



Bund der Freien
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Struwwelpeter 2.0

Shockheaded Peter

Media competency and
Waldorf education



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Waldorfschulen

This reader is published as a collaboration between the German Waldorf School Association and "Aktion mündige Schule" (AmS). AmS campaigns for freedom in education and in 1995 initiated the first popular initiative "Schools in freedom" (www.freie-schule.de); it subsequently supported the initiatives of the same name in Berlin and Brandenburg.

Freedom has an outer and an inner side. The former creates the prerequisites, the latter the substance. They both have in common that they do not simply just exist but keep having to be re-conquered

Media competency is one of the issues of freedom in our time.

Aktion mündige Schule eV



Dear Readers,

When my daughter was five years old, she explained to my wife how our fax machine works. She had never sent a fax herself but had occasionally watched her father doing so. Such an experience, nostalgic as this one might be, is something which we nevertheless encounter everywhere: parents, pre-school teachers and teachers keep being confronted with the fact that the children and young people with whom they work and who have been entrusted to their care use the latest electronic media without a second thought and move in virtual worlds of which adults are not even aware that they exist. What remains is often a feeling of insecurity, fear or helplessness.

That is no different for Waldorf teachers, one of whose most important educational ideals is to prepare the children in a wholly practical way for the challenges of their time.

As long ago as 1919 Rudolf Steiner emphasised that no pupil should be allowed to leave the Waldorf school without at least knowing the basics of how an electric tram works. We could not be alert to what is happening in our time if we did not understand how the technology functions which we use in everyday life. In Rudolf Steiner's time it was trams and the telegraph, today it is computers, smartphones, the Internet and robots.

From an educational perspective it can never be a matter of condemning technology. It is not about moral rules of behaviour but about enabling pupils to make meaningful use of technology. In order to be able to do that, we first ourselves have to understand the individual, social or constitutional effects a piece of technology might have—both for the person who uses it and the person who uses its products.

An unprejudiced and precise observation of technology always allows us to find exact correspondences with physical, psychological, social and intellectual activities of human beings. Equally technology relieves people of work and leads to completely new structures in society.

Educationally the question therefore immediately arises as to the abilities which a growing person must develop in order to be able to handle technology with the freedom to allow them to use it meaningfully and not succumb blindly to its fascination.

This applies in particular measure to the electronic media which imitate a lot of psychological activity and thus have a particularly seductive effect: why should we make an effort when on an emotional level of experience very similar effects can be downloaded through the minimal movement of a finger?

Waldorf education very deliberately makes use of the opportunities offered by the different periods of life and developmental phases which young people pass through in the course of growing up. Accordingly the curriculum is an artistic synthesis which is constantly developing; but at the same time it also watches out to discover new skills and strengths which each pupil can acquire in the course of their schooling by various means. It is the purpose of this publication to show that Waldorf education can contribute crucial perspectives for the development of a development-oriented media education.

What does that mean for daily teaching practice? What is the relationship between the new challenges and proven Waldorf traditions? From what age should we deal specifically and consciously with electronic media? How can they be used meaningfully and creatively in lessons? What skills are important in the use of media and when is the basis for them laid?

The present brochure is intended particularly for pre-school teachers and teachers, but it can also be understood by interested parents and pupils because it largely avoids the use of specialist terminology. It goes without saying that this outline is a work in progress which has to keep develop-

ing. Above all, it wishes to give encouragement to the pre-school teachers and teachers who are actively seeking to grapple with one of the great educational challenges of our time.

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*Henning Kullak-Ublick,
Hamburg, August 2015*

Clarification of concepts

Dr. Edwin Hübner

“Students have alarmingly poor reading and spelling skills—but great media competency” was the title of a report in July 2012 about a previously unpublished study.¹ In it lecturers at philosophical faculties in Germany complained about a serious lack of quality in students which “positively jumps out at you”: “There are difficulties above all in spelling, orthography, the command of grammar and syntax. A lack has generally been observed in the ability to formulate something independently, write coherent texts and, above all, also a lack of competency in reading, for example when making notes during lectures.” A few sentences later the report says about the same students: “They undoubtedly have greater media competency, there is no dispute about that.”

Reading this, we might start to ponder what is meant by media competency. Because writing is most certainly a medium. And there are clear complaints that writing skills are too poor. So that cannot be what is meant with media competency. However, if we only understand it to refer to the competency in handling information technology, then the quoted statement makes sense. It is nevertheless true that much information and many scientific texts on the Internet are only available in written form. But if we have difficulty with the medium of writing, what, then, does the compe-

tency in dealing with the Internet mean? Finding an essay buried away somewhere on the Internet and cleverly being able to download it to one’s computer, but not understanding its content?

This example makes clear that there is a lack of conceptual clarity. What is media competency? And at an even more basic level: what is a medium at all?

This question can be answered with a general definition but that does not get us much further because there is a great variety of products or machines which can all be described as media: newspapers, magazines, books, radios, televisions, computers, etc.

If we try to determine phenomenologically what human beings encounter in their environment, there are essentially three key aspects:

- **Writing**
- **Transmitted or preserved speech or music**
- **Still or moving images**

1) Pany, Thomas: „Studierende mit alarmierenden Lese- und Rechtschreibschwächen“, in: *Telepolis* 24.7.2012 www.heise.de/tp



Writing



Preserved speech and music



Still or moving pictures

The same content can be transmitted by all three forms of media but the activity of a person in engaging with each medium is qualitatively different. If someone reads a written work then it is the eyes which are primarily active and that person has to develop their own images in the imagination on the basis of the abstract sequence of symbols they see. When people have contact with the word transmitted by technology it is mainly their hearing that is active. Here too they have to create individual images through the activity of their imagination. In transmitted images, above all sounds and moving images together, the activity of the imagination is hardly necessary because the images are already there.

With that we have arrived at what people do in concrete terms when they read a text, listen to music or watch a new film on the screen—independently of the transmitted content. We therefore have to differentiate between two aspects when we look at the relationship between a person and media: on the one hand the transmitted content (ideas and thoughts) to which the individual directs their attention, and on the other hand the aspect of the activity, what people do physically while they are dealing with the technical artefact or device. People are engaged in differ-

ent activities in relation to the same photographic image depending on whether they look at it on photographic paper, on a computer screen or projected on to a wall with a projector.

The way people interact with media therefore takes place in the context of the tension which exists between the way they relate with their ideas and with their activity to the respective medium.

A distinction has to be made between the media type as a procedure, as a technical process, and the “material” in which this process takes place. Text can be written on stone, a papyrus roll or paper, but it can also appear in print in books, ebooks, newspapers, magazines or on the screen of a computer. Writing as a media type remains the same in all those instances. But the carrier by means of which it is made accessible to people is a different one in each case and people have a different relationship to the respective carrier with the whole of their sensory organism and that influences in a subtle way how people deal with the media type of writing.



Media content



Media type



Media carrier

We therefore have to distinguish between three layers when looking at media:

1. **Media content**—what people take in as content (e.g. the content of a novel).
2. **Media type**—the process by which something is communicated or presented (text or sound).
3. **Media carrier**—the material basis on or within which the communicative or presentational process occurs (book, ebook, smartphone, MP3 player, etc.).

The contradiction described at the beginning is now easy to understand. The philosophy students display clear deficits with regard to the media type “text” but possess pronounced skill in handling the media carrier “computer”. But comprehensive media competency comprises not just skill in handling the media carriers but also the media types text, sound and image. Media education thus comprises several fields: media content, the field of media types and the field of media carriers.

