

# AUSTRALIAN STEINER GRADUATE OUTCOMES

## Research Project Report

Steiner Education Australia

November 2021



## Australian Steiner Graduate Outcomes Research Project

### Lead Researchers:

Dr Michael Carey (Quantitative analysis)

Dr Bronwen Haralambous (Qualitative analysis)

### Assisted by:

Dr Shelley Davidow (Editorial assistance and German translations)

Dr Alison Willis (Editorial assistance and review of Qualitative analysis)

Research Report written by Dr Bronwen Haralambous and Dr Michael Carey

School of Education

University of the Sunshine Coast

Address: Locked Bag 4, Maroochydore DC, QLD 4558

Research Partnership between the University of the Sunshine Coast and

Steiner Education Australia

Funded by Steiner Education Australia

Chatswood, Sydney.

## Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	6
1.1 Situating the Project .....	6
2. METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS .....	7
2.1 Methodologies .....	7
2.2 Research Design .....	7
2.2.1 Main Intention.....	7
2.2.2 Scope of the Project .....	8
2.3 Data collection and analysis methods .....	8
2.4 Quantitative Methods: Comparison with German and US Steiner Waldorf Surveys.....	9
2.5 Demographics of the Australia/New Zealand sample.....	9
3. STUDY AND CAREER PATHWAYS .....	12
3.1 Comparative review of survey data on study pathways.....	12
3.2 Comparative review of work and career pathways .....	14
3.3 Influence of Steiner Waldorf education on their further studies .....	17
3.4 Attitudes towards the quality of Steiner Waldorf learning and teaching .....	21
3.5 Review of the influence of Steiner Waldorf education on their study and careers.....	22
4. INFLUENCE OF ANTHROPOSOPHY ON THEIR LIVES .....	24
4.1 Current Influence of Anthroposophy on their lives .....	24
4.2 The application of Steiner Waldorf principles in child rearing.....	26
5. CHOOSING STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION .....	28
5.1 Would you attend a Steiner Waldorf School again?.....	28
5.2 Challenging aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling .....	28
5.3 Positive aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling.....	31
6. STEINER WALDORF VIRTUES AND CAPACITIES .....	36
6.1 The influence of Steiner Waldorf teaching on personal development.....	36
7. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE .....	42
7.1 Recommendations from Steiner Waldorf graduates, alumni, and teachers .....	42
7.2 Bringing them in: Establishing Steiner Waldorf alumni relationships with schools .....	46
8. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS .....	48
9. REFERENCE LIST .....	50
10. APPENDICES.....	51
Appendix I: Profiles of the Researchers.....	51

Appendix II: Figures of comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to quality teaching, learning experiences and social factors.....	53
Appendix III: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to features of Steiner Waldorf education .....	54
Appendix IV: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German parents’ motives for choice of a Steiner Waldorf school .....	55
Appendix V: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German capacities and virtues.....	56
Appendix VI: Welch’s Independent Samples T-tests .....	58
Appendix VII: Survey Questions.....	61

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Response to ‘In which year did you complete school?’ .....	11
Figure 2. Comparison of tertiary qualifications of Steiner Waldorf and Australian graduates .....	12
Figure 3: Field of the highest tertiary education program completed by Steiner graduates.....	12
Figure 4. Field of highest tertiary education program completed by Australian graduates .....	13
Figure 5. Field of highest tertiary education program completed by US Steiner graduates.....	13
Figure 6. Work sectors of Steiner Waldorf to Australian national graduates .....	14
Figure 7. Work sectors of US Steiner Waldorf graduates compared to US national graduates.....	15
Figure 8. Work sectors of German Waldorf graduates compared German national graduates.....	15
Figure 9. Comparative relevance of Steiner Waldorf pedagogy .....	25
Figure 10. Comparative enactment of Steiner Waldorf child rearing principles .....	26
Figure 11: Comparative ‘repeated’ choice of Steiner Waldorf education .....	28
Figure 12. Relationships between key recommendations.....	42
Figure 13. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to quality teaching.....	53
Figure 14. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to learning experiences .....	53
Figure 15. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to social factors .....	53
Figure 16. Comparison of German and Australian/NZ responses to key features of Steiner Waldorf teaching.....	54
Figure 17. Comparison of German and Australian/NZ responses to multimodal features of Steiner Waldorf teaching.....	55
Figure 18. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German parents' motives for choice of a Steiner Waldorf school .....	55
Figure 19. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their self-determination. ....	56
Figure 20. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their experience of meaningfulness. ....	56
Figure 21. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their social skills.....	56
Figure 22. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their personal development. ....	57
Figure 23. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their attitude on sustainability.....	57
Figure 24. Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their personal preferences.....	57

## List of Tables

Table 1. Did you attend a Steiner Waldorf preschool or kindergarten before entering the Steiner Waldorf school? .....	10
Table 2. From which year level did you begin attending the Steiner Waldorf school? .....	10
Table 3. After which year level did you leave the Steiner/ Waldorf school? .....	10
Table 4. Preparation for post-school studies.....	17
Table 5. Appreciation of Core Characteristics of the Pedagogy.....	18
Table 6. Valued features of Steiner Waldorf education .....	19
Table 7. Attitudes toward Steiner Waldorf learning and teaching .....	21
Table 8. Summary of the valued aspects of Steiner Waldorf education on study and career experiences .....	23
Table 9. Anthroposophical influences on subjectification and thinking .....	25
Table 10. Key characteristics of Steiner Waldorf child rearing practices.....	27
Table 11. Negative responses to attending a Steiner Waldorf School again .....	28
Table 12. Challenging aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling Experiences.....	29
Table 13. Pedagogy of Love.....	31
Table 14. Pedagogy of Life.....	32
Table 15. Imaginative teaching strategies .....	33
Table 16. Pedagogy of Wisdom .....	34
Table 17. Pedagogy of Voice .....	35
Table 18. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their self-determination. ....	36
Table 19. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their experience of meaningfulness. ....	37
Table 20. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their social skills.....	38
Table 21. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their personal development. ....	39
Table 22. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their attitude on sustainability. ....	40
Table 23. Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their personal preferences. ....	41
Table 24. Comparing German and Australian/NZ proportional responses to question 17. Which of the following features of Steiner/Waldorf education do you consider important today? .....	54

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Situating the Project

*I was really excited to see that you were undertaking this research project, because it is demonstrating what it is that's important [about Steiner Waldorf education], and it's being purposeful and scientific about it, using the language of traditional science to connect with the broader society and bring them into what's going on and how it can be useful. So I'm thrilled that this is going on. (Brenda, FG10, 01:20:37)*

Our intention in setting out on this research project was to hear, in prior students' own words, what they have to say about their Steiner Waldorf school experiences. We wanted an opportunity to listen to their reports about the influence of their education on their further studies, career pathways and life and relationships. We were interested to know what they valued in their schooling, and what they consider to be the gifts and challenges of their education. We also wanted to give *them* an opportunity, to connect with each, reconnect with their school communities, and have a forum in which to voice their recommendations and thoughts concerning the future flourishing of the local and global Steiner Waldorf education movement. We hope that this research project will provide a firm foundation for ongoing Steiner Waldorf graduate outcomes research in Australasia, and that it will contribute towards the establishment and/or consolidation of up-to-date data bases in schools and strengthened relationships between alumni and schools.

Following the American Steiner Waldorf researchers who published their most recent report on their graduate outcomes last year (Safit, Gerwin, Stokes & Starzynski, 2020), it was not our intention in the research project, nor is it in this report, to attempt an evaluation of Steiner Waldorf education, nor to assess the efficacy of specific schools. Rather, we have gathered together descriptions, compiled and analysed data in order to identify, from the reflections of teachers, graduates, and alumni,<sup>1</sup> trends that are influencing the Steiner Waldorf school movement, and to draw global comparisons relating to strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of the pedagogy. Inspired by the German Steiner Waldorf researchers who published their most recent report on their graduate outcomes this year (Randoll and Peters, 2021), we explored the attitudes of Steiner Waldorf graduates and alumni to the anthroposophical underpinnings of Steiner pedagogy. We hoped thereby to deepen our understanding of forces of tradition and change that lead parents and students to become committed members of Steiner Waldorf school communities, so that schools can continue to flourish and effectively deliver the keystone elements of the pedagogy.

In the current climate, where evidence-based research is highly valued by educational authorities, funding agencies and policy makers, it is imperative not only to demonstrate that the Steiner school movement is undertaking graduate outcomes research but also to ensure that the quality of the research is robust in design and execution. The University platform adds a level of professional rigour to the project and consolidates the partnership between USC and SEA. We are grateful for the funding and moral support, and enthusiastic participation we have received from Virginia Moller, Nicki Radford and Peggy Day in the SEA office, the SEA delegates, school directors and administrations, teachers, and graduates and alumni.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Research Report our use of the word 'graduates' generally includes alumni.

## 1.2 Global and Australian Steiner Waldorf Research

Two documents previously submitted to Steiner Education Australia underpin this research report:

- i) Literature Review in support of the Steiner Australia Graduate Outcomes Research Project, December 2019
- ii) Steiner Australia Graduate Outcomes Proposal for a Research Project, February 2020

The Proposal offers an account of the budget and a fuller review of the methodology than the one outlined in this report. The Literature Review provides a detailed survey of research studies into Steiner Waldorf Graduate Outcomes which have been undertaken in Australia and globally.

## 2. METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

### 2.1 Methodologies

In our collection and interpretation of data we followed a Mixed Method of Inquiry (Creswell, 2014; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Our interpretation of the data as a whole and of the qualitative data in particular, was guided by principles which inform Qualitative Research, Participatory Action Research (Kemmis, 2008) and Contemplative Inquiry (Haralambous, 2016; Kresin-Price, 2013; Zajonc, 2009). Guidelines for Participatory Action Research Methodology are well aligned with the pedagogical basis of Steiner Education (Haralambous, 2016; Kresin-Price, 2013). The “extended epistemologies” underpinning Participatory Action Research (Heron & Reason, 2008; Kemmis, 2008) are supportive of the expanded foundation of Steiner’s (1894/1964) *Philosophy of Freedom* which endeavours to overcome the ‘mind-body’ aporia. Positioned midway between positivism and deconstructive approaches, the participatory worldview argues that the real world is *really real* and ‘out there,’ but, drawing on constructionist perspectives, it recognizes that outer reality is experienced ‘in-here’ as well, as a mind-body reality in which we all share (Haralambous, 2016; Reason & Bradbury, 2001/2006). Our choice of mixed methods supports our intention to astutely observe ‘the real world out there,’ as well as to pay careful attention to the thoughts and feelings which enliven the inner worlds of participants. As the name implies, Zajonc’s (2009) Contemplative Inquiry Methodology, which draws on Steiner’s philosophical principles, is based on a mindful approach to research. Similar to Moustakas’ (1990) *heuristic* research principles, Zajonc’s guidelines place emphasis on the emergence of ‘illumination’ and insights during the research process. New ideas make an ‘appearance’ (Bortoft, 1996, 2012) when an open space of *poiesis* (Agamben, 1999) is created for them through meditation (Haralambous, 2016).

### 2.2 Research Design

#### 2.2.1 Main Intention

The Australian-New Zealand Steiner Graduate Outcomes Project followed three guiding intentions:

- i) to examine the pathways of Australian and New Zealand Steiner graduates and alumni in their transition from school to further study and work,
- ii) to explore whether their education prepared them well for further study, work and for their life and relationships in general,
- iii) to gather recommendations concerning the future sustainability of Steiner Waldorf Education in Australia and New Zealand.

## 2.2.2 Scope of the Project

Data was collected from all the Steiner Waldorf High Schools in the six states where Steiner operates in Australia: NSW, VIC, WA, SA, QLD, ACT, and four schools from two capital city regions in New Zealand: Auckland and Wellington.

Data collection instruments included:

- i) an online survey,
- ii) 13 graduate/alumni focus group interviews with 32 graduates and alumni,
- iii) and two teachers' focus group interviews with eight teachers.

The rollout and reporting of the research project spanned – from May 2020 through to November 2021. The rollout of the project was delayed by administrative challenges in schools related to the COVID19 pandemic.

## 2.3 Data collection and analysis methods

Our choice of mixed methods enabled us to validate and explicate findings from different data sources and thus produce more comprehensive, internally consistent, and valid findings which supported our enhanced understanding and confidence in our conclusions. By including two Steiner insiders and two outsiders in our research team we aimed towards a more balanced analysis of the data. The insiders were able to throw light on the findings out of their understanding of the Steiner Waldorf context of the research project and the outsiders were able to see them in a more distanced, objective manner. We followed the university's ethical guidelines and the maxim of 'do no harm' to the participants, Steiner Waldorf schools or the larger school movement (Midgley, Danaher, Baguley, 20212).

We followed an "explanatory design" model (Punch, 2014) and undertook the survey in the "first phase," which included mostly quantitative data and some short descriptive responses, followed by the focus group interviews. We were then able to use this "second phase" more detailed qualitative data "to enhance or build upon" our initial survey results and to deepen the context for our interpretation of the data set as a whole (pp.345-350). In our analysis of the qualitative data, we used some enumeration and applied both a priori and inductive coding. In the presentation of our data (Cresswell, 2014), instead of using "word clouds" (Bletzer, 2015; Mathews, 2015) we drew up *word maps* to portray thematically grouped phrases and sentences, and designed "network diagrams" (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2020) to illustrate interconnections between themes.

The survey questions <sup>2</sup> and the focus group interviews focused on the study and career destinations of Steiner-educated alumni and recent graduates in relation to international and national research data and Australian national statistics. In the student interviews we explored the extent to which Steiner Waldorf educated alumni and recent graduates perceived their schooling as an asset for their careers; relationships; environment, creativity, and involvement in matters related to social justice and ethical decision-making. We also asked for their recommendations concerning the future sustainability of Steiner Waldorf education. In the interviews with teachers, we inquired about their opinion of students'

---

<sup>2</sup> See [Appendix VII](#)

overall achievements, personal capacities, ethical stance and participation in social justice and environmental issues in classes from different years.

## 2.4 Quantitative Methods: Comparison with German and US Steiner Waldorf Surveys

A comparison of our survey results was made with two recent similar surveys: German Waldorf graduate alumni (N = 1,770) (Randoll and Peters, 2020) and US Waldorf graduate alumni (N=438) (Safit et al., 2020), as data have kindly been shared for this purpose by the researchers. However, direct comparisons could not always be made for all variables we wanted to investigate because, in the case of the US data, only aggregated data were available. Due to this we decided to use the German survey as the basis for the design of our survey by replicating many of their survey scales. The German researchers were able to provide all their raw data for statistical purposes. To deal with the unbalanced sample of N=165 Australian/NZ respondents compared to the comparison group of N=1770 German respondents, for statistical tests comparing group means, a random sample of n=165 responses were extracted from the German data set. Welch's independent samples t-test was used for this purpose because it copes with incidences of unequal variance in the samples being compared. In the case of comparing proportions with descriptive statistics, the whole German data set (N=1770) was used in a comparison with the (N=165) Australian/ NZ data set.

## 2.5 Demographics of the Australia/New Zealand sample

A purposive sample of Steiner Waldorf graduates was sourced from Steiner Waldorf alumni, resulting in valid responses from alumni graduates from all the High Schools from Australia, from the six states where Steiner operates in Australia: NSW, VIC, WA, SA, QLD, ACT, and four schools from two capital city regions in New Zealand: Auckland and Wellington. This is a coverage of approximately 50% of the schools operating over the past 40 years. The sample was collected mainly through social networking sites that provided a portal of communication for Steiner/Waldorf graduates, from which "snowballing" also became a method of distribution when the survey link was passed on to other Steiner Waldorf alumni. Survey completion was voluntary and anonymous, and participants could opt out of the survey at any point as directed through the Research Project Information Sheet and consent information (USC Human Research Committee, Ethics approval A201366).

It is important to note that this purposive sample can be interpreted as indicative of the school experience and graduate outcomes of Steiner Waldorf graduates; the sample cannot be used to make claims inferring representation of the whole population because random sampling of the Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf population was not possible with the access provided to respondents. The collected sample consisted of N=165 Steiner Waldorf graduates who had completed school between 1979 and 2020 (**Figure 1**); n= 117 identified as female; 45 identified as male; two identified as non-binary, and one preferred not to answer. The majority (n=140) of the Australian/NZ respondents can be categorised as Gen Y, or millennials, because they were born between 1980-2002 and attended school 1985-2020. Although other age ranges are used to define this cohort, this is the categorisation used by the comparison German study, so we have applied this definition also.

Respondents were asked three questions to establish their type and length of Steiner Waldorf school attendance.

Frequencies and percentages are detailed in **Tables 1-3**. Most respondents attended a Waldorf preschool or kindergarten before entering the Steiner Waldorf school: (61.2%) attended the school from Year 1 (63.6%) and completed Year 12 (94.5%).

**Table 1.** Did you attend a Steiner Waldorf preschool or kindergarten before entering the Steiner Waldorf school?

	Frequency	Percent
YES	101	61.2
NO	64	38.8
Total	165	100.0

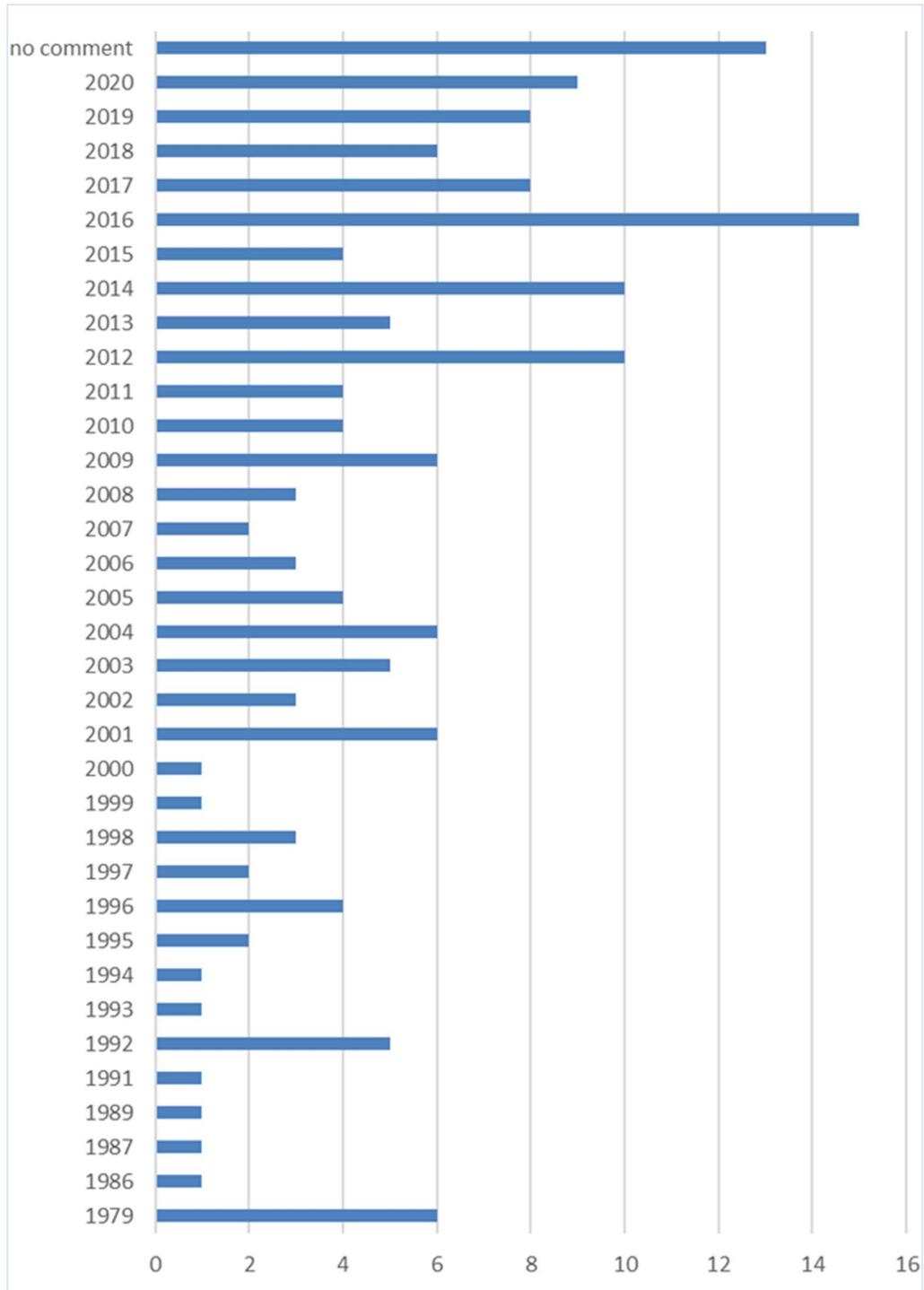
**Table 2.** From which year level did you begin attending the Steiner Waldorf school?

