children. They don't want to improve their manners. They don't want change. They don't really talk negative about the school, but they just feel uncomfortable with it."*

The director of the public school summarized the same thought as follows: *"The community of Libongcogon is not yet ready for the kind of education offered by the Waldorf school. It is too advanced. […] It would have been more logical when this school would have been in the city. […] It is also really a school for affluent students. What are they doing here! Why not start such school in the city?"*

The observation that the school is not succeeding in becoming 'normal' in the village is also known at the Waldorf school. This is not only witnessed in the image presented by outsiders, but also in the actual decrease in the number of students from the village who opt for the school. Despite the school's mission to be a grassroots school offering quality education for the poor children from the village, the school is failing to attract growing numbers of students from the village community.

Discussion

We have seen that Waldorf ideals – which partly align with certain traits typical of private education in the Philippines and therewith align with cultural capital reproduced in urban middle classes and elites– are well-known and shared among the teachers, students, and parents at the Waldorf school. The school therefore seems to form a strong community in which a common identity is shared.

Growing numbers of students in the Waldorf school provide room for the school to opt for a more selective enrolment policy, favouring parents who are more active in their support of school ideals. In practice, these parents come mainly from urban environments, since these ideals seem to fit in well with a reproduced urban and elitist kind of cultural capital. This may even further strengthen the school community and internal consensus; and equally favours and strengthens a feeling of school belonging for those students who are brought up with these ideals by their families. At the same time, however, this may undermine the ideal of forming diverse school classes, being inclusive, and attracting children from lower social backgrounds (from the village community), since these ideals do less align with their direct home environments, and therefore may complicate their commitment and feelings of school belonging. A decrease in the number of children from the village community attending the school suggests that this is the case. It seems that, despite all the good intentions and beautiful things that are achieved, the school is increasingly alienated from the direct local environment. Internal bonding might become stronger, but external bonding is getting weaker.

This is expressed in many ways. For example, by choosing annual celebrations in line with an internationally formulated Waldorf curriculum instead of local celebrations. In fact, there was little exchange between the public school and the Waldorf school, which remain firmly in two different worlds, in which mutual stereotypes can live on. All these factors together are experienced as intimidating by the residents of the village and make it less easy – and, indeed, likely – for community children to choose, feel at home in, or be successful at the Waldorf school.

Our results confirm that the Waldorf school community struggles with external communication, hindering widespread understanding and acceptance. The school contributes to local educational diversity, but growth is driven more by urban, middle-class interests than local enthusiasm. Mutual images indicate limited contact, allowing stereotypes to persist. The idea of the Waldorf school serving as a model for educational innovation therefore remains idealistic. In practice, bridging the gap with the local village community proves challenging, and the perception that the school is not intended for the local residents, despite its presence in the village, persists – the perception of a different world existing on the same village road.

Shortcomings and suggestions for future research

This study is linked to a gradually growing body of literature on the globalization of Waldorf education (e.g., Boland 2015, Hoffmann 2016, Stehlik 2019), as well as more

general discussions in social scientific literature on globalization trends in education (e.g., Spring 2015). Despite this link, a specific case study like this could prompt questions about its representativeness. The generality and specificity of the findings need exploration through additional comparable studies in diverse social contexts. Moreover, a broader exploration is warranted on the actualization of threefolding ideals, sustaining diversity in the classroom, fostering an open school culture, and the conditions for successful integration into local communities. The concepts of cultural capital and school belonging are helpful analytical tools to do so. Addressing these aspects would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Waldorf education dynamics beyond this specific case, as well as more general conclusions in relation to private school cultures, especially in globalizing contexts.

Conclusion

The Waldorf school in this study is characterized by a strong internal identity and loyalty and a lively alternative educational scene, with lectures and enthusiastic followers. The profile and ideals of Philippine Waldorf education are distinctive and therefore contribute to the diversity of the Philippines' educational landscape. Consequently, there is potential for growth and impact. But this growth and impact is also limited due to the limited reach beyond the own school community, especially in rural areas, probably due to urban elitist, or even internationalist cultural capital that is reproduced, that leads to limited feelings of school belonging for underprivileged, lower class or rural students. In this way, Waldorf does not live up to its own ideal of social threefolding. Outsiders do often not really understand the point of Waldorf education and seeing it as an oddity. The inward focus obstructs the ideal of becoming a school with a diverse student population, including poor and underprivileged students, and also the wish to function as a model school with a broad impact in diverse localities, as well as being an example for other schools. Therefore, the potential impact of Philippine Waldorf education remains limited. Philippine Waldorf education has thus far remained an educational niche. A beautiful niche for those who know it, but for everyone else it is a world apart.

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Filipino Anthroposophical Community

From my fieldwork notes:[1]

The anthroposophical community in the Philippines may be small, but it is active, enthusiastic, and committed. Beyond strictly educational initiatives, it also encompasses initiatives in agriculture and healthcare. In the supermarket, for example, I buy biodynamic rice, and in Iloilo I visit a group of anthroposophical doctors. During my stay in the Philippines, I take part in several anthroposophical conferences: (1) the Asian Teacher Waldorf Training in Santa Rosa (see Chapter 4), and (2) the Postgraduate Medical Training on Anthroposophic Medicine in Iloilo, where – contrary to what the name might suggest – a broad cross-section of the Filipino anthroposophical community is represented. I was also invited to join a small anthroposophical study group in Iloilo, where Steiner's texts were read and interpreted together. At all these occasions, one striking contrast stood out: on the one hand, there was a very serious approach to study and high idealism; on the other, a great sense of joy, humour, and lightness. Is that something typically Filipino?

From my fieldwork diary: *It is time for reflection. The rather stiff German lady who gave lectures here looks out over the room with her stern and somewhat grumpy expression and says: "These past days, I have been so surprised by the cheerfulness that seems to prevail here. When we studied the texts of Steiner and Wegman, there was so much laughter. I kept wondering why." Although this is meant as a serious reflection, the audience responds once again with amusement and laughter. The German lady keeps a straight face, gives the room a meaningful look, and continues: "I think I've come to understand it better now…" By now, some people have tears of laughter in their eyes. The German lady visibly struggles to suppress a smile. A shy giggle escapes her – probably not something she experiences often during her lectures. She continues: "I also think I am beginning to understand Steiner better now…" That does it. The room erupts with laughter; people are roaring, cheering, and unable to stop. The German lady is overwhelmed at first but soon joins in, laughing uncontrollably. Amid the laughter, someone from the audience comments: "That's just how Filipinos are. Give them the slightest reason to laugh, and they'll go all out. We are joyful people. Even during floods, you can sometimes see people wading through the water with smiles on their faces…" The English speaker, another lecturer at this conference, takes over, gently restoring calm with her closing remarks. She ends the gathering with a powerful statement: "In Europe, anthroposophy may have reached maturity, but it is also becoming worn and lifeless. The opposing forces are strong, and we must be careful not to turn into museum-keepers. Here, anthroposophical study takes a form I no longer recognize in Europe. You keep anthroposophy alive – you weave it into your lives and into society. Asia becomes an inspiration for Europe, not the other way around. The periphery becomes the centre. Here, anthroposophy continues to live!"*

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[1] I have shortened, merged, and rewritten parts of the original notes for the sake of readability and length.

Figure 2 | West Visayas State University, Iloilo, 20 June 2018. Postgraduate Medical Training on Anthroposophic Medicine: a study session on anthroposophical biographical research and personal development. An example of a gathering within the Filipino anthroposophical community.

Discussion and Conclusion

An Ethnography of Philippine Waldorf Education

Each chapter in this thesis has described aspects of Philippine Waldorf education aimed at answering a variety of questions inspired by and focusing on a single Waldorf school in Central Philippines. Chapter 2 focused on the question: What it is like to conduct research in this specific Waldorf setting? Chapter 3: How has Waldorf education arrived in the Philippines and has spread through the Philippines? Chapter 4: What does the curriculum of the school look like? Chapter 5: How does the quality of education compare to the quality of education of the public school nearby? And finally, Chapter 6: How does the school in question profile itself, which ideals does it seek to promote, and what images do outsiders hold of the school? Together, the chapters provide an ethnographic description of the school and answer the main research question of this thesis:

How is globalizing Waldorf education reconstituted in the local setting in the Philippines?

This study serves as an example of research conducted by a teacher within a relatively familiar setting: Research about Waldorf education in the Philippines carried out by a Waldorf teacher from the Netherlands. It was carried out and funded within the NWO framework of the *Promotiebeurs voor Leraren (Doctoral Grant for Teachers)*. This research project not only demonstrates that conducting research may enrich a teacher's professional practice – for I have learned and experienced a great deal – but also that such research can yield insights that may differ from those obtained in more conventional research settings. This is because the researcher has a curricular, attitudinal and didactic closeness to the respondents and can deeply relate to them and their educational setting.

Theoretically, the ethnography of the school serves as an example of an ethnography of global connections within an alternative educational approach. The study illustrates how an educational concept 'travels' to and through the Philippines and how Waldorf education takes on a new form in a local setting. The ideals and practices of this educational model are highlighted, and by examining concrete encounters, networks, ideas, actions, and articulations, the study also reveals frictions within so-called zones of awkward engagement (Tsing, 2005), as well as occasional brilliance as a result of those frictions.

The specific research approach, described by Anna Tsing (2005), allows for an empirical focus on the uniqueness of this case, avoiding the pitfalls of generalization and abstraction. It is exceedingly difficult to apply a general theory to a unique and extraordinary case. For this reason, Chapter 3 delves deeply into the personal story of the school's founder. The establishment of the school cannot be understood separately from his biography and worldview. At the same time, his story represents only one perspective, whereas social phenomena always occur within a web of complex interactions with multiple important actors and events that resist easy encapsulation in overarching theories. It underlines that this case is unique – just as any other case would be. For instance, the school examined in this study is the only Waldorf school in the Philippines situated in a rural setting.

