

Assessment and final reports in foreign language lessons: A case study from a Czech Waldorf school

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Waldorf schools strive to create learning opportunities for well-rounded growth of the individual through the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing. Assessment, as perceived and practised in these schools, should in the first place be a means of supporting learning and development. Waldorf assessment abstains from grading, is qualitatively oriented, and deals with academic achievements as well the pupils' artistic, emotional and physical development, both individually and as a group. This illustrative case study examines essential theoretical principles regarding assessment in Waldorf pedagogy and how these are practically implemented in a Czech elementary Waldorf school. Its empirical aim is to explore final reports from English as a foreign language in primary and lower-middle school and study how they reflect and respect the essential theoretical principles regarding assessment at Waldorf schools.

Key words: Waldorf pedagogy, primary and lower secondary school, foreign language teaching, assessment, final report

1. Introduction

In the Czech Republic the first Waldorf schools were founded in 1990, while worldwide Waldorf education celebrates its centenary in 2019. They differ from mainstream schools, among other aspects, in their organization, philosophical grounding in anthroposophy, and by offering two foreign languages from the first class. Lutzker (2013) confirms that a unique approach is also implemented in the field of assessment: "In an age of standardized testing in which teachers and pupils all over the world are required to work towards measurable, comparable, pre-defined goals, our focus on creativity and transformation presents a clear contrast and an alternative." (p. 13).

Let us begin by briefly considering the etymology of the word *assessment*. It has two roots, the Latin *assidere/adsidere*, which literally means *sit beside*, and the Anglo-French *assesser*, which means *judge the value of something such as property for the purpose of taxation*. While the first meaning implies the image of a teacher standing by and supporting a learner, the second one emphasizes the qualities of measuring and determining the value of something (Sievers, 2017, p. 213). In Waldorf pedagogy, as we will see, assessment is approached much more in line with the first meaning.

2. General assessment principles in Waldorf pedagogy

Assessing the work of students has always been one of the teacher's main tasks. In humanistic methodologies, assessment should be constructive and non-judgmental. Its crucial function has been to promote a positive self-image of the student as a person and learner. The type of assessment used at Waldorf schools is referred to as "alternative", which is significantly different from the traditional paper-and-pencil and short answer tests. Grades are commonly not used and the focus is on the individual student's overall progress. Alternative assessment looks at the holistic performance of the students by highlighting their abilities and their overall improvement. (Coombe, 2018, p. 9)

In the Waldorf context, teachers reflect daily on what took place during the lessons so that they can get a good grip on how students have taken up, understood, and processed the material of instruction. Thomas (2005) posits that this practice helps teachers separate the important from the unimportant, develop a sense for quality and it enables teachers themselves to begin a learning process in the evaluation of the student's school work. He also adds:

In school, as well as in life, there is a 'what', a 'how' and a 'who'. The 'what' consists of measurable facts, the 'how' contains a relationship between the learner and the teacher, and the 'who' indicates something that is unique, not immediately tangible but rather future-oriented, a kind of message from the future. (2005, pp. 20, 22)

Rawson (2015) elaborates on this idea:

What we understand about a person is something unique; it cannot be standardized, generalized, or measured. It is also never complete, but always remains open. We generally assess the past, what has already happened. But assessment also means getting a sense of what is emerging, what is in a state of becoming. ... This means that we have to create space in our assessment for the person's potential development and doing this well can even help a healthy future to come about. (2015, p. 30)

According to Rawson (2005), evaluation means having aims. Evaluation criteria must correspond with the pedagogical aims for the various ages and support each child's development. Waldorf educators should be concerned with more than assessing or making learning outcomes visible: "Our task is at the same time to strengthen the learning process through evaluation. It is part of our education task to value the learning process itself as an outcome." (2005, p. 27) Complete assessment should include self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment. These three different perspectives respect the social context and enrich the cultural climate of schools. (Rawson, 2015; Thomas, 2005).