Year Level	Frequency	Percent
1	105	63.6
2	5	3.0
3	11	6.7
4	5	3.0
5	8	4.8
6	1	.6
7	12	7.3
8	4	2.4
9	4	2.4
10	5	3.0
11	4	2.4

**Table 3.** After which year level did you leave the Steiner/ Waldorf school?

Year Level	Frequency	Percent
9	2	1.2
10	3	1.8
11	3	1.8
12	156	94.5
Total	164	99.4

Figure 1. Response to 'In which year did you complete school?'

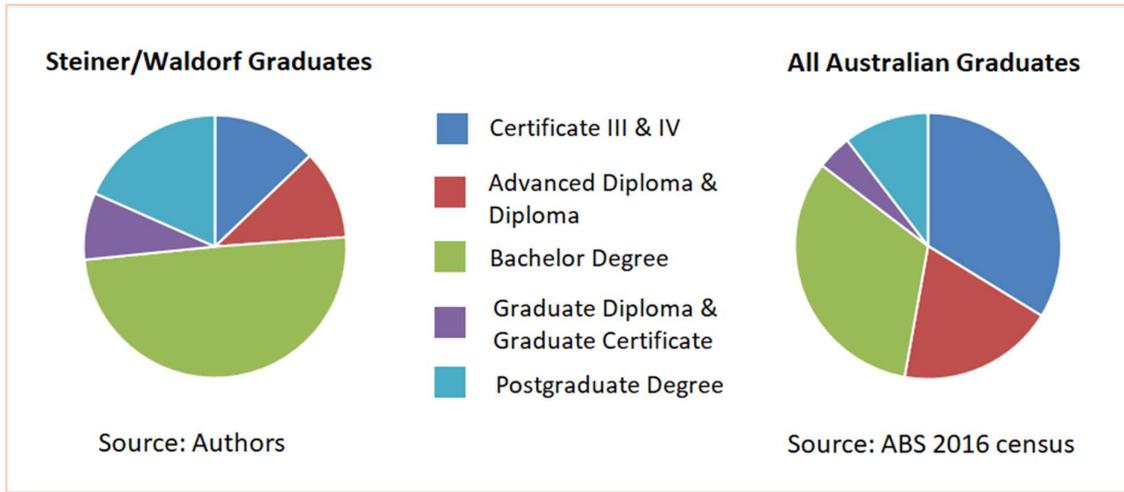


### 3. STUDY AND CAREER PATHWAYS

#### 3.1 Comparative review of survey data on study pathways

The highest level of tertiary education obtained by the Steiner/Waldorf graduate sample (n=109 responses) was elicited using the Australian qualification categories to enable direct comparison with the Australian Bureau of Statistics population data for all Australian graduates (ABS, 2016 census, *Figure 1*) shown as relative proportions.

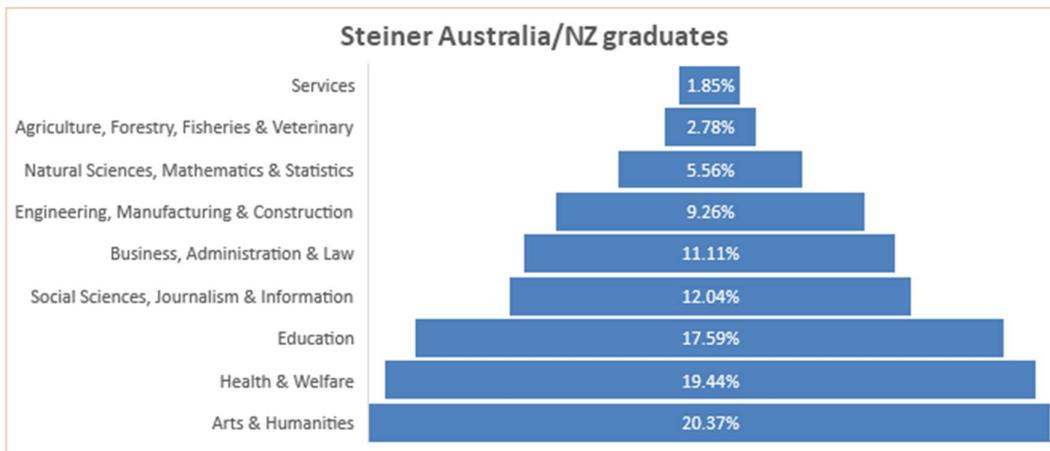
**Figure 2.** Comparison of tertiary qualifications of Steiner Waldorf and Australian graduates



*Comments on Figure 2:*

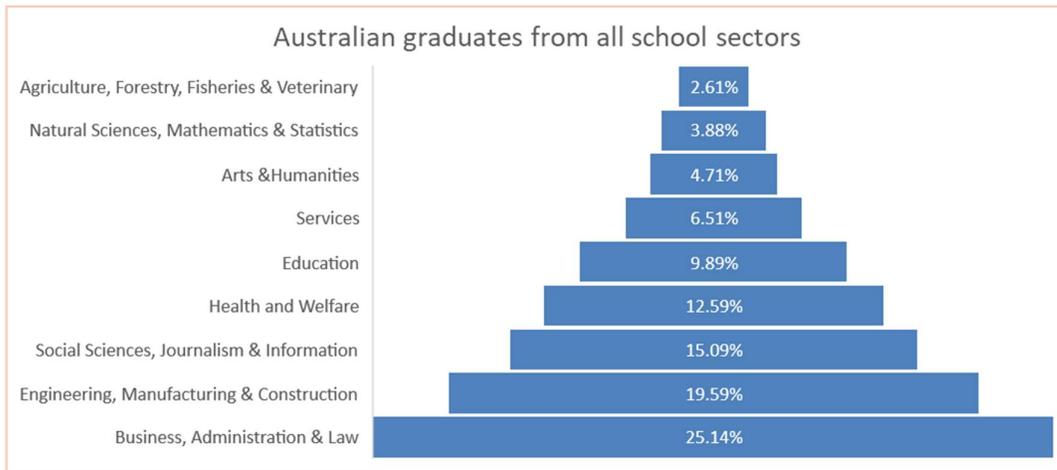
Nearly half (49%) of the Steiner Waldorf graduate sample hold a Bachelor’s degree, which is greater than the national proportion of approximately a third (31%) of tertiary education-qualified graduates. A greater proportion of the Steiner Waldorf graduate sample hold a postgraduate degree than the national proportion. An eighth (12%) of the Steiner/Waldorf graduate sample hold a Certificate III or IV trade certificate compared to a third (33%) of the national proportion.

**Figure 3:** Field of the highest tertiary education program completed by Steiner graduates



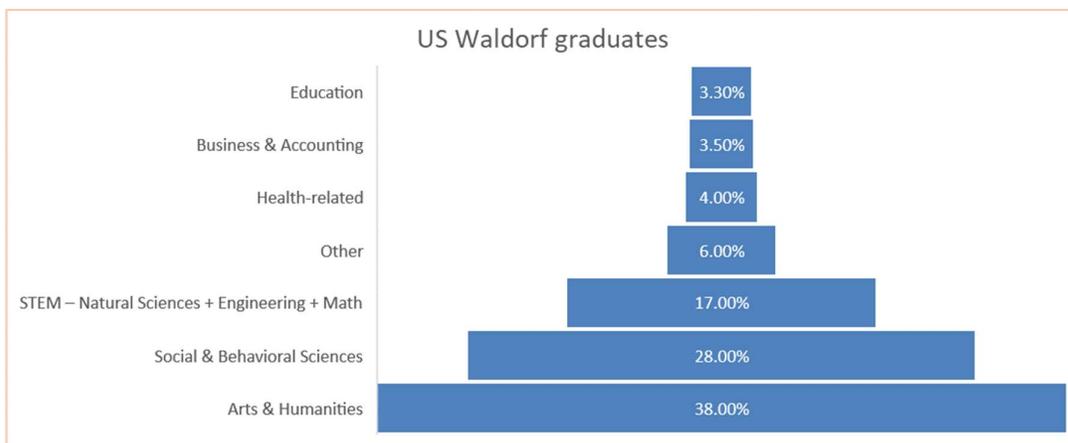
**Figure 3** illustrates the fields of study of the highest tertiary education program completed by Australian Steiner Waldorf graduates. The most popular career choices were Arts and Humanities (20.37%), Health and Welfare (19.44%), and Education (17.59%), followed by Social Sciences, Journalism and Information (12.04%) and Business, Administration and Law (11.11%).

**Figure 4.** Field of highest tertiary education program completed by Australian graduates



**Figure 4** illustrates the fields of study of the highest tertiary education program completed by all national Australian graduates (ABS, 2016). The most popular career choices were Business, Administration & Law (25.14) and Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction (19.59%) which are both more than double the percentages for the Steiner Waldorf graduates in these programs. Conversely, Steiner Waldorf graduates’ choice of the Arts and Humanities is over four times higher than the national average, and for Education it is nearly twice as high.

**Figure 5.** Field of highest tertiary education program completed by US Steiner graduates



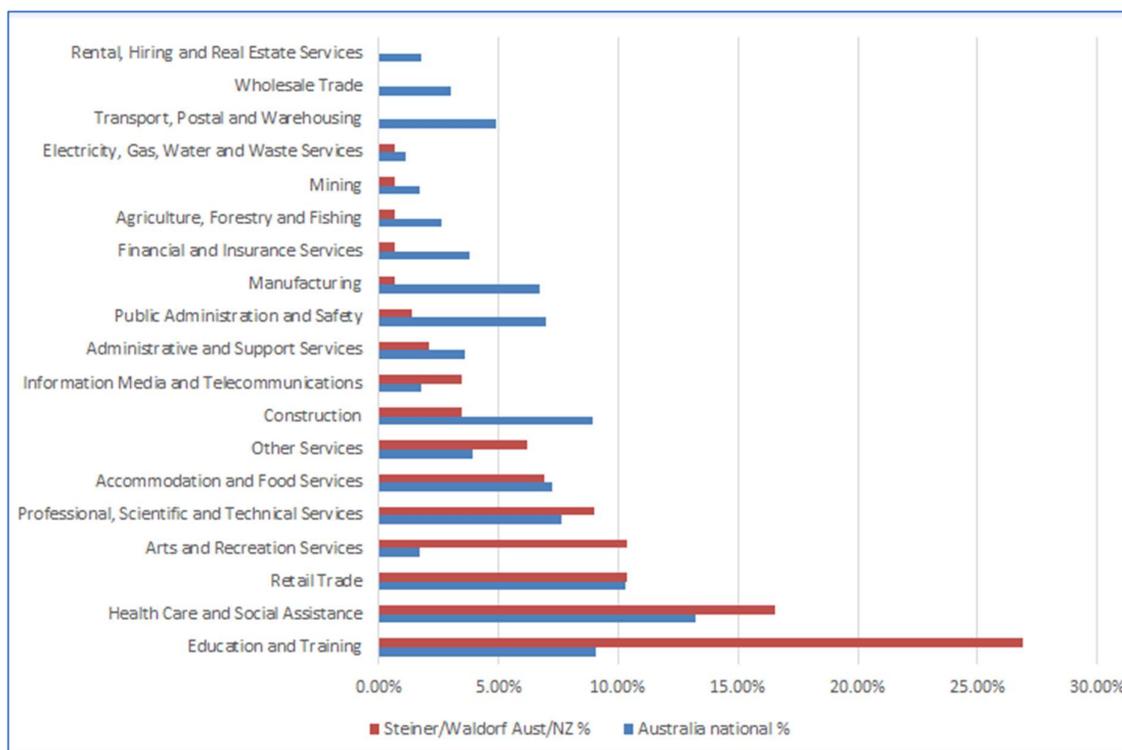
**Figure 5** illustrates the fields of study of the highest tertiary education program completed by US Steiner Waldorf graduates. The most popular career choices were similar to the Australian Steiner Waldorf graduates: Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioural Sciences.

### 3.2 Comparative review of work and career pathways

A comparative review is now presented of responses to Question 15 of the Survey:  
*'In which industry sector do you work?'*

Participants were asked to select one option from the fields listed in Figure 9 below which compares their responses with Australian national statistics.

**Figure 6.** Work sectors of Steiner Waldorf compared to Australian national graduates



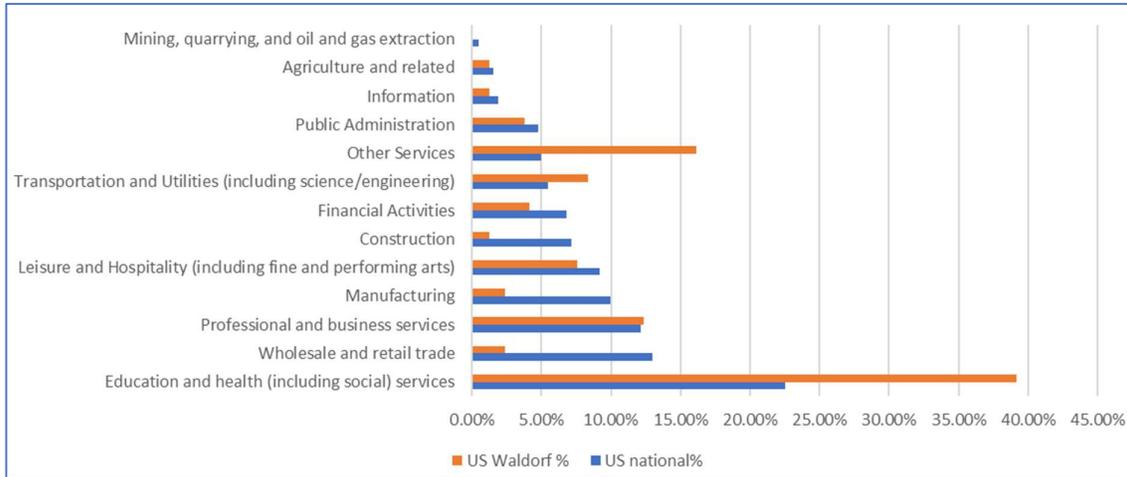
**Comments on Figures 6 – 8:**

Steiner Waldorf alumni tend to choose the ‘caring professions’ (i.e. education, training, health care and social welfare), and other ‘human-centred’ professions like the arts and recreation, retail trade, professional, scientific, and technical services,<sup>3</sup> and the hospitality industry. An international comparison of the industry sectors in which Australia/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates work could be made with a similar recent purposively sampled survey of US (n=552) and German (n= 1770) Waldorf graduate alumni in Figures 6-8. Although the employment categories for the industry sectors differ, *the major sectors chosen are similar for all Steiner Waldorf graduates across Australia, New Zealand,*

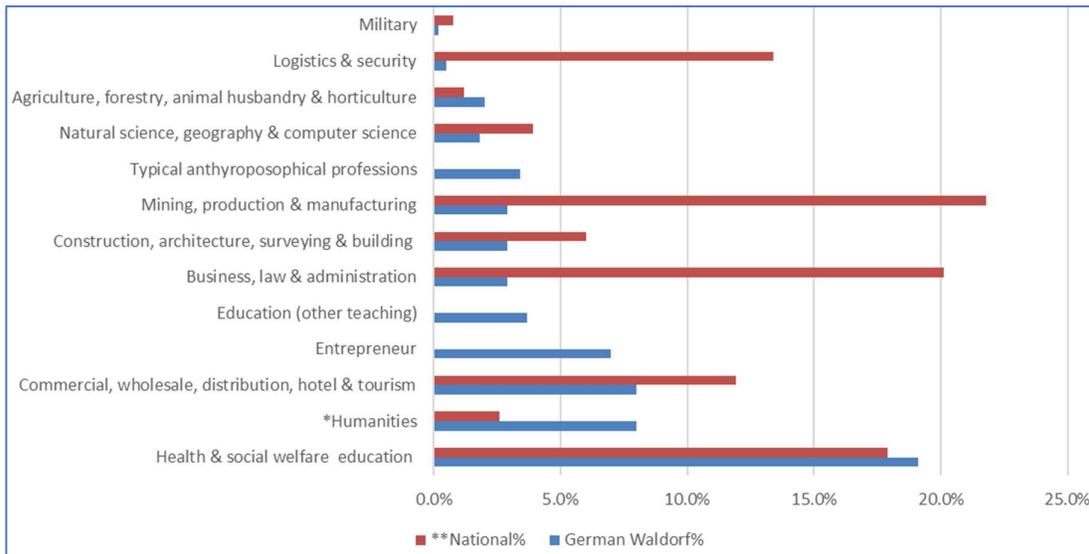
<sup>3</sup> These services generally require a high level of expertise and training and formal (usually tertiary level) qualifications and include scientific research, architecture, engineering, computer systems design, law, accountancy, advertising, market research, management and other consultancy, veterinary science, and professional photography. Excluded are units mainly engaged in providing health care and social assistance services, which are included in Division Q Health Care and Social Assistance. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/8464D4BB38214E7DCA25711F00146E44?opendocument>

Germany, and the US. Human-centred careers are chosen to a greater extent than national averages. (Note that in *Figure 8* 'education' is listed in two separate categories).

**Figure 7.** Work sectors of US Steiner Waldorf graduates compared to US national graduates



**Figure 8.** Work sectors of German Waldorf graduates compared German national graduates



<sup>4</sup> and <sup>5</sup>

During the interviews many Steiner Waldorf alumni emphasised the valuable connection between their Year 12 Research Project and their study and career pathways.

*So in a nutshell, the quality of support I had ... from the teachers to foster my own interests and pursue my own passions in science and research was fantastic. And that really set me up for my higher education. (Ian, FG13, 06:32)*

<sup>4</sup> \* Humanities: Linguistic, literary, intellectual, social and economic science, media, art, culture, and design

<sup>5</sup> \*\* Federal Statistical Office - Professions 2019.

*I'm studying psychology and counselling and I'm in my second year now. My question [in my Year 12 project] was: 'Is dreaming essential for psychological well-being?' So psych-related, but I didn't know at that point what I wanted to do at university. It's kind of funny that it's quite directly related to what I do now – and I'm still interested in dreaming. (Joanne, FG5, 0:26:11)*

*So I thought it was really good getting that depth of knowledge and talking specifically about the Year 12 Projects, I found it was really good preparation for university, for writing assignments that big and learning how to reference and how to take notes when someone is lecturing. Main Lessons also really prepared me quite well for doing university study. [I studied a double degree] in Psychology and Fine Arts. My Year 12 Project was about the relationship between 'Humans and Art,' and now I'm in the last year of my Masters in Public Health. (Lucy, FG5, 0:26: 44)*

*My Year 12 Project [focused on] dance, in a more creative style, and included choreography and filming. I found that [at university] I had to use some of the filming skills in one of my units. No one in my group could edit except for me. So that was helpful. (Ingrid, FG5, 0:28:35)*

*I think the Year 12 project was incredible for setting up, for being able to be self-directed learners. [...]. [I found university] very easy, but I was always a very driven student. I was able to just get on with it, whereas I noticed that a lot of my university peers didn't really know even where to start with that. So that project was amazing. (Sandra, FG8, 01:34:03)*

Another graduate made a more general comment about the influence of her school experiences on her career:

*It's an amazing school. I just I recently moved back to the area and was invited to go back and be a judge in their Wearable Art Awards, which meant so much to me because my whole career was sort of based on my Wearable Arts entrance at the same school. So it was a nice circle back. (Kim, FG10, 0:05:53)*

Not all students found it necessary to pursue tertiary studies:

*No [further studies] since leaving school. ... The school model allowed me the flexibility to explore my interests that weren't necessarily accommodated within the curriculum that VCE offered because my interest was in filmmaking and the school didn't have a lot of experience or resources in that area. But they did support me to make it up as I went along and definitely encouraged me to pursue that interest. And further education for filmmaking wasn't necessarily based on your ATAR score or whatever it was at the time, so it wasn't so much your academic performance, but more your Folio and just your thought process or creativity. ... I applied for positions in a couple of film schools, post high school, and I didn't get a spot in either of them. So I just started pursuing filmmaking on my own terms, outside of formal education, and got a series of part time jobs so that I could fund those pursuits to the point where I ended up getting enough work in film and video production out of my own hunger for that work and it became full time work for me and sustainable in the end. So I bypassed any tertiary education. (Keith, FG9, 0:06:26)*

### 3.3 Influence of Steiner Waldorf education on their further studies

The graduate focus group interviews provided an opportunity to explore data gained from the surveys in more depth. Interviewees were asked about their transitions from school to further study and work, and whether they felt well prepared for their career pathways. In **Table 4** below key phrases have been selected that reflect their responses to these questions.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 4.** Preparation for post-school studies

<p><b>Adequate preparation</b>  <i>Absolutely terrific – Prepared me adequately – I received a medal of High Academic Excellence. – My Steiner Waldorf Education set me up for higher education.</i></p> <p><b>Love of learning</b>  <i>Suited me beautifully – Fantastic experience: Comfortable, encouraged, generally confident – Keen to learn for the sake of learning – Love of learning – Pleased I stayed, enjoyed school, felt very, very expanded through my Steiner Waldorf Education – Loved school – Year 11 &amp; 12 were really good, challenging at times – Steiner Waldorf Education was really, really good for me – I valued the plays, outdoor education, camps, depth of knowledge which was good prep for university study.</i></p> <p><b>Skills gained</b>  <i>Good skills – We were encouraged to ask a lot of questions – I could learn, question and apply critical thinking – Questions were more important than content – Listening, note taking, review, good prep for university – Good listening &amp; recall skills – Good research skills – Hands-on skills – Skills, critical &amp; creative thinking – Confident &amp; well equipped – Confident &amp; well equipped – Well equipped – Could talk to lecturers – Could talk to lecturers – Resilience – I was able to ask for guidance to change courses – Belief I had something to say got me through – I blitzed it with straight High Distinctions – Steiner Waldorf education prepares you for life, adaptability, being able to fit in.</i></p> <p><b>Thinking skills</b>  <i>Lateral &amp; creative thinking, you don't have to follow a straight line/pathway – Integration of thinking, feeling and willing – Different view of life – Encouraged to think outside the box</i></p> <p><b>Motivation and time management</b>  <i>Motivation to meet deadlines for assignments 'sets you up for life' and a work environment – Managed online learning because of Steiner Waldorf Education – I could do time management and submit on time – Freedom to be responsible for your own learning - independence in learning – Creative discipline, teacher knows you can do better – Seeing tasks through to completion</i></p> <p><b>Supportive learning environment</b>  <i>I received extra support – I received support to improve – Teachers were supportive of my learning – I stayed at Steiner for supportive learning</i></p>
---

<sup>6</sup> Repeated words and phrases indicate multiple similar responses. Dashes between phrases and sentences show a new speaker.