Simultaneously, this study seeks to draw general insights from this specific case, allowing the findings to have practical relevance beyond the immediate context. What lessons

can be learned from this school that might also apply to other Waldorf schools or other educational institutions with alternative educational approaches? The primary message and key discussions emerging from this study focus on the importance of localized curricula, alignment with local communities, and fostering a sense of school belonging for the entire student population. Thus, although this is a specific study of a particular educational approach, at a unique location, in a unique school, the broader themes resonate with educational practices elsewhere. There are countless other contexts in which these themes also emerge. My own school setting in the Netherlands serves as one such example. Staff at my school in Leiden also struggle to effectively communicate ideals to the parents and families living in the diverse and multicultural neighbourhood surrounding the school. Moreover, it requires constant attention and effort to adapt the original Waldorf curriculum and ideals into a contemporary, localized, and relevant programme that aligns with today's students and the diversity of our classrooms. Staff try to create a curriculum in which all students feel at home – one that, in a meaningful way, is tailored to students' personal development, broadens their horizons, and prepares them for the societal life ahead. The hope is that the findings of this study can serve as a reflective tool for educators to examine and improve their own educational settings.

In this final chapter, I summarize the key findings and themes of this study and discuss its relevance on different levels: methodologically, theoretically, empirically, and practically.

1. Methodological value and relevance: This study highlights the significance and utility of *the teacher's ethnographic view* – ethnographic research conducted by teachers within educational settings that are, to some extent, familiar to them.
2. Theoretical value and relevance: This research serves as a valuable example within the field of education of an *ethnography of global connections*, applying Tsing's analytical perspective on globalization processes to an educational context (Tsing, 2005).
3. Empirical value and relevance: This study is one of the few empirical studies into globalizing Waldorf education and, to the best of my knowledge, the only study on Waldorf education in the Philippines. This alone makes the study empirically relevant and valuable. Furthermore, its value lies in (a) identifying and describing *friction* and *brilliance* in *zones of awkward engagement* – outcomes of globalization that, among other things, lead to (b) *a call for localized and cultural inclusive Waldorf curricula*.
4. Practical value and relevance: This study offers a valuable reflective and inspiring perspective for researchers and stakeholders in Waldorf education worldwide (research as a mirror), in their efforts to improve Waldorf education.

These four areas of focus are discussed sequentially in the following sections.

On the Methodological Value and Relevance:

The Teacher-Ethnographer's View

The methodological value of the teacher-ethnographer's view was primarily discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. In this chapter, a rationale for ethnographic research conducted by teachers in schools was presented, or more specifically, a rationale for ethnographic research by Waldorf teachers in Waldorf schools. This rationale was developed using vignettes from the field. The chapter highlights the complexities of the role of teacher-ethnographers, such as the fact that they are, to a certain extent, studying themselves, that they occupy dual roles in the field, and that they often co-produce data with their respondents. Alongside these challenges, there are also significant advantages: First, an insider perspective benefits from a natural proximity to the research participants, which significantly enhances the opportunity to gather rich, detailed insights. Second, the research is conducted from multiple grounded insider perspectives. Finally, this approach holds the potential to generate meaningful, practical outcomes that can directly inform practice.

Overall, the question of whether Waldorf teachers can effectively and competently research Waldorf education is answered positively in chapter 2. While much of the existing literature on Waldorf education is either explicitly supportive or critical of Waldorf education, it was argued that, if the right measures are taken – namely being reflexive and open about one's background and objectives – an insider's view can potentially be beneficial for the research by offering a nuanced picture of the research matter with high validity.

This research approach enables a proximity to the respondents that allows, as good ethnographic research should, us to arrive at a true and deep understanding, which is not only reasoned but also experienced, offering both theoretical and practical insights.

This experienced insight of a teacher-ethnographer is not identical to an emic perspective, since teacher-ethnographers must also maintain a degree of distance from what is being studied, especially during phases of analysis and writing. But while teacher-researchers do not automatically adopt an emic perspective, there is a strong likelihood that they develop a good understanding of it. Teacher-ethnographers are able to switch between emic and etic perspectives, as well as between various levels of emic perspectives, since multiple emic perspectives in this research exist, including the perspective of the school and the viewpoints of actors within the networks of the international Waldorf movement. This closeness to the emic perspective makes it possible for the teacher-ethnographer to closely follow and understand debates within Waldorf schools – debates that are obviously subject to change, including, for example, evolving views on cultural diversity and inclusivity.

On the Theoretical Value and Relevance:

An Ethnography of Global Connections

This research into globalizing Waldorf education required a search for a suitable theoretical framework. This search was initially broad, given the inductive, qualitative, and exploratory nature of the study. The outcome of this search is not just important for the current study but could be relevant in the design of forthcoming research projects as well.

The search began with Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* (1996), about the cultural dimensions of globalization translated into flows and scapes and ultimately led to Tsing's ethnographic approach, named after the subtitle of her book *Friction*: "An Ethnography of Global Connections" (2005). In the following text, I first examine Appadurai's perspective on globalization before discussing Tsing's approach and explaining its relevance to this study.

Waldorf-scape

Appadurai's (2016) theory of global flows and scapes, including *eduscapes* (Forstorp and Mellström, 2018), which give rise to global *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983) in education, has provided valuable and practical insights for this research. This theoretical framework is particularly useful for fostering an awareness of what can be termed a 'Waldorf-scape', encompassing internationally shared images of what Waldorf education is and ought to be. This scape functions almost like a culture in itself, connected to a broader spectrum of anthroposophical initiatives that are also globalizing, including anthroposophical medicine, architecture, social threefolding, and biodynamic agriculture. The various scapes and flows outlined in Appadurai's theory are readily identifiable within the Waldorf-scape, including the so-called ethnoscape and ideoscape, referring to, respectively, flows of people and of ideas.

Firstly, the so-called Waldorf-ethnoscape, characterized by the flows of individuals linked to the globalizing Waldorf movement. This includes mentors dispatched from the Goetheanum, the international anthroposophical headquarters, to advise, evaluate, and officially recognize emerging Waldorf schools in countries without established anthroposophical associations or Waldorf school associations, such as the Philippines. Additionally, this ethnoscape comprises teachers, trainers for international Waldorf programmes (e.g., the annual Asian Waldorf Teacher Training in Manila), renowned speakers in the Waldorf community, funders (e.g., the *Internationaal Hulpfonds*), exchange students, interns (such as those participating via the German NGO *Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners*), alumni exploring future opportunities (e.g., through the International Youth Initiative Program, YIP, in Sweden), researchers (such as myself), and even what could be called 'Waldorf tourists' – teachers, parents, or retirees who enjoy visiting or contributing to Waldorf education in other countries. The spread of Waldorf education worldwide can, in part, be explained through these flows of individuals connected to the movement. Tracing networks and specific contacts illuminates how the dissemination of Waldorf education occurs through people. The mobility of these Waldorf travellers generates transnational networks that shape and influence local educational practices.

Secondly, the *Waldorf-ideoscape*, referring to the flows of ideas, values, and ideologies linked to the international Waldorf-scape, including ideas of broad and holistic personal development. The ideas, values, and ideologies that make up the Waldorf-ideoscope are never static, since they are continuously discussed, compromised, and transformed when they encounter other and alternative ideologies, when they enter into new local settings such as the Philippines.

While this theoretical lens has proven useful in this research, it primarily sheds light on overarching global trends and less on the specificities of the local situation. Two nuances can be made:

1. There is a local response to the Waldorf-scape

Anderson-Levitt (2003) refines Appadurai's theory of globalization by emphasizing that globalizing trends in education are not simply adopted but are instead locally interpreted, adapted, and sometimes even actively rejected. While Appadurai's concept of global flows and scapes focuses on the worldwide dissemination of ideas, people, and practices, Anderson-Levitt highlights how these global influences are received and reinvented or reinterpreted at the local level. Her work underscores the agency of local actors in the globalization process and the complex, dynamic interplay between the global and the local.

In the theoretical debate on whether globalization leads to homogeneity or heterogeneity, she leans towards the latter: rather than uniformity, it results in diversity. The research conducted and reported in this thesis follows Anderson-Levitt's focus on the local – moving from the small to the large, from the specific to the general. Initially, following Anderson-Levitt, I assumed that a Waldorf school in the Philippines would be quite different from a Waldorf school in a European context. Strangely, the initial impression was one of striking similarities. Some lesson content, for instance, was identical to what I was familiar with in the Netherlands, including specific cultural features, such as the celebration of Saint Martinmas or Saint Nicholas Day. Only at a later stage, when I became more familiar with the school, did I also identify fundamental differences, which could maybe best be described as a 'typical Filipino touch to Waldorf education'. I found the initially observed similarities surprising, as it seemed to contradict Anderson-Levitt's theoretical stance. To some extent, there was indeed a degree of homogeneity and a dominant global (or western or European) conceptual framework at play, in the sense that there seemed to be consensus – at least partly – on an internationally shared curriculum and on typical and internationally recognizable educational practices within Waldorf schools.

2. There are power dynamics at play within the Waldorf-scape

World System Theory (originally an economic concept developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, 1974, and applied to an educational setting by i.a. Spring 2015) is also of interest here for reconsidering the Waldorf-scape and the observation that, at first glance, the Philippine Waldorf school is not so different from other Waldorf schools.

In relation to education, World System Theory highlights how education systems and ideas of 'good education' are often dominated by core countries and exported to the periphery. Today, the terms *core* and *periphery* are less appropriate and clear-cut; nonetheless, I use them here in the context of Wallerstein's theory to stay close to the language of this theoretical approach. Core countries typically have the resources, infrastructure, and influence to develop educational models that then become global standards or ideals. This results in a process of cultural homogenization, a largely top-down process in which Western (predominantly Euro-American) conceptions of education become dominant. As clarified for example in Chapter 4, in which Eurocentric elements in the Waldorf curriculum are discussed.

World System Theory could also shed light on the power dynamics and inequalities that are at play in globalizing Waldorf education. Of course, Waldorf education is not a dominant trend in education, even in its core countries. But Spring (2015: 14-26) indicates that it is not only main educational trends and policies that are becoming globalized, but also the alternatives to them. In that sense, Waldorf education can be seen as a globalizing alternative to mainstream educational trends and policies. The unequal power relations within the Waldorf-scape are evident, for example, in international mentoring, funding, and certification processes. Waldorf schools outside the core regions, such as in the Philippines, depend partly on guidance, funding, and certification from institutions in core countries, such as the Goetheanum in Switzerland. These processes reflect the asymmetrical power relationships in which core countries more or less determine what is considered 'authentic' Waldorf education. This is reflected in, among other things, a curriculum that contains strong Eurocentric elements, such as an emphasis on European history and cultural values. This reinforces European cultural dominance and can have an alienating effect among local students and teachers outside the core area.

Even though these dynamics are not part of a preconceived plan, a viewpoint from this theoretical approach highlights how peripheral regions, also in relation to Waldorf education, remain dependent on core countries for knowledge, funding, and accreditation.