But education must not just be guided by the abilities which people need to select content, handle devices and deal with media types but it also has to take the physical and emotional development of children and adolescents into account. That is why it is indispensable that reflections on media education are preceded by considerations of developmental psychology and our understanding of the human being. We have to start with the growing human being when we consider at what point it makes sense to learn to handle certain skills with the children in the various fields of media competency.

Media education in the light of our understanding of the human being

Henning Kullak-Ublick

Each child develops individually. This obvious fact can lead us to neglect to provide educational support for the characteristic developmental stages which every child passes through at certain stages of their life. In contrast, Waldorf education places a particular value on children and adolescents being able to develop within realms of experience which take account of their physical, emotional, social and intellectual degree of maturity. Such a balancing act between doing things too early or too late demands that teachers keep the development of each individual child as well as of the class community constantly in mind.

The archetypal image for age-appropriate development, as well as for learning as a whole, is the conquest of the three archetypal human abilities of walking upright, speaking and thinking. These developmental stages, which every human being requires, are linked both to the age of the first three years of life as well as the surroundings of the children; but they nevertheless have to be acquired by each child individually and thus lead to an extension of their individual autonomy. These experiences are so fundamental in nature that they form the constitutional basis for all further learning.

Taking account of important moments in child development certainly does not restrict their individual process of maturation but, on the contrary, helps it to unfold fully. To remain with the example above: it is of course possible to force a child to walk prematurely by means of a baby walker but by doing so we deprive them of the essential experience for their future life of being able to obtain an upright posture through their own strength and thus to achieve a completely different relationship to their surroundings. Conversely it would be a forced intervention to prevent the child from walking once they have become mature enough to do so. What is important, then, is to create the space for the child to develop but not to force it.

Rudolf Steiner describes a particularly marked developmental step through which children and adolescents obtain an increasingly autonomous relationship with the world in that forces which previously worked unconsciously turn into freely available soul forces. He compared this gain of personal autonomy with birth and drew attention to the fact that we can observe something like a seven-year rhythm in this respect.



In early childhood children make themselves at home in their body and successively develop it into an instrument with which to experience the world and through which they can establish a direct and

sensory relationship with their environment. Here the surrounding spaces, movements, rhythms—in short, the surrounding atmosphere—play a crucial role. The more the sensory experiences are differentiated, the more there is a rhythm to the course of the day, the more the actions of the adults around the child are meaningful, the more it is possible for the child to build a rich physical and constitutional foundation for life. At this age, Rudolf Steiner says, the child moves in an envelope woven from the habits, thoughts and feelings of the adults. The soul forces of thinking, feeling and intent largely form a unity which should not be broken apart through a premature and one-sided intellectual emphasis.



At around the age of six or seven, these forces are successively discovered as independent fields of experience and require differentiated support and attention. The forces which were previously directly engaged in forming the body—Steiner calls them the etheric or formative forces—are liberated and can now be used to form conscious and deliberately produced thoughts and ideas. The imagination plays a crucial role in this respect; after all, it allows children to develop a flexible and vivid life of ideas from which they can derive the corresponding concepts in a second and third developmental step. At this age the relationship of children with the world is significantly determined by the relationship of the adults surrounding them with the world. The children experimentally borrow their view of the world, as it were, in order to form their own on that basis—and be it in opposition.



With puberty, thinking, feeling and the will have established themselves as independent fields of activity to such an extent that it increasingly lies within the autonomy of the adolescent to bring them together into a unity again. With regard to the further, now fully conscious learning, it is exceptionally important that they experience in adults that the latter are in this sense in control of their thinking, feeling and will, in other words, have obtained an individual relationship with the world and form both their judgements and their actions out of such an awareness.

All learning experiences are based on the archetypal image described at the beginning: just as in learning to stand upright and walk it is the active, acting will which is at work, language has a direct relationship with an experience of the world through the feel-

ings (as the search for the right word clearly shows) in order then to become the teacher of the thinking.

In the fifth lecture in "Study of Man", Rudolf Steiner describes the extraordinary threefold step which leads from inference via judgement to the concept: the first step is that children should concern themselves with a subject through perception, action and experiment in order then to describe it precisely and thus develop a basic power of judgement (what do I describe, what do I leave out, etc.). Once this activity of perception and judgement has been able to be processed at least once in sleep, the children together form concepts which result from looking back on what they have experienced and remembered. This path from experience into consciousness enables the individual formation of judgements and concepts because it does not roll out a finished result but moderates an open-ended process which challenges the will, feeling and thinking.

The above considerations can be summarised in a table:

Age	Birth to approx. age 6–7	To approx. age 13–14	To approx. age 20–21
Relationship with:	Parents and surroundings	+ school and friends	+ “world”
Social relationships	Attachment	Relationship	Encounter
Learning stages	Learning linked with activity	Learning linked with emotion	Conscious learning
Cognitive stages	Self-experience	Sense of self-worth	Self-assurance

This signature of learning through discovery must also underlie the curricula for media education. Here the consistent motif in the encounter with the world, constitutive in the first years of school, is that the children experience connections. Not individual chunks of knowledge but conceptual landscapes or chronological processes should be experienced and understood. When children in their second year at school draw reflections in a circle and in class 12 mathematically investigate inversion in a circle, they encounter the same phenomenon through activity on the one hand and then cognitively on the other. If children in class 3 experience for a whole year what is involved in making a roll, from ploughing to baking, they will have a more thoroughly real relation-

ship with global economic questions, ecology, the chemical effect of fire and much else than if they had to do without such a basis in experience.

In the following outline of a curriculum (page 14), the attempt will be made to do justice as much to the various ways that children and growing young people can access the world as to the social conditions under which they are growing up.

Indirect and direct media education

Dr. Edwin Hübner

Technology saves people from having to do things although as a result they face the risk of losing the corresponding skills just like a muscle atrophies if it is not used. Human beings thus tend to be alienated from intentional thinking and their own body through technology: as active human beings they are reduced to mere conceptual thinking. This does not have to be a problem for adults who can find the corresponding counterbalance. For them the positive opportunities of the world of technology thus open up.

For children there is the fundamental problem that they first of all have to develop their body. In a development which takes many years, they have to develop their physical, emotional and intellectual abilities as the indispensable basis for obtaining media competency.

Direct media education, which enables the growing human being to use media in a meaningful way, must therefore be preceded by indirect media education which schools precisely those abilities in human beings which they require to be equal to the challenges of life and thus at the same time the demands which the technical media world makes of them.