**Comments on Table 4:**

Many of the interviewees attributed their effective levels of preparation for further studies to the holistic and integral nature of Steiner Waldorf pedagogy. They mentioned that they valued the open-minded approach to religion and spirituality, the multi-modal and arts-based teaching methods, the *‘broad foundation for understanding social dynamics,’ ‘wholesome and spiral curriculum,’ ‘hands-on and different style of teaching and learning,’* their *‘sense of connection in the world,’* and *‘the way Steiner Waldorf brings branches of society together.’* In both the graduate and teacher interviews it was noted that *‘students value their close relationship with their teachers which makes them more giving,’* and more likely to please them by completing their work on time and to a high standard. Teachers are able to guide students towards developing *‘inner discipline rather than having to use punishment.’* One of the graduates observed that the *‘early years were a strong factor in her school leaving success.’* She also asked: *‘How does early Steiner Waldorf education lead to asking questions in a different way?’* Another reflected that *‘Steiner Waldorf education values young people, their minds, fresh ideas and ability to play.’*

Other features of Steiner Waldorf education that were highlighted are reflected in **Table 5**.

**Table 5. Appreciation of Core Characteristics of the Pedagogy**

***Interest in others and community***

*Interest in & acceptance of others – Community, connection – Social responsibilities – Steiner Waldorf education helped my understanding of the connectedness of everything – Resilience, positive relationships – Social justice – Community service – I value the sense of justice, what’s right that is instilled*

***Reverence***

*I value the reverence: morning verses, poetry, rituals, and festivals – I appreciate the inherent reverence for nature*

***Nature and Indigenous connection***

*Life, appreciation of nature from Steiner Waldorf education – I appreciate my education – trip to Alice Springs, an Indigenous experience that brought connection and understanding – At the time I hated PE & outdoor education, but now I value it*

***Main Lessons and broad approach***

*I valued the integration of disciplines in Main Lessons – They are the mark of a broad education – I appreciated the broad education and the integration of arts and sciences – I value the broader approach in Steiner Waldorf towards science – I value the broad knowledge base – I value Main Lesson books – I have kept all my Main Lesson books – Main Lessons were a good preparation for university – I struggled with Main Lessons, their protracted time and high standard, but now I see their value and have kept my Parsifal Main Lesson book for over 30 years.*

**Comments on Table 5:**

The responses noted in **Table 5** present a refrain that is present in all the data sets, a chorus of voices reiterate an appreciation of these characteristic features and values: caring relationships and community, a sense of connection with others and the world, an embedded sense of social justice,

reverence for nature and participation in outdoor activities. The Main Lesson was highly valued for its broad-based and integrated nature and because it supported the effective delivery of listening, recall, review of lesson content, and note-taking skills.

**Table 6** shows [Question 19](#) survey responses, which measured the perceived amount of importance of Steiner Waldorf-specific education features, or alternatively, whether they did not happen. These responses mirrored interviewees’ reflections exemplified in [Tables 5 & 6](#).

**Table 6.** Valued features of Steiner Waldorf education

Valued features of Steiner Waldorf education	Aust/NZ responses				Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Did not happen	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Aust/NZ	German	
The class community over the entire school period	1.8%	2.4%	17.7%	78.0%	3.72	3.37	.000*
One class teacher for an extended period	1.2%	7.3%	37.6%	53.9%	3.44	3.47	.702
Main Lesson	0.6%	5.5%	26.2%	67.7%	3.61	1.43	.000*
Art and music lessons	0.0%	4.3%	22.0%	73.8%	3.70	3.75	.321
The Class Play	1.2%	7.3%	28.7%	62.8%	3.53	3.82	.000*
Industrial Arts	5.5%	7.9%	39.4%	47.3%	3.28	3.42	.118
Hand work	1.8%	6.1%	28.5%	63.6%	3.54	1.83	.000*
Eurythmy	0.0%	4.3%	22.0%	73.8%	3.70	3.56	.046*
Holistic teaching	1.2%	7.3%	28.7%	62.8%	3.53	3.15	.000*
The morning verse/personal verse	5.5%	7.9%	39.4%	47.3%	3.28	3.30	.862
Celebration of festivals	1.8%	6.1%	28.5%	63.6%	3.54	3.06	.000*
Learning in ability level groups	36.0%	0.0%	45.1%	18.9%	2.47	3.38	.000*

\*Statistically significant mean group differences between size-matched Aust/NZ and German random samples (n=165; Welch’s independent samples t-tests). Note that the respondent choice of “did not happen” was not included in the calculation of mean and the t-test statistic because we were only interested in determining the relative degree of importance.

\*\*Mean importance is the average of “not important”, “somewhat important” and “important” responses.

**Comments on Table 6:**

In [Table 6](#), the overall high percentages (most > 90%) for the importance the Australian/NZ graduates place on the listed Steiner Waldorf education-specific features reinforces the general positive tenor of the data. In comparison with German responses to this survey question, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni indicated that they value ‘*The class community over the entire school period; Main Lessons, Handwork, Holistic teaching, Eurythmy and Festivals*’ significantly more (p<0.05) than their German counterpart. The German graduates placed significantly greater value on the *Class Play* and *Learning in ability level groups*, but the latter received a higher score because only 1.8% of German alumni reported it did not happen (see [Appendix III](#)).

It is worth noting that while 64% of the Australian/NZ respondents indicated that *learning in ability level groups* is somewhat important or important (none said it was not important), 36% of the alumni

responded that schools are not offering ability level groups (as *'they did not happen'*). Yet this also possibly means that many schools *are catering* for different levels of tuition, as observed by these graduates:

*In our school, especially for Year 11 and 12, we had quite a few ... who weren't being challenged enough in maths ... And [the school] made separate elective units for even harder maths and more advanced electives. ... they did try to give as much as they could to those students who needed more [advanced tuition]. (Joanne, FG5, 1:04:3)*

*In my class ... we had four different levels of maths, ... everyone seemed to be in their right level. We had a lot of options ... I knew that I struggled in maths, but I still wanted to do a really high level. And my teacher put in a lot of effort to help me stay at that level because I thought that I could do it. The teachers had a lot of faith in all of us and really pushed us to do what we wanted to do. (Holly, FG5, 1.05.35)*

Where ability level groups were unavailable and/or specialist subject choices were limited, some graduates in the survey and interviews identified a need for them to take up supplementary courses and tuition:

*Extra courses were needed to support university study – Bridging courses in chemistry – Distance education courses for missing subjects, e.g. chemistry – Gifted needed extra courses – Need for more advanced electives – Need for more levels of maths*

Related to these factors, others observed that they felt inadequately prepared in some areas:

*Lack of academic skills – Poor essay writing – Poor maths skills – Some science learning was inadequate – Lacked specialisation particularly in technical skills – Inadequate and inappropriate learning support*

Nevertheless, some interviewees reflected that they were good at writing essays and other observations suggest that positive aspects of their education outweighed some of the weaknesses:

*And I felt confident that I had a lot to offer. ... I think I struggled writing essays ... the structure of the introduction and the body of what you're trying to say and a conclusion. ... But I was not short on the capacity to think and contribute and know that I had that. (Yvonne, FG2, 0:15.03)*  
*I'm a generalist much more than a specialist. And I think as far as the kind of practical application of my education goes, [...] there were some technical skills that others had more of than I did that I did feel like I missed out on. And that, on reflection, I felt a little bit of a lack of confidence because I was dealing with people who were very proficient. And yet I prefer being a generalist and I was never really drawn to being a specialist. (Louise, FG4)*

While the responses of Steiner Waldorf graduates to these questions strongly affirm that they value these features of their education highly, it is important for schools to pay attention to the areas of weakness that they have identified, such as the need for quality teachers with expertise in the specialist subject areas and the adequate provision of school facilities for these specialisations. They have also noted the need for students and teachers to be supported through ability level learning groups, and to have adequate learning support for gifted students and for those with learning challenges.

### 3.4 Attitudes towards the quality of Steiner Waldorf learning and teaching

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 20 of the Survey](#):

*'The following are general statements about Steiner Waldorf Schools. Please indicate by selecting the relevant statement to what extent you agree or disagree.'*

**Table 7.** Attitudes toward Steiner Waldorf learning and teaching

Australian/NZ participants' attitudes	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Aust/NZ group mean**	German group mean	Mean Diff. (p)
a) The lessons were usually educationally sound and well prepared.	3.7%	6.2%	52.2%	37.9%	3.24	2.96	.000*
b) My teachers were professionally competent.	5.0%	6.2%	50.3%	38.5%	3.22	3.12	.162
c) I felt supported on many different levels.	5.6%	6.8%	34.8%	52.8%	3.36	3.39	.712
d) The teacher-student relationship was characterized by mutual respect and appreciation.	6.2%	2.5%	29.2%	62.1%	3.48	3.38	.228
e) In class I had ample opportunities to contribute my own ideas.	3.7%	3.1%	37.9%	55.3%	3.45	3.38	.378
f) I was free to learn without pressure to perform.	3.1%	18.6%	42.2%	36.0%	3.13	3.17	.617
g) I felt that my teachers took me seriously.	1.9%	4.3%	39.1%	54.7%	3.48	3.39	.229
h) I often found the teacher-student relationship to be too close.	20.5%	61.5%	6.8%	11.2%	2.08	1.79	.001*
i) Most of the teachers understood my concerns.	3.1%	10.6%	62.5%	23.8%	3.07	3.10	.738
j) At school I often got bored.	24.2%	59.0%	13.0%	3.7%	1.95	2.12	.057
k) Most of the content I learnt has been useful to me.	3.7%	9.9%	60.2%	26.1%	3.10	3.07	.641
l) I like to tell others that I attended a Steiner Waldorf School.	3.7%	11.2%	39.8%	45.3%	3.27	3.26	.863
m) At school, I often felt excluded.	34.8%	47.2%	15.5%	2.5%	1.85	1.52	.000*
n) Teachers were often helpless in the face of aggressive confrontations between pupils.	22.5%	56.9%	18.8%	1.9%	1.99	2.06	.494

\*\* Higher average scores equal stronger agreement. Lower average scores equal stronger disagreement.

#### **Comments on Table 7:**

The responses are consistently positive, with *overall agreement* (combined strongly agree and agree) for the quality of teaching 90% for **a)**, 88.8% for **b)**; respectful teacher-student relationships 87.6 for **c)**, 91.3% for **d)**, 93.8% for **g)**, and 86.3% for **i)**; and for student participation in learning 93.2% for **e)**, 86.3% for **k)**. Agreement proportions were slightly lower for **f)** at 78.2%, possibly because of stress related to

students needing to meet both mainstream certification requirements and Steiner Waldorf curriculum specifications, such as Main Lessons and the Year 12 Senior Project.

On the negative side, 18% felt that the student-teacher relationship was too close, even though 82% of participants disagreed overall (they either disagreed or strongly disagreed). Similarly, while 83.2% 'did not get bored' **j**), 16.7% '*did get bored*,' possibly due to the generalist nature of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum which requires student participation in a broader range of subjects. Although 82% of students felt included, 18% of students felt excluded. Despite the strong affirmation of quality teaching, 90% for **a**), 20.7% felt that teachers were helpless in the face of aggressive student confrontations **n**) which is rather high for this feature. Finally, on a positive note, 85.1% 'like to tell others they attended a Steiner Waldorf school' **l**).

In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey <sup>7</sup> Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly higher level of agreement than the German ones in response to **a**) *The lessons were usually educationally sound and well prepared*. Randall and Peters (2021) explain that due to the rapid expansion of Steiner Waldorf schools in Germany there is a shortage of adequately qualified teachers, and of Steiner Waldorf qualified teachers, particularly in the High Schools (p.106). Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly higher level of agreement (in a negative sense) in response to **h**) *I often found the teacher-student relationship to be too close*, **m**) *At school, I often felt excluded*. This experience may be related to the small size of many of the Australian/NZ Steiner schools where there are fewer specialist subject teachers and some need to teach in more than one specialist subject area.

### 3.5 Review of the influence of Steiner Waldorf education on their study and careers

It is worthwhile reviewing, at this point in our report, the influence of Steiner Waldorf education on graduates' further study and career pathways and experiences through Biesta's (2020) lens of taking the "beautiful risk of education" because his ideas cast a thought-provoking light on foundational principles of Steiner pedagogy as an education towards freedom (Ashley, 2009; Carlgren, 2009). Rather than following a pathway towards *effective and predictable* educational goals, Biesta (2020) suggests that we should take the risk of the unknown and the as yet unknown (p.103). Biesta names "three domains of purpose" in education which he identifies as "qualification, socialization, and subjectification" (p.89). *Qualification* means making knowledge and skills available (p.92), and as this provision occurs within particular "cultures, traditions and practices," it is always accompanied by forms of *socialization*, which in turn impacts on the individuation or *subjectification* of students. In this article Biesta (2020) argues that "what is at stake in the idea of subjectification is our freedom as human beings and, more specifically, our freedom to act or to refrain from action" (p.93).

Freedom viewed in this way is fundamentally an *existential* matter; it is about how we exist, how we lead our own lives, which of course no one else can do for us. (Biesta, 2020, p.93)

As freedom lies at the heart of Steiner Waldorf education, Biesta's idea of subjectification and its endangered status, resonates with the pedagogical intention to support students to "exist as subjects of their own lives" and not as objects of what "other people want" from them (p.93). In Question 21 of the survey we therefore asked graduates about their capacity to see themselves as "the creators" of their "own destiny." From a Steiner perspective Biesta's trinity of domains should be a *quaternity*

---

<sup>7</sup> See *Figures 13-15* in [Appendix II](#) for more statistical detail on the comparative responses.

because the domain of ‘life’ is missing. Students do not only need to become *qualified* and *socialised subjects*, who are independently and freely able to create their own destiny, they also need to have a feeling of responsibility towards the environment, an understanding of the complexity of the natural world and its biodiversity, and a “capacity to see specific developments on the planet in an interconnected way” (as reflected in the sections of Question 21 of the Survey).

Biesta would argue that he includes these capacities in what he means by the existential nature of the subject. He explains that subjectification is about "qualified" freedom because our existence as subject “is never an existence just with and for ourselves, but always an existence in and with the world”(2020, p.95). Living in harmony with others and our environment, Biesta (2020) points out, necessarily limits our freedom, as the ecological crisis is demonstrating very forcefully. Yet, here as well, the capacities students need to grow to enable them to navigate the global world and manage the sustainability of the planet require a depth of philosophical conceptualization which, from a Steiner perspective, can only be generated through the creation of a separate domain. The Steiner Pedagogical Value of Life (SEA, 2011; Haralambous & SEA, 2018) offers a rich and diverse range of principles, strategies and skills which effectively serve the ecological nature and purpose of this educational domain. But to enact them in a way that rings true to Steiner’s vision of freedom we need to take up what Biesta (2020) calls the “beautiful risk” of education.

**Table 8. Summary of themes relating to Steiner Waldorf study and career experiences**

SUBJECTIFICATION		
Morning and personal verses Ability to express own ideas		
QUALIFICATION	PEDAGOGY OF LIFE	SOCIALIZATION
Adequate preparation	Love of learning	Supportive learning environment
Skills: critical & creative thinking, recall, questioning, research	Broad, holistic approach with multimodal strategies, integrated music, speech & drama, eurythmy, arts, handwork, industrial arts	Long-lasting class community
Motivation	Main Lessons	Teacher ‘looping’ – one class teacher for several years
Time management skills	Rituals and rhythmic celebration of festivals.	Learning/emotional needs met
Learning in ability level groups	Reverence for Nature, camps, gardening, outdoor education	Respectful teacher-student relationships
Educationally sound lessons		Indigenous connection
Professionally competent teachers		Empathy, connection with others
Learning content was useful		

**Comments on Table 8:**

The review of the influence of Steiner Waldorf education on graduates’ study and career pathways and experiences has focused thus far on data associated with the domains of qualification and socialization, and subjectification as characterised by Biesta (2020). Although Steiner Waldorf students are not directly taught about the Pedagogical Value of Life, graduates have nevertheless identified its distinguishing characteristics such as rhythm, the integration of the arts through multimodal strategies, as well as “process, discovery, movement, ecological awareness and bringing learning to life imaginatively” (SEA, 2011, p.31). In Steiner Waldorf pedagogy, Imagination is understood to be a *living* thinking (Haralambous, 2016) that facilitates an appreciation of the living processes in Nature. ‘Pedagogy of Imagination’ (Nielsen, 2004) revitalises and encourages an interest in and love of learning.

## 4. INFLUENCE OF ANTHROPOSOPHY ON THEIR LIVES

In this section we explore responses to questions in the survey about the influence of Anthroposophical ideas and the philosophical principles that underpin Steiner Waldorf pedagogy. In asking these questions we followed the example of the German researchers who were interested in the potential longevity of the Steiner Waldorf education movement in Germany, where they celebrated the centenary of the establishment of the first Steiner Waldorf school in 2019. Randoll and Peters (2021) observe that with the rapid expansion of the movement some schools are demonstrating a tendency to over compromise the pedagogy which may lead to a loss of identity (p108.). They were keen to explore whether a deeper commitment to the pedagogy is likely to be carried over by generations of ‘traditional’ Steiner Waldorf graduates which may then strengthen the ethos of schools. If there is a dilution in the delivery of core anthroposophical principles then the overall spiritual<sup>8</sup> orientation of the pedagogy and characteristic features of the education, like main lessons, eurythmy, and the celebration of festivals, may become more difficult to implement. On the other hand, if the findings from the research identify that there is a strong interest in the anthroposophical underpinnings of the pedagogy, this may indicate the future flourishing development of the movement.

### 4.1 Current Influence of Anthroposophy on their lives

For a comparative review of parental motives of Australian/NZ and German graduates for enrolling their children in a Steiner Waldorf school, see [Figure 18](#) in [Appendix IV](#). The ‘pedagogical’ and ‘traditional’ motives (family members attended a Steiner Waldorf school) are stronger in the German responses, probably because the schools have been established for longer than the ones in Australia. The *philosophical worldviews* (as in their general outlook on life and desire for a holistic educational approach), rather than the *pedagogical or anthroposophical* motives appear to be more influential in Australia, where respondents observed that they appreciated the ‘holistic’ and ‘broad based’ educational approach.

[Figure 9](#) (below) presents a comparative review of responses to [Question 26 of the Survey](#):  
*‘Do any aspects of the anthroposophical/philosophical foundations of Steiner Waldorf education have any relevance in your life now?’ (YES/NO)*

#### [Comments on Figure 9 \(below\)](#):

The responses suggest that the philosophical foundations of Steiner Waldorf education have a greater continued influence on Australian/NZ graduates than they have on German graduates. For the Australian/NZ graduates, responses to [Questions 34 and 26](#) yielded the same 89% positive weighting which indicates that there is a strong correspondence between the continued inspirational influence of Steiner Waldorf ideas and holistic values, *and their application* in child rearing practices and life choices, love of nature, outdoor activities, and environmental awareness; commitment to sustainable living and health-oriented lifestyles; the celebration of Steiner-inspired rituals and festivals; and creative practices of music, crafts, and art.

When commenting on the responses in their survey to this question Randoll (2021) points out that they are mostly *pedagogical* rather than *anthroposophical* (p.68), which is true for our responses as well.

---

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Steiner described Anthroposophy as a pathway of inner development which leads the spiritual in the human being into connection with the spiritual in the universe.