Tsing's approach: An ethnography of global connections

While the theoretical insights of scholars such as Appadurai, Anderson-Levitt, Spring, and Wallerstein are highly applicable to this research, Anna Tsing's ethnographic approach, which she terms an 'ethnography of global connections' (Tsing, 2005), proved to be most relevant for the current case study.

Tsing's focus on the concrete trajectories of globalizing projects within so-called 'zones of awkward engagement' – emphasizing tangible encounters, networks, ideas, articulations, and actions – strips the study of almost any theoretical abstraction. Her approach can be considered more of a method than a theory, suggesting that each situation is so specific that it demands a detailed, factual description rather than a retreat into theoretical abstractions or globalist fantasies (Tsing, 2000). The actual encounter between external, global influences – which often prove to be less global than they appear – and local realities – which tend to be less self-contained than they are sometimes assumed to be

– results in a certain awkwardness. According to Tsing, the presumed universality of the 'global' is misguided; it is constantly reinterpreted and locally reshaped.

In this study, for instance, the presumed universality of the underlying ideas of Waldorf education is reframed within new Filipino localities. In this process, anthroposophical concepts and Waldorf practices are not value neutral. While presented as universal principles, Tsing's framework suggests that they should be understood as 'locals dressed up as universals'. When introduced into a new context, these concepts give rise to frictions and occasionally to moments of brilliance within zones of awkward engagement. Examples of these zones of awkward engagement – defined as unexpected or unusual connections – are: (1) the incorporation of the spiritual philosophy of anthroposophy into a framework of Filipino Catholicism or other forms of Christianity; (2) the classroom as a social meeting place between poor rural students from the barangay with urban, middle-class students from Iloilo City; and (3) the contradictory sources for curriculum development, including local inspiration as well as 'a cosmopolitan Waldorf curriculum' formatted and reproduced in international Waldorf networks (see Chapter 3). The friction surrounding the curriculum was explored elaborately in Chapter 4, while the social tension of alienation caused by the school's urban student population was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

From the insights provided by Anna Tsing it also becomes evident that, if every *universal* is, in reality, a *local* dressed up as a *universal*, it is extraordinarily complex to formulate a general definition of Waldorf education that is universally applicable. Indeed, this seems impossible. What emerges from the findings of this research is that the meaning attributed to Waldorf education is entirely dependent on who provides the interpretation. As a result, not only has a unique form of Waldorf education developed in the Philippines, but there are also variations within the Philippines and even within individual schools (see Chapter 3). In different settings, differing views exist about what Waldorf schools are or should be.

Moreover, these descriptions of Waldorf schools and Waldorf education are not static over time. On the surface, Waldorf education can sometimes appear rigid. This is because certain traditions are shared across Waldorf schools worldwide – e.g., seasonal festivals, content of specific lessons, and stories deemed appropriate for certain developmental stages, such as teaching the *Edda* in Grade 4. These traditions often trace back to the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, over a century ago. In practice, however, schools are highly diverse, as each school must adapt to the specific location and time in which it operates. To better understand this, it is essential to follow Tsing's suggestion of closely examining the specific actions and articulations that have taken place; in other words, follow concrete school trajectories and histories. This is what has been done in this dissertation, resulting in a specific and unique depiction of a Philippine Waldorf school.

In conclusion, Tsing's approach has proven to be the most applicable in this study, particularly because it avoids excessive theorization. This approach allows to examine the specific case without falling into the pitfall of broad generalizations.

On the Empirical Value and Relevance (part 1):

Friction and Brilliance in Zones of Awkward Engagement

The empirical value of this study lies not only in its rarity as research on the globalization of Waldorf education – let alone Waldorf education in the Philippines – but also in its further development of Tsing's approach, applied in the field of educational research. It does so by identifying and describing *friction* and *brilliance* in *zones of awkward engagement* within a concrete trajectory of a globalizing educational project, such as the globalization of Waldorf education.

Below, I distinguish and describe three major areas of friction – or zones of awkward engagement – loosely based on the initial layout introduced in Chapter 3:

1. In the spiritual sphere: Conflicting spiritual realities
2. In the social sphere: Diverse classrooms and alternative lifestyles
3. In the cultural sphere: A Eurocentric and alternative curriculum

The first area – conflicting spiritual realities – like the other areas, was substantiated by research data, but did not ultimately crystallize into a published article, apart from a brief mention in Chapter 3. I have nevertheless included it to provide a more complete picture.

The second and third areas of friction have been extensively discussed in previous chapters:
• In Chapter 4, about Eurocentrism in the curriculum and the complexity of dealing with this.
• Chapters 5 and 6, about socioeconomic differences, the social composition of school classes, the misunderstanding of values and ideals, and the school's integration in the community.

In the Spiritual Sphere: Conflicting Spiritual Realities
Within the realm of the anthroposophical worldview and spirituality, certain phenomena – such as the concept of an angelic realm – are familiar and resonate with the Christian faith experiences of Filipino Waldorf stakeholders. This makes such aspects easy for Filipino Waldorf teachers and parents to understand, incorporate, and reinterpret with new meaning. Likewise, the acknowledgement of a spiritual world – one that transcends the material realm – is something many Filipino Waldorf stakeholders can easily relate to. For some members of the school community, the existence of elemental beings and spirits is part of their worldview, even outside of anthroposophy. Several teachers, for example, shared detailed accounts of encounters they had with spiritual beings. One teacher had even dedicated his artistic work to depicting these entities.

For most Filipinos in this study, accustomed to engaging with immaterial beings, such as angels and nature spirits, it was probably easier to incorporate anthroposophical notions into their worldview than it is for many teachers in American and European Waldorf schools, where such topics are often approached with more caution and are more frequently discussed in metaphorical rather than literal terms. This is not only

my strong impression based on my experience in a Waldorf school in the Netherlands, but it is also reflected in accounts about Waldorf education online, for example in Lombard (2003): "The Waldorf school [...] claimed to be a scientific, art-based, nonsectarian school" [instead of religious or spiritual]. The absence of restraint in this regard might be the brilliance in the Philippine story: the natural embrace of a spiritual reality and, with it, the core of anthroposophy, in which a spiritual world plays a central role. While in European and American circles this aspect is not universally taken seriously and often faces strong criticism, in the Philippine context it appears to be accepted with greater ease.

However, other concepts common to anthroposophy, such as karma and reincarnation, can create friction with existing frameworks of reference, as they conflict with beliefs prevalent in the church. For instance, the Christian notion of eternal life in heaven directly contradicts the idea of reincarnation. For some Waldorf teachers, accepting reincarnation – so deeply embedded in the anthroposophical understanding of the human being – meant they had to radically reconsider their Christian worldview and faith.

There are also anthroposophical ideas that are simply unfamiliar – neither closely aligned with existing beliefs nor immediately causing tension. They are not loaded with meaning yet. At most, they might seem alien or strange to outsiders. Examples of such concepts include the threefold or fourfold images of the human being, the social ideology of social threefolding, or the use of temperaments or planetary classifications to analyse student characteristics. These ideas may be described as 'awkward' and take on new meanings in the Philippine context, where those involved in Waldorf education engage with them through study groups and self-study, seeking to use them as sources of inspiration for thinking and acting within a Waldorf framework.

In the social sphere: Diverse classrooms and alternative lifestyles

In Chapters 5 and 6, I wrote about the classroom and the village. In both settings, various frictions were experienced. These frictions arose from contrasts between the different groups involved in the school, as well as from the uncommon lifestyles of Waldorf stakeholders. The relatively large group of urbanites enrolled in the school brings with them cosmopolitan educational ideals, emphasizing personal development and autonomy, while these ideals hold less relevance in the village community. The potential tension between urban and rural populations is less evident in the classroom, where a reasonably harmonious blending occurs – one that can be described as a form of 'brilliance'. However, friction becomes apparent in the differing roles and inequalities within the school community, where teachers and decision-makers are mostly from the city, while the cleaner and janitor come from the village. It is also noticeable in the village itself, where locals feel intimidated by the city-dwellers' fluency in English, the expensive cars they use to drop off their children, the international atmosphere, and the foreign visitors that come to the school.

Some stakeholders suggested that this sense of awkwardness surrounding the school's presence in the village community may even be a key factor in the declining number of local children enrolling in the Waldorf school. Despite the school's efforts to attract more

students, foster local collaboration, and hire local staff, enthusiasm for the school – and the support it receives – primarily comes from outside the village, mainly from urban families who have actively sought an alternative form of education and the best possible opportunities for their children's development. This dynamic reinforces itself: as more students from the city enrol, they actively embrace the school's vision and associated lifestyle, further strengthening the school's identity. However, this reinforced identity simultaneously distances the school from the village community in which it is situated.

Although the school aims to serve children from the local village – drawing on principles of the social ideology of social threefolding – it inevitably follows the broader trend: in the end, it also prefers parents and children who actively support its mission. For many students, this school mission is not an abstract set of lofty educational ideals based on anthroposophical insights but rather a tangible lifestyle ideology. This lifestyle is centred on a health-conscious, mindful, and sustainable anthroposophical way of living, which includes, among other things, avoiding unhealthy snacks and addictive social media. Practices such as not using mobile phones, not playing computer games, not binge-watching TV series, not eating chips or sugary sweets, not consuming meat or chemically treated vegetables – all of these aspects make children feel distinctly different within the Waldorf school and also set them apart from their social surroundings and family members, who are not attached to the Waldorf school.

For Waldorf parents, this means they are constantly negotiating with the reality around them, often encountering social friction and a lack of understanding from their wider social environment. The awkward engagement between Philippine society and the lifestyle ideals of Waldorf stakeholders is ever-present. With its countless shopping malls, fast-food chains, and high social media usage,[1] Philippine society presents an almost impossible environment in which to consistently adhere to these anthroposophical lifestyle ideals – making occasional, or even frequent, lapses inevitable. Perhaps this field of tension is also at the root of the fact that many parents – especially from the village – emphasize that the students learn 'good manners' at school. Teachers, on the other hand, hardly ever talk about 'good manners', because it might insinuate an old-fashioned authoritarian teacher-student relationship, which neither fits the teacher's ideals nor the school culture, which is often described as 'gentle' or 'as a family'.

In the Cultural Sphere: A Eurocentric and Alternative Curriculum
Chapter 4 dealt with frictions and tensions that primarily emerge in the curriculum. Anthroposophical principles and traditions are presented as cosmopolitan, garnering appreciation from world-oriented urban parents, while local elements are mistakenly regarded as inferior.