At primary school, verbal assessment is based on observation. Each pupil is assessed individually which means that he or she is not compared with other pupils but

solely in respect to his or her individual dispositions and potential. The focus of assessment is on active participation in lessons, ability to concentrate, quality of work, relationship to the subject, and ability to work individually as well as cooperate with the teacher and classmates. The pupils' own books are also assessed in terms of accuracy as well as their aesthetic quality.¹ Tests are usually not introduced before the 4th or the 5th school year. Self-assessment, on the other hand, is promoted from early primary years. At lower secondary school, new forms of assessment, such as oral presentations, reading and writing assignments, or long-term projects come to the forefront as well as home preparation and homework assignments. Tests with clear criteria are used to find out whether students have reached what they had set out to achieve. Students are commonly not awarded grades on tests. Their result is expressed either in points or as a percentage. Primary and lower secondary Waldorf pupils (classes 1-9) in the Czech Republic receive verbal assessment, which is usually "translated" into marks in the 8th and 9th class for the purpose of secondary school admission, and it must

- 1) be comprehensible for the students and the parents,
- 2) motivate students to achieve the set goals and improve,
- 3) contain strategies for future growth and development,
- 4) support the pupil's integrity,
- 5) be polite and avoid generalized statements.

Czech Waldorf students receive a so called final report at the end of every semester, which corresponds with the above mentioned general guidelines for verbal assessment. They do not contain grades and include comments about the student's performance, achievements, results and class participation. Affective factors such as attitude, motivation and effort ought to be included to provide a holistic profile of the student. Rawson (2015, p. 39) points out that reports should seek to be fair, objective, straightforward, sensitive and they should address each individual's strengths and weaknesses. Bald or generic comments lacking context as well as clichés are considered unhelpful.

3. Assessment in foreign language lessons

The Waldorf approach to assessment is made possible due to the fact, among other things, that the pedagogy promotes long-term relationships between teachers and their classes. The longer time they spend together, the more the teachers can learn about their students and their lives, understand their personal challenges, and reflect these in their assessment. Ideally, there is one class teacher for the entire primary and lower-secondary periods. Foreign language teachers have the same opportunity to work with one group of learners from their very beginnings of study to various stages of

¹ As commercial textbooks are not used in Waldorf schools, pupils create their own book for each subject.

proficiency in the upper-level classes. Wiechert (2013, p. 7) points to the fact that Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the school, had an idea that foreign languages should be taught by the same person in the first eight years, but in real life this happens rather rarely.

Sievers (2017, pp. 214-217), a foreign language Waldorf teacher, also stresses the importance of establishing clear and reasonable criteria to ensure a fair assessment. She distinguishes three types of assessment:

- a) assessment for learning (subject orientated)
- b) assessment of learning (outcome orientated)
- c) assessment as learning (process orientated)

In assessment for learning the teacher's main goal is to accompany and support their learners. They use various means of formative assessment, such as observation, providing feedback on written/oral assignments or conversations with students. Feedback can be written or oral, it should be descriptive, it should focus both on what has been achieved and what has yet to be achieved, and provide suggestions on how to improve and move forward. This type of assessment is also referred to as *ipsative* (self-referenced), in which the achievements of the individual are not measured against general standards, but only against the person's own 'standards' or previous achievements. Assessment of learning, also known as summative, is outcome orientated. In mainstream education it commonly means measuring performance against standardized criteria. In Waldorf education it means summing up what has been done and it usually occurs at the end of a learning unit. The pupils' achievements are compared with given criteria or standards, and their results are commonly expressed in numbers of letters. Last but not least, assessment as learning is related to self-directed learning and thus requires a certain degree of awareness of the learning process and the ability to reflect on it. For these reasons it is most effectively used in the upper school years.