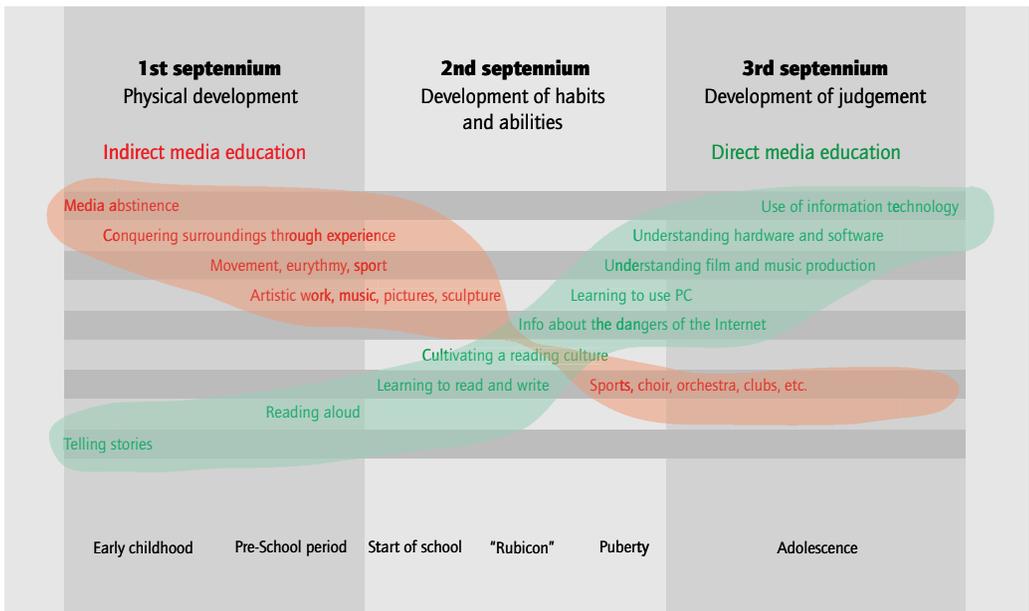
That is why all education in the present time is media education: education today and in the future must proceed on the basis that young people grow up in a technical media world. That does not mean, however, that somehow media have to be present in each lesson. On the contrary: as the primary developmental task of the child is to develop and master their own physical and emotional forces, education has to begin by supporting their healthy development. It therefore has to ensure, on the one hand, that children find many activities in their surroundings which stimulate them to develop their physical and mental abilities in a healthy and rounded way. On the other hand it has to be ensured that everything which would hinder such physical and mental development is excluded. Indirect media education therefore tries to make sure that in the first years of life to the time when the child is ready for school technical media do not play any role in the child's life.

Life in early childhood should ideally be free of media. The aim is to enable children to practice and train their ability to do things physically and experience things emotionally, and thus their will, in many different ways. Everything which is an obstacle to such practice should be excluded. In essence, we could say that the motto for such an approach is: **later media competency is rooted in earlier media abstinence.**

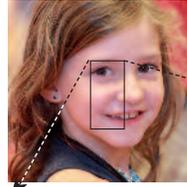
Such an educational approach is often vilified contemptuously as “overprotective education”. It is not, however, a case of “protecting” but of “enabling”. This is an “enabling educa-

tion” which helps children to acquire the forces which they need for life in a world filled with information technology which the latter cannot, however, give them.

As children grow up, indirect media education retains its importance as a counterweight but does increasingly move into the background to give way to direct media education. The following diagram illustrates the interaction between indirect and direct media education:



The principle characteristic of modern media is image resolution, i.e. "atomisation" and "fragmentation". Here the resolution of the printed image into raster dots at five times magnification



A principal characteristic of all media can be described with the words "fragmentation" or "atomisation".

Such a signature can already be seen in writing. The living flow of language is analysed and broken down into individual sounds which are then translated into symbolic representations. Language living in the present is made enduring in spatially ordered symbols.

Film breaks down movement into many images taken rapidly one after the other. Television technology divides the image one step further into thousands of individual dots. The transmission of language by mobile communications works on the same principle. The acoustic signals are scanned in a cycles of milliseconds and the measured values are translated into digital information which is then transmitted.

This signature of atomisation inherent to media technology also has an effect on content. It is a basic characteristic of all media types that they separate out and hold fast details from living reality which thus lose their relationship with the totality of life.





The media world surrounding us gives us a fragmented world of individual pieces of information which in themselves no longer have a context. Just look at a news broadcast from this perspective. An amazing wealth of particulars is presented which is, however, completely missing any inner coherence. A war in the Middle East is directly followed by a natural disaster in the USA; a serious accident in China is described and subsequently the opening of a museum; this is followed by the result of a football match in Europe and finally by the weather forecast. These individual contributions have nothing to do with one another. Their lack of context fails to communicate any meaning.

Facing this is the individual person who has to find their way around a world presented in this way. They need the ability to orientate themselves in this cosmos of fragmented scraps of information and embed them again in some kind of context. They can only do this if they have acquired a certain level of background knowledge. Education has to support the growing young person in this. It has to give them the ability once again to work out a context for themselves in a world of disjointed bits of information. For that they need on the one hand a broadly based general education comprising as many fields of life and knowledge as possible, and on the

other hand a centre in themselves to which they can relate everything they know.

We can find an important educational reference in this regard in Rudolf Steiner. He told the teachers working at the time:

"But there is a relationship which is of very special importance and which we should establish wherever possible: the relationship with the human being as such. We should take every opportunity to establish the relationship with the human being as such. That is to say, we may be discussing an animal, we may be discussing a plant, we may be discussing a thermal phenomenon—in every instance we have the opportunity without fragmenting the lesson, without distracting the child as it were, to connect the matter with something concerning the human being."

If human beings are placed at the centre, and if beyond that we seek to show how they relate to their environment, then children can consolidate themselves inwardly and develop an assurance in their relationship with the world. They possess a centre to which they can relate the bits of information in which assail them every day in a meaningful way.

Media curriculum

Dr. Edwin Hübner

A person is not really media competent if they can only use a PC. Media competency means knowing the advantages and disadvantages of all media types and media carriers and, depending on the situation, selecting the one which is most suitable at any particular time.

For this reason, too, it is important that children should first learn to handle the classic media carriers: paper and books. Beyond that, current practice has shown that there is no real educational sense in making use of computers in lessons before the age of 12.

Waldorf education considers the ability to use a computer to be as important as do other educational methods. But it holds the view that the age at which a subject is dealt with by the children is of central importance. The independent use of a computer assumes that an independent judgement has been developed. The ability to form our own judgements does not primarily start developing until the age of 12—and not until this age is it educationally sensible and necessary to use computers, and IT technology as a whole, as media carriers. However, the education about media types must be clearly distinguished from this. It starts as soon as the child enters school.

Direct media education takes place at the levels of media type and media

carrier. Attention must be paid to every level in school and for every field there is a curriculum.

Curriculum for the media type "text"

Children should experience in early childhood that stories have their origin in the human imagination. That is why it is desirable that children at the beginning of their life are initially told stories—without a book in hand.

Subsequently it is important that we should keep reading to children. Children should experience that in books, and in texts as a whole, the mysterious and exciting stories which people tell one another have been written down. Parents should observe their function as role models and display an active book culture through their behaviour.

In the first class at school, children learn how to write and how what has been written can be read on the basis of active pictorially artistic activity.

From classes 2 and 3 onwards it is important that the ability to write and read continues to be practised. To this end it is recommended to build up a class library in the classroom in which the children can lend each other the books they have found exciting. It is also very good if the school sets up a school library which gives encouragement to read. Reading groups spe-

cially set up for beginning readers contribute to the development of a reading culture.

From class 5 or 6 children should get an initial idea of what it means to do "research". There are many things that cannot be found on the Internet. There is an enormous wealth of knowledge in libraries. That is why it is important that growing young people learn about libraries and also get some idea how they can find things in the stocks of books held there.

In class 7 or 8 the pupils should develop the skill to touch-type with 10 fingers on a keyboard—at least for as long as computers are still operated with keyboards.

Curriculum for the media type "sound"

Just as with text, the ability to make judgements in the media type "sound" is based on our own active experiences. In the preschool period the children should find adults with whom they can sing together and through whom they can acquire a more or less big repertoire of songs.

In the first years at school, singing and making music together is very much cultivated and the stock of songs the children know is systematically expanded. Starting in class 1, the children should also learn simple musical instruments such as the recorder. A

more demanding instrument like the violin or piano can follow. The goal is for the children to acquire a broad spectrum of musical experiences and the corresponding skills.

