Globalization of Waldorf education: an ethnographic case study from the Philippines

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CHAPTER 7

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

[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

[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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