The curriculum closely resembles that of Waldorf schools elsewhere in the world. The main lessons follow a fixed structure, with storytelling content aligned with the developmental

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[1] See for example: https://www.statista.com/topics/6759/social-media-usage-in-the-philippines/#topicOverview

phases of children. However, these developmental phases are sometimes mistakenly assumed to parallel human history. For example, the curriculum includes fairy tales in grade 1, fables in grade 2, Old Testament stories in grade 3, Norse mythology from the Edda in grade 4, Greek history in grade 5, Romans and the Middle Ages in grade 6, and the Renaissance and Age of Exploration in grade 7 (see Chapter 4 for more details). The question arises as to what extent these main lessons align with the local context of the school and whether that affects their intrinsic value in relation to children's developmental stages. It is also an interesting question whether children's developmental processes unfold similarly across different parts of the world – a classic nature-versus-nurture debate. Either way, discussing Norse gods in the tropics is an awkward engagement. And sometimes, the curriculum completely misses its pedagogical mark – such as in the example from Chapter 4, where grade 7 students learn about European explorers 'discovering' the Philippines. Here, the narratives of explorers do not naturally align with students as the explorers, who tend to identify themselves in this setting more likely with the discovered or the oppressed in the stories. Moreover, these narratives also sharply contradict the efforts of the Philippine government to promote awareness of national or local heroes in their resistance towards the Spanish 'discoverers'.

Another deeply embedded element in Waldorf education is the celebration of seasonal festivals such as Michaelmas, Saint Martin's Day, and Saint John's Day. On the surface, these figures are not unfamiliar to Catholic Filipinos. For instance, the country's most famous beer brand is named after the archangel Michael (San Miguel), and religious festivals honouring saints are widely celebrated. Nevertheless, an awkwardness remains. Firstly, these seasonal festivals do not coincide with the village's own festivities, such as the annual *barangay fiesta*. On that day, unlike students at the nearby public school who have the day off, Waldorf students are expected to attend school, with little recognition of the local celebration. The other Waldorf festivals – just as in European Waldorf schools – are linked to the seasons, using symbolism of light and darkness, inward reflection, and outward action. However, this symbolism does not naturally align with the length of days and seasonal changes in the Philippines as it does in Europe. These festivals are largely unfamiliar in the Philippine context or, at the very least, are celebrated quite differently. Often, a particular value is emphasized, such as courage for Michaelmas or sacrifice for Saint Martin's Day, with children performing acts of service for others. Some festivals seem entirely removed from their original European context, such as Saint Nicholas' Day (Sinterklaas). There was an ongoing debate about whether this tradition was truly Waldorf or merely introduced by international mentors from the Netherlands – along with a figure that seems to be a version of the controversial Black Pete (Zwarte Piet) figure, which has sparked significant debate in the Netherlands.

The weekly verses written by Rudolf Steiner, recited each morning in the teachers' room as in many Waldorf schools worldwide, also reveal their origins in a very different geographical and climatic setting. These verses are closely tied to natural processes and the four seasons as they unfold in Europe. As a result, they can feel alienating – mentioning snow and coldness, for instance, while outside, the tropical heat lingers. Such climatic and geographical misalignments are common in Waldorf materials, and teachers sometimes choose to adapt them. For example, in fairy tales, they may deliberately replace certain animals or plants to better reflect the students' environment.

Another source of friction is the fact that certain traditions and teaching methods are inherited from European mentors, even though these methods are sometimes considered outdated or unsuitable in Europe itself. For the Philippine Waldorf school, navigating the conflicting perspectives of different mentors can be a challenge. The school primarily hosts mentors from the Netherlands and Germany, who frequently provide contradictory advice on what is considered 'true' Waldorf education. During my stay, for example, there was an ongoing debate about the status, pedagogical value and content of the subject of *form drawing*, a practice where students create flowing or geometric forms to develop concentration, spatial awareness, and inner balance.

Despite the frictions caused by the curriculum's Eurocentrism, there is also an aspect of awkwardness that parents and students perceive as a significant asset of the school. Strange, perhaps, but beneficial in their eyes. After all, a school is free to be innovative and to do things differently, and this is often precisely its educational significance. Families choose Waldorf education for a reason. Many aspects of the school are different in comparison to public schools or other schools in the area. In some cases, this kind of awkwardness results in brilliance. The curriculum is not only an ideal but is also, in practice, designed for broad and holistic personal development. The school's slogan, emphasizing a balance between activities of thinking, feeling, and willing, is reflected in a diverse curriculum that includes a significant number of movement classes, craft-based activities, and experiential learning. This includes gardening lessons, a wide range of artistic subjects, sports, house construction, woodworking, textile crafts, and more.

Unlike many other Philippine schools, where the focus is primarily on cognitive skills and rote learning, Waldorf places less emphasis on testing. Academic assessments and rankings play a major role in most Philippine schools, as evidenced by the 'top ten' student lists displayed at the back of classrooms and the awarding of medals for high academic performance. The Waldorf school, in contrast, aims to be less results-driven and more development-focused. This philosophy is also reflected in the relaxed interactions between teachers and students. The atmosphere is somewhat informal and alternative, which some within the school describe as familial. This informality can also be seen in the absence of a school uniform and the more flexible approach to the flag ceremony – practices that, in regular schools, are typically taken very seriously.

In conclusion, one of the key empirical contributions of this study is that it clarifies which *zones of awkward engagement*, with their associated *frictions* and *brilliance*, are at play. Of course, this is not a fixed condition but an ongoing, dynamic process. For instance, the assumption that the curriculum is Eurocentric already led to increased awareness during my research period, prompting shifts in thinking and concrete steps towards change. At the same time, the complexity of this process also has become evident, raising a fundamental question: How much can a Waldorf school be adjusted to its local setting, without compromising or losing its Waldorf identity? In the next section, I will further explore the importance of a localized and cultural inclusive curriculum, as well as the complexities related to it.

On the Empirical Value and Relevance (part 2):

Call for a Localized and Cultural Inclusive Waldorf Curriculum

As discussed above, the curriculum represents a *zone of awkward engagement* in that lesson material takes on a new, sometimes awkward meaning in a different context. Part of this *awkwardness* stems from the Eurocentrism and neo-colonialism embedded in the curriculum. While similar concerns are also raised in European settings – particularly in multicultural classrooms – this issue becomes even more sensitive and painful in a non-Western, decolonized context such as the Philippines.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation has laid the foundation for a call to action, urging Waldorf schools to make their curricula more inclusive, localized, and culturally adaptable. This point further underscores the empirical and practical value of this study: highlighting the need for a localized and cultural inclusive curriculum where students can feel at home – allowing them to reach their full learning potential. A distinction can be made here between lesson content and the underlying principles of Waldorf education, such as the emphasis on broad and holistic personal development. While it is important to acknowledge that these underlying principles are themselves culturally influenced (as discussed in chapter 3), they can still hold intrinsic value across cultural borders. The main friction frequently lies in the lesson content.

Although this ideological call for curriculum change is understood by many Waldorf teachers in the Philippines, it proves challenging in practice. To create effective new curricula for Waldorf schools, teachers must possess not only a solid understanding of anthroposophy but also of anthropology (see also in the discussion of Chapter 4). Knowledge of local stories and other cultural elements, such as local histories, cultural expressions, celebrations, habits, is essential to make meaningful adaptations to the curriculum. At the same time, a strong foundation in anthroposophy is essential for high-quality Waldorf education, measuring it from its own standards and maintaining its distinctive identity. This combination of anthroposophical and anthropological knowledge can lead to new curricula that are tailored to the time and place of the school, free from ideas and practices that are held to be unquestionably true or without room for critical examination. This approach ensures that students feel at home in their school – a concept referred to as *school belonging*.

School belonging has proven to be helpful concept in this research. This dissertation follows the assumption supported in other research settings (e.g. Korpershoek, 2020) that school belonging is crucial for academic success. And, moreover, that it is a prerequisite for achieving the ideals of Waldorf education, including the broad and holistic personal development of students. Only when students feel truly at home within the school setting can they grow and become free individuals who contribute meaningfully to society. The challenging question remains: how can this goal be achieved? How can Waldorf education be truly localized and cultural inclusive and how can students feel at home within the

school setting? What is essential to it? And, conversely, how can cultural appropriation be prevented? These questions concerning the localization of the curriculum raise further issues: How much should a Waldorf school adapt in order to provide meaningful education? And how much can it deviate from its principles while still being recognized as a Waldorf school? It is a delicate balance that can easily tip too far in one direction.

I will now evaluate a few of the major challenges related to the process of making the curriculum more localized and inclusive:

1. The local setting is not helpful

Firstly, the local setting is not helpful. In the Philippines, colonized curricula are often insufficiently problematized. In fact, former colonizers are frequently portrayed as bringers of progress. From this perspective, it might seem logical that an ill-adapted Waldorf curriculum would go similarly unchallenged in the Philippines. Across the board, there appear to be few – if any – efforts to make the Waldorf curriculum truly suitable and meaningful within the Philippine local context. This issue is not confined to history or social studies lessons. For example, consider the story of the Bremen Town Musicians, which features a donkey – a creature unfamiliar to many children in the studied school – or a chemistry lesson on sugar, which entirely overlooks the profound colonial history of sugar plantations with extremely poor living conditions for the local workforce in the Iloilo Province in Central Philippines (e.g. McCoy 1993). The need to adjust the curriculum is just not felt by all local Waldorf stakeholders.

2. Teachers are too busy

Secondly, and more practically, teachers are simply too busy to focus on curriculum change, even if they feel the need for it. Teachers have demanding jobs and are constantly navigating the daily pressures of their students' needs, those of the students' parents, and the school organization. As a result, they are not always eager to accept, initiate, or support significant content-based changes. Some prefer to be provided with lesson content externally, allowing them to focus more on pedagogical practices in the classroom rather than on adjusting the curriculum. In practice, it is often difficult to fully separate pedagogy from the content of what is being taught. Moreover, it is not easy to integrate new content to underlying anthroposophical principles, such as artistic ways of learning, appropriate anthroposophical alignment with developmental stages of students, or the balance between thinking, feeling, and willing.

Complicating matters further is the fact that proposed changes are rarely straightforward or logical. For instance, content changes can disrupt the cohesion of the curriculum or undermine the recognizable identity of Waldorf schools. This makes the call for localized and cultural inclusive curricula easier said than done and raises questions about the flexibility of the Waldorf education concept. It can feel as though changing one element will effect many others, which then also need to be adjusted in turn.