From class 4 or 5 onwards simple music theory introduces thinking about the musical experiences. From class 8 onwards the young people should become familiar with the historical genesis of the culture of musical creation up to and including contemporary music. Here it is important that they should be able to analyse present popular music in particular and thereby understand how film music is composed and what function it performs within the action of the film.

Curriculum for the media type "image"

Much value is placed by everyone on a command of the textual media type. But there is not the same awareness that the image media type also has to be "read". Just as children have to learn to understand texts, they also have to know how images communicate a message and how it can be understood.

A central motif of a curriculum which takes its cue from child development is that children should first learn to create images through their own active work. That can start in the preschool period in that they begin to draw or paint simple motifs with wax crayons

or watercolours. This is built on in the early years at school when children only gradually become capable of developing an aesthetic sense. The children now learn to distinguish and aesthetically judge various shades of colour. As they grow older, the pictures and drawings become more differentiated and varied. At about the age of 12 (class 6), an introduction to the laws of projection and the theory of light and shade is also very useful. The children learn to handle the laws of perspective in a practical way through concrete drawing problems. In class 11 such practical understanding can be taken up and mathematically deepened in projective geometry.

From class 9 onwards is the time for the young people to become acquainted with the language of photographic and film images, once again by means of concrete projects. The aim should be for them to be able to analyse and understand the procedures of professional film-making through the production of their own films. In this context the adolescents should also understand the structure and function of advertising.

Understanding media carriers

It is one of the basic impulses of Waldorf education, something we can already find expressed in Steiner, that children and young people should learn to understand their technical environment.

A key main lesson in class 3 has as its subject the basic principles of house and ship building, of various trades and food production. In the same way

children should have practical experience of how paper is made. In the spirit of such a curriculum, doing book binding themselves in class 7 or 8 is also an educationally productive project.

There has long been a consensus in Waldorf schools that computer technology should be introduced from class 9 onwards and that this should be done by starting with the practical use of electronic components and devices.¹ This means that as part of a practical main lesson in class 10 or 11 basic computer circuits (NOR, OR, NAND, AND, half adders, full adders, flip-flops, etc.) are built using relays and transistors and examined before investigating the way that microprocessors work. In class 11 many schools have included practical programming in the curriculum. Finally, the Internet and the way it is built in principle should be dealt with in class 12.

The overall aim is to show how the machine we call a "computer" implements formalised human logic in a sequence of physical changes of state. In looking at the way this is implemented, it becomes clear that only human thinking can meaningfully interpret these interlinked states and their end state.

Using the media landscape for learning and presentations

In order for pupils to be able to use computer technology meaningfully also for their studies, they have to learn how online resources can be sensibly utilised alongside books, journals, etc.

That assumes, however, that they have already mastered strategies of meaningful book searches. They should become familiar with this when they make their first smaller presentation in front of the class. Specific suggestions as to how useful research can be undertaken on the Internet by means of search engines can be of educational benefit—initially guided in school—starting in about class 7 or 8. In this context the various types of search engine can be discussed, basic procedures and aspects of searches can be dealt with and information provided about specialist portals as well as useful research portals.

It is very important that pupils should be given criteria which they can use to assess the credibility of web pages.² Finally, there is the subject of “verification of sources”. There should be a regular return to this subject in the appropriate place in subsequent years—above all in history lessons. A class 8 pupil should also obtain a basic knowledge about the correct forms of written communication on the Internet: construction of a business email, formulating a meaningful subject line, “netiquette”, writing an application letter, attachments, etc.

Presentation techniques on a PC, overheads, etc. can be learned with the pupils from class 10 onwards, practised and critically discussed. In this way they can understand the strengths and weaknesses of computer aided presentations, learn to use presentation software sensibly and avoid presentation pitfalls.

Words from Rudolf Steiner can serve to sum up the basic motif of the media curriculum: “All teaching must provide knowledge about life.” All teaching must ultimately lead pupils to understand the life of their time in as comprehensive a way as possible, have a good command of its fundamental cultural techniques and continue to develop them in a meaningful way.

1) Educational perspectives, experiences and concrete suggestions for lessons have been collected at www.waldorf-it.de.

2) Thus for example pupils should be made aware of the importance of the version history and discussion page in a Wikipedia article.

Class teacher period

Henning Kullak-Ublick

When people communicate themselves through their language, expressions, movement and gestures, through song or other forms of expression, or let themselves be impressed by others, this is the most immediate form of communication from person to person. Although media extend our possibilities of entering into an interchange with others, they insert an intermediary in between the direct encounter between human beings which keeps hold of what was previously a direct presence.

Speech and text

When children become familiar with the medium of writing, the written word is separated from the speaker and listener and preserved. That is quite a radical abstraction process because language until then has been a direct experience. That is why learning the letters is preceded in Waldorf schools by an intense practice phase in which the elementary forms are drawn first and only then are the letters derived from the images—images with which the children can create an inner bond.

Such drawing requires the full attention of the children because on the one hand there is a great aspiration to make what is drawn clear and beautiful, and because on the other hand the materials offer sufficient resistance in

the hands of the children to direct their vigilance into their fingertips. This makes drawing and writing an equally creative and perceptual process. Large, not too smooth sheets of paper and wax crayons are well suited to bring out such a balance of content, aesthetics and effort of will.

In writing, children know what they put on paper—they are “directly present”. In reading, the distance to the previous experience of language becomes even greater because now they have to reawaken the spoken word to life again from out of the letters: they have to hear inwardly what they see before them as finished symbols and on top of that still have to understand what they “hear”.

Language is externalised in symbols in writing and has to be returned to an inner experience in reading.

It makes immediate sense that the ability to express ourselves well in writing and, conversely, actively learning to read have as an important prerequisite that the speaker or listener has a nuanced relationship with the spoken word: alongside an active and passive vocabulary they also have to experience the beauty, vividness and elasticity of language—including through their own voice.

Because language can only be learnt from human beings, the writing of for-





In writing, children know what they put on paper—they are “directly present”...

eign languages is also not practiced in Waldorf schools until the languages have been experienced in the early years at school in lively stories, dialogues, poems and songs.

Speaking is far more than an act of information exchange. Speech activates all levels of soul experience from the bright spark of an idea through the probing search for the right word to modulation, sentence structure and the speed at which we speak which change with each different person to whom we speak.

What applies to language also applies in variation to every other type of communication: it encompasses the whole spectrum of human experience in thinking, feeling and the will.

From the perspective of media competency, the question arises as to the basic abilities which people need in order to gain access to different media. The “when” also plays a big role. Electronic media are a very specialised form of communication. Their omnipresence—which will increase exponentially once again in the very near future when robots will commonly be found everywhere—poses the risk, however, that as a result other forms of expression will be neglected and will atrophy.

A sovereign command of different media is the consequence of a sensible use of the senses, perceptual ability, power of judgement and the will to think which a person has acquired.

These are, however, abilities which arrive not all at once but only over time because they are directly connected with the age of the child.

In this section we will look at the time from starting school to about the age of 12, that is, at the first six years of school.

The crucial prerequisites for dealing with electronic media at a later stage are created in the first years of school. It is, however, the case that children do not obtain their assurance in this respect by learning how to work any given device (that takes no time at all) but from quite different areas.