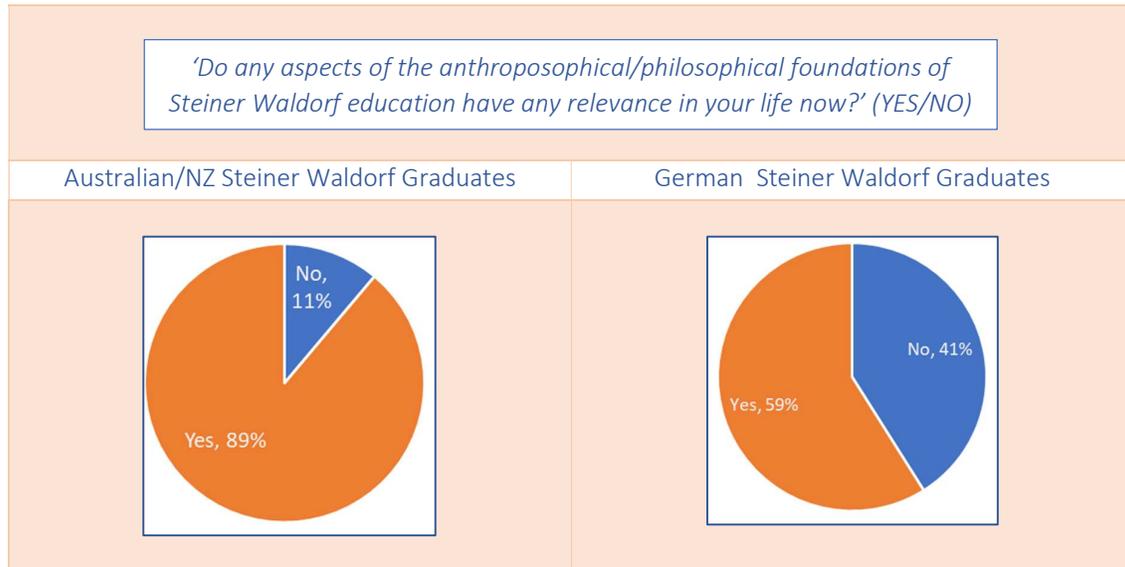
Eight of our graduates *explain why* by clarifying that as ‘anthroposophy’ is not directly taught at Steiner Waldorf schools, many graduates are still not aware of these ideas.

*I have never read or learnt any personally so the only influence that it has in my life now would be what has been incorporated into my life through my education and upbringing. I do associate the development with many of my passions in life with the upbringing and education I received. When I had my second child [...], I [studied] Steiner early childhood ... coming back to it as an adult ... to some of the theory and reading some of the lectures that Steiner gave, [...] suddenly there were these little light bulb moments of, ‘oh, that was what that was all about,’ [which I had not realised] as a child because [I was] just in [my] little wonderful world as a child (Marian, FG4, p.12)*

It is interesting to note that only two gave a ‘no’ response to [Question 26](#), and a third qualified the answer:

*Yes and no, I don't think Steiner really changed who I was as a person because I came in late. I feel it was me who was always striving for self-improvement. But I have very similar values to what Steiner was teaching.*

**Figure 9.** Comparative relevance of Steiner Waldorf pedagogy



Some graduates did offer a more conscious acknowledgement and truer reflection of *anthroposophical principles*, in their reference to subjectification (Biesta, 2020) and a spiritual pathway of development.

**Table 9.** Anthroposophical influences on subjectification and thinking

**Subjectification, thinking**  
*[Anthroposophy] has shaped me – Forged my own path in life – Very relevant to who I am in this world and I'm very grateful to have had it – Helped me understand the world – Spiritual sense of life – Spirituality – True purpose and meaning in life – Ability to think independently and creatively, to forge a future for myself – To think more creatively – Think for myself – Think freely – Think differently – Think independently – Self- assurance & self- confidence, self- identity – I am a grounded person*

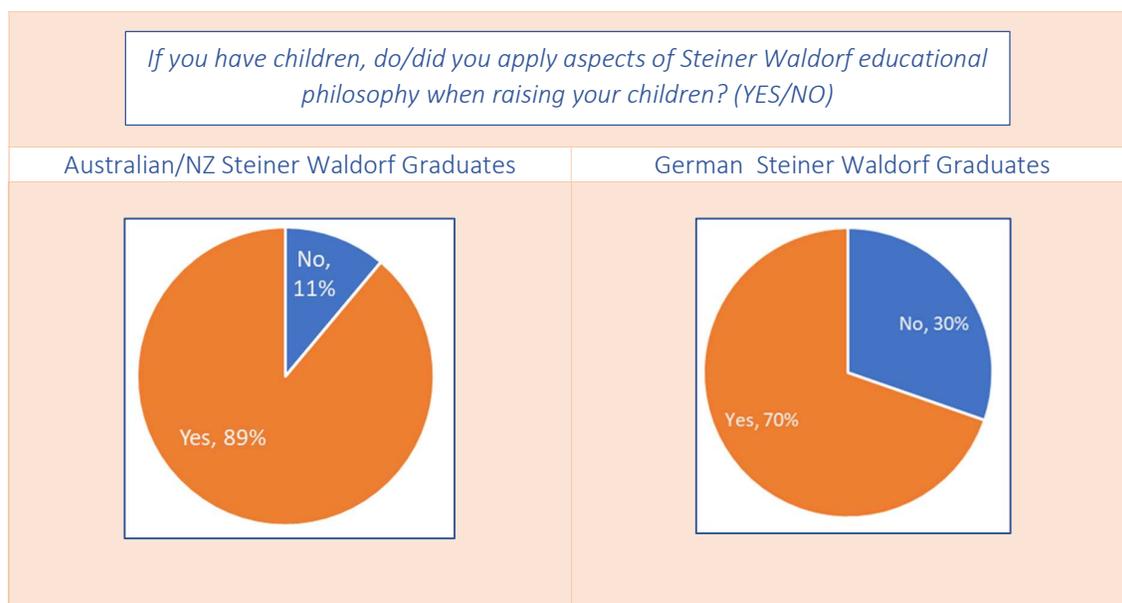
**Comments on Table 9:**

Although these responses are brief, they pinpoint one of Rudolf Steiner’s core philosophical principles, which like Biesta’s idea of subjectification (2020), places high value on the ability to think independently and freely. Both Biesta (2020) and Steiner (1919/1996; 1923/2004) suggest that it is this capacity, in particular, that supports students to find their way in the world, and ‘purpose and meaning in their lives’ (Marie Steiner, 1923).

**4.2 The application of Steiner Waldorf principles in child rearing**

In this section a review is presented of responses to [Question 34 of the Survey](#).

**Figure 10. Comparative enactment of Steiner Waldorf child rearing principles**



**Comments on Figure 13:**

Despite the stronger *traditional* element in the German schools, it appears that Steiner Waldorf graduates in Australia are more willing to enact core features of the philosophy in their child rearing practices as reflected in the characteristics mentioned below (in [Table 10](#) in the continued review of qualified responses to [Question 34 of the Survey](#): *If YES, what aspects, for example?*). One respondent offered a longer answer that sums up the general tenor of other answers:

*My mother says they chose Steiner because it is an educational approach that is:*

- *tailored to developmental age,*
- *includes not rushing to seat young children at desks at an early age,*
- *well-rounded,*
- *[characterised by] having art, music, etc. embedded within it from an early age,*
- *[characterised by] dedicated teachers who are curious about how children learn,*
- *a caring approach including listening to each child and their needs,*
- *[characterised by] pastoral care through the teenage years,*
- *small enough ... for the teachers to really get to know each student.*

**Table 10.** Key characteristics of Steiner Waldorf child rearing practices

**Play**

*Imagination – Encourage imaginative play – Space and time to learn through play – Play, unstructured play – Outdoor play – Play based philosophy – Independent play and priorities of play time – Encourage creative play – Plenty of time for play – Lots of play time and outside time with natural objects – Lots of free play – Open ended and imaginary play – Natural fibres for clothes and toys – Wooden toys – Choice of toys – Steiner toys – No plastic or noisy toys, block crayons for art – Avoid plastic toys – Choice of educational resources and relaxed style*

**Nature**

*Play in Nature – Lots of nature play – Appreciation for nature – Nature – Nature – Natural environment – Natural environment – Connections to the environment – Encouraging nature play – Appreciation of nature and mother earth – Nature play, nature table – Natural toys, outdoor play, gardening – Respect for nature and the seasons – Explore the natural world – Reverence of the natural world – Time outdoors camping and bushwalking – Spend all day outside playing*

**Music, art, craft, creativity**

*Encouraging creativity and imaginative play and self-initiated problem solving – Encouraging love of learning and creative play – Crafts – Art – Art and literature, art, create art together, creativity is encouraged, we all sing all the time, art – Art and music as a part of everyday life – Craft, painting and drawing – Encouraging a wide range of activities including crafts – Create music together – Colour with Steiner crayons – Encouraging music and art – Encouraging curiosity and responding to their questions with ‘ what do you think?’ – Empathetic, creative, and artistic parenting, “thinking outside the box” – Singing for different parts of the day when they were very young*

**Festivals, rituals and rhythms**

*Festivals – Saying a blessing (from Steiner kindergarten) before meals – Gratitude for our meals, the day and weather – Meal blessings, Rhythms, songs and stories, seasonal table, songs/stories, festivals/celebrations with special care – Rhythm and routine – Routine – Strong daily rhythms, rituals around festivals, celebrations, mealtimes, bedtime – Connecting to the seasons and festivals of the year – Embracing traditions such as festivals – Celebrating festivals*

**Limited/no technology**

*x20 respondents noted limited or no use of technology or screens, particularly in the early years*

**Home environment and health**

*Encouraging and nurturing creativity at home – Gentle, warm home environment, craft, cooking – Family mealtime – Including the children in many daily tasks – Doing household work side by side*

**Comments on Table 10:**

The responses to this question reflect that for these Steiner Waldorf graduates, there is a high take-up of core features of Pedagogy of Life which inform early childhood education, and practice of them in their home and parenting choices. It is encouraging to see the overall positive application of anthroposophical principles and Steiner Waldorf pedagogical principles. Whether we are able to draw from these data reassurance for the continued flourishing of the Steiner Waldorf education movement in Australia and New Zealand is not clear given the small size of the sample and the unpredictability of the current situation.

## 5. CHOOSING STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION

### 5.1 Would you attend a Steiner Waldorf School again?

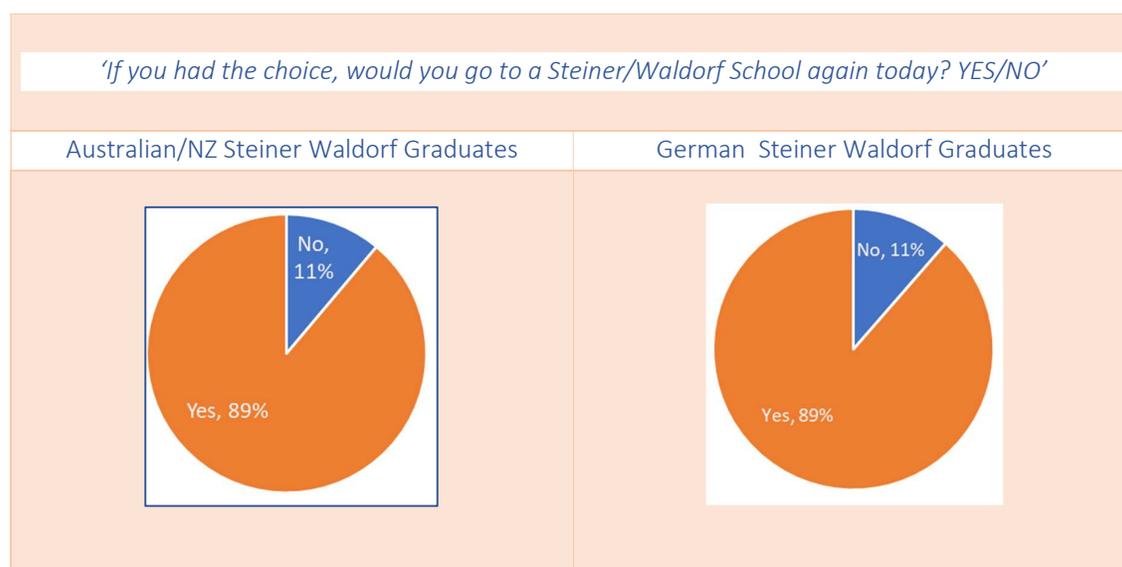
In [Section 5](#) a review is presented of responses to the following questions from the survey:

[Question 23 of the Survey](#): ‘Apart from the statements mentioned above, which other aspects of your experiences at the Steiner/Waldorf School do you consider to be positive or negative today?’

[Question 24](#): ‘If you had the choice, would you go to a Steiner/Waldorf School again today? YES/NO’

The review draws on data from the interviews as well.

**Figure 11:** Comparative ‘repeated’ choice of Steiner Waldorf education



**Comments on Figure 11:**

Significantly, there is *no difference* between the German and Australian/NZ graduates in their responses to this question; and drew the same weighting of 89% positive responses for the Australian/NZ respondents as [Question 26](#) (above). Those committed to the philosophical foundations of the education are likely to have chosen Steiner Waldorf schools again. [Table 11](#) (below) presents a review of the reasons of the 11% who answered ‘no’ to [Question 24 of the Survey](#):

### 5.2 Challenging aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling

**Table 11.** Negative responses to attending a Steiner Waldorf School again

***Lack of academic rigour***

*Yes, though I want to be able to choose my high school subjects – I thought it was particularly good for the primary years but was not quite rigorous enough in the later years – High School didn’t give me the skills I needed for University – No, while the community around the school was generally good, the facilities available and subjects provided were far below what was necessary for me to continue on into an academic career after school without undertaking extracurricular work – I think it would have achieved a better academic result in a more competitive school – I do not feel as though I was academically challenged and learnt to ‘study’ correctly.*

**Comments on Table 11:**

The responses identify that some graduates did not feel adequately prepared for university and that they experienced a lack of academic rigour and facilities, and subject choices, which meant having to take up extracurricular subjects outside school. Another graduate was critical of having one class teachers for an extended time in the Primary School: *No, it is too risky and at least two of my siblings had very bad experiences with class teachers, my children will not go to a Steiner school.*

Another two mentioned a lack of friends: *Yes and no because I had no friends in high school – I felt excluded by kids from 'normal' schools.*

A further graduate qualified her negative response by acknowledging that she is now where she wants to be.

*'Based on my high school experience I would consider completing Years 10-12 elsewhere purely for the academic recognition other schools have with ATAR etc. however, I am still where I wanted to be now just a few years later and I know the teaching system has changed now and a lot of current students are accepted straight into university.'*

The 'No' responses here pinpoint key issues related to small schools where friendship choices are more limited, as reflected in the poignant simplicity of the answer: *'no friends.'* The *alternative* nature of Steiner Waldorf schools also raises social challenges (Haralambous, 2016, pp.12-16) and a potentially different experience of loneliness, as reflected in the response: *'I felt excluded by kids from 'normal' schools.'* This point was reinforced in responses to [Question 23:](#)

*Small class sizes magnify interpersonal issues and limit social connections. – Too small to allow for healthy social interactions and relationships. – Little opportunity to change friendship groups. – Sometimes too clique-y. You can be 'assigned a role' in a class that is hard to change.*

**Table 12. Challenging aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling Experiences**

***Limited choice of teachers***

*A lack of consistency among skill and experience level of educators, some knew nothing of Steiner philosophy whereas others were well versed. – Some of the teachers were not high quality – Some teachers seemed a bit naive and pseudo spiritual – Having the same teacher for such a long period of time can be extremely unfortunate if your teacher is not very good and you struggle to learn with them, don't understand their teaching style or you just really struggle to connect with them on any level. – There is one of each specialty teacher in high school, if you are not getting along with one teacher for some reason, you can't swap classes. – I had one bad experience with a high school teacher and because our school was so small, it tainted my whole high school experience. – There was only one teacher who really shouldn't have been a teacher. He couldn't teach. This was obvious when he was replaced by a teacher who could. But this can happen in any school.*

***Lack of subjects choices***

*Limited number of students limits subject availability in final years of study. – Not having enough streamlined choice of subject areas in senior high school years. – Lack of a solid PDHPE lesson and sex education. – Lack of knowledge in the social/political sciences.- Lack of subject choice and resources. – Limited education about chemistry, physiology, and neuroscience. – No in-depth knowledge in some subjects, particularly the sciences and STEM in general. – Not receiving an OP/ATAR. – Low resources for some subject areas, having to make up for some things via extracurricular activities and studies.*

**(Table 12, continued)**

**Lack of facilities**

*Lack of competitive sport. – Sport was never a focus nor encouraged, sport is a big part of a child's upbringing, learning rules and working as a team. – Not having connections with other schools for sports carnivals.*

**Lack of adequate IT instruction**

*Low focus on technology and its incorporation into teaching. – IT lessons were outdated – IT literacy is hugely important as [graduates] leave HS and enter higher education or workforce.*

**Lack of inclusivity**

*Not having support with ADHD diagnosis and adequate support with ongoing issues linked to my mental well-being. – Old school ideas on gender roles. – Less exposure to socially different situations. – Isolation in learning how to interact with others from different backgrounds and cultures/ethnicity. – Some of Steiner's views are outdated and racist / sexist. – We were not given a strong education about Indigenous and Australian culture and history.*

**Comments on Table 12:**

As noted by some of the graduates, the small size of some Steiner High Schools often entails limited subject choices and facilities, and the need for some students to seek out extra supplementary courses. While comments in [Table 11](#) which refer to a lack of academic rigour and study or university skills, cannot be attributed to the small size of schools, the reference to *'bad experiences with class teachers,'* sometimes can be. Problems can potentially be exacerbated by prolonged exposure to, and therefore greater dependence on, one class teacher, or a few teachers in a small high school, because there are no alternative teachers, subject choices, or avenues of appeal. Nevertheless, poor quality teaching and a 'lack of' academic rigour in some Steiner Waldorf schools need to be and are being addressed on an ongoing basis.

Although some respondents mentioned a lack of cultural diversity and inclusivity (in relation to Indigenous curriculum content and addressing learning challenges), others reflected that these features were the *positive* aspects which they valued most: <sup>9</sup>

*Tutoring and 'split level groupings were always helpful and positive, as there was the opportunity to ask questions – Extra help was available for those who needed it – We valued the teaching of our Indigenous culture, through stories.'*

While there are clearly differences in the effective application of the pedagogy amongst schools, it is worth remembering that the majority of the graduates' responses are positive and that 89% observed that they would choose a Steiner Waldorf school again.

The observation that *'some of Steiner's views are outdated and racist/sexist* is of particular concern and has been refuted by the Goetheanum Leadership Group, which notes that while Steiner mentioned "biological, ethnic and cultural influences on humanity," his main concern was with "the individuality's autonomy and self-efficacy" and our human capacity to "transcend and transform biological, cultural and social premises and conditions" (Jüngel, June 2021; citing Häfner, Kaliks, Selg & Wittich, 2021). Far from being a racist, Steiner demonstrated a steadfast and deep commitment to the flourishing development of humanity (Haralambous, 2016).

---

<sup>9</sup> See the discussion of Pedagogy of Wisdom in the review of [Question 23](#) on p. 34 below.

### 5.3 Positive aspects of Steiner Waldorf Schooling

In this section a review is presented of positive responses to [Question 23 of the Survey](#) through the lens of the four pedagogical values of Steiner Education (SEA, 2011 pp.31-33; Haralambous/SEA, 2018, pp.21-25).

‘Pedagogy of Love,’ which lies at the heart of the educational movement is characterised by warmth, care, belonging, reverence, connection, community, and relationships (SEA, 2011, pp.31-33; Haralambous/SEA, 2018, pp.21-25). As these descriptors appear strongly in the responses, (or underlie them), it appears that this pedagogical value is being authentically enacted and is greatly appreciated.