3. Concepts are not clear-cut

Thirdly, when we speak of localization or cultural inclusivity, their meaning is not always

clear. Filipinization, Asianization, and localization are concepts that seem to touch on an important condition necessary for fostering a sense of school belonging and cultural inclusivity. However, these concepts are not clear cut and none of them fully encapsulates the complexity of achieving cultural inclusivity and a sense of belonging through localization.

Filipinization, for instance, risks oversimplifying the enormous cultural diversity within the Philippines itself. There are significant cultural gaps between urban and rural areas and among different regions; Philippine society has neither a singular history nor a singular identity. Focusing on distinguished historical and cultural settings within the country, especially when this focus is on ethnic minority groups with a strong cultural identity of their own, could lead to unwanted or inappropriate forms of cultural appropriation.

Asianization, as a counterpoint to Eurocentrism, also falls short. While the Philippines is geographically part of Asia and shares similarities with other Asian countries, there is little widespread Asian consciousness in the country. In fact, one could argue that the Philippines is the least 'Asian' country in Southeast and East Asia, given its strong historical orientation towards and influence from other parts of the world, particularly from its former Christian colonizers Spain, which ruled its colony mainly from Central America, and the United States.

Localization, then, might seem the most fitting approach for fostering a sense of belonging in school. But what is localization? At first glance, this concept appears to be at odds with the idea of feeling 'at home in the world'. However, a global orientation does not have to be excluded from localization processes; rather, it should be embedded in the meaningful world of the students at the school. Furthermore, localization assumes a clear and distinct local context. Yet, in a heterogeneous classroom where cultural capital plays a role in the transmission of value systems – and where certain groups benefit more from the reproduction of these values, making them more successful in education (related to the ideas of Bourdieu, e.g. Bourdieu 2010) – it becomes difficult to define a singular local cultural interpretation. Differentiation is therefore necessary to ensure equal opportunities.

4. Complex student demographics hamper the process of localization

Lastly, a disparity in student demographics, as highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6, challenges the process of localization and school integration in the local village community, which ultimately also hampers the reaching of cultural and social inclusivity and equal feelings of school belonging.

In Chapters 5 and 6, the relatively high English proficiency observed at the Waldorf school – in comparison to the nearby public school – was linked to the concept of cultural capital. Many students at the Waldorf school come from urban families who generally have stronger English skills. Similarly, the teachers at the Waldorf school also demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency. Moreover, in Chapter 6, it became evident that there is little interaction or familiarity between the students and teachers of the two schools in

the community, the Waldorf school and the public school. These schools exist somewhat as separate worlds, despite being located just a stone's throw apart along the same road. Teachers and students at the public school often find the Waldorf school intimidating and unfamiliar.

Although the Waldorf school, in line with its ideals, aspires to serve children from the village, in practice, it predominantly attracts urban middle-class families. These urban families may also find it easier to align themselves with the school's ideology, as it resonates more naturally with their value systems, their cultural capital, including an emphasis on personal development. Moreover, beyond cultural capital, also other forms of capital come into play. Despite a sympathetic and well-intentioned socialized school fee system, financial capital does play a role as well, as the school constantly needs resources and therefore benefits from the enrolment of wealthier students. Social capital also plays an important role. Within the school, strong bonding social capital (Putnam 2000), with limited but strong ties within the school community, fosters unity and connectedness, reinforcing the school's familial atmosphere. However, the school's bridging social capital (Putnam 2000) is weaker, referring to weaker ties that are embedded in broader and open social networks. The limited presence of bridging social capital is making it more difficult to establish connections with external communities. When bridging social capital exists, it primarily extends beyond the village – and, to a large extent, even beyond the Philippines – connecting with an urban alternative community or international Waldorf circles.

In other words, the Waldorf school struggles to effectively communicate its ideals within the community in which it is located. Its internal identity does not align with how it is perceived externally, which not only makes it more difficult to attract children from the village, but also to make those who enrol feel at home in the school. Although the school's ideals are understood and practiced within the school community, the school remains an odd element in the village setting. This disconnect places strain on one of its core goals: bringing together students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in the same classroom. It also demonstrates that Waldorf education, despite its lofty ideals, has the tendency to become and remain a niche. It not only fails to attract poor students from the rural community at the local level, but it also falls short of becoming a significant educational movement more broadly in the Philippines. While it was initially assumed that Waldorf education in the Philippines would continue to grow after its initial rapid expansion, growth has somewhat stagnated and remained modest.

On the Practical Value and Relevance:

Research as a Mirror

The practical relevance of this study ('What do we gain from this research?') can be assessed from multiple perspectives. In all cases, the study serves as a means of reflection – a 'mirror' that may foster growing awareness, critical thought, and potentially action within the field of educational analysis and improvement, especially in relation to curriculum development,

both within Waldorf education and beyond. By evaluating alternative education in an unusual cultural setting, this study followed the most important suggestion of the educational ethnographer Sara Delamont (2014: 15-6) to overcome the so-called familiarity trap by providing a mirror for the things we tend to qualify as 'normal'.

As with the laws of physics that govern how mirrors reflect light, the reflection offered by this research depends on the standpoint of the viewer. For me, the reflection is direct: I see myself and reflect on myself through the research. For others, the angle of reflection is determined by their point of entry – their position in relation to the research shapes what they see. This position also affects the clarity of the reflection. For some, the mirror may offer a sharp image; for others, it may be more diffuse – like a reflection on the surface of water, which can disappear with rising waves and reappear unexpectedly in moments of stillness and calm. Moreover, the research provides multiple mirrors – maybe even a kaleidoscope – with fragments of reflection that together form a new image. Different groups arrive at different reflections: e.g. researchers and those interested in globalization in education, members of the international Waldorf community, stakeholders of the school under study, and, of course, me.

The mirror to other and future researchers and those interested in globalization in education

This study serves as an example of a concrete trajectory of a globalizing project within an educational setting. The insights of this research are relevant to similar research projects elsewhere. Globalizing educational approaches, policies, and trends are countless. In studying them, it is equally important to move beyond abstract theorization by starting from the specific and concrete, remaining open to unexpected outcomes, and identifying relevant frictions and forms of brilliance – whether similar or markedly different – that emerge in dynamic zones of awkward engagement.

There is also ample scope for further research within the Waldorf education movement – both comparative studies on the themes explored in this study as well as deeper investigations into new areas of friction. For instance, future research could examine tensions between government policies and Waldorf principles, issues surrounding standardized examinations, or the interplay of moral–ethical, and spiritual issues related to Waldorf education. Research on Waldorf education in China, for example, reveals distinctive forms of friction. Some parents consciously opt their children out of formal examinations, even as the government imposes organizational restrictions due to the perceived political and spiritual nature of Waldorf schools. At the same time, Waldorf schools operate within intentional communities of like-minded families who have relocated outside the city to make such initiatives possible and where some reconnect to ancient Chinese philosophy through anthroposophy (e.g. Sun 2024). Or Egypt, where anthroposophy merges with Islamic spirituality in the sustainable desert community of Sekem (Abouleish, 2005). Or Brazil, where some Waldorf initiatives have started in poor favelas (Craemer 2022). Just to mention a few examples that come to mind.

The mirror provided by this thesis is not only relevant for established researchers, but also

for those considering research – especially teachers who are contemplating an inquiry into their own educational practice. Engaging in research as an educator is not just a rich personal experience that fosters self-development; it also offers a unique insider perspective that can hold significant academic value. This study has sought to highlight the valuable teacher-ethnographer's view. In that spirit, I wholeheartedly encourage anyone considering such a path – especially with the support of a Promotiebeurs voor Leraren (Doctoral Grant for Teachers) – to take the leap and explore their own educational practice. Go for it!

The mirror to the international Waldorf movement

So far, I have primarily evaluated this research through an etic lens. But what is the emic view – looking through a Waldorf lens – on globalization, cultural diversity, and cultural inclusivity in Waldorf education? The emic perspective raises questions about how these issues are (or are not) problematized within Waldorf schools or the broader Waldorf movement itself. To what extent provides this research also a mirror to actors from within?

At the outset of this research, raising the issue of cultural friction within the curriculum still appeared to be relatively groundbreaking within Waldorf setting, particularly, though not exclusively, in the Philippines. There, as in many other places, this issue initially seemed to be hardly problematized at all. However, over the course of this study, broader societal awareness of this issue has grown. Moreover, within the international Waldorf movement essential questions were increasingly being raised, leading to a growing awareness. This is evident, for example, in revised guidelines from the Goetheanum regarding Waldorf education (International Forum for Steiner Waldorf Education/ Hague Circle, 2016), which now place greater emphasis on cultural diversity, as well as in recent publications about dynamics and consequences of the globalization of Waldorf education (e.g. Boland 2015, Göbel 2019, Rawson 2021, Stehlik 2019), a documentary,[2] and numerous conferences[3] and lectures devoted to this topic.[4]

On the one hand, there is a recognition that cultural inclusivity is necessary. On the other, there is also an awareness of Waldorf education's vulnerability, as well as the fact that different currents within the Waldorf movement approach this issue in different ways (see, for example, the threefold division of Waldorf schools into purist, accomodationalist, and evolutionist schools, as suggested by Boland 2015: 197-8 and Oberman 2008: 270). Ultimately, this leads to a broader question: How flexible is Waldorf education – not only in terms of cultural adaptation but also over time? This is a challenging question because, despite a willingness to change, there remains only one true point of consensus within

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[2] Such as the documentary in relation to Waldorf's 100 years of existence, "Waldorf 100 – becoming", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-mVPUzgWPY

[3] For example, in the Netherlands the conferences Thuis in de Wereld (At home in the World) organized by the Begeleidingsdienst van Vrijescholen (Waldorf Schools Advisory and Support Service) in 2023 and 2024.

[4] See for example the international lecture series "What can we do better? The challenge of transformation in Waldorf education" on current-day challenges in globalizing Waldorf education at Alanus University: https://www.international-campus-waldorf.com/recordings-2024/; https://www.international-campus-waldorf.com/materials-2024-21/

Waldorf schools regarding inspirational sources: anthroposophy. For all the educational insights developed in recent decades, none of them provides a unifying core. They may be adopted in practice, but they do not constitute its foundation.