We have already seen in the example of language that hearing, understanding, investigating and having a feeling for the spoken word belong just as much to speech acquisition as the active "putting into words" of our own feelings and thoughts. Human beings cannot be replaced by devices here. That is why the cultivation of beautiful and clear articulation when telling a story or reciting a poem, the pleasure in word games and riddles, the playing of dramatic scenes and the conquest of writing as an artistic means of expression are quite wonderful instruments for developing a living relationship with language. These experiences form the platform from which successive new media can be conquered without the content being lost in the process.

Characteristic effects of electronic media are that they:

- Make information available with extreme speed, i.e. at any time and immediately.
- Make the sense of passing time while they are being used disappear.
- Create the illusion of movement (in images, games, films, etc.) with minimal physical exertion.
- Frequently replace active attention with the flood of images and information generated externally.
- Rely on web links, i.e. programmed associations, instead of pursuing connections on the basis of thinking and perception.
- Gloss over boredom.
- Replace judgements or concepts we develop ourselves with finished judgements in the form of a never-ending flood of information.
- Replace the slow and thorough development of ideas in dialogue with another person with bite-sized news summaries which are intent more on the associated effect than on knowledge acquisition and the perception of our counterpart.
- Shorten language to abbreviations or symbols (icons).

These things are countered by many sensible applications but the issue here is how they can be used without dependencies being created or other unwanted side-effects taking centre stage.

So what abilities are important and how can they be developed?

- Active training of the senses can stimulate perceptual abilities in a nuanced way.
- By training observation, attention can be maintained beyond short spans.
- The children's developing world of ideas can become a creative instrument of consciousness through training the imagination—an instrument which not only reproduces thoughts but develops (and reflects on) further what has been learnt. Imagination is the best protection against unsubstantial fantasy worlds.
- A lot depends on experiencing our own physicality in space and time and making ourselves at home in our body.
- The hands have to be discovered as what they are: the ultimate human instruments of freedom with which we can do "anything" we want.
- Class libraries stimulate the sensory experience of reading and they promote real research in which it is not web links but real questions which lead to the goal.
- Joint activities can lead the children to discover how collaboration can produce more than the sum of individual activities.
- Experiences with a variety of "analogue" means of expression and media carriers develop the ability to distinguish between the

qualities of various media and their carriers (paper or modelling wax, wax crayons or watercolours, musical instruments, clay, wood, etc.).

- The "triad" which extends from active hearing or doing through descriptive creation to recollecting cognition creates the basis for independent, active learning.
- Children must be given a sense of time and rhythm through experiencing lessons which "breathe", learning to wait, being involved in natural processes (looking after animals and the herb garden in class 1, agriculture main lesson in class 3, butterflies in class 5, gardening, bees, etc.) and experiencing that work is always led to a conclusion (culmination) so that the effort is worthwhile.

In short: children in the early years at school should use materials which address the full diversity of their senses from smell through colours to touch.

All of these things are deeply rooted in the methods and traditions of Waldorf schools. But in contrast to the past, many of these activities only any longer take place in school and therefore acquire an additional social therapeutic function.

**With regard to the above,
we can say:**

- The experience of chronological processes counters the disappearance of time in the sphere of electronic media.
- Training the attention, the experience of meaningful connections through observation, and learning to develop concepts ourselves in the "triad" of learning are the prerequisite for being able to judge the associative random search result on the Internet in context.
- The experience of movement and tactile dexterity are the counterpart to the physical immobility when using computers.
- Communal experiences through seeing the results of the work of classmates as well as communal activities (music, drama, eurythmy, handwork, etc.) communicate the experience of real encounters and set real relationships against electronically controlled forms of communication.
- The living use of language in many different forms elevates it above the purely informative exchange of news or judgments and communicates the experience of a true meeting from person to person.

At around the age of 12, children discover increasingly how they can—and want to—confront the world through reflection and in terms of causalities. This is the time at which the conscious use of electronic media can and should also start.

School is probably the only place today in which children can have experiences for several hours each day which are all based on a direct, sensory and emotional encounter with the world and the people around them. It can be a field of experience in which children can come to terms unhindered with the analogue—i.e. non-virtual—world and at the same time extend their opportunities to meet with other children and adults.

To this extent the absence of electronic media at this age is not an impoverishment but a gain in proximity to the world and the ability to focus on and deal with the world. This means not less but more activity, not a restriction of available experiences but an extended and fulfilled connection with the world.





School is the only place today in which children can have experiences each day of a direct, sensory and emotional encounter with the world and the people around them.



Young people on the web

Celia Schönstedt

The relationship between children and the media landscape changes between their tenth and twelfth birthday. For primary school children the most important entertainment device is still the television, computers hardly feature. This changes with the onset of puberty: the emotional connection with the television is transferred to the computer and the Internet. Thus from a certain age almost all young people surf the web, embark on a voyage of discovery and visit the so-called social media platforms to keep in contact with their friends or find new ones. That can be done through a profile with Google+ or Facebook, a Twitter or YouTube account or through their own blog. On their smartphone or PC at home, the growing young people spend a lot of time letting their data—sometimes very personal—flow through the web.

We easily overlook that Facebook and the like are hidden traps. Nothing is forgotten on the web—something of which young users should be aware! In order to make use of the social media platforms without risk, it is important to know the following basic “rules”. They are intended as recommendations and primarily represent an appeal to common sense.



Rules of the game for young people:

1. Handling confidential information in the right way

Personal information and the information of friends such as surname, telephone number or address have no business on the Internet. Passing on personal information is only permissible if the person concerned (in the case of minors, the parents) has given consent. Smartphone apps in particular require a great deal of care since much information can be transmitted unnoticed on installation. Great attention should also be paid to all other security settings on the web such as in firewalls, browsers, cookies, etc..

2. Publication of content

Before writing anything, the possible consequences should be considered, i.e. nothing should be published which one would not be happy to write on a poster at the central railway station or tell another person directly to their face. And it is important to know that one can be held responsible for one's contributions in forums, blogs and other social networks.

One can give one's postings a personal style but should be very cautious with anything of a private nature. As a matter of principle one should never post anything that is insulting, discriminatory, racist or vulgar or take part in any kind of hate campaign—instead, factual argumentation is recommended. It is best to reveal one's sources in postings, to insert the corresponding links and name the original address if known. Because social media lives off linking and networking and transparency. That makes contributions credible and gives them greater weight.

3. Behaviour on the Internet

Since in a written medium we cannot see the expressions or gestures of others, ironic or humorous remarks should always be marked accordingly—that is the only way to avoid misunderstandings (example: "I don't like you ;-)").

It should further be considered that with our account we present our personality on the social networks which could be perceived in real life by other users as a "real" person. That can have—both positive and negative—repercussions because every mouse click leaves a trace. The times when it was possible to surf the web anonymously are long past: website visits can always be traced.

It is also important to know how to react when cyber bullying occurs, for example that a user can be blocked, that screenshots can be taken as evidence and that one should in any case without fail seek help.

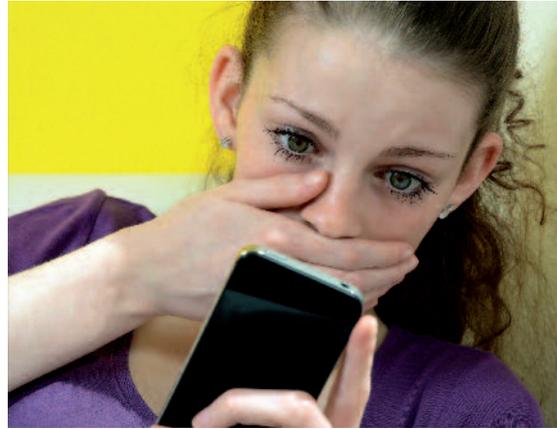
4. Legal information

It is important to comply with the laws in force—in particular no material protected by copyright should be used and no racist or pornographic content distributed. Trademark and personality rights should not be infringed.