#### **Table 13. Pedagogy of Love**

##### ***Caring Community***

*Sense of community (mentioned five times) – Sense of connection, belonging was strong – Having the same friends – Teacher student relationships – Knowing children and families of all ages – Community, care, reverence – Community, long term friendship – Community and depth of learning – Community aspect, particularly special strong social connection with classmates – Supportive and accepting community and teachers – Community, culture, friendships and relationships and the environment are the most positive aspects of Steiner education that I will take away with me – Community connection with likeminded people meant I was safe as a young person, that we all looked out for each other – Being in a community that felt like family – Secure and consistent community – Campus, community, events – My ability to communicate my needs with others, learning to share responsibilities, the community with teachers who did not come across as too dogmatic with the Steiner philosophy.’*

##### ***Supportive Relationships***

*Strong relationships – friends in primary school – lasting friendships with classmates – friendships – friendships and trust – other students and teachers – relationships with teachers – deep, long term relationships – lifelong friendships from growing up with the same people one big social group of all year levels everyone hung out with each other – friends that were created – Strong bonds with classmates – support from the school during a difficult HSC year – Student teacher relationships – Close relationships with teachers motivated me to strive – Teachers – Support from teachers, broad range of learning – Social and the teachers were nice – Interpersonal relationships with the teachers who encouraged me and gave me space to grow. – The strong relationships, understanding, and bonds that were present with the vast majority of my teachers. This allowed my teachers to be able to teach to my needs. – I had the most fantastic primary school guardian and as a result, I had the best primary school experience. – Secure connections formed with guardians and teachers through regular care and contact which balanced a tumultuous, and often traumatic, home life. – Enthusiasm of teachers to connect and teach us content and to see the growth in students, their understanding and genuine excitement and interest in students’ discoveries. – I had a fantastic class teacher who mitigated many of the shortcomings of the system. – The teachers were all genuine, nice people who made an active effort to connect with me and help me. The intentions behind the lessons we learnt were always positive, they were also taught in a way that was applicable to my life in years to come, still now, almost every day. Having a meaningful relationship with teachers, like they actually cared about you.*

**Comments on Table 13:**

For many graduates, the close community, and supportive relationships with their teachers, provided the foundation of safety and security on which the teachers could then address their learning needs. The long-lasting influence of this value is summed up in this observation:

*I had a wonderful class, 10 years later we're still in touch and supporting each other. I feel like Steiner helped me to become a confident problem solver and a great boss. My employees really value working for me and I think that is really because I had a close relationship with my class and wanted to create a similar working environment.*

Pedagogy of Life,<sup>10</sup> is characterised by thinking that is fluid and organic, mobile and life-enhancing (Gidley, 2016, pp.122, 123), Teaching strategies apply principles of process and discovery learning and aim to enhance ecological and environmental awareness and awaken an understanding of sustainable practices. Imagination as a *living thinking* facilitates an appreciation of the living processes in Nature as well as the growth of empathy (Haralambous, 2016), as reflected in this comment:

*I was encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility to leave a positive influence on the environment and the people in my life. And I thought a respectful and nurturing environment was encouraged, which was good.*

The comments in **Table 14** below, which express respondents' appreciation of Nature, camps, outdoor education, and gardening, demonstrate ways in which this pedagogical value are practised.

**Table 14. Pedagogy of Life**

<p><b>Camps</b></p> <p><i>Camps – camps – camps – school camps – camps were amazing – camps were amazing – camps and entire outdoor education/recreation curriculum. Those experiences were incredibly important in building my resilience, ability to face my own negative traits and working as a team – camps as rites of passage for young people, learning the boundaries of independence, responsibility, challenges, that come with that – experiencing different cultures on school camps</i></p> <p><b>Nature, nature study &amp; beauty of school environment</b></p> <p><i>Nature – nature, environment, gardening – gardening – garden and architecture – physical environment – physical environment – beautiful grounds – school environment was one that was beautiful – location of the school was great, we had so much space to explore – natural resources and the school being on land with lots of trees left! – Being able to run and play in nature – proximity to nature during play break – deep respect for nature and reverence for the spiritual worlds</i></p>
---

**Comments on Table 14:**

Multi-modal teaching strategies and the integration of aesthetic practices of art, music, movement, eurythmy and crafts support the growth of *living thinking*. These features of the approach are effectively illustrated in responses to this question and are summed up well in this reflection: '*exposure to many different skills and ways of learning have helped me a lot in terms of adapting to the university environment.*'

---

<sup>10</sup> Also see Section 3.5 and Table 8.

In one of the interviews Natalie shared her love of the outdoors that she had gained from the camps.

*Yeah, I absolutely loved the camps. Always talk about them and I still very much love doing all those kinds of things like hiking, camping. I think I wouldn't do them now if I hadn't had that experience at school, because I wouldn't be confident in just going out with a backpack for several days. (Natalie, FG4)*

**Table 15.** Imaginative teaching strategies

***Creative problem solving, innovative thinking skills***

*Creative – creative – creativity in all fields – everything creative was positive – stories – I'm good at seeing things from many different perspectives and coming up with new solutions that haven't been tried before – expecting / encouraging young people to have a voice and come up with their own creative solutions – helping people see there are multiple ways to do something – knowledge and interest in a wide range of topics – wider view of the world from a younger age – having a positive attitude to learning and researching new things – Creative thinking, as well as supporting the way I work, which is very visual – Wide range of subjects – Strong problem solving – shaping my thinking laterally to look at life from various angles – exposure to other opinions in open discussion – ability to think broadly and navigate difficulties – positive attitudes and motivation to strive for what was important to me – being able to ask questions and be curious about anything and everything – Teaching young people to back their own thinking – In high school, the teachers were always open to discussions and helped us to form our own opinions – wide ranging and in-depth exploration of many topics – large range of topics that were covered by main lessons and the poetry/choirs – Capacity to form new ideas, rather than recycle old ideas*

***Craft, skills, arts & music***

*I gained a lot of life skills – hard craft – development of a variety of hands on skills, e.g. woodwork, sewing – Overwhelmingly, my appreciation of the arts and the world around me – music, art – one-on-one music lessons, Bach – inclusion of music, art, drama, and maths every day all through college – emphasis on artistic subjects – time focused on obtaining artistic skills – healthy balance of academia and arts/ music – drama/ plays – technology-free for the most part*

***Love of learning***

*Joy of learning – Lessons were extremely engaging, so much so that I never wanted to miss a day of school – Enjoyment in going to school, with school feeling like another home*

**Comment on Table 15:**

The repetition of words, such as 'creative' and 'creativity' emphasise the popularity of the response. Strong emotional appeal is a recognised benefit of and strategy for imaginative teaching ('*everything creative was positive*'), certain to engage students and make learning more enjoyable (Egan, 1995; Haralambous & Nielsen, 2014; van Alphen, 2011). One graduate noted how the joy of learning has carried over into her current career:

*I am a woman in engineering, a very male dominated profession, but I distinctly remember my Year 8 class teacher in Canada telling me she thought I could be an astronaut and letting me play with the safe physics equipment from our main lesson during lunch and recess. The creativity she allowed helped cement my love of science and my belief that scientists should be taught a broader education. In the mainstream system where students are segregated into*

*faculties at a younger age, scientists are not taught how to dream and be creative, traits needed for innovation and problem solving.*

Pedagogy of Wisdom (SEA, 2011, 2018) values paradoxical thinking, creativity, and complexity (Gidley, 2016, p.149) and is characterised by holistic teaching and learning and an integral, balanced, and well-rounded approach.

**Table 16. Pedagogy of Wisdom**

**Research Projects in Year 8 and Year 12**

*The Class 12 Research Project was absolutely invaluable to my learning. Taught me confidence in approaching others, taught me drive in working towards my self-determined goals, and taught me confidence sharing my knowledge and insights in a public setting.*

*The Year 12 Project was an amazing opportunity. I loved it, and I am sure it influenced my life in so many ways, including working in research now. It has also influenced my volunteer work.*

**Multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion**

*The diverse range of students attending the school from different socioeconomic backgrounds. – Inclusiveness, acceptance, encouragement, diverse learning topics – Looking out for people who are new – Willingness to accept and have an interest in all peoples of the world. – Seeing the interconnectedness of the world – A deep understanding of the connectedness of everything, spiritual awareness, and practice.*

**The Main Lesson**

*A balanced education, for example doing Main Lessons in more areas than I would have ever delved into if I had only picked my 5 or 6 VCE subjects. – No narrowing of subjects in high school, maturity level, acceptance of others – Large range of topics that were covered by Main Lessons.*

*Critical thinking/analysis of information, studying a concept for 4 weeks during (Main lessons) to compile your own thoughts, and experiences. – Being able to explore different topics through Main Lesson even if some weren't the most exciting subject, to have that opportunity allowed me to have better understanding in life, career opportunities out there, and gain knowledge in different fields that I otherwise would not have.*

**Comments on Table 16:**

Principles of multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion are aligned with the integral nature of this pedagogical value. The Main Lesson and the Research Projects in Year 8 and 12 are key vehicles for the implementation of Pedagogy of Wisdom because they support an integrated approach to learning.

The pedagogical value of 'Voice' provides a foundational platform for the other three pedagogies. "Even an education that is caring, lively and wise will not be effective in the long run if young people are not empowered to find their voice" (Gidley, 2016, p.249). Teachers enact this value, when they pay attention to "silent spaces and sensitive sounds" and include "poetic recitation, singing, drama and natural conversation" (Gidley, 2016, p. 260), and when they give students "opportunities to voice their hopes, fears, interests and dreams" (p.261). Pedagogy of Voice is the main vehicle for the delivery of teaching goals and strategies associated with the growth of self-identity and self-realisation, with the capacities that Biesta (2020) identifies with subjectification.

**Table 17. Pedagogy of Voice**

**Voicing one's opinion, confidence in speaking**

*Opportunities for growth and development of self-confidence, especially public speaking. – I gained so much confidence being cast as a lead role in our play that I never would have auditioned for otherwise. It changed my whole perspective on my ability to speak for myself with conviction. – Having a voice and also sometimes having a say in how and what we wanted to be educated in (in the latter years anyway).*

**Subjectification, self-realisation**

*Resilience and confidence – Confidence in my ability to look after myself – Sense of self, self-love – Independence – Steiner education builds people who are ready to enter adulthood with their own sense of identity – Being allowed to be an individual – Being moulded into a fairly creative individual – Space to grow and become the person you wanted to be.*

**Ethical and Social awareness**

*Community thinking: "we are all better off when we look out for each other." – An emphasis on active citizenship and socio-political awareness. – Educators had lot of respect for boldness and bravery especially in students' creative pursuits. – The ethical, moral intentions that permeated the teachers and events created a learning environment that felt safer and more supportive which I really appreciated.*

**Comments on Table 17:**

The reflections below demonstrate further the meaningful enactment of this pedagogical value.

*The stories and the ritual side, the reverence towards the story is a really important way of helping children make their way, I guess. I wasn't aware of this as you're not supposed to be taught values, it's supposed to come through the curriculum. I don't think I knew that that was part of anthroposophy, but I'm glad it is. And I observe in myself that I have trust in that process that I don't feel like children need to be given lessons in that way. (Louise, FG4)*

*But I think that having that understanding that I would be loved unconditionally anyway helped me to find my own path. And it might not be this, but it might be this other thing. And that it's okay to explore and to play [...], that helped me become really good at it, because then I just applied myself and I was like, okay, I'm going to be a top student. And I got there because of that. I don't think that had I come from a regular public school and still struggled, I don't think that I would have pushed myself to be that student. (Judy, FG2, 0:9:49)*

*For me, the resounding aspect that was cultivated through my time at school was my sense of self. I have been given a foundation that has encouraged me to explore who I am and a capacity to take that out into the world. This is consistent with many of the students who come through the Steiner movement. In no way are we without our problems, but we are rounded, generally good and interested people who seek to offer something to our community and engage in the world around us. (Response to Question 21)*

In [Section 6](#) below Pedagogy of Voice is demonstrated further through the review of responses to Question 21 on 'self-determination.'

## 6. STEINER WALDORF VIRTUES AND CAPACITIES

[Survey questions 21 to 26](#) asked graduates to respond to a series of statements to elicit the extent to which Steiner Waldorf teachers and learning activities influenced their personal development of student virtues and capacities. The following tables provide the proportionate responses to the virtue and capacity statements and the mean difference between the Australian/NZ and German responses. In [Appendix V](#), the accompanying [Figures 19-24](#) show the mean group responses elicited from an equivalent random sample of German Waldorf alumni.

### 6.1 The influence of Steiner Waldorf teaching on personal development

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 21](#) of the Survey:

*‘How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your **self-determination**?’*

**Table 18.** Australian/NZ participants’ attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their self-determination.

Steiner Waldorf influence on self-determination.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
<b>a)</b> My capacity to express my opinion to others	3.6%	0.6%	9.1%	33.9%	52.7%	3.49	3.29	.013*
<b>b)</b> My capacity to think independently	2.4%	0.6%	4.2%	21.2%	71.5%	3.69	3.39	.000*
<b>c)</b> My capacity to assess my strengths and weaknesses	1.8%	0.6%	12.1%	32.7%	52.7%	3.55	2.98	.000*
<b>d)</b> My capacity for critical thought	1.8%	2.4%	10.3%	26.1%	59.4%	3.59	3.55	.477
<b>e)</b> My ability to navigate new media	7.3%	10.4%	56.1%	11.6%	14.6%	2.76	2.79	.851
<b>f)</b> My willingness to engage with less-interesting topics	3.0%	5.5%	36.6%	31.7%	23.2%	3.18	2.73	.000*
<b>g)</b> My career aspirations	3.6%	0.6%	9.1%	33.9%	52.7%	3.37	2.97	.000*
<b>h)</b> My capacity to form opinions on issues	2.4%	0.6%	4.2%	21.2%	71.5%	3.58	3.37	.005*

#### ***Comments on Table 18:***

The responses are consistently positive, with an overall positive influence on *self-determination* proportions of over 85% (combined rather positive and positive influence) for all categories except for **(e)** My ability to navigate new media and **(f)** My willingness to engage with less-interesting

topics. Overall positive influence proportions were low for (e) at 26.2%, due to the high proportion of neither negative nor positive responses (56.1%). This is not unexpected because the new media of mobile devices is not in keeping with the Steiner Waldorf philosophy. Overall positive influence proportions were also lower than the other categories for (f) My willingness to engage with less-interesting topics at 54.9%, but only 8.5% responded that Steiner Waldorf had an overall negative influence on this aspect of self-determination; 36.6% responded Neither negative nor positive influence. In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey,<sup>11</sup> Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence for:

- a) My capacity to express my opinion to others
- b) My capacity to think independently
- c) My capacity to assess my strengths and weaknesses
- f) My willingness to engage with less-interesting topics
- g) My career aspirations
- h) My capacity to form opinions on issues

In one of the interviews Yvonne shared with us her capacity to express her opinions to others.

*I've come out with a real conviction that I have a right to have a voice at the table. And I'm not sure whether that comes from my home life, or from the school, [...] it's just part of who you are because you were immersed in it. (Yvonne, FG2, 42.50)*

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 22 of the Survey](#):

*'How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your **experience of meaningfulness**?'*

**Table 19.** Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their experience of meaningfulness.

Steiner Waldorf influence on experience of meaningfulness.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
a) My joy of learning	3.0%	1.8%	9.1%	33.9%	52.1%	3.49	3.08	.000*
b) My ability to see myself as the creator of my own destiny	3.0%	2.4%	13.9%	31.5%	49.1%	3.47	3.38	.239
c) My capacity to see specific developments on the planet in an interconnected way	1.8%	1.8%	15.2%	29.7%	51.5%	3.54	3.33	.010*

\*\* Higher average scores equal more positive influence.

**Comments on Table 19:**

The responses are consistently affirmative, with an overall positive influence on *experience of meaningfulness* proportions of over 80% (combined rather positive and positive influence) for all

<sup>11</sup> See [Appendix V, Figures 19-24](#) for graphs of the comparative responses.

categories. In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence than the German ones in response to **a) My joy of learning** and **c) My capacity to see specific developments on the planet in an interconnected way**

Brenda reflected in our interview on how important her insight into connectedness is to her:

*I think it's probably the absolutely enduring faith that keeps coming back to this word that we're all connected, that we are of one. There is a sense of relevance between us and the natural world and each other and all of our intentions, that it's OK, that there's so much difference and that little things matter in that sense of relationship, between the many different things in our existence. Just that's just so deeply in me I think and it helps. (Brenda, FG10, 01:36:41)*

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 23 of the Survey](#):

*'How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your **social skills**?'*

**Table 20.** Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their social skills.

Steiner Waldorf influence on social skills.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
<b>a) My interest in socio-political issues</b>	3.0%	3.0%	29.3%	31.7%	32.9%	3.34	3.01	.001*
<b>b) My interest in engaging with others' opinions</b>	2.4%	3.6%	10.9%	37.0%	46.1%	3.42	3.29	.086
<b>c) My capacity to work in a team</b>	2.4%	3.0%	8.5%	26.7%	59.4%	3.56	3.49	.344
<b>d) My capacity to resolve conflicts with others</b>	1.8%	4.2%	19.4%	33.3%	41.2%	3.41	3.34	.353
<b>e) My ability to accept my own shortcomings</b>	1.2%	2.4%	24.8%	41.2%	30.3%	3.34	3.61	.000*
<b>f) My willingness to get to know people from other cultures</b>	3.6%	3.0%	17.6%	18.8%	57.0%	3.57	3.33	.008*

**Comments on Table 20:**

The responses are consistently affirmative, with an overall positive influence on *social skills* proportions ranging from 71.5% to 86.1% (combined rather positive and positive influence) for all categories except for **a) My interest in socio-political issues** (64.6%), but only 6% responded that Steiner Waldorf had an overall negative influence on this aspect of social skill development; 29.3% responded Neither negative nor positive influence.

In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence than the German ones for:

*a) My interest in socio-political issues*

*f) My willingness to get to know people from other cultures*

However, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni responded with a significantly lower level of positive influence than the German ones for: *e) My ability to accept my own shortcomings*

In an interview Melanie reflected on her acceptance of other people:

*I think the thing that I appreciate the most from [my education] is my acceptance of all people from different walks of life, and I suppose now that I'm working in support education then I have an all-round acceptance of every one of any background or ability. (Melanie, FG6, 19.48)*

Johnny explained that the small class size meant that everyone had to learn to get on with each other.

*Oh, you didn't have to get on with everybody, but you were with them. But yes, you learn to be very tolerant to lots of different perspectives by having people look at the same subject in very different ways. This helps you in trying to understand how other people think about things rather than just thinking that your way is the right way. (Johnny, FG12, 0:06:01)*

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 24 of the Survey](#):

*'How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your personal development?'*

**Table 21.** Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their personal development.

Steiner Waldorf influence on personal development.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
a) My creative capacity	0.6%	1.8%	2.4%	28.5%	66.7%	3.65	3.69	.506
b) My capacity for resilience	3.0%	1.2%	8.5%	30.3%	57.0%	3.54	3.14	.000*
c) My capacity to engage with strangers	3.6%	3.0%	20.6%	32.1%	40.6%	3.38	3.49	.205
d) My capacity to look confidently into the future	3.6%	0.6%	17.0%	31.5%	47.3%	3.47	3.36	.187
e) My self-esteem (in the sense of "I am worth something")	3.0%	2.4%	19.4%	25.5%	49.7%	3.51	3.37	.088
f) My self-confidence (in the sense of: "I can do something")	3.0%	2.4%	12.1%	27.9%	54.5%	3.52	3.34	.032*

\*\* Higher average scores equal more positive influence.

**Comments on Table 21:**

The responses are consistently positive, with an overall positive influence on *personal development* proportions ranging from 72.7% for **c) My capacity to engage with strangers**, to 95.2% for **a) My creative capacity** (combined rather positive and positive influence).

In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence than the German ones for: **b) My capacity for resilience**

However, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni responded with a significantly lower level of positive influence than the German ones for: **f) My self-confidence (in the sense of: "I can do something")**

In an interview Lisa shared her sense of hope for the future that she'd like to share with others:

*And I think what helped me in my career, I always have hope, quite honestly, I have hope that no matter what anybody is experiencing, that there's always hope that things can look different. And I have a sense of what that probably feels like inside me [...]. So I know that. I'm hoping that I can share that hope with everybody else to know that there is a place that is less overwhelming and less scary and less difficult. (Lisa, FG6, 8:07)*

In this section a review is presented for responses to Question 25 of the Survey:

*'How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your **attitude on sustainability**?'*

**Table 22.** Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their attitude on sustainability.

Steiner Waldorf influence on attitude on sustainability.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
<b>a) My sense of responsibility towards the environment</b>	1.2%	0.6%	13.3%	27.3%	57.6%	3.63	3.57	.394
<b>b) My awareness of personal health</b>	1.2%	1.2%	30.9%	33.3%	33.3%	3.43	3.38	.565
<b>c) My knowledge of the complexity of the natural world</b>	1.2%	0.6%	9.7%	37.0%	51.5%	3.54	3.34	.010*

\*\* Higher average scores equal more positive influence.

**Comments on Table 22:**

The responses are consistently positive, with an overall positive influence on *attitude on sustainability* proportions of 84.9% for **a) My sense of responsibility towards the environment** and 88.5% for **c) My knowledge of the complexity of the natural world** (combined rather positive and positive influence).

Proportions of positive responses were lower for **b) My awareness of personal health** (66.6%), but only 2.4% responded that Steiner Waldorf had an overall negative influence on this aspect of personal development; 30.9% responded Neither negative nor positive influence.

In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence than the German ones for: **c) My knowledge of the complexity of the natural world**

In one of the interviews Brenda shared her fascination with chaos theory and fractals:

*And that's I mean, that's another example. When you look at the things like chaos theory when you've got fractals, right. Where you've got the same small patterns repeating in a completely new unique way. But you break it down and there's all these repeats of the same phenomenon coming together in a unique way. (Brenda, FG10, 0:33:22)*

In this section a review is presented for responses to [Question 26 of the Survey](#):

*'How did your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, and school events influence your **personal preferences**?'*

**Table 23.** Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf learning activities influenced their personal preferences.