Sievers (2017) is convinced that the main aim of assessment is to enhance the pupils' learning and development. Furthermore, similarly to most Waldorf educators, she finds grading or introducing grades too early to be detrimental to learning:

When grades are given too early, we can observe that pupils tend to identify with the grades they get. They don't say 'this time my achievement was on level 4 because...', they rather say 'I am a four.'... Grades are often experienced as the end of the process. Something has come to an end, has had a label put to it and can now be stored away – or can even be forgotten altogether. (2017, p. 221)

She also claims that the most commonly used means of assessment work with the following:

- a) naturally occurring evidence (collected in any form that relates to the competence or capability in question)
- b) witnessed/oral evidence (e.g. oral presentations)
- c) written evidence (homework performance, lesson books, writing assignments, tests, portfolios)

Similarly to Sievers, we can find critical remarks on using grades in Templeton (2007):

To put it bluntly, a mark (or a grade) very quickly takes on the character of a reward like the biscuit for the dog: if I perform the trick well, I get a reward, if I don't I am told off. The result with children is that very soon they will learn what they have to do to get a good mark (or the teacher's praise), which in turn may lead to certain children being only interested in the mark and not in the actual task or subject they are supposed to learn about. (p. 206)

Pupils with poor grades are soon labelled as unsuccessful, which is extremely difficult to get rid of because "only rarely do youngsters feel encouraged to work harder through a bad mark!" Similarly, Ireland (2015, p. 45) in her research on assessment in Waldorf schools in the USA reported that Waldorf teachers believe that giving letter grades too early ruins children's enthusiasm for learning. Finally, Zachos (2004, p. 7) proposes that all means of assessment must be used pedagogically, and that is not possible when grades are assigned: "We may in some way be serving our school, our children's parents, our need to control student behaviour or a college admission process, but we are not serving the process of learning."

4. Final reports: a case study

4.1 Methodology

Final reports at Waldorf schools aim at characterizing pupils' cognitive, affective, social, psycho-motor and aesthetic development over a period of time and motivating them for further learning. The first part of every report contains the pupil's general characteristics and it is followed by assessment from all the subjects. The content of the report should surprise neither the parent nor the pupil. Reports from individual subjects, including foreign languages, also contain two parts: the first one is a summary of main aims and lesson content, the second one assesses the pupils' performance.

The empirical aim of this illustrative case study is to explore final reports from English as a foreign language over the entire period of primary and lower-middle

schooling, and study how they reflect and respect the essential theoretical principles regarding assessment at Waldorf schools described in the previous two chapters.

I was able to read approximately one hundred reports from various schools in the Czech Republic. In the end I chose the reports of three pupils who differed significantly in terms of their academic achievement as well as personal development. Two boys, Peter and Matt, and a girl, Jane (pseudonyms) all attended the same class at the Waldorf school in České Budějovice from the first to the ninth year in 2006-2015. These reports allowed me to follow the pupils throughout the entire primary and lower-secondary period. A further reason for including reports from this particular school is that there was a single teacher teaching English to this class from year 1 to year 9 (teacher A, female, a qualified English teacher). From year 5 onwards the class was co-taught by another teacher (teacher B, male, a qualified English teacher).

The reports had originally been written in the pupils' mother tongue, Czech, and were then translated by me for the purpose of this study. As for the format, at primary school the reports are written principally to the parents, at lower secondary school they are addressed directly to the students.

Four reports of each selected student in different phases of primary and lower-secondary schooling will be presented in full in sections 4.3-4.5 and analysed in detail in section 5. In addition to examining the reports, I conducted informal interviews with the respective teachers to explain or clarify certain points and references in the reports. These interviews were conducted in Czech, the teachers' mother tongue.

4.2 Final reports: a general introduction

Every final report contains a general introduction, the same for every student in the class, which summarizes the main aims and the content of the lessons over the given period. Following are two examples from the students' year four and seven. The first one was produced by teacher A in 2010, the second one together by both teachers in 2013.