5. Right to one's own image

As soon as someone is clearly recognisable in an image, their consent is required before publication. Specific example: a breach of the law has occurred if photos of a fellow pupil, a teacher or parent are posted on the web without the consent of the people concerned. The same applies to posted videos which make use of music protected by copyright.

Particular care should be taken with the use of intimate pictures of oneself such as e.g. sending them by MMS, WhatsApp or by similar means (so-called "sexting") as the risk of abuse is very great.



6. Learning from mistakes

If a mistake should occur when using Facebook or the like, it is best to admit to it and try to clear up the misunderstanding as quickly as possible.

If one is uncertain about how to formulate a contribution or commentary, it is best to check once more with parents or a teacher before publication—the same applies equally to deliberately negative or inappropriate contributions from other users on one's own website, pinboard or blog.

"Be professional, kind, discreet, authentic. Represent us well. Remember that you can't control it once you hit 'update'." ("A twitterable Twitter policy" in 140 characters. Source: www.gruntledemployees.com)

Media as vehicles for education

Franz Glaw

When the subject of the use of media is discussed, the discussion is mostly about their effect on consumers.

Much less attention has so far been paid to the effect on the producers, particularly the young producers of media content.

The question as to the effect appears in quite a different light in both respects if we change sides in the truest sense of the word.

Irrespective of whether pupils are researching an article for a school magazine, a local radio broadcast or whether they are making a film contribution, they are from the beginning in a complex web of relationships between the external world, their own interest and the public.

A radio programme to which nobody listens and a film which nobody watches lose their meaning. Networking on social media produces an insight on a range of levels about public reaction. Not just commentaries from YouTube users but even second by second analysis of "views": at which point did viewers lose interest, which passages were viewed repeatedly, in which countries, by which age groups was my film seen?

The first chapters made clear that in childhood indirect media education, particularly in the form of abstinence, plays a crucial role. How might direct media education now look in upper school?

Three aspects can play a key role:

1. Active creation

Just as the class 9 pupil becomes familiar with the material and work techniques in woodwork not just theoretically but experiences the adjustment of his planning and specific actions through the work piece itself, so their own experience in the production of media content should be the basis of learning.

2. Developing the power of judgement

In this way, of course supplemented by the corresponding theoretical knowledge, young people can develop power of judgement and are no longer dependent on accepting the judgement of adults.

3. Structuring access to the world

Electronic media can communicate access to the world and human beings, access which is created with interest and with intentions which have been thought about in knowledge of the effect, and which is clearly different from analogue access. Thus the experience of making a (feature) film can teach a lot of relevant knowledge if it is compared with the experience in working on and performing a theatre piece.

Just as with good reason we teach writing before reading in Waldorf schools (see page 18), the same can apply analogously here: the reflected

production of content in various media types is part of the educational task of the school. Here the aspect of the reduction in own activity can provide a guideline for the sequence so that the tasks might be listed as follows:

- Production of a newspaper (text)
- Production of a radio programme (sound)
- Production of a film/TV contribution (moving image)

Project experiences in upper school

Text media type: "Finding one's own language"

The occupation with the medium of text in upper school does not need to be restricted to the reception and analysis of literary texts or technical texts. It can also serve the goal of supporting pupils in the search for their own form of expression. The poetry main lesson in class 10 offers the foundations for becoming acquainted with the possibilities and limits as well as the laws of various literary forms. On this basis pupils can test themselves and the effect of their own texts. Here it is very helpful if there is a concrete task and an addressee; that is, if it is not just the teacher who reads the text for the purpose of assessment.

A very good opportunity exists in this respect if there is a school newspaper, or a class or group of pupils produces a newspaper for a specific occasion.



The Facebook page of the school magazine Monolith

The then class 8 at the Düsseldorf school in 1994

founded the school magazine Monolith following a "newspaper week". It continues to appear regularly to the present day despite several generational changes.

When in 2008 the education ministry in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia decided to amend the regulations for the award of the intermediate school leaving certificate, the draft amendment initially provided neither for the opportunity to include previous achievements nor the possibility of re-examination. Together with other protests from the Waldorf representatives, the editorial team of Monolith went on the offensive, carefully researched the issues connected with Waldorf teacher training locally in Witten-Annen, studied the legal position, questioned experts, attended plenary sessions of the state parliament and meetings of the schools committee and finally asked all education policy spokespeople of the parties represented in the state parliament for a detailed interview which was to appear in a special edition of the school newspaper. Well-prepared, very comprehensive interviews then took place in the state parliament which illustrated to the politicians the limits of their own knowledge about

the matter, which they readily admitted.

The representatives of the opposition parties even found their way to the Düsseldorf school and attended the presentations of and colloquia on the year projects. After further debate in the state parliament, the draft law was finally amended to say that the subject teacher will award a predicted grade and that there is the possibility of re-examination. Afterwards the editors were rightly proud of their part in the success on the political stage.

Sound media type: "My image of the world"

As part of a project week, a group of female pupils came together in class 9 who wanted to make a radio programme arising from their agricultural work experience. They intended to deal with the subjects of factory farming, organic meat and vegetarianism. Their first stop in their research was the organic shop in the school grounds. Here the aspiring reporters put the questions they had prepared both to the customers and the owner. In this way they found out that the meat which was sold there was supplied by Jansen's, an organic butcher in Cologne. They followed up immediately with a charming telephone call with the result that next day we were given an exclusive tour of the business by the boss himself, who with a

great deal of humour spoke about his 30 years working as an organic butcher. Interviews with customers, the background noise in the sales area, including the little bell at the door, and above all the unmistakable Jansen laughter gave us almost 2 hours of live sound material. Furthermore, Mr Jansen also gave us the address of our next research stop: the organic farm on which the animals live before they are slaughtered and, cut into half carcasses, delivered to the butcher. Once again the line of argument



Mr Jansen from the organic butcher's shop

agricultural work experience—project week—radio programme produced a small miracle and on the next day delivered a comprehensive insight into appropriate and healthy animal husbandry with the farmer and business owner answering all questions patiently and almost philosophically. On the fourth day all the material was listened to and usable sound clips were extracted and saved. In addition, another group still conducted some interviews in a busy shopping street with customers of a conventional butcher's and an organic shop.

As with all the other interview partners, it was apparent that the fears and concerns of the 14-year-olds were wholly unfounded: all the people they

approached responded in a friendly way and were more than willing to speak. And be it the equipment (recorder, headphones, microphone) or the technical competence of the interviewers: the interviewees treated the fledgling reporters with great respect which strengthened their self-confidence and made them almost visibly grow in stature.

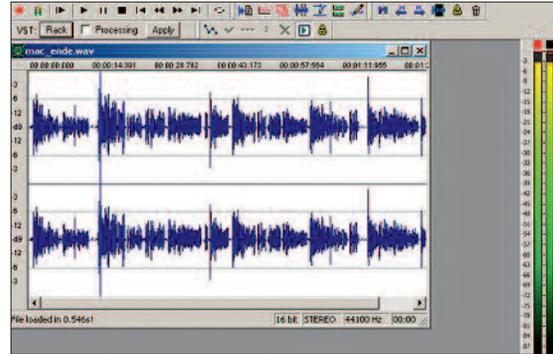
It can be seen from this that the medium of radio provided the pupils with access to places and subjects and, above all, also to people which would hardly have been accessible to them without this medium.