The educational philosopher Gert Biesta (2022) has been embraced within many contemporary Waldorf schools. His argument – that independence is necessary for offering an alternative voice in education – suggests that Waldorf schools should not simply follow societal trends, but rather influence society through their educational approach. Interestingly, this stands in contrast to the idea that Waldorf education should adapt to and be grounded in its local setting. He also argues that the sense of belonging is not so much about a limited locality, but rather that students learn to feel at home in the world. In this sense, globality and locality are not opposites but rather extensions of each other.

The question of how Waldorf schools can be culturally inclusive is ultimately also a question of how Waldorf schools can remain relevant – ensuring that they do not become a niche and that they can sustainably put their ideals into practice. It is clear that, presently, this is only partially successful. In the end, this research serves therefore as a mirror to Waldorf schools – not only for the specific school in question but also for the broader Waldorf movement, including my own Dutch Waldorf school.

The mirror to the Waldorf school under study

The study also serves as a mirror for the school under examination. Overall, a paradoxical picture emerges. On the one hand, the school appears as a grassroots initiative born out of ambitious ideals. These include the aspiration to provide quality education to disadvantaged rural children and to contribute to a better world. To some extent, the school succeeds in translating these ideals into practice – for instance, by fostering a harmonious classroom environment where rural children study alongside middle-class urban peers. Additionally, the school's foundation is deeply tied to the personal journeys and convictions of its founders and stakeholders. Its ideals are grounded in thoughtful societal critique and a clearly articulated vision for education. This is not a school that emerged haphazardly; its establishment was the result of careful and prolonged planning.

The school is also characterized by a young, enthusiastic faculty with genuine and contemporary views on society and education. These educators bring a fresh lens to Waldorf pedagogy and anthroposophy. In many ways, the school feels distinctly Filipino. This is evident in its daily interactions and its unique embrace of spiritual aspects of anthroposophy. With a characteristic blend of devotion and light-heartedness unique to Filipinos, the school integrates concepts such as the spiritual world, reincarnation, angels, and nature spirits. In the Philippines, these spiritual elements are readily embraced by the younger generation. For example, a portrait of Rudolf Steiner in the teachers' lounge does not evoke mixed feelings as it might in some European schools. This dedicated yet non-dogmatic and open engagement with anthroposophy contrasts sharply with the (largely unfounded) stereotype of anthroposophists in some European contexts as dogmatic or old-fashioned. Moreover, there is strong faith in the transformative potential of Waldorf

education – for both individual students and society at large. Unlike Waldorf schools in Europe, this school does not have to contend with critical perceptions about alleged racism (e.g. Van Baarda 2000, Koren 2022, Staudenmaier 2014), academic underperformance (e.g. Bus and Kruizinga 1986, Cunningham and Carol 2010, Steenbergen 2009), and spiritual eccentricity (Hammer 2001, Lichte 2018, Staudenmaier 2014).

On the other hand, the school's reality clashes with several foundational principles. The curriculum remains notably Eurocentric for example, and its ideal of serving underprivileged rural children is undermined by a sense of alienation caused by the influence of an urban elite. This paradoxical image highlights a clear challenge for the school: Can it sustainably fulfil its own ideals? Achieving this will require several actions, including developing a more localized and cultural inclusive curriculum. The task ahead is to ensure that the inevitable frictions within the zones of awkward engagement are transformed into aspects of brilliance.

Change is certainly not impossible. Already during my stay at the school, ideas from this study were picked up and applied to make small adjustments to lesson content and thus to the curriculum. In the main lesson block on The Age of Discovery, for example, greater awareness and attention were given to the Filipino side of the story after I shared my observations about the Eurocentric orientation of this lesson series with the teachers. As a young school, with a strong pioneering spirit, the Gamot Cogon Waldorf School is in constant motion. This movement is reflected in its growing maturity, which manifests in, for example, a more critical and independent stance towards external foreign mentors. Knowledge transmission is becoming less of a one-way street, and the school itself is increasingly serving as a source of inspiration for others – as evidenced by the steady stream of visitors and the growing collaboration among Waldorf schools in the Philippines. Because this project spanned several years, the mirror function of the research may have faded somewhat over time. However, without overstating my own role, I believe this research has provided an impulse – in a modest but meaningful way – towards educational improvements in the school under study in the Philippines.

The mirror to myself

Last but certainly not least, this research has also served as a mirror for me. It has contributed to my academic and personal development, but it has also led me to rethink and reflect on my own work situation. After all, I am also a Waldorf teacher. The themes I explored in the Philippine Waldorf school are, in many ways, just as relevant to my own educational setting in the Netherlands.

In my own working environment, too, the challenge lies in providing high-quality Waldorf education that is attuned to both the spirit of the times and the cultural and social context of the school. My school in Leiden attracts students from both the city and surrounding villages, yet relatively few come from the multicultural neighbourhood directly around the school. While our mission is not as explicitly framed within the social ideology of social threefolding as a way of providing disadvantaged students with access to quality education, as it was done in the Philippines, we do strive to be a school where everyone feels welcome.

Creating such a school requires a contemporary, localized curriculum that allows students to feel at home. I am becoming increasingly aware of this challenge. As a senior teacher at the school, I increasingly have opportunities to genuinely influence the way we shape the education we provide. Recently, I joined the school management team, which has given me more influence over policy decisions, curriculum development, and the shaping of our school's Waldorf identity.

I have deep appreciation for many traditions and principles of Waldorf education, both in their spiritual-philosophical and practical aspects. At the same time, I am committed to continuously improving my teaching, as well as the education provided in my own school setting. Over the past year for example, I have worked intensively with the mentors of the seventh and eighth grades, the section of the school I am in charge of, to refine and reformulate main lesson goals and content. And, beyond my own school, I am also involved in improving Waldorf education at the national level through my role as a trainer for Waldorf mentors during the annual Vrijeschool Lerarenweek (Waldorf School Teachers' Week) in Zeist. This professional development event helps Waldorf teachers across the Netherlands prepare for the new school year. Moreover, I am involved in the development of a training programme – under the auspices of the Begeleidingsdienst voor Vrijescholen (the advisory service for Waldorf schools in the Netherlands) – for 7th and 8th grade teachers, in which they will be educated into modern day Waldorf teachers. Through these efforts – and especially also in my own classroom – I strive to take small but meaningful steps towards a contemporary and culturally inclusive Waldorf education, where students feel at home and can grow into autonomous, critical, and responsible global citizens.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I can state that the research has provided an ethnographic image of Philippine Waldorf education. Although the study focused on one particular school, it aimed for broader relevance – methodologically, theoretically, empirically, and practically. The research has highlighted the value of the teacher's ethnographic perspective, encouraging other educators to engage in research themselves. It has also offered a key approach to studying globalization in education – by examining it as an ethnography of global connections, emphasizing the importance of uncovering both frictions and brilliance, as well as the role of school belonging, shaped, in part, by localized and culturally inclusive curricula. Finally, this study has been presented as a mirror – for researchers and stakeholders in Waldorf education, for the school under study, and for me – where reflections may hopefully lead to meaningful improvements of current-day Waldorf education.

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Acknowledgements

Curriculum Vitae

Thijs Jan van Schie, born in 1980 in Haarlem, attended Waldorf Schools in Leiden and the Hague. After a travelling through Australia and Southeast Asia, he began studying Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University in 2000. During his studies, Thijs Jan participated in research projects in Vietnam (2003) and Chile (2004-2005) and taught cultural anthropology courses at Leiden University and the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (2005-2006). In 2006, he graduated in both Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, and in Education, with a specialization in teaching Social Studies. Since 2005, he has worked as a teacher at Marecollege, a Waldorf school in Leiden. In 2009, Thijs Jan took a sabbatical from Marecollege to work at the Catholic University of Malawi, contributing to a pioneering cultural anthropology programme. In 2011-2012, he worked at Hanoi Medical University, on behalf of the Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam, to develop and introduce a course on *Medical Anthropology* for six Vietnamese universities. On his return, Thijs Jan resumed his work at Marecollege, combining it with teaching at Leiden University, where he was also an internship coordinator and career coach for anthropology students. In 2016, he started his PhD project after receiving the NWO Doctoral Grant for Teachers. Between 2016 and 2020, he travelled four times to the Philippines for this research.

In 2022, Thijs Jan took on a new role at Marecollege as part of the school management team, where he contributes to school policies and oversees student progress, curriculum development, and the staff working within his section, the middle school (grades 7 and 8). Thijs Jan van Schie lives in Noordwijkerhout and is married to Irene ten Teije. They have two children: a daughter, Nora (8), and a son, Flore (5).

Summary

This dissertation provides an ethnographic account of a Filipino Waldorf school, exploring how Waldorf education manifests in a Philippine setting. While the case itself is unique, it also offers insights into the globalization of Waldorf education.

The main findings of this study are as follows:

Methodological contribution: This dissertation offers a rationale for what may be called the teacher-ethnographer's view. This perspective arises from research conducted by teachers within educational settings – such as Waldorf teachers studying Waldorf education. Although this proximity to the research subject entails the risk of certain biases, it also generates rich, lived data from within and allows for the more direct initiation of improvements in educational practice.

Theoretical contribution: The dissertation advocates the use of Anna Tsing's approach to globalization. Her framework – often referred to as the ethnography of global connections – posits that globalization processes are rather concrete than abstract. Researchers should therefore focus on concrete, specific cases and examine the so-called zones of awkward engagement: sites of encounter where seemingly universal concepts acquire new local meanings. In such zones, confusion, friction, and at times brilliance may emerge. Tsing's approach also provides a rationale for choosing a traditional ethnographic research approach, as this allows for depth and specificity of insight.

In the context of Filipino Waldorf education, zones of awkward engagement include the incorporation of anthroposophical concepts into Filipino frames of reference; the classroom encounters between children of diverse backgrounds – urban and rural, wealthy and poor; and the tensions arising from Eurocentric curricular content in an Ilonggo school.

Empirical contribution: This study is among the few that examine the globalization of Waldorf education, and perhaps the only one to do so within a Philippine context. Its value also lies in the detailed empirical exploration of the aforementioned areas of friction. In the social sphere, one striking finding is the decreasing proportion of village children compared to the growing number of urban students. This may be explained by the school's ideals – such as its emphasis on holistic personal development and an alternative lifestyle featuring healthy and often vegetarian food, ecological and sustainable practices, and limited screen time and social media use – which tend to resonate more strongly with the cultural capital and expectations of urban middle-class families seeking alternative forms of education than with those of poorer rural families, for whom such ideals may feel alienating. The use of English as the main language of instruction, the presence of international visitors, and the daily stream of cars from the city intensify this sense of distance. Yet, alongside such friction, there is also brilliance: in the classroom, children play and learn together, and a sense of equality prevails.