Year 4

*In the fourth year the pupils are involved in a lot more reading and writing in their English lessons than before, but rhythmical activities such singing, recitation and speech exercises still play a very important role. Pupils are also beginning to learn vocabulary in a more conscious and systematic way. The main topics were describing a person, school subject, parts of the body and the structures can and have got. Every week they listen to a chapter from the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* narrated by the teacher.*

Year 7

This year students have learned to express themselves in the future tense using the structures will and going to. They have explored several more areas in grammar (object pronouns, conjunctions, imperative, prepositions of time, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives). Free writing was practised by exchanging letters with students from our partner school in Italy and through several writing assignments. The cultural topic of the year was Ireland. The students were learning about this country through poetry, music and literature. They finished working with their reader Ghosts at the Castle and started reading a new magazine. As part of a cooperation project with class 2 they translated into Czech a book called The Little Polar Bear and made it into a reader for their younger classmates.

4.3 Final reports of Matt

Matt was described by his teachers as a very friendly, outgoing and cheerful boy. In most subjects he worked with a lot of enthusiasm but he often lacked confidence and focus. He put a lot of effort into all types of tasks and activities but he frequently struggled with meeting the expected criteria.

Year 4 (written by teacher A)

I have nothing but praise for Matt's home preparation for his English lessons which has always been patiently supported by his family. Thanks to this extra practice Matt has been able to participate a lot more in various activities. He appears to be more confident this year and in spite of experiencing difficulties in the subject, he seems to have quite a positive relationship to English. Together with three other classmates he completed a shortened version of the final test, which showed that he generally understood the different themes and areas covered this year. It is very important to note that he is able to remember, pronounce and copy new words correctly. He still finds writing English words from memory immensely challenging.

Year 5 (written by teacher A)

Matt is such a toiler! He compensates his language difficulties with unwavering home practice which positively affects his results in English. All his home assignments, both written and oral, have turned out very well, namely his independent recitation of not just one but two poems. There were fewer mistakes in his final test this time. He still finds it difficult to pronounce more complex words and spontaneously respond to questions but he is making gradual progress. Matt deserves praise for his assiduous effort. I wish him strong will and determination to keep up his good work to meet the upcoming requirements next year.

The primary reports from English confirmed Matt's industrious and reliable nature and his willingness to overcome obstacles and do his best. They also depicted some of the difficulties he was facing in foreign language acquisition, such as pronunciation and correct spelling of words. Both these features continued to play a major role in the lower-secondary years.

Year 8 (written by teacher B)

Dear Matt, you've worked quite hard. This year, however, your results were poorer than they used to be. Most of your test scores were under-average. On the one hand, they showed that you had not fully grasped all the grammar, but on the other, you might not have studied enough on your own. Unfortunately, you don't have the needed confidence in speaking, writing and understanding both spoken and written English, which could only improve if you maintained regular home preparation. Your oral presentation about General Patton was one of the accomplishments this year I would like to highlight, however. There was good language, interesting content and you managed to present it to class comprehensibly and essentially without looking into your notes. I also enjoyed the writing assignment about your typical day. You made quite a few mistakes but compared with your previous works it was much longer and more coherent. I hope these partial successes will motivate you to work hard next year.

Year 9 (written by teacher A)

Dear Matt, English has never been an easy subject for you and everything you've learned and achieved has been earned by your hard work. I've always admired your determination. You have been able to find a way of effectively coping with various tasks. Your results have always reflected the effort you had put in. On the whole you've made more progress in writing than in speaking. Self-confidence has always been an issue with you. Sometimes you did not have enough of it but after these nine years of hard work you can surely be proud of yourself. I hope that you will be able to use the acquired skills in real situations and perhaps even improve them a step further in the future.

4.4 Final reports of Peter

Peter had a difficult start at primary school. In the first years it was extremely challenging for him to become involved in lessons and participate in them, not only in English. He was described by his teacher as very shy, and with less ability to concentrate than expected for his age. He was often unsuccessful at various tasks, and he required special assistance. This could be noticed in his first reports.