Steiner Waldorf influence on personal preferences.	Aust/NZ responses					Mean importance**		Mean diff. (p)
	Negative influence	Rather negative influence	Neither negative nor positive	Rather positive influence	Positive influence	Aust/NZ	German	
<b>a) My enjoyment of music</b>	2.5%	1.9%	14.9%	29.2%	51.6%	3.53	3.40	.120
<b>b) My appreciation of literature</b>	1.2%	2.5%	11.2%	32.9%	52.2%	3.54	3.01	.000*
<b>c) My enjoyment of nature</b>	2.5%	0.0%	2.5%	16.1%	78.9%	3.76	3.51	.000*
<b>d) My appreciation of art</b>	0.6%	0.6%	10.6%	25.6%	62.5%	3.68	3.37	.000*

\*\* Higher average scores equal more positive influence.

**Comments on Table 23:**

The responses are consistently positive, with an overall positive influence on *personal preferences* proportions ranging from 80.8% for **a) My enjoyment of music**, to 95% for **c) My enjoyment of nature** (combined rather positive and positive influence).

In comparison with German responses to this question in the survey Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf alumni responded with a significantly higher level of positive influence than the German ones for: **b) My capacity for resilience**. However, Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduates responded with a significantly lower level of positive influence than the German ones for: **b) My appreciation of literature**, **c) My enjoyment of nature**, **d) My appreciation of art**.

In an interview Keith listed some of many aspects of the education which he valued:

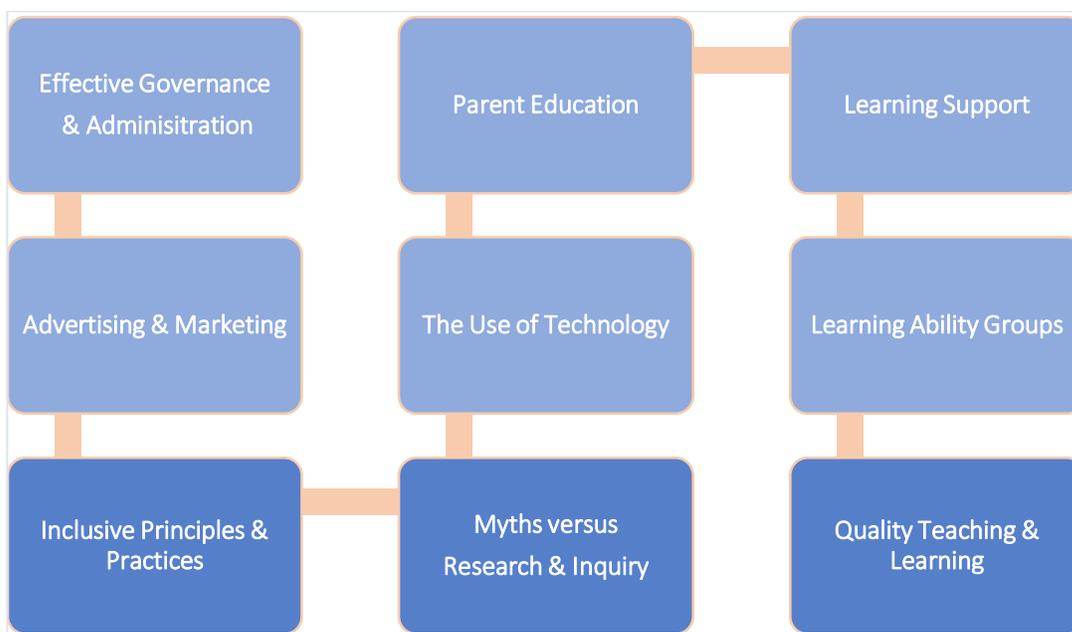
*The camps, the music, the exposure to a lot of different music and making music together, even if it's just, you know simply singing in assembly. And the environment itself, is also something that's quite unique and quite beautiful. [...] The architecture, all of the natural materials and colours and the bush as well. The trees and the landscape. (Keith, FG9, 0:43:46)*

## 7. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

### 7.1 Recommendations from Steiner Waldorf graduates, alumni, and teachers

In line with one of our main intentions, we gathered ‘recommendations concerning the future sustainability of Steiner Waldorf Education in Australia and New Zealand.’ In the interviews, teachers, graduates, and alumni expressed that they greatly valued this opportunity to contribute their ideas and experiences, from their Steiner Waldorf schooling, their further studies, and careers. Some were unable to name any weaknesses, and others readily voiced their concerns and recommendations. The spirit in which they offered their suggestions was tentative and respectful. As reflected in most of the data, most feel a sense of deep gratitude for their education and are keen to see it flourish.

**Figure 12.** Relationships between key recommendations



**Comments on Figure 12:**

**Figure 12** illustrates some of the interconnections between the themes. The cornerstone recommendation, for pedagogically authentic ‘inclusive principles and practices,’ requires strong governance, administration, clear communication strategies and policies’ for their effective implementation, and carry though into ‘quality teaching and learning,’ ‘learning support,’ and ‘learning ability groups.’ The building of a culture of ‘research and inquiry’ will ensure that schools continue to flourish as vibrant learning communities committed to parent education and participation, and the wise use of technology, which was widely recognised to be the main challenge we need to face in Steiner Waldorf schools today and in the future.

Technology and the need to update the curriculum and the teaching of Information Technology and media literacy skills was identified as a key issue for the future.

*I feel like [technology is] probably the biggest challenge. [...]. Because I'm a filmmaker, that's how I know, how much time and energy goes into crafting messages for screen. And how*

*manipulative or influential they can be on a person and that probably amplifies my concern. (Keith, FG9, 0:38:00)*

Many noted the continued need to restrict the entry of electronic media, computers and phones into the Primary School for as long as possible.

*Really, it's an interesting one because a lot of people think, if the school doesn't have a computer lab and my kid's interested in IT, for instance, I want to send them to a place that's got a lot of computers, a lot of infrastructure and people teaching computers. But I just don't think that it's necessarily that simple a connection to make. I think the most important thing in so many different vocations is to have a strong imagination. And if you're being force fed, other people's ideas and imagination, rather than being able to build and grow your own, then you're probably not as well placed to decide and determine what job you want to go into and be good at. (Keith, FG9, 0:41:17)*

The issue of conflict amongst parents over technological issues and home lifestyles was raised.

*I think it's also difficult for the kids because if my kid goes to your house and you're going to let them watch telly all night, I don't really want them to do that, but I don't want us not to be friends. So how do you tackle that stuff? (Lisa, FG6, 0:57:31)*

One graduate who now works in a Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten emphasised the important role that parent education plays in relation to the use of technology.

*[At our school we're] continually ... fostering of ... a childhood that is as screen free as possible, supporting parents to facilitate that their home environment matches and supports the school's success. [But there is a] big push [for IT] coming into the primary school. [We're trying to be] creative and advocating for the work that the pedagogy and the education does. I think parent education needs to be a big part of it, because [...] we've really seen the impact that occurs when there are even small cohorts of children who are highly exposed to screens and how that impacts their play. I think the impact of screen and movies [...] on a child's play is one of the saddest things that you see in a school, and it can have an ongoing impact across the classroom. [...]. The best talk I've heard was a prep teacher who put all the blocks and all the toys all over the floor and then asked the parents to pick them up. She then just tipped them out again as soon as they'd almost finished and did this about three or four times before the parents started to get quite frustrated. [This was her way of demonstrating her] experience of being a Steiner Waldorf teacher when the home environment does not match what the school does, because essentially you are unpacking that every night and then as a teacher, you're working to pack them back into being humans who can work in the classroom and do all the things that they need to do, [knowing that they will then] go home and essentially be disrupted again. (Ann, FG9, 0:41:17 – 0:50:05)*

In the survey responses and graduate and teacher interviews recommendations were made to strengthen the delivery of Information Technology and media literacy skills in the High School, while maintaining a human-centred approach.

*I'm glad I did not have technology until Year Eight and Nine. [But there are IT skills that] I'm still learning from university that I wish I had learnt at school because [...] I know that would have helped me through my subjects in Year 11 and 12, just making it easier, and not taking as long. (Ingrid, FG5, 0:46:28)*

One of the teachers affirmed the need for a more comprehensive IT program:

*Some of the feedback that I get from the current seniors (not all of them), is that we haven't served them well enough in the digital technology space. [...]. Even though we have a fairly*

*structured digital technology that starts in Year Eight and goes to Year Ten. [...]. Some are very good at it because they just live and breathe it in their own time. But the overt learning isn't as comprehensive as it could be to serve what they need when they move into university, (Andrew, T FG1, 0:13:52)*

Another teacher in this interview agreed with Andrew, but also reflected that in the current covid-related environment, with the recent shifts towards the extended use of technologies, we need to stay human-focused.

*It's interesting when our alumni come back and talk at parent nights. [...]. They know a lot of about a lot of things. And I think that's because their teachers told them stories and there's a real human connection to the learning that they've had. [...]. I think we have to just work harder [...]to put the computer screens down every so often. We have to really engage them in the human encounter in order to counteract that. [...]. I think we have to work so much harder to keep the human relationship at the centre of the lessons. If everything is still coming through the human being and we're not giving over to technology in our method, then the students are still having the human connection with the teacher that they love and the learning coming through that. (Stephanie, T FG2, 0:29:12)*

Stephanie went on to emphasise the need for media literacy:

*It's important that they learn to really understand media literacy and what's true and what's not, and I think that's the most important thing, that needs to become a priority. Across the board, [we need] to bring that into the curriculum a bit more so that they're not just left there, floundering with all this information and this world that they can't quite process in media. [They need to be able to manage] the addictive nature of IT. (Sharon, T FG1, 0:31:05)*

The topic of technology was raised in another interview in relation to advances in the use of technological aids in learning support.

*[My son] was diagnosed with severe dyslexia three years ago. He's now 10. And he's so artistic, and there's so many elements [of Steiner Waldorf education] that he would love. But the lack of understanding around dyslexia from the school that I had been to, was really disappointing. [I am now] a quality learning advisor in universities. I work a lot in the online space as well, and [there is now] assisted technology that's available for him that can still be used in a holistic way. It was really interesting that his cognitive abilities weren't understood through that Steiner approach. (Sandra, FG8, 0:23:56)*

Ruby responded to Sandra's story by noting that a new specialist in her school has been able to effectively integrate some of the new technologies with the Steiner Waldorf approach.

*[There is now] someone in a [...] special education role, [who] is amazing and has so much knowledge about working with children with diverse learning needs. [...]. She's helped shake the school up. And it really needed someone who was specialized and who understood the special character of the school to be able to start really changing things. And now [...] we have children [...] who are able to use dicta pens [...] they can scan the writing and they'll read it out. [...]. It's finding the right way of working with these technological tools. (Ruby, FG8, 0:46:00)*

Sandra then pointed out that the technologies require training and the support of learning assistants in the classroom:

*[My dyslexic son] is a very creative, practical person. He's academically, and cognitively very bright, too. If you look at a learning outcome [...] to read a passage and be able to break that down and critically analyse it, he can do that. [...]. But you won't know it if you ask him to read*

*this passage and write down his thoughts. So the assisted technologies [are letting him] shine cognitively in the class. And that may be speech to text so that he can hear something, and then speech to text, to tell you what he wants to say, or it can come out and he can then learn to type it. [...]. It's the analysis component. [...]. The technology does not take away from the pedagogy, but [it] potentially needs a lot more coaching or more training in that area. [...]. You might need, in my experience, up to three people in the classroom for that to really happen. (Sandra, FG8, 01:09:52)*

As has been noted in the review of the data, many graduates indicated a need for learning support and learning ability groups, particularly in mathematics and science. Participants asked for teachers to engage all students at their ability levels, the gifted and those with learning challenges. Ironically, for them this means 'less handholding' and more rigour in specialist subject areas. There is a need to work towards changing the perception that Steiner Waldorf schools are not good at science.

Some graduates spoke about the '*disjuncture between the old days and the new world.*' Many emphasised the need to reinterpret the core approach to Steiner Waldorf education through a contemporary lens, without losing the best features of the tradition. Pedagogically authentic practices of inclusivity and multicultural diversity require ongoing review. Jenny shared her positive experiences of multicultural sharing as a worthy example.

*In my daughter's Year One class, around six of the students were of mixed race heritage. [The parent body set up] class discussions with German, Balinese, Indian, Indigenous, and Chinese people. We created this beautiful space to talk about race relations and difference. [...]. And then the grandparents came in and told their stories of the immigrant English people. [...]. That acknowledgement of the diversity in the parent and family group, I think helped with the kids integrating and being friends as well. (Jenny, FG10, 01:06:12 - 01:12:32)*

Bearing in mind the financial implications, some graduates asked for the striving to support enrolments from Indigenous communities and lower socio-economic areas, possibly through scholarships, to remain alive. The importance of integration of Indigenous content into the curriculum was also raised.

*Steiner Waldorf education teaches a very Eurocentric historical perspective. I want to see truthful Indigenous stories about what really happened in Australia prior to and during colonisation. I want the truth to be told. (Jenny, FG10, 01:12:08)*

In this regard there is also a need for an ongoing review of male dominant elements in the Steiner curriculum. Respectful kindness towards trans students was also noted. Many alumni readily admitted that they have not been in touch with Steiner Waldorf schools during the past ten years or so and were pleased to hear about the ongoing work that Steiner Education Australia is doing in these areas of concern, such as the strong uptake of Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plans in many schools.

Clear communication strategies and policies, effective governance and school administration was another recommendation.

*Ensuring that the administration of the school is across the spectrum of learning outcomes and that they have the right mix of teachers, resources, actual support for people who want to do science, like a good science lab or good sports facilities, and being funded to be able to support across that spectrum, because some schools are very strong in certain areas that they have the most amazing music teachers, but maybe they suffer in the maths area. [...]. I feel that's a challenge in Steiner schools, more so than in a public school, because Steiner schools are just*

*smaller. ... You've got to hit those benchmarks. Clear governance structures or effective school governance, whether it's your Board, or college teachers, it's so important. (Ian, FG13, 0:26:56)*

With regard to advertising and marketing, graduates pointed out that it will be helpful if Steiner Waldorf students are taught how to explain the basic nature of the approach to outsiders and newcomers. While much advertising promotes positive aspects of Early Childhood and Primary School education, graduates and teachers drew attention to the need to market the High School in particular. The Year 12 Research Projects are a rich reservoir of potential material for the promotion of Steiner Waldorf High Schools. Sharing them more widely within and beyond the Steiner Waldorf school movement would also be beneficial.

*[I attended] a gathering of schools from all over the country, sharing their Year 12 Research Projects and that made me think we need to do more of that. (Stephanie, TFG2, 01:09:00)*

Reflections on the obfuscating nature of 'Steiner myths' drew some laughter. Ruth had been told that *'if children have square blocks to play with in Kindy, their internal organs will grow like Mallee roots'* (FG8, 0:31:58). Ian remarked on the prohibition of football during breaks:

*I don't know if that was part of a lecture from Dr Steiner or how that came through, but it was dogmatically enforced at my school [...]. If there was [...] one thing where our students in Year 8 were going to rebel against the teachers, it was on that. We would set up football games intentionally and then run away when the teachers came to close us down. (FG13, 0:30:21)*

These reminiscences reflect the need to work against tendencies towards insularity and the dogmatic interpretation of Steiner pedagogy through the building of a culture of research and inquiry. Some of Steiner's indications readily become problematical today and require ongoing explanations, discussion, and review. And finally, a memo regarding the value of humour:

*Steiner Waldorf education [should not] take itself so seriously [...] it can easily become doctrinal and humourless. And that defies what life is about. Humour is really essential. (Louise, FG4)*

## 7.2 Bringing them in: Establishing Steiner Waldorf alumni relationships with schools

Many alumni expressed positive responses to this research project: *'Excited, thrilled – Fantastic, exciting – Only speculations if no real data.* They mentioned that they valued the demonstration of *'what's useful and important, being scientific – connecting with broader society,* and that they're looking forward to seeing *'the data for general success in the first year of university.'* While we did not set out to collect data on the efficacy of Australian /NZ alumni relationships in a direct way in this project, many alumni in the interviews shared that they were delighted to have the opportunity to reconnect with other alumni and their former class colleagues and to catch up on life stories. We also heard many anecdotes of maintained contact between alumni and previous class and guardian teachers.

*One of the students reached out to our entire alumni group from Year 8 and set up a Facebook messenger group so that we could all send messages to this teacher, 21 years on, as he retires. We want to share where we're at in our lives now and to thank him for the positive impact that he's had on our lives. [...] that only happened this week. (Ian, FG13, 0:23:19)*

Although the majority of alumni we surveyed and interviewed highly value their Steiner Waldorf education and appreciate the richly positive influence it has had on their lives, they are mostly left to their own devices, when wanting to maintain contact with each other, their past teachers, and schools. Much more could be done by schools to establish strong alumni relationships, and much can be gained

thereby, for alumni, schools, and the larger school movement. The difficulty that we encountered when trying to locate alumni to participate in the research project, because the majority of individual schools do not maintain an alumni database or ongoing contact with alumni, is testament to the reality that a more coordinated effort is required.

The North American study (Safit, et al., 2019, pp.8-9; 2020, pp.175-186) provides some further insight into the challenges and successes they have experienced in maintaining alumni relationships. Their observations offer helpful guidelines which could inform the creation of Australian/NZ alumni databases and staffing to support them. The main challenge is prioritising the database and then allocating time and staffing to the task. The alumni database needs to be built into the overall school infrastructure and budget so that a position can be created for someone to take up the task and maintain a dedicated focus on alumni work. The 'job description' requires keeping records and contact information current, finding desirable ways (such as an active alumni web page) to draw alumni to events, keeping alumni engaged, and soliciting funding requests. Finding someone committed to the task is preferable as high staff turnover does not allow for consistent presence and communication with alumni.

There are many ways that alumni stay connected with each other and their schools, such as the use of social networking sites, dedicated alumni publications (magazines and e-newsletters), maintaining contact with teachers, sustaining connections through family members now attending the school, attending reunions, school festivals, fairs, plays and other events, and committing to the school's annual fund-raising appeals. Identifying the kind of meaningful opportunities and engagements that alumni find appealing, for example annual reunions or other alumni-focused events, is key to planning and implementing maintained connections.

Findings from the North American study (Safit et al., 2020) reflect that Steiner Waldorf 'college-age' alumni are more likely to stay in touch with each other and with their schools than the 'post-college' alumni. Conversely, this latter group is more likely (15.6% in relation to 5/7%) to contribute towards their school's annual fund (p.177). Possibly the younger group are "more comfortable with online communication" and the older ones are more likely to have settled into established professions and have greater financial stability and means to support funding requests (p.176).

Apart from the social, research related, and marketing benefits for schools of strong school-alumni relationships, is the fairly untapped potential of the alumni group as a source of funding. We "know that alumni *do* give money to other causes" (Safit et al., 2020, p.180). Steiner Waldorf graduates like to know how their philanthropic gifts are distributed and favour supporting scholarships for students with financial need. Other more specific priorities include: "attracting and retaining the best faculty (61%); making school financially accessible to those who are Waldorf-educated and yet not able to afford Waldorf school education for their children (40.5%); improving academics (24.5%); assisting students to be college-ready when they graduate (24.5%)." (p.180).

Hopefully we can, in Australia and New Zealand, learn from the North American experiences and research recommendations and avoid facing the consequences of the attitude reflected here:

*The school is not very effective in maintaining a relationship with me, therefore giving to the school does not make it on my radar. I would give what I can (as I do with my college), if I was asked, and if I was kept informed of developments, values and such. (Safit et al., 2020, p.181)*

## 8. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Most graduates and alumni expressed that they greatly valued belonging to their vibrant school communities and continue to appreciate their opportunities to participate in the seasonal celebration of festivals, Spring Fairs, and cultural events. Overall, they showed strong interest in each other and appreciated the opportunity to connect with others and to voice their opinions about their schooling. Most are still connected with their colleagues and their teachers. Deep gratitude was expressed for their education, the dedication and hard work of their teachers and for their insight and understanding of them as people.

Like our North American colleagues (Safit et al., 2020), we need to point out that the most we can offer from summarising the survey responses and descriptions of the participants who were educated in Steiner Waldorf schools over the span of just over 40 years “is a general picture of overarching trends, formed by numbers and categories and fortified by samples of personal narratives and poignant comments” (pp.187-188). The validity of our analysis of the data from the project as a whole is dependent on the effectiveness of the distribution of the surveys and the response rate we received to the surveys and interviews, which was quite low (N=165) for the survey, (N=32) for the graduate interviews and (N=8) for the teacher interviews but nevertheless was adequate for the type of design and population we were sampling and the statistical analysis we conducted.