In the cultural sphere, friction is also evident, particularly in the curriculum. While the curriculum is perceived as innovative and cosmopolitan, it also contains many Eurocentric elements, such as Grimm's fairy tales or lessons on famous European explorers. At the same time, the Waldorf emphasis on arts, movement, and creativity provides a meaningful alternative to mainstream educational approaches that focus narrowly on achievement and cognition. This, too, represents a form of awkward brilliance.

Call for localized Waldorf education: This dissertation calls for the development of contemporary and localized Waldorf education. The underlying assumption is that students learn better and experience greater well-being when they feel a sense of belonging and recognition within their educational environment. Waldorf teachers often describe this relational process as artistic teaching, since it requires a form of social artistry – crafting lessons in the moment, in dialogue with students, so that content resonates deeply with them. In practice, this proves challenging. True alignment calls on teachers to be both anthroposophists and anthropologists, so that, grounded in a deep understanding of human development, they can translate a Waldorf vision into a curriculum rooted in local culture and community.

Practical relevance: Finally, the practical relevance of this study lies in its reflective function. The mirror it offers will differ for each reader and perspective. For myself, as a developing person, teacher, and school leader within a Waldorf school, this reflection is immediate. I view this research as a call to action and continuous improvement. I deeply hope it will inspire others too in their pursuit of contemporary and culturally inclusive (Waldorf) education.

Samenvatting

Deze dissertatie geeft een etnografische beschrijving van een Filipijnse vrijeschool en gaat daarbij na hoe vrijeschoolonderwijs zich manifesteert in een Filipijnse setting. Hoewel de casus op zichzelf uniek is, geeft het ook inzicht in de globalisering van vrijeschoolonderwijs.

De belangrijkste inzichten uit het onderzoek zijn de volgende:

Op methodologisch vlak biedt deze dissertatie een rationale voor de zogenoemde teacher-ethnographer's view. Dit gezichtspunt komt voort uit onderzoek dat gedaan wordt door docenten in onderwijssettings, zoals onderzoek door vrijeschoolleraren over vrijeschoolonderwijs. De nabijheid van de onderzoekers bij het onderzoeksthema brengt weliswaar risico's met zich mee, maar levert ook rijke doorleefde data op van binnenuit en leidt vanwege die nabijheid ook gemakkelijker tot verbeteringen in de onderwijspraktijk.

Op theoretisch vlak bepleit deze dissertatie het gebruik van de globaliseringsbenadering van Anna Tsing. Haar benadering, ook wel aangemerkt als etnography of global connections, stelt dat globaliseringsprocessen zich moeilijk laten vangen in abstractie. Onderzoekers dienen daarom vooral heel concreet naar specifieke gevallen te kijken en zich daarbij te richten op zogenoemde zones of awkward engagement, plekken van ontmoeting, waar ogenschijnlijk universele concepten nieuwe lokale betekenis krijgen. In zones of awkward engagement is er soms sprake van verwarring of frictie en incidenteel ook van glans. Tsings benadering maakt het ook logisch te kiezen voor een traditionele etnografische aanpak, omdat die aanpak leidt tot specifiek en diep inzicht. Zones of awkward engagement in het geval van Filipijns vrijeschoolonderwijs omvatten de incorporatie van antroposofische concepten in Filipino referentiekaders, de ontmoeting in het klaslokaal van leerlingen met diverse achtergronden – uit het dorp en uit de stad, rijk en arm – en de schurende Eurocentrische lesinhouden in een Illongo-school.

Op empirisch vlak is deze studie bijzonder omdat het één van de weinige studies is naar globalisering van vrijeschoolonderwijs en misschien wel de enige studie die dat doet in een Filipijnse context. Daarnaast is deze dissertatie vooral ook van waarde omdat het een empirische uitwerking van de hierboven genoemde frictiegebieden betreft.

In de sociale sfeer valt daarbij het afnemende aandeel dorpskinderen op ten opzichte van het toenemende aandeel stadskinderen in de school. Verklaring hiervoor zou kunnen zijn dat de idealen van de school, met bijvoorbeeld de gerichtheid op brede persoonlijke ontwikkeling en een eigentijdse en alternatieve leefstijl, met bijvoorbeeld gezond en vegetarisch eten, biologische en duurzame producten en het vermijden van schermtijd en sociale media, meer aansluiten bij het cultureel kapitaal en de verwachtingen van stadse middenklasse families die zoeken naar alternatieve onderwijsvormen dan bij arme dorpse families, op wie deze kenmerken juist een vervreemdend effect kunnen hebben. Internationale bezoekers, Engels als voertaal en een dagelijkse stroom auto's uit de stad

vergroten dit vervreemdende effect. Maar, naast het schuren is er ook glans, want in de klas gaat het verbazingwekkend goed, spelen de kinderen samen en voelen ze zich gelijk.

In de culturele sfeer is er ook frictie, met name in het curriculum. Dat curriculum wordt enerzijds opgevat als vernieuwend en mondain, maar omvat tegelijkertijd veel Eurocentrische aspecten, zoals sprookjes van Grimm of lessen over beroemde Europese ontdekkingsreizigers. Tegelijkertijd maakt de aandacht voor onder meer kunst- en bewegingsvakken vrijeschoolonderwijs ook een zinvol alternatief voor veel ouders en leerlingen ten opzichte van andere onderwijsvormen, die uitsluitend gericht zijn op prestatie en cognitie. Daarin schuilt ook een zekere glans, of awkward brilliance.

Deze dissertatie is ook een oproep tot het vormgeven van eigentijds en gelokaliseerd vrijeschoolonderwijs. De onderliggende aanname is daarbij dat leerlingen tot beter leren en tot een hoger welzijn komen als ze zich thuis voelen en herkenning en erkenning vinden in de onderwijssetting waarin zij zich ontwikkelen. Vrijeschoolleraren duiden dit relationele proces soms aan met de term 'kunstzinnig onderwijs', omdat het sociaal kunstenaarschap vereist om een les zo vorm te geven, in het moment en in contact met de leerlingen, zodat de lesstof optimaal afgestemd is op hen. In de praktijk blijkt dit niet eenvoudig. Een werkelijke afstemming vraagt welhaast aan docenten om antroposofen en antropologen tegelijk te zijn, opdat zij zich vanuit doorgronde menskundige kennis, passend bij een vrijeschoolvisie, een vertaalslag kunnen maken naar een passend curriculum, gestoeld op en gegrond in de lokale cultuur en gemeenschap.

Tot slot is de praktische relevantie van deze studie gelegen in haar spiegelfunctie, de mogelijkheid tot reflectie. Die reflectie verschilt per lezer, per invalshoek. Voor mijzelf, als ontwikkelend mens en als leraar en schoolleider op een vrijeschool, is de reflectie direct. Ik zie het onderzoek als aansporing. Hopelijk inspireert het onderzoek ook andere mensen in hun streven naar eigentijds en cultureel inclusief (vrijeschool)onderwijs.

Buod (Tagalog / Filipino)

Ang disertasyong ito ay nagbibigay ng isang etnograpikong pag-aaral tungkol sa isang paaralang Waldorf sa Pilipinas, na sinusuri kung paano naisasabuhay ang edukasyong Waldorf sa kontekstong Pilipino. Bagama't natatangi-, nag-aalok din ito ng mga pananaw tungkol sa pagkalaganap ng edukasyong Waldorf sa daigdig.

Pangunahing natuklasan ng pag-aaral:

Metodolohikal na ambag: Nag-aalok ang disertasyong ito ng paliwanag para sa tinatawag na pananaw ng *guro-etnograpo*. Ang ganitong pananaw ay nagmumula sa mga pananaliksik na isinagawa ng mga guro sa loob ng kanilang sariling kapaligang pang-edukasyon — halimbawa, mga guro sa Waldorf na nagsasaliksik tungkol sa edukasyong Waldorf. Bagama't may panganib ng pagkiling dahil sa lapit ng mananaliksik sa paksa, nagbibigay rin ito ng mahalagang mga datos mula sa aktwal na karanasan at nagbibigay ng direktang pagmumungkahi para sa pagpapabuti ng mga gawi sa pagtuturo.

Teoretikal na ambag: Ipinapanukala ng disertasyong ito ang paggamit ng pamamaraan ni Anna Tsing tungkol sa globalisasyon. Ayon sa kanyang pananaw – na kilala bilang *ethnography of global connections* – ang mga proseso ng globalisasyon ay konkreto at partikular, hindi abstrakto. Samakatuwid dapat ay tumuon ang mga mananaliksik sa mga konkreto at partikular na kaso at pag-aralan ang tinatawag na zones of *awkward engagement*: mga tagpo ng pagkikita kung saan ang tila unibersal na mga ideya ay nagkakaroon ng panibagong lokal na kahulugan. Sa mga ganitong lugar, maaaring lumitaw ang kalituhan, tensiyon, at minsan ay kahusayan. Nagbibigay rin ang balangkas ni Tsing ng matibay na dahilan upang gumamit ng tradisyunal na etnograpikong pamamaraan, dahil ito'y nagdudulot ng lalim at tiyak na pananaw.

Sa konteksto ng edukasyong Waldorf sa Pilipinas, kabilang sa mga *zones of awkward engagement* ang pagsasama ng mga konseptong antroposopikal sa mga pananaw na Pilipino; ang interaksyon sa silid-aralan ng mga batang mula sa iba't ibang pinagmulan—tagalunsod at tagabayan, mayaman at mahirap; at ang mga tensiyon na dulot ng Eurocentric na nilalaman ng kurikulum sa isang paaralang Ilonggo.

Empirikal na ambag: Isa ito sa kakaunting pag-aaral na tumitingin sa globalisasyon ng edukasyong Waldorf, at marahil ang tanging isinagawa sa konteksto ng Pilipinas. Ang halaga nito ay nasa masusing pagsusuri ng mga nabanggit na lugar ng tensiyon.