Year 3 (written by teacher A)

In the second half of the third year, similarly to the first, Peter experienced very good days, during which he was working actively and with joy, and not very good days when he was tired, less focused, and not willing to participate in lessons. Peter has made progress this year but he has not sufficiently mastered the lesson content. He has learned a lot of words, he can understand familiar commands and answer simple questions. He does quite well in copying words but when he writes from memory he writes phonetically. It would be very useful if he reviewed and practised writing English words. I would also like to note my appreciation for his participation in our class play, which he managed wonderfully both from the language as well as the social points of view.

Year 5 (written by teacher B)

Peter appears to be very quiet in our lessons, he does not actively participate much. It often takes him a long time to respond when he is called and he relies too much on the help of others. I would really appreciate more initiative on his part during lessons as well as during home preparation. He is rather shy in speaking, but he is beginning to express himself nicely in writing where he likes to play with language and uses a dictionary to learn new words and phrases. I could see all that in his description of My best friend. Overall, Peter has made slight progress in all areas, but he still needs to improve his speaking, class participation, and home preparation.

At lower secondary school Peter started to be more independent and confident. His approach to learning and consequently also his school results changed dramatically, as can be seen in the following two reports.

Year 7 (written by teacher B)

Dear Peter, in the sixth class you started to be less shy in English lessons and this year I can say that you have been fully involved and active in all our activities. You have undergone an enormous change in your attitude to the subject and the result is that you have really improved in all areas. You understand the texts we read with ease and you are able to write a whole page of text which is comprehensible, meaningful and interesting. What I have to highlight most is your newly discovered courage to speak. I also appreciate the fact that you have joined an after-school English club and passed the YLE Movers. You should be really proud of your achievements and that's why I was a bit surprised to read how poorly you view your results in self-assessment. Please think about every sentence in this report and try to see your new strengths clearly and don't underestimate yourself. If you keep up your good work in the years to come, you have a chance to become a very good user of English.

Year 9 (written by teacher A)

Dear Peter, when I look back and see you in your first years at school and compare this picture with who you are at the end of the ninth year, it seems a bit like a miracle to me. Over the years you have become a self-confident and ambitious student capable of overcoming many obstacles and coping with great challenges. That is how I've perceived you in our English lessons. The turning point was the start of lower-secondary school when you gradually began to show to us what you know and what you can do. You have learned a great deal but sometimes you are too modest about your skills and abilities. From the bottom of my heart I wish you all the best in your future and I hope you will grow further and meet inspiring teachers and classmates.

4.5 Final reports of Jane

Unlike Matt and Peter, Jane has been a very motivated and successful pupil in all subjects. According to her reports, she never experienced any difficulties in any area and she has been demonstrating a special interest foreign languages since the first years.

Year 4 (written by teacher A)

I can confirm what Jane expressed in her self-assessment this year: she has coped with all aspects of learning English with great confidence and creativity. Her written work is especially wonderful, precise and also aesthetic. She shows interest in learning more than what we do in our lessons. She likes to use a dictionary and she likes to learn English at home with her parents, which shows how honest her motivation is. The only area she could improve in is her speaking. Jane should not be afraid to speak up even when she is not absolutely sure that her answer is correct.

Year 5 (written by teacher A)

Beyond any doubt, Jane is a talented foreign language learner. She understands perfectly, she can answer questions and make her own sentences. She enjoys thinking about how languages work. She has read both readers with ease and full comprehension. When she reads aloud, she reads fluently with correct pronunciation. Her writing is excellent too, she tries to make her assignments interesting, uses wide vocabulary, and only rarely makes mistakes. She was the one who suggested that we turn our reader Jack and the Beanstalk into a play and in her free time she rewrote it into a script. For next year I hope that she will be more active during lessons as well as more friendly and caring about her classmates' needs.

As both the fourth and the fifth-class reports reveal, Jane was very keen on learning English and she looked for opportunities to improve beyond the class requirements. Her initiative to write a script (together with several classmates and in cooperation with the two teachers) actually resulted in the production of a class play which the pupils performed at the end of the school year to fellow schoolmates as well as at a drama festival in Prague. The following two reports attest that she was able to carry on with her exceptional personal effort and maintained her intrinsic motivation to learn English even during her teenage years.