In revisiting our main intentions for this research project we can strongly affirm that the majority of Steiner Waldorf graduates and alumni who participated in our study consider that their education has equipped them well for their further study and career pathways and for their lives and relationships in general. Nearly half of the Australian/NZ Steiner Waldorf graduate sample (49%) hold a Bachelor’s Degree, which is nearly a third greater than the national average in Australia. The other 51% of graduates are most likely to have undertaken study in a Certificate III & IV Course or some form of postgraduate study. Like their North American colleagues, they are most likely to have studied in the field of Arts and Humanities. Other popular programs include Health and Welfare, Education and the Social Sciences, Journalism, and Information. In regard to their careers, Steiner Waldorf alumni tend to choose the ‘caring professions’ (i.e. education, training, health care and social welfare), and other ‘human-centred’ professions like the arts and recreation, retail trade, professional, scientific, and technical services, and the hospitality industry. Although the names for employment categories for the industry sectors differ across countries, *the major sectors chosen are similar for all Steiner Waldorf graduates across Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and the US*. Human-centred careers are chosen by Steiner Waldorf graduates to a greater extent than the national averages in these countries.

This ‘human-centred’ orientation is characteristic of the gesture of the Steiner Waldorf participants in our study towards the world in general. Many expressed the view that *capacities* are more important to them than qualifications. In this regard our findings are aligned with both the German study which notes that Steiner Waldorf teachers are primarily “relationship workers” (Randoll and Peters, 2021, p.105) and the North American one which observes that Steiner Waldorf alumni are less aligned with “success as affluence,” and more with ideals like “self-realization, love for nature, and a sense of obligation to community” (Safit et al., 2020, pp.188-189). Our alumni rated very highly<sup>12</sup> the influence of their education on their capacity to express their own opinions, (*and* to question and listen to the

---

<sup>12</sup> Between 75.2% and 95.2% overall positive for the listed capacities. See review of responses to Survey Question 21, in *Tables 18-23*, pp.36-41, and *Figures 19-23*, pp.57-58 in *Appendix V*

opinions of others, and to think independently and critically. In relation to the experience of meaningfulness in their lives they experienced the influence of their education in their sense of connection with the world around them and in their capacity to see themselves as the creators of their own destiny. Many expressed their great joy and love of learning. Also noteworthy is their capacity for creativity, resilience, self-esteem (feeling worthy), self-confidence (ability to act), and confidence in the future, which they also rated highly. They show a genuine interest in other people and have a capacity to engage with strangers, and a willingness to get to know people from other cultures. Their love of nature, 'nature study,' and enthusiasm for camps, outdoor education, and gardening has been fruitful in yielding commitment to values associated with 'pedagogy of life,' such as healthy living, nutrition and exercise, a sense of responsibility to the environment, and a capacity to know and understand the complexity of the natural world in a way that facilitates sustainability.

Reassuringly, this picture of the personal and social capacities of our Steiner Waldorf alumni that has emerged from the data, is on track in relation to the findings of the other two recent studies, as well as to the authentic delivery of the four pedagogical values (Gidley, 2016; Haralambous/SEA, 2018). Yet, we agree with the German and North American researchers, that despite being true to its centennial pedagogical origins, Steiner Waldorf educators today are "cultivating a clearly 21<sup>st</sup> century generation" (Safit et al., 2020, p.195). As reflected in the weaknesses and challenges of their Steiner Waldorf schooling experiences which they identified, and in their sincerely expressed recommendations, one of the key nascent qualities of the millennials is their commitment to the principles of inclusion and diversity (Randoll and Peters, 2021, p.105; Safit et al., 2020, p. 196). We need to heed their voices, support them, and follow their example because they are hearing what is being called forth from them as leaders of the "future as it emerges" (Scharmer, 2009).

Another theme that resonates through the three studies is the need to *let go* of outdated elements of the pedagogy and *keep the best*. Randoll and Peters (2021) caution that the recent rapid growth of schools in Germany has led to a dilution of essential tenets of Steiner Waldorf pedagogy and ask how they can be re-enlivened. At the heart of our education lies Steiner's vision of freedom and the rebirth of society through the union of the arts, sciences, ethics, and spirituality. Today, with the advent of the COVID19 pandemic, we are facing unprecedented new challenges to the global Steiner Waldorf school movement. The question of how best to meet the truly radical nature of Steiner Waldorf education (von Bülow, 2012) and the "beautiful risk" (Biesta, 2020) it offers us, continues to hold vital relevance. We need strong relationships with our alumni so that we can strengthen our collaborative research potential and continue to enact the promises the pedagogy gifts us.

We hope that our research findings provide a valuable source of quotes and recommendations for SEA, Steiner Waldorf educators, educational directors, and teachers in their negotiations with educational authorities and government departments, and in their strategic planning, the implementation of teaching and learning programs and curriculum research. We also trust that our research will stimulate collaboration with alumni and encourage their further active involvement with their school communities and the wider Steiner Waldorf education community. We would like to thank our German colleagues, Dirk Randoll and Jürgen Peters for their warm-hearted and generous sharing of their research data with us, Connie Stokes in North America for her supportive dialogue with us in the early stages of our planning, and Janet Molloy in New Zealand for her enthusiastic collaboration. We look forward to further dialogue with Steiner Waldorf educators and researchers in the global arena.

## 9. REFERENCE LIST

- Ashley M. (2009) Education for Freedom: The Goal of Steiner/Waldorf Schools. In: Woods P.A., Woods G.J. (eds) *Alternative Education for the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230618367\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230618367_12)
- Biesta, G. (2020). Risking ourselves for education: Qualification, socialization, and subjectification revisited, *Educational Theory*, 70 (1), 89 – 104.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gidley, J.M. (2016). *Postformal Education: A Philosophy for Complex Futures*. Springer International Publishing AG.
- Haralambous, B. (2016). *Surfing the wave of emergent renewal: Re-imagining Steiner’s Vision for Teachers’ Research and Professional Learning* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Canberra).
- Haralambous, B. (2018). *Steiner Educational and Academic Foundations*, for the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF). Sydney: Steiner Education Australia.
- Haralambous, B. & Nielsen, T. W. (2014). Wonder as a gateway experience. In K. Egan, A.I. Cant & G. Judson (Eds.) *Wonder-Full Education: The centrality of Wonder in Teaching and Learning across the curriculum* (pp. 219 – 318). New York: Routledge.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (2008). Extending Epistemology within a Co-operative Inquiry. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of Action Research participatory inquiry and practice* (pp. 366-380). LA: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A., & Turner, L. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133.
- Kemmis, Stephen. (2008). Critical Theory and Participatory Action Research. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury *The Sage handbook of Action Research participatory inquiry and practice* (pp.121-138). LA: Sage Publications.
- Kresin-Price, Nancy. (2013). *Building warmth-sculpture in the student-teacher relationship: Goethean observation and Contemplative Practice*. A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Transformative Studies, San Francisco, CA: CIIS.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. Fourth Ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Midley, W., Danaher, P.A., & Baguley, M. (Eds.). (2012). *The role of participants in educational research: Ethics, epistemologies, and methods*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Mitchell, David & Gerwin, Douglas (Eds.) (2008). *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase III*. Wilton, New Hampshire: The Research Institute for Waldorf Education. ISBN 978-1-888365-87-0
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: design, methodology and applications*. Newbury Park: Sage publications.
- Nielsen, T.W. (2004). *Rudolf Steiner’s pedagogy of imagination: A case study of holistic education*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Johnson, R.B. (2006). The Validity Issue in Mixed Research. *Research in the Schools*, 13 (1) 48 – 63.
- Punch, K. (2014). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) Los Angeles, California: Sage.

- Randoll, D. & Peters, J. (Hrsg.) (2021). *“Wir waren auf der Waldorfschule” Ehemalige als Experten in eigener Sache*. Frankfurt am Main: Beltz Juventa. [“We were at the Waldorf School”: Experts in their own right.]
- Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2001/2006). Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration. *Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 1 – 14). London: Sage.
- Safit, I., Gerwin, D., Stokes, C. & Starzynski, A. (2019). *Into the World: How Waldorf Graduates fare after High School*. Hudson: Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE), Waldorf Publications.
- Selg, P., Kaliks, C., Wittich, J. & Häfner, G. (2021). *Anthroposophy and Racism*. (Christine Howard, Trans.). Dornach: Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society on behalf of the Goetheanum Leadership.  
<https://goetheanum.co/en/news/working-paper-on-racism>  
<https://static.goetheanum.co/assets/medias/Anthroposophy-and-Racism.pdf>
- Steiner, Rudolf. (1894/1964). *The philosophy of freedom: The basis for a modern world conception* (M. Wilson, Trans. & Intro.). GA 004. London: Rudolf Steiner Press.
- . (1919/1996). *The foundations of human experience*. (Foundations of Waldorf Education I). (R. F. Lathe & N. P. Whittaker, Translators). [14 lectures, Stuttgart 20 August – 5 September 1919]. GA 293. Appendix: [2 lectures Berlin 15 & 17 March, 1917]. GA 66. Hudson, N.Y: Anthroposophic Press.
- . (1923/2004). *A modern art of education*. [Lectures Ilkley 5 – 17 August 1923 Yorkshire]. GA 307. Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press.
- Van Alphen, Peter (2011). Imagination as a transformative tool in Primary School Education, *Research on Steiner Education*, vol. 2 (2), 16 – 34
- Von Bülow, C. (2012). Dialogue with Hougham. In P. Hougham *Dialogues of Destiny: A postmodern appreciation of Waldorf Education* (pp. 121-129). Malvern Hills, Britain: Sylvan Associates. Kindle Edition, 2014.

## 10. APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Profiles of the Researchers

Dr Michael Carey

Senior Lecturer, Secondary Education & Professional Learning

Dr Bronwen Haralambous

Adjunct and Sessional Lecturer, Steiner Education

Dr Shelley Davidow

Lecturer Curriculum and Pedagogy, Course Coordinator of Graduate Certificate in Steiner Education

Dr Alison Willis

Lecturer Curriculum and Pedagogy

Appendix II: Figures of comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to quality teaching, learning experiences and social factors

Figure 13. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to quality teaching \*

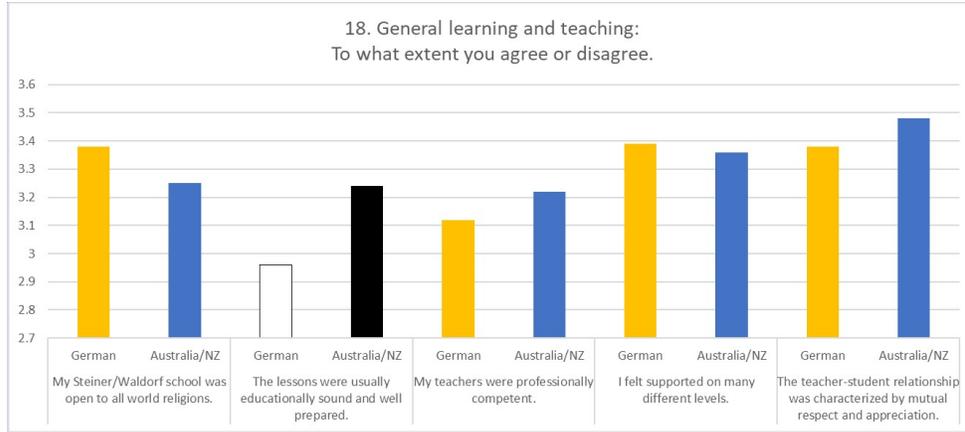


Figure 14. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to learning experiences

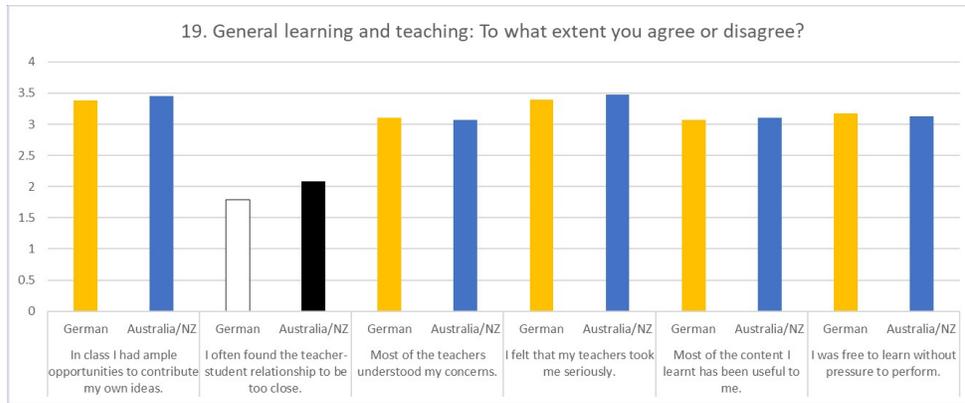
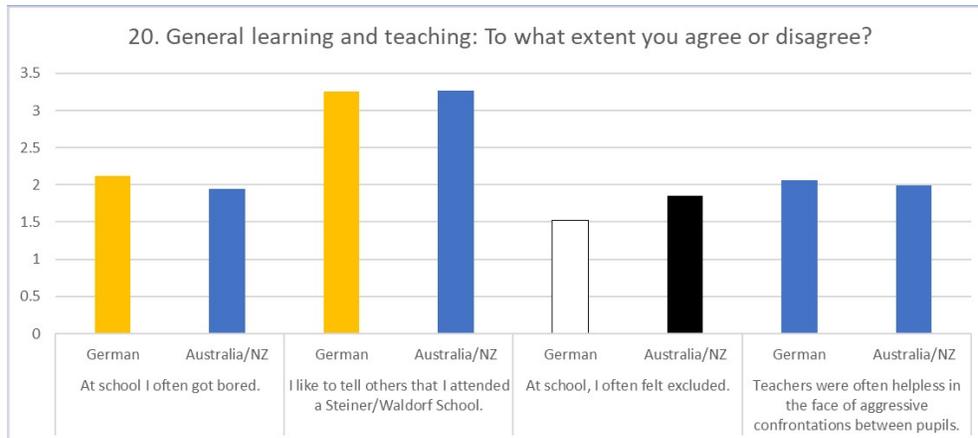


Figure 15. Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to social factors



\*Significantly different pairs of responses are coloured black and white.

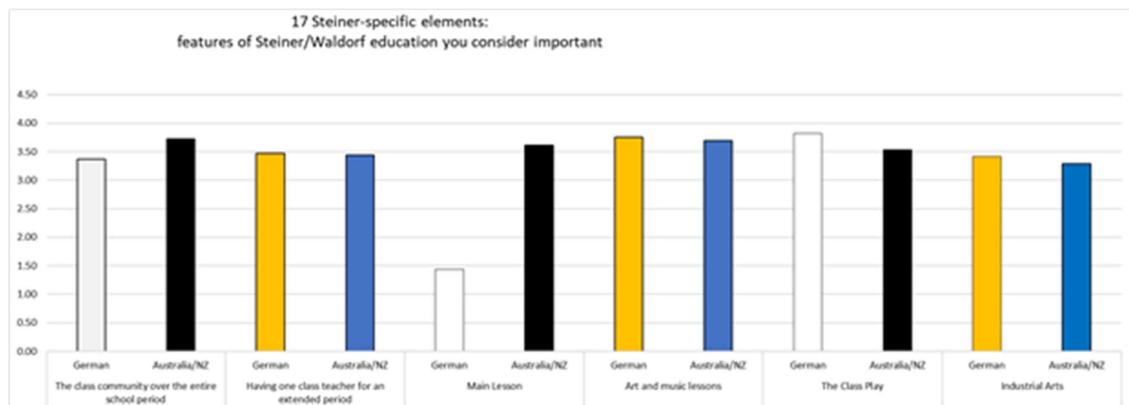
### Appendix III: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German responses to features of Steiner Waldorf education

**Table 24.** Comparing German and Australian/NZ proportional responses to question 17. Which of the following features of Steiner/Waldorf education do you consider important today?

Valued features of Steiner Waldorf Education	GERMAN GRADUATE RESPONSES				AUS/NZ GRADUATE RESPONSES			
	Did not happen	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Did not happen	Not important	Somewhat important	Important
The class community over the entire school period	0.0%	2.5%	58.4%	39.1%	1.8%	2.4%	17.7%	78.0%
One class teacher for an extended period	0.0%	3.7%	45.7%	50.6%	1.2%	7.3%	37.6%	53.9%
Main Lesson	66.7%	26.4%	3.8%	3.1%	0.6%	5.5%	26.2%	67.7%
Art and music lessons	0.0%	0.6%	23.8%	75.6%	0.0%	4.3%	22.0%	73.8%
The Class Play	0.0%	0.0%	17.8%	82.2%	1.2%	7.3%	28.7%	62.8%
Industrial Arts	3.6%	1.8%	43.6%	50.9%	5.5%	7.9%	39.4%	47.3%
Hand work	44.5%	36.3%	11.0%	8.2%	1.8%	6.1%	28.5%	63.6%
Eurythmy	1.8%	1.8%	34.4%	62.0%	0.0%	4.3%	22.0%	73.8%
Holistic teaching	0.6%	9.8%	63.8%	25.8%	1.2%	7.3%	28.7%	62.8%
Morning verse/personal verse	0.6%	5.5%	57.3%	36.6%	5.5%	7.9%	39.4%	47.3%
Celebration of festivals	11.7%	4.9%	49.1%	34.4%	1.8%	6.1%	28.5%	63.6%
Learning in ability level groups	1.8%	9.1%	38.4%	50.6%	36.0%	0.0%	45.1%	18.9%

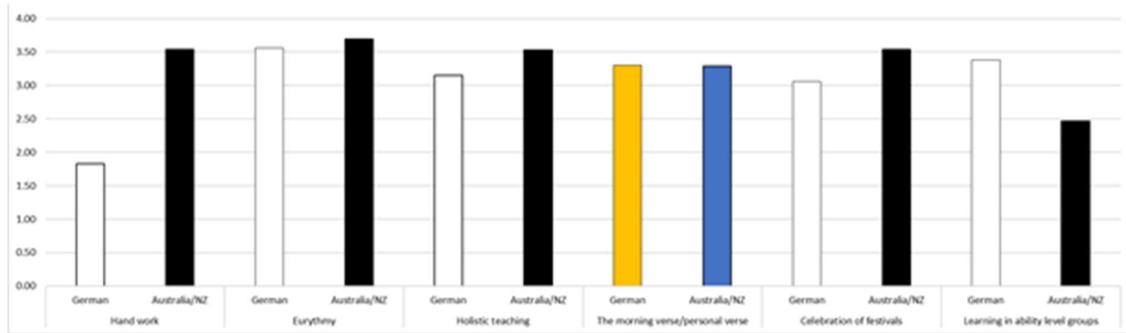
Figures comparing German and Australian/NZ mean difference responses to question 17. Which of the following features of Steiner Waldorf education do you consider important today?

**Figure 16.** Comparison of German and Australian/NZ responses to key features of Steiner Waldorf teaching



Significantly different pairs of responses are coloured black and white.

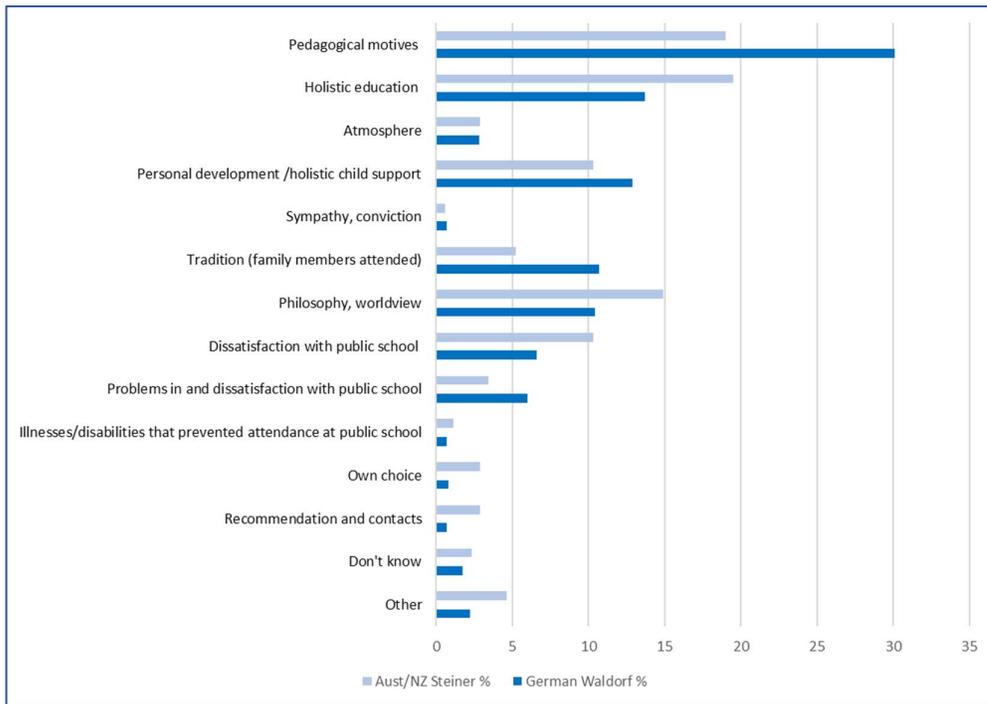
**Figure 17.** Comparison of German and Australian/NZ responses to multimodal features of Steiner Waldorf teaching



Significantly different pairs of responses are coloured black and white.