Creating reality

A further completely new and crucial experience arrived when it came to making a radio programme out of the almost five hours of sound material.

To begin with, it was immediately obvious that listeners could not be expected to listen to these five hours in full and without commentary. The material had to be radically cut down. Then the voice-over had to be written and spoken clearly and without mistakes in the recording studio. This required speaking skills and inventiveness from the pupils to create an image for the listeners of what they could naturally not see themselves.

The starting sequence was to be a scene in the sales area of Jansen's



A well-modulated soundtrack

butcher's shop. On various tracks we mixed the conversation between customers and shop assistants and customers among themselves as background, Mr Jansen's laughter, the repeated ringing of the door bell and, finally, the voice-over which explained where we were and whom we were about to interview about what.

This montage technique triggered great surprise among some pupils and the spontaneous reaction "But that's manipulation!". But it quickly became clear that a radio feature in principle has to be produced like this. The unfiltered and complete reproduction of reality is simply not possible. For that the radio listeners would themselves have to go to the production locations after preparatory research.

Responsibility

So the producer of the radio programme has to select, arrange and comment—there is no other way.

They present their view of a section of reality and to this end use the impressions obtained of this diversity. In doing so, they of course have a pur-

pose and require a concept without which they would not have any criteria for selection. The question is, of course, how conscientiously the producer works and how independent and honest they are with regard to their intentions.

It is a crucial difference whether pupils are taught these facts in an abstract way or can experience them through their own activity. By making their own production in a real context they become aware, on the one hand, of the responsibility of media workers and they can, on the other hand, better put their own consumption of media into the context in which the media content is produced; this ultimately makes them more capable of critical reflection.

Recognition of own work

A few weeks later we then went to the recording studio in which a one-hour broadcast on our subject was to be produced. At the start of the project the pupils thought it was a joke when I mentioned a programme on local radio. Now things became serious and the excitement was accordingly great. We took along the soundtrack of our production and alternated in answering the questions of the presenter in the small sound booth. Since it was fortunately not a live broadcast, we were still able to iron out the odd glitch.

To top it off, the grandfather of two of the pupils involved celebrated his birthday on the day of the broadcast. The whole birthday party listened to the radio programme. Next day classmates from class 13 also paid a great compliment. They happened to hear the announcement of the programme and stayed listening through to the end.

Moving image media type: "Finding one's own form of expression"

Our forms of communication and also the way we obtain information have radically changed through the development of electronic media and will continue to do so. The changed forms of communication also include the fact that we can access moving images at any time through our smartphones. The search for information on YouTube has meanwhile overtaken searches via search engines. There are tutorials on YouTube on all questions of practical life with the amount of uploaded content growing at enormous speed. On the eighth birthday of YouTube in February 2013 it was already 100 hours of new film material becoming available on the platform per minute.

The language of moving images is thus a highly effective form of communication of which we make intensive use. And this language has its own particular structure, its own laws.



I have to learn this language if I want to use it consciously and independently. Not least, also to be protected against deception and manipulation. "We have to approach the digital media as their master, otherwise we become their slave." (A. Neider, *Medienbalance*)

And just as in the Middle Ages only a few privileged people were able to learn to write and make use of it, so until a few years ago it was the case that only a few people had the opportunity to communicate with a wider public through the medium of film, to produce and present their ideas and visions in artistic form. Today the development of technology with high quality cameras even in smartphones in combination with free software and video portals like YouTube has made it possible for everyone to become scriptwriter, cameraman, actor, editor and film producer and in some cases even to earn a living in that way.

The way in which I take in content

and, above all, also how I judge it is not only dependent on what I see but also on how it is presented. That includes camera distance, shot length, camera angle, camera movement, zoom as well as lighting and colour temperature during recording. Editing technique during postproduction then plays a crucial role in which images, recorded at various times and in various places, are assembled into a new whole together with sound material from a great variety of sources. In this way completely different effects can be produced with the same starting material.

And we can note that it is above all the young generation which enthusiastically makes use of these possibilities. Increasing numbers of Waldorf schools are also operating their own YouTube channel, their own TV station we might say. The German Association of Waldorf Schools, too, has been represented here since 2012 under "waldorfschulen" and publishes its own films.

If we look at the results, however, it is noticeable that there is still a great deal of amateurism, a filmic stammering and helpless stuttering. When the first Waldorf school was founded, Rudolf Steiner in his time demanded that pupils should, for example, be taught the principle of the electric motor because, after all, they used the tram. Correspondingly it applies today that teaching a basic understanding of the language of film should be part of the general educational tasks of school. And it should best be done not in the form of analyses but through reflected and repeated own doing. It can, for example, be incredibly illuminating if different groups of pupils make completely different films from the same raw material, the footage, in postproduction. After that no one has to explain to them any longer that although the reality in films makes use of images from observed reality, it consciously and also artistically creates a new reality out of them in which colours, image composition, perspective, editing technique and many other things play a crucial role with regard to the effect on the viewer.

Thus training in this area not only opens up the opportunity for pupils to use this medium in a more deliberate and successful way, so that they can articulate themselves more comprehensibly, it also increases the enjoy-

ment which can be experienced in well-made works of film art.

Certain prerequisites are of course required if the corresponding knowledge and abilities are to be successfully taught. First and foremost, the sequence is crucially important. Educationally it can be thoroughly counter-productive to introduce the subject at too early a stage. If I have never drawn or sketched a picture on paper with my own hand, if I am completely unfamiliar with the pictures of important artists, if I have not been able to gather any experience in photography, that is with still images, my expressive range as a cameraman or director will be very limited and, above all, unconscious. The development of imagination and creativity, the command of fine motor skills and also refined sensory perception are abilities which develop in stages and which require our own body-linked experience. The education of the Waldorf school is guided in its lesson content, methods and teaching methodology by the age of the pupils. Here the principle applies that as a first step pupils should have the corresponding experiences directly and not mediated by a medium. Only after that should such experiences be presented and produced in transformation by and filtered through a medium.

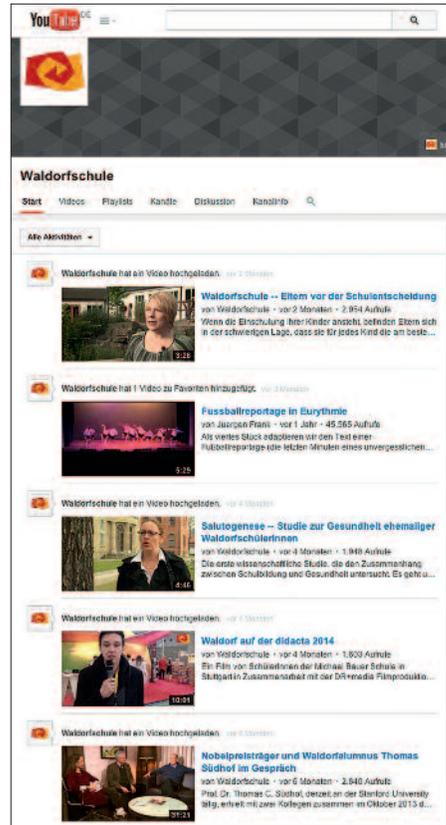
Pupils are therefore to be enabled to

*You Tube channel of the
German Association of
Waldorf Schools*

be involved in developing these cultural and social spheres in a creative and responsible way on the basis of their own knowledge and practical experience rather than adapting in a largely ignorant way to the developments in technology and science (society).