Year 7 (written by teacher B)

Dear Jane, you have just completed another successful school year. I would say that your skills and abilities are far beyond the expectations at elementary schools. Your speaking is clear and confident though sometimes perhaps a bit too fast, and your writing, such as the Biography of Dr. Watson, often just took my breath away. I admire how capable you are of using grammar and vocabulary we had not learned at school and how naturally you integrate what you learn into your productive expression. I don't think that you need any recommendations from me at this point about how to improve because you know what to do and you also do it! I am overjoyed at the progress you are making.

Year 9 (written by teacher A)

Dear Jane, you have been reading words of praise in your reports all nine years. You deserve that praise for your consistent effort, concentration, participation and genuine interest in foreign languages. In the past two years you have progressed enormously as a result of your own extra effort and you are now able to express yourself in both speaking and writing on a large number of topics. Your current level highly exceeds the expected level of a ninth-grader. I wish you favourable conditions for further growth of your well-built foundations and a loving relationship to foreign languages all throughout your life.

Matt, Peter and Jane attended the same class in their Waldorf school for nine years. They represent three markedly different types of foreign language learners with diverse skills, talents and abilities as well as challenges and difficulties which are depicted in their final reports. The following section summarizes the Waldorf pedagogy approach to assessment and discusses whether the presented foreign language reports are in accordance with the proclaimed principles.

5. Discussion

As it has emerged from the literature review in the theoretical part of this paper, assessment in Waldorf education should be:

- 1) comprehensible, constructive, without generalized statements;
- 2) non-judgemental, polite and helpful.
- 3) include self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment;
- 4) provide a holistic picture of the learner;
- 5) motivate, promote a positive self-image, and support the pupil's integrity;
- 6) focus on creativity and transformation as opposed to measurable standards;
- 7) be future-orientated and capture “what is emerging, what is in a state of becoming”.

Do the selected reports reflect and respect these essential assessment principles of Waldorf pedagogy? By analysing the final reports of three Waldorf students I have found the following:

Points 1 and 2

All three students' reports refer to concrete skills and abilities, the pupils' participation, motivation, home preparation and relationship to the subject. They describe the pupils' development in these areas comprehensibly and specifically. Various details are included in the reports, e.g. Matt did a successful oral presentation on General Patton in year 8, Peter produced an interesting writing assignment titled *My best friend* in year 5, Jane voluntarily turned her class 5 *Jack and the Beanstalk* reader into a script. All the reports are individual-referenced, i.e. the pupils are not compared to other pupils, only to their previous performances. I did not identify any part or passage which could be considered cliché, impolite or insensitive. Moreover, all the students received recommendations and suggestions for further improvement at some point: Matt was encouraged to maintain home preparation to avoid further decline of his results and gain more confidence (Year 8), Peter should practise spelling of words in writing (Year 3), Jane was prompted to be more active in lessons to improve her speaking (Year 4 and 5).

Point 3

The analysed documents represent teacher assessment and some of them contain comments regarding self-assessment. Teacher A confirms Jane's view of herself and her English skills (Year 4) and teacher B encourages Peter not to underestimate himself and see the progress he has just begun to make in English in a clearer and more positive light (Year 8). Due to their nature the reports do not contain any reference to peer assessment. However, according to the information provided by the interviewed

teachers, peer assessment is frequently used in their lower-middle school English lessons, especially to evaluate homework assignments and oral presentations. Self-assessment in foreign languages is regularly used every year from class 3 in this particular school, but it is not expected to be included in the final reports.