Sa larangang panlipunan, kapansin-pansin ang pagbaba ng bilang ng mga batang mula sa baryo kumpara sa pagdami ng mga estudyanteng galing sa lungsod. Maaaring ipaliwanag ito sa pamamagitan ng mga mithiin ng paaralan—tulad ng pagbibigay-diin sa holistikong pag-unlad ng tao at alternatibong pamumuhay na may kasamang masustansyang pagkain (madalas ay vegetarian), mga ekolohikal at kapana-panatiling gawain, at limitadong paggamit ng screen at social media – na marahil ay mas umaayon sa gusto at inaasahan ng

mga pamilyang nabibilang sa demograpikong urban middle class kaysa sa mga pamilyang mahihirap, na maaaring makaramdam ng pagkailang sa mga mithiin na ito. Ang paggamit ng Ingles bilang pangunahing wikang panturo, ang presensya ng mga bisitang banyaga, at ang araw-araw na pagdating ng mga sasakyang mula sa lungsod ay lalong nagpapalalim ng distansyang ito. Gayunman, sa kabila ng mga tensiyong ito, may tagpo rin ng karunungan at kagandahan: sa silid-aralan, naglalaro at nag-aaral ang mga bata nang magkasama, at umiiral ang pakiramdam ng pagkakapantay-pantay.

Sa larangang kultural, makikita rin ang tensiyon, lalo na sa kurikulum. Habang itinuturing itong makabago at kosmopolitan, naglalaman din ito ng maraming elementong Eurocentric, gaya ng mga kuwentong pambata- ng Brothers Grimm o mga aralin tungkol sa mga kilalang manlalakbay na taga-Europa. Gayunman, ang diin ng edukasyong Waldorf sa sining, pag-galaw, at pagkamalikhain ay nagbibigay ng makahulugang alternatibo sa karaniwang edukasyon na nakatuon lamang sa kahusayang intelektwal . Ito rin ay isang anyo ng *awkward brilliance*.

Pananaw para sa lokal na Waldorf education: Nananawagan ang disertasyong ito para sa paglinang ng makabago at lokal na bersyon ng edukasyong Waldorf. Ang batayang palagay ay mas mahusay ang pagkatuto at mas malalim ang kapakanan ng mga mag-aaral kapag nararamdaman nila ang pagkakabilang at pagkilala sa loob ng kanilang kapaligirang pang-edukasyon. Madalas ilarawan ng mga guro sa Waldorf ang prosesong ito bilang *artistic teaching*, dahil nangangailangan ito ng malikhaing pag-iisip—ang pagbubuo at pagbigay ng nakakabagay na aralin sa mismong sandali, sa pakikipag-usap at pakikitungo sa mga bata, upang ang nilalaman ay tumugma sa kanilang karanasan. Sa praktikal, ito ay mahirap. Ang tunay na pagkakahanay ay nangangailangan na ang mga guro ay maging parehong antroposopista at antropologo: gamit ang kanilang malalim na pag-unawa sa pagka-Tao kaya niyang ipatupad ang pananaw ng Waldorf tungo sa kurikulum na nakabatay sa lokal na kultura at komunidad.

Praktikal na kabuluhan: Sa pagwakas, ang praktikal na kabuluhan ng pag-aaral na ito ay nasa kakayahan nitong magsilbing salamin. Iba-iba ang repleksyong makikita ng bawat mambabasa. Para sa akin, bilang isang taong patuloy na umuunlad—bilang guro at pinuno sa isang paaralang Waldorf—ang repleksyong ito ay agarang tumatama. Tinuturing ko ang pananaliksik na ito bilang panawagan tungo sa pagkilos at patuloy na pagpapahusay. Lubos kong inaasahan na ito rin ay makapagpapasigla sa iba sa kanilang paghahangad ng makabago at kultural na inklusibong (Waldorf) na edukasyon.

Translated by: Teresa Lucia Canonero

Buod (Hiligaynon / Ilonggo)

Ini nga disertasyon nagahatag sang etnograpiko nga pagsaysay bahin sa isa ka eskwelahan sa Pilipinas nga nagagamit sang Waldorf nga pamaagi sang pagtudlo, kag ginapakita sini kon paano nagakatabu ang Waldorf education sa konteksto sang Pilipinas. Bisan pinasahi, nagahatag man ini sang mga panan-aw parte sa paglapnag sang Waldorf nga edukasyon sa kalibutan.

Panguna nga mga nadiskubre sang pagtuon:

Metodolohikal nga kontribusyon: Nagahatag ini nga disertasyon sang rason para sa ginatawag nga *teacher-ethnographer's* view. Ini nga panan-aw naghalin sa mga pagtuon nga ginahimo sang mga manunudlo mismo sa sulod sang ila ginatudluan – pareho sang mga manundulo sa Waldorf nga eskwelahan nga naga-tuon parte sa Waldorf education. Bisan may risgo sang pagkiling tungod sang pagkalapit sang manugtuon sa iya ginatun-an, nagahatag man ini sang madalom kag buhi nga datos halin mismo sa sulod kag nagahatag sang tsansa para sa direkta nga bulig para sa pag improbar sang praktis sa pagtudlo.

Teoretikal nga kontribusyon: Ginasuportahan sang disertasyon ang paggamit sang pamaagi ni Anna Tsing bahin sa globalisasyon. Suno sa iya nga *ethnography of global connections*, ang mga proseso sang globalisasyon indi abstrakto kundi konkreto kag partikular. Ang mga manugtuon dapat magpokus sa mga partikular nga kaso kag magtan-aw sa mga ginatawag nga *zones of awkward engagement* – mga okasyon kon sa diin ang mga ideya nga daw unibersal naga angkon man sang bag-o nga lokal nga kahulugan. Sa mga okasyon kaangay sini, nagakatabo gid ang pagkagamo, tensyon, kag kon kaisa makakita man sang, kasanag kag kaalam.

Sa konteksto sang Waldorf nga pagtudlo sa Pilipinas, ang mga *zones of awkward engagement* yara sa pagsulod sang mga antroposopikal nga ideya sa Filipino nga panghunahuna; ang pagtililipon sang mga kabataan nga may lain-lain nga ginahalinan – taga-siudad kag taga-baryo, manggaranon kag pigado; kag ang tensyon nga nagahalin sa makabig nga Eurocentric nga mga leksyon sa isa ka Ilonggo nga eskwelahan. Empirikal nga kontribusyon: Isa ini sa pila lang ka pagtuon nga naga-usisa sang globalisasyon sang Waldorf nga edukasyon, kag siguro amo lang ini ang nahimo sa konteksto sang Pilipinas. Ang importansya sini makita sa madetalye nga pag-analisa sa sining mga okasyon nga may tensyon.

Sa pangkomunidad nga bahin, isa ka talalupangdon nga resulta amo ang pagnubo sang bahin sang mga kabataan nga taga-baryo kag ang pagdamo sang mga estudyante nga taga-syudad. Ini mahimo nga resulta sang mga ginapatihan sang eskwelahan—pareho sang paghatag-importansiya sa holistiko nga pag-uswag sang tawo kag sa alternatibo nga estilo sang pagpangabuhi nga naga-ugyon sa ikaayong-lawas (masami vegetarian), ekolohikal kag sustenable nga pang gawi, kag pag limita sa paggamit sang screen kag social media. Ini nga mga pagpati mas malapit sa kultura kag ginapangita sang mga urban

middle-class nga pamilya kaysa sa mga pigado nga taga-baryo, nga mahimo makapabatyag sa ila nga wala sila nagakabagay sa sini nga komunidadlayo. Ang paggamit sang Ingles bilang pinakapanguna nga linguahe sa pagtudlo, ang presensya sang mga bisita halin sa iban nga pungsod, kag ang adlaw-adlaw nga pag-abot sang mga salakyan halin sa syudad nagapadugang sang sini nga distansya. Apang sa tunga sang sini nga tensyon, may ara man sang katahum: sa sulod sang buluthuan, ang mga kabataan naga-intiendihanay, naga hampang, kag nagatoon nga ululupod, nga wala sang pagbatyag nga lain-lain ang ila ginahalinan nga pagpangabuhi.

Sa kultural nga bahin, makita man ang tensyon, labi na sa kurikulum. Bisan ginatan-aw nga moderno kag kosmopolitan, naga gamit man ini sang madamo nga makabig nga Eurocentric nga materyales, pareho sang mga istorya sang Brothers Grimm ukon mga leksyon parte sa mga sikat nga taga-Europa nga manugpanglakaton. Pero ang pagtuon sang Waldorf nga nagahatag importansya sa sa sining, sa paghulag, kag sa pagkamatugahon nagahatag sang alternatibo sa mainstream nga edukasyon nga nakatutok lamang sa akademiko kag kognitibo nga pagtuon. Ini man isa ka porma sang *awkward brilliance*.

Panawagan para sa lokal nga Waldorf nga edukasyon: Nagapanawagan ini nga disertasyon para sa pagpatubo sang isa ka lokal kag kontemporaryo nga pagtudlo paagi sa Waldorf education. Ang prinsipyo diri amo nga mas maayo ang pagtoon kag pamatyagon sang mga estudyante kon ila mabatyagan nga kabahin man sila kag makit-an gid sila nga importante nga miyembro sang ila eskwelahan. Ini nga proseso sang pagtudlo ginakabig sang mga manunudlo sa Waldorf bilang *artistic teaching* – ang kapasidad nga maghatag kag mag-angot sang nagakaigo nga leksyon samtang ini nagakatabo kag ang pag paambit kag pagpakig-angot sa mga estudyante agud ang leksyon ila man mabagay sa ila mga personal nga eksperyensiya. Pero indi ini mahapos nga buluhaton. Kay ang matuod nga pag intiende nagakinahanglan nga ang mga manunudlo mangin pareho nga antroposopista kag antropologo – nga may madalom nga paghangup sa pag-uswag sang tawo kag makahimo magdala sang panan-aw sang Waldorf sa lokal nga kultura kag komunidad.

Praktikal nga kaangtanan: Sa katapusan, ang praktikal nga kaangtanan sang sini nga pagtuon amo ang iya gamit para sa pag nilay-nilay, kag ini naga lain-lain sa tagsa ka sa manogbasa. Para sa akon, bilang isa ka manunudlo kag kabahin sa liderato sang isa ka Waldorf nga eskwelahan, ini nga pagnilay-nilay direkta kag personal. Ginalantaw ko ini nga pagtuon bilang panawagan sa aksyon kag padayon nga pagpaayo. Nagalaum ako nga makahatag man ini sang insiprasyon sa iban sa ila pagpangita sang Waldorf nga sahi sang edukasyon nga kontemporaryo kag inklusibo sa kultura.

Translated by: Teresa Lucia Canonero