Some schools have set up video working groups which document school events and realise their own film projects. Art lessons offer the opportunity to study the aesthetic aspects through observation and doing. Literary film adaptations might be studied in German lessons. But then—just as the characteristics of materials and the various processing techniques are revealed in craft lessons—we only gain an insight into the function and effects of the clearly more complex image and sound media through our own production.

We can interpret the new information technologies and media as a further developmental stage of human beings and we are called upon to put them at our service if we are to avoid being ruled and robbed of our humanity by them.



Self-education of adults

Dr. Edwin Hübner

In Germany alone, about 58 billion texts were sent in 2012,¹ worldwide it was about seven trillion; for 2016 9.4 trillion texts are expected.² Telephone calls made by mobile phone comprised 107 billion minutes in 2012³, that is equal to about 204,000 years. The data downloaded from the Internet to mobile devices increased to 93 million GB in 2011,⁴ and it is still rising.

These are figures which show the amount of time which people devote to the small devices which live in their jacket pockets. They are changing human behaviour. The journalist Christoph Koch published a book in 2012 which quickly became a bestseller and yet all it contains is a description of what he experienced when he did without his mobile phone for four weeks.⁵ It has not, however, just been Koch who has described clear changes in his behaviour through the intensive use of the Internet and mobile phone; many other authors confirm what he writes.⁶ All of them complain that they have lost the ability to be able to concentrate on something for a longer period of time. They describe unani- mously how they could not pay attention to anything. One scientist noted that he had lost the ability "to think great, deep thoughts".⁷ But we are not just losing the ability to think in a concentrated way but also to communicate meaningfully with other

people. The observation of an American university lecturer makes this clear:

"At the end of my lecture the students immediately open their mobile phones and check for calls and text messages. In the cafeteria I observe students queuing and writing texts while ignoring their fellow students who are standing not half a metre away. One late afternoon I notice six students walking up and down the corridor making phone calls and somehow managing to avoid bumping into one another like ships passing in the night, lost in the fog of conversation ... One student reports by email about a 'computer date' on Saturday evening without having left her room. Paradoxically these students are both social engaged and social isolated."⁸

These observations are representative for many others: in one school the parents have been invited to a parents' afternoon. While the children joyfully show their parents what they can do, six or seven fathers are occupied on their smartphones. Although the fathers are physically present, they are mentally absent. Mobile phone technology educates us to become "absently present". In the 1990s, the advertising of the mobile phone industry promised us "unlimited communication". It is indeed true that today every person can talk to

someone else by telephone at any time of the day or night in any place all over the world. This grandiose technical achievement is countered by the fact that real communication in the here and now is declining. Attentive observers notice that direct human conversation is declining to be replaced by communication via technical networks. It has been possible to observe such erosion of direct human conversation in favour of virtual contacts since mobile phones and the Internet have become everyday things.⁹

It is not a matter of wanting to abolish the Internet and mobile phones again—that, as Rudolf Steiner already correctly noted with regard to the technology of his time, would be reactionary—but only of drawing attention to critical aspects so that an individual counterbalance can be created. We have to learn to set times of inner calm against being overpowered in our everyday lives by mobile phones, the Internet, radio, TV, etc. We do not have to do without the benefits of communication technologies but some recommendations can be made for their more competent use, which can of course be added to:

- Establish times at which the Internet and mobile phone are at rest. At least one day in the week should be “non-screen” and “non-web” time.



In families with children it might be the motto: “On Sunday Mum and Dad belong to me!”

- Create technology-free zones in the home, at least the bedroom should be free of TV, computer, telephone, mobile phone, etc.
- Devices should be switched off during meals together.
- Take care that conversations are not interrupted by the ringing of your own mobile phone or, indeed, by a telephone call in the middle of a conversation. It is possible to make



others politely aware that we do not think it a good thing if a conversation is interrupted by a telephone call.

- Emails are practical but they can also be an enormous source of distraction. Hence: never start the working day by looking at the emails but first start with own tasks. Only once the important own work has been done should the emails be retrieved and dealt with.
- Don't constantly check for emails but only at fixed times.

- If you find yourself spending too much time on the Internet—set an alarm clock.

The American communications expert Howard Rheingold points out that digital media and networks can only be usefully deployed if we develop and maintain certain abilities. That includes first and foremost the basic ability of sustain attention. Training our attentive ability assumes mental discipline which allows us to use the digital “thinking tools” without losing our concentration.¹⁰ But such mental discipline can only be practiced in periods

and spaces without media. Concentrated and continuously fostered meditative work each day is one possibility to train inner discipline. It is crucial to establish times and places in which we concern ourselves with things which provide a counterbalance to the urgency of communication technologies. This is the only way to strengthen our inner sovereignty in our daily dealings with the Internet and mobile phones. Being able to set an example to our children in practicing such sovereignty contributes more to their development of media competency than many verbal instructions.¹¹

Because, as the cabaret performer Karl Valentin already said: **“We can educate our children as much as we like, they always end up copying us.”**

- 1) <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/3624/umfrage/entwicklung-der-anzahl-gesendeter-sms-mms-nachrichten-seit-1999/>
- 2) <http://blogs.informatandm.com/6454/media-alert-happy-20th-birthday-to-the-sms/>
- 3) Bundesnetzagentur Jahresbericht2011, p. 87, <http://www.bundesnetzagentur.de/>
- 4) Bundesnetzagentur Jahresbericht2011, p. 87, <http://www.bundesnetzagentur.de/>
- 5) Christoph Koch, *Ich bin dann mal offline: Ein Selbstversuch. Leben ohne Internet und Handy*, München 2012
- 6) Nicolas Carr, *Wer bin ich, wenn ich online bin ... und was macht mein Gehirn solange?—Wie das Internet unser Denken verändert*, Munich 2010; Alex Rühle, *Ohne Netz: Mein halbes Jahr offline*, Munich 2010; William Powers, *Einfach abschalten: Gut leben in der digitalen Welt*, Munich 2011, John Brockman, *Wie hat das Internet Ihr Denken verändert?: Die führenden Köpfe unserer Zeit über das digitale Dasein*, Frankfurt/M 2011
- 7) Paul Kedrosky in Brockman 2012, p. 91
- 8) Robert Provine in Brockman 2011, p. 242
- 9) Sherry Turkle, *Verloren unter 100 Freunden: Wie wir in der digitalen Welt seelisch verkümmern*, Munich 2012; Franziska Kühne, *Keine E-Mail für Dich. Warum wir trotz Facebook & Co. vereinsamen. Aus dem Alltag einer Therapeutin*, Cologne 2012
- 10) Howard Rheingold in Brockman, 2011 p. 202ff
- 11) See also the commendable book by Valentin Wember: *Willenserziehung, 60 pädagogische Angaben Rudolf Steiners*, Tübingen 2014



"A different kind of thinking probably arises at the screen than in a library. But it can be just as complex and it can train creativity and the ability for team work."

Cornelia Funke in response to the question whether she thought that children learnt different cultural techniques through books than through the use of computers.*

** Cornelia Funke is a German author of books for children and young people whose fantasy novels have achieved international success and have been translated into 37 languages with 20 million copies published in total.*



Literature on media education

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Paula Bleckmann: *Medienmündig—Wie unsere Kinder selbstbestimmt mit dem Bildschirm fertig werden*, Stuttgart, 3rd edition 2013, 251 pages

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