Points 4 and 5

All the reports are based on the teachers' observations as well as other forms of assessment, namely writing assignments, oral presentations, working with readers and using a dictionary to name a few. The affective factors such as the pupils' motivation, attitudes, and effort, appear very significant in the Waldorf teachers' approach to assessment and they are always included in the final report comments. In fact, they seem to be the central theme of the reports in the primary years and in the final Year 9 reports, but they are also substantial in all the other lower-secondary reports. The teachers highlight concrete progress or improvement as well as the pupils' unique qualities: Matt is a toiler (Year 5 and also in Year 4 and 9), Peter passed Cambridge YLE Movers, but he is not able to view his progress objectively (Year 7), Jane can correctly use even language and structures she did not learn at school. While the overall impression is that of positively worded and motivating assessment, which focuses on what the pupils can do rather than not, there are points of criticism in all the pupils' reports, which are in my opinion expressed in a tactful and motivating manner (e.g. Matt, Year 8 and Peter, Year 5).

Points 6 and 7

Creativity appears to be an appreciated value, especially in all Jane's reports and in Peter's lower secondary reports. Matt struggles with meeting even basic standards in the subject and the central theme of all his reports seems to be motivation and encouragement to keep up the hard work he has been putting into learning English. Peter's development is in my opinion an example of what could be understood by the term transformation. We can clearly trace his gradual growth from being a timid, passive pupil with difficulties in various areas of language acquisition (Years 3 and 5) to becoming a confident user of English (Years 7 and 9). Teacher B speaks of "enormous change in attitude to the subject" and a "newly discovered courage to speak" in his Year 7 report, teacher A speaks of a "miracle" in her Year 9 concluding report. It is rather challenging to evaluate whether the documented assessment is future-orientated and captures "what is emerging, what is in a state of becoming". To some extent we can say that there is orientation towards future in the encouragement each pupil receives to keep up good work or improve: Matt (Year 5, 8 and 9), Peter (Year 7 and 9), and all Jane's reports. It is further reinforced by acknowledging extracurricular activities of the pupils related to the subject as well as skills and abilities exceeding classroom experience

(Matt and Jane). The reports could be viewed as personal messages from teachers to their students. In addition to that, the ninth-class reports do not refer only to the achievements of the school year but offer a sort of a summative look at how the pupils grew and developed in English throughout primary and lower-secondary school and a very personal wish from the teachers for the future.

Could the Waldorf assessment principles be applied in other settings? While in Western Europe and North America it is a well-established tradition even in mainstream education to use comments and reports as part of assessment at various levels of education, usually in combination with grades, in countries such as the Czech Republic, grading still prevails while verbal comments and/or written reports are rare, with the exception of alternative schools. To produce a written report is much more time-consuming than to produce a grade. Both teachers A and B estimate that it takes them approximately 30 minutes to produce a report for one student in one subject, and on top of that they spend additional time discussing and proofreading the reports of their colleagues. Teacher A explained that before writing a report, she always pictured each child in the context of the whole learning period and thought about what the child really needed to hear most. She had often read previous reports of the child before writing a new one to address the most important issues and report on the child's progress. Both teachers described report writing as challenging, often extremely tiring, but also enriching, especially when progress has been observed. These special demands are most likely to be the chief limitations to a wider use of this assessment technique.

6. Conclusion

The case study was created to demonstrate how final assessment in foreign language instruction, with a particular emphasis on final reports, is rendered at a Czech Waldorf school. While illustrative of this setting, it does have some limitations. The focus of the study is very narrow as it only shows how three pupils were assessed in their English lessons in one school by two teachers in one country. A broader focus would very likely show a larger variety of approaches. Suggestions for further research would therefore include exploring the practice in other educational contexts, carrying out comparative studies within the Waldorf movement in other countries, and investigating the theme from the perspective of its recipients, i.e. the students or even parents.

The selected reports offer a qualitative, descriptive, in-depth views into the issue. They are in line with the essential theoretical principles regarding assessment at Waldorf schools and in this respect may be considered as examples of good practice. They correspond, without doubt, with the *assidere/adsidere* meaning of the word assessment. Last but not least, they reveal the benefits of having the opportunity to work with and accompany students over a long period of time. That is an indubitable privilege of Waldorf teachers, who thus have the chance to perceive their pupils in the

process of growing and becoming, which appears to have a very significant impact on how they conceive assessment.

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