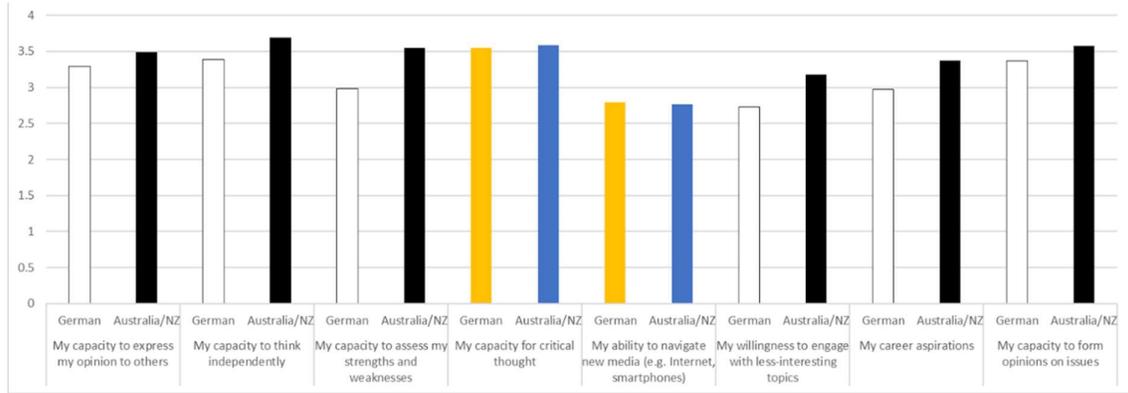
### Appendix IV: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German parents' motives for choice of a Steiner Waldorf school

**Figure 18.** Comparison of Australian/NZ and German parents' motives for choice of a Steiner Waldorf school



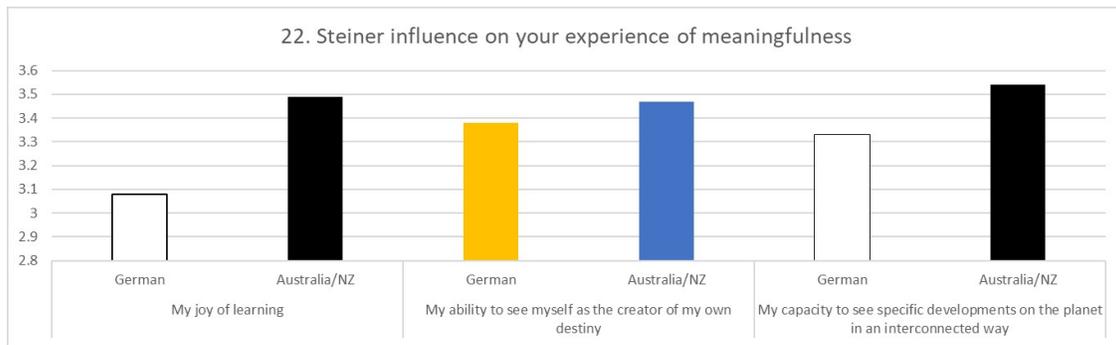
Appendix V: Comparison of Australian/NZ and German capacities and virtues

**Figure 19.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their self-determination.



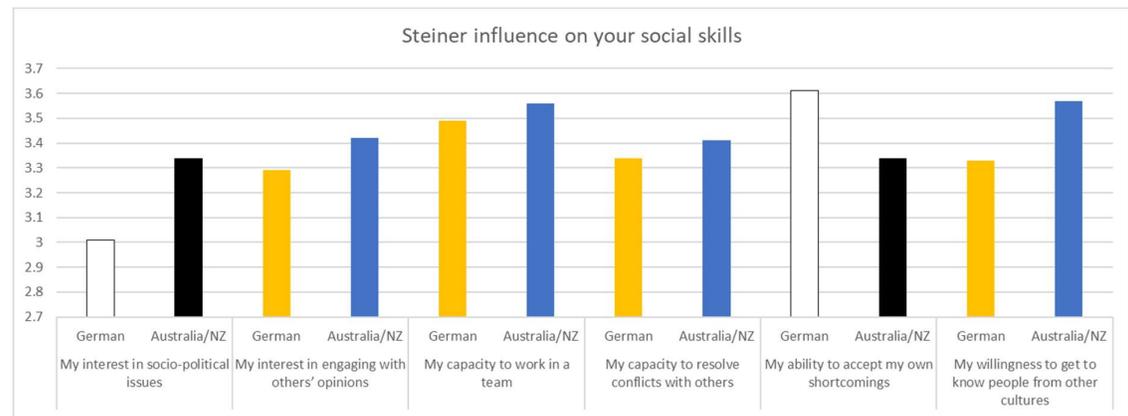
Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

**Figure 20.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their experience of meaningfulness.



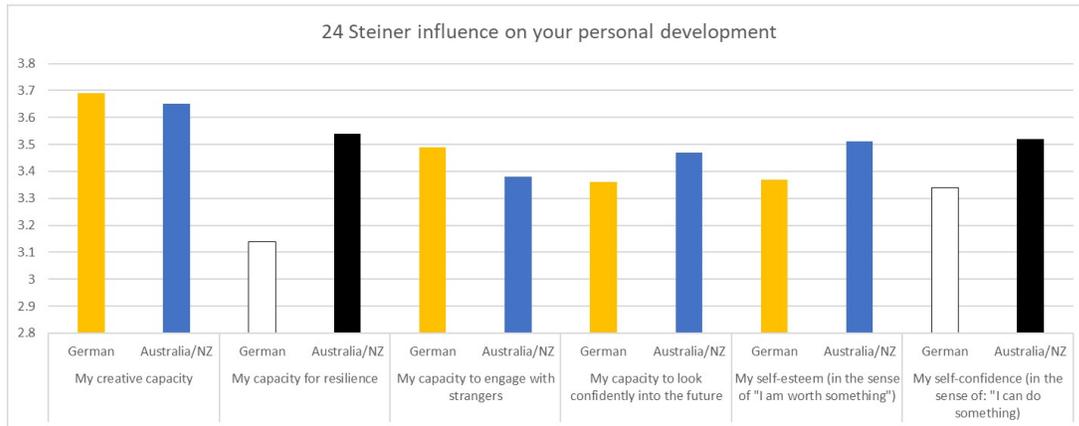
Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

**Figure 21.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner Waldorf influenced their social skills.



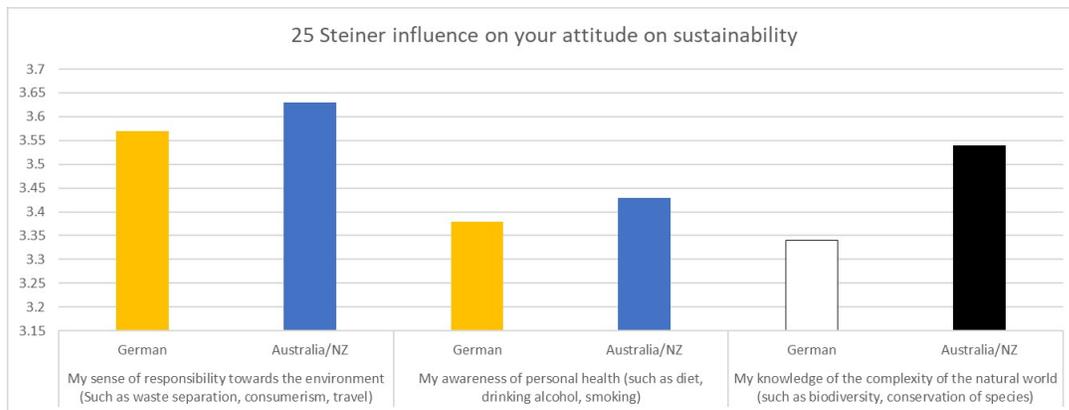
Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

**Figure 22.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their personal development.



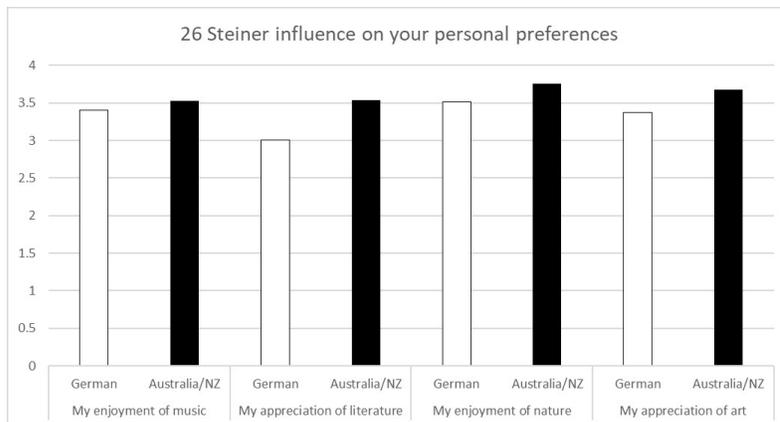
Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

**Figure 23.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their attitude on sustainability.



Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

**Figure 24.** Mean group differences of German and Australian/NZ participants' attitudes towards how Steiner/Waldorf influenced their personal preferences.



Significant group differences are indicated by black and white bars.

## Appendix VI: Welch's Independent Samples T-tests

Results of *Welch's Independent Samples T-tests* for all inferential statistics (equal variances assumed as German comparison group is a randomly sampled equal n=165). Significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) are marked with\*.

	Region	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	t	df	Sig. p
The class community over the entire school period	German	161	3.37	.533	2.636	-5.595	323	.000*
	Australia/NZ	164	3.72	.602				
Having one class teacher for an extended period	German	162	3.47	.570	4.836	0.383	325	.702
	Australia/NZ	165	3.44	.684				
Main Lesson	German	159	1.43	.716	1.458	-	321	.000*
	Australia/NZ	164	3.61	.622				
Art and music lessons	German	164	3.75	.448	5.545	0.994	326	.321
	Australia/NZ	164	3.70	.547				
The Class Play	German	163	3.82	.384	79.032	4.737	325	.000*
	Australia/NZ	164	3.53	.687				
Industrial Arts	German	165	3.42	.708	3.040	1.568	328	.118
	Australia/NZ	165	3.28	.832				
Hand work	German	146	1.83	.927	8.162	-	309	.000*
	Australia/NZ	165	3.54	.694				
Eurythmy	German	163	3.56	.629	6.684	-2.006	325	.046*
	Australia/NZ	164	3.70	.547				
Holistic teaching	German	163	3.15	.601	12.825	-5.370	325	.000*
	Australia/NZ	164	3.53	.687				
The morning verse/personal verse	German	164	3.30	.598	13.400	0.174	327	.862
	Australia/NZ	165	3.28	.832				
Celebration of festivals	German	163	3.06	.928	0.982	-5.289	326	.000*
	Australia/NZ	165	3.54	.694				
Learning in ability level groups	German	164	3.38	.729	82.822	8.472	326	.000*
	Australia/NZ	164	2.47	1.164				
My Steiner/Waldorf school was open to all world religions.	German	164	3.38	.729	1.073	1.605	327	.110
	Australia/NZ	165	3.25	.736				
The lessons were usually educationally sound and well prepared.	German	164	2.96	.585	20.078	-3.839	327	.000*
	Australia/NZ	165	3.24	.725				
My teachers were professionally competent.	German	163	3.12	.613	12.106	-1.403	326	.162
	Australia/NZ	165	3.22	.768				
I felt supported on many different levels.	German	164	3.39	.772	.240	.369	327	.712
	Australia/NZ	165	3.36	.833				
The teacher-student relationship was characterized by mutual respect and appreciation.	German	163	3.38	.650	2.666	-1.207	326	.228
	Australia/NZ	165	3.48	.816				
In class I had ample opportunities to contribute my own ideas.	German	164	3.38	.720	.509	-.882	327	.378
	Australia/NZ	165	3.45	.728				
	German	163	1.79	.751	.334	-3.332	326	.001*

## Australian Steiner Graduate Outcomes Research Project

I often found the teacher-student relationship to be too close.	Australia/NZ	165	2.08	.841				
Most of the teachers understood my concerns.	German	163	3.10	.669	.413	.335	325	.738
	Australia/NZ	164	3.07	.679				
I felt that my teachers took me seriously.	German	162	3.39	.680	.755	-1.206	325	.229
	Australia/NZ	165	3.48	.668				
Most of the content I learnt has been useful to me.	German	164	3.07	.684	.042	-.467	327	.641
	Australia/NZ	165	3.10	.712				
I was free to learn without pressure to perform.	German	163	3.17	.798	.215	.500	326	.617
	Australia/NZ	165	3.13	.813				
At school I often got bored.	German	163	2.12	.842	8.050	1.906	326	.057
	Australia/NZ	165	1.95	.723				
I like to tell others that I attended a Steiner/Waldorf School.	German	163	3.26	.782	.012	-.172	326	.863
	Australia/NZ	165	3.27	.799				
At school, I often felt excluded.	German	164	1.52	.825	2.390	-3.778	327	.000*
	Australia/NZ	165	1.85	.759				
Teachers were often helpless in the face of aggressive confrontations between pupils.	German	163	2.06	.911	13.817	.684	325	.494
	Australia/NZ	164	1.99	.696				
My capacity to express my opinion to others	German	151	3.29	.689	.017	-2.501	299	.013*
	Australia/NZ	150	3.49	.712				
My capacity to think independently	German	158	3.39	.703	11.428	-3.996	314	.000*
	Australia/NZ	158	3.69	.617				
My capacity to assess my strengths and weaknesses	German	148	2.98	.820	.372	-6.712	291	.000*
	Australia/NZ	145	3.55	.623				
My capacity for critical thought	German	154	3.55	.549	.290	-.712	300	.477
	Australia/NZ	148	3.59	.648				
My ability to navigate new media (e.g. Internet, smartphones)	German	130	2.79	.994	2.482	.188	200	.851
	Australia/NZ	72	2.76	1.094				
My willingness to engage with less-interesting topics	German	143	2.73	.778	.165	-4.455	245	.000*
	Australia/NZ	104	3.18	.785				
My career aspirations	German	133	2.97	.977	4.121	-3.605	251	.000*
	Australia/NZ	120	3.37	.744				
My capacity to form opinions on issues	German	153	3.37	.646	.694	-2.834	293	.005*
	Australia/NZ	142	3.58	.634				
My joy of learning	German	146	3.08	.771	.125	-4.801	294	.000*
	Australia/NZ	150	3.49	.702				
My ability to see myself as the creator of my own destiny	German	146	3.38	.645	.558	-1.180	286	.239
	Australia/NZ	142	3.47	.721				
My capacity to see specific developments on the planet in an interconnected way	German	135	3.33	.680	.450	-2.612	273	.010*
	Australia/NZ	140	3.54	.650				
My interest in socio-political issues	German	134	3.01	.731	3.441	-3.489	248	.001*
	Australia/NZ	116	3.34	.757				
My interest in engaging with others' opinions	German	144	3.29	.578	6.312	-1.725	289	.086
	Australia/NZ	147	3.42	.702				
My capacity to work in a team	German	154	3.49	.586	.362	-.949	303	.344
	Australia/NZ	151	3.56	.689				

Australian Steiner Graduate Outcomes Research Project

My capacity to resolve conflicts with others	German	150	3.34	.633	1.356	-.930	281	.353
	Australia/NZ	133	3.41	.698				
My ability to accept my own shortcomings	German	154	3.61	.502	3.375	4.024	276	.000*
	Australia/NZ	124	3.34	.623				
My willingness to get to know people from other cultures	German	130	3.33	.652	.223	-2.692	264	.008*
	Australia/NZ	136	3.57	.767				
My creative capacity	German	159	3.69	.515	1.232	.665	318	.506
	Australia/NZ	161	3.65	.551				
My capacity for resilience	German	146	3.14	.788	1.082	-4.649	295	.000*
	Australia/NZ	151	3.54	.690				
My capacity to engage with strangers	German	142	3.49	.580	4.906	1.270	271	.205
	Australia/NZ	131	3.38	.769				
My capacity to look confidently into the future	German	136	3.36	.696	.015	-1.324	271	.187
	Australia/NZ	137	3.47	.728				
My self-esteem (in the sense of "I am worth something")	German	146	3.37	.643	.900	-1.714	277	.088
	Australia/NZ	133	3.51	.735				
My self-confidence (in the sense of: "I can do something")	German	151	3.34	.765	1.553	-2.160	294	.032*
	Australia/NZ	145	3.52	.718				
My sense of responsibility towards the environment (Such as waste separation, consumerism, travel)	German	140	3.57	.564	.816	-.853	281	.394
	Australia/NZ	143	3.63	.577				
My awareness of personal health (such as diet, drinking alcohol, smoking)	German	128	3.38	.641	.253	-.577	240	.565
	Australia/NZ	114	3.43	.624				
My knowledge of the complexity of the natural world (such as biodiversity, conservation of species)	German	140	3.34	.676	3.430	-2.609	287	.010*
	Australia/NZ	149	3.54	.587				
My enjoyment of music	German	142	3.40	.725	2.049	-1.559	281	.120
	Australia/NZ	141	3.53	.682				
My appreciation of literature	German	133	3.01	.866	2.150	-5.997	278	.000*
	Australia/NZ	147	3.54	.622				
My enjoyment of nature	German	146	3.51	.635	17.109	-3.622	305	.000*
	Australia/NZ	161	3.76	.576				
My appreciation of art	German	147	3.37	.768	23.676	-4.082	292	.000*
	Australia/NZ	147	3.68	.523				

## Appendix VII: Survey Questions

### QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL

1. Which Steiner/Waldorf School did you attend?
2. From which class did you begin attending the Steiner/Waldorf School?
3. After which class did you leave the Steiner/Waldorf School?
4. In which year did you complete school?
5. In which state did you complete school?
6. Which school leaving certificate did you receive when you graduated from school?
  - Secondary school leaving certificate
  - University entrance certificate
  - Vocational entrance certificate
  - No school leaving certificate
7. What profession, career pathway or subject speciality have you studied?
8. What profession, career or work situation are you currently practising?
9. Are you currently studying at tertiary level? (yes/no)
10. If you selected 'no' for question 9, please go to question 12. If 'yes', please select the tertiary level you are currently studying:
  - Certificate III and IV
  - Advanced Diploma and Diploma
  - Bachelor Degree
  - Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate
  - Postgraduate Degree
11. What is the field of tertiary education you are currently studying?
  - Education
  - Services
  - Arts and Humanities
  - Social Sciences, Journalism and Information
  - Business, Administration and Law
  - Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics
  - Information and Communication Technologies
  - Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
  - Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary
  - Health and Welfare
12. Have you completed any tertiary education qualifications? (yes/no)
13. If you selected 'no' for question 12, please go to question 14. If you selected 'yes', what is the highest level of tertiary education completed? Please select one option from the following:
  - Certificate III and IV
  - Advanced Diploma and Diploma
  - Bachelor Degree
  - Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate
  - Postgraduate Degree
14. What is the field of the highest tertiary education program you have completed? Please select one option from the following:
  - Education
  - Services
  - Arts and Humanities
  - Social Sciences, Journalism and Information

- Business, Administration and Law
  - Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics
  - Information and Communication Technologies
  - Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
  - Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary
  - Health and Welfare
15. Which industry sector do you work in? (select one)
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
  - Mining
  - Manufacturing
  - Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
  - Construction
  - Wholesale Trade
  - Retail Trade
  - Accommodation and Food Services
  - Transport, Postal and Warehousing
  - Information Media and Telecommunications
  - Financial and Insurance Services
  - Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
  - Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
  - Administrative and Support Services
  - Public Administration and Safety
  - Education and Training
  - Health Care and Social Assistance
  - Arts and Recreation Services
  - Other Services
  - None of the above

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES AT THE STEINER/WALDORF SCHOOL

16. What were your parents' motives for enrolling you in a Steiner/Waldorf School?
17. Did you attend a Waldorf Preschool or Kindergarten before entering the Steiner/Waldorf School?
18. Did Anthroposophy (Steiner philosophy) play a role in your parents' home?
19. Looking back, which of the following features of Steiner/Waldorf education do you consider important?
- (Ranked as follows: Did not happen, Not important, Somewhat important, Important):
- The class community during your time at Steiner/Waldorf
  - Having one class teacher for an extended period
  - Main lesson
  - The surveying main lesson
  - Art and music lessons
  - Class play
  - Manual arts
  - Hand work
  - The year 12 project
  - Eurythmy
  - Holistic teaching
  - The morning verse/personal verses
  - Celebration of festivals
  - Learning in ability level groups

20. The following are general statements about Steiner/Waldorf Schools. Please indicate by selecting the relevant statement to what extent you agree or disagree.

(Ordinal scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.)

- My Steiner/Waldorf School was open to all world religions.
- The lessons were usually educationally sound and well prepared.
- My teachers were professionally competent.
- At the Steiner/Waldorf School I felt supported on many different levels.
- The teacher-student relationship was characterised by mutual respect and appreciation.
- In class I had ample opportunities to contribute my own ideas.
- At school I was free to learn without pressure to perform.
- I felt that my teachers took me seriously.
- I often found the teacher-student relationship to be too close.
- Most of the teachers understood my concerns.
- At school I often got bored.
- Most of the content I learnt has been useful to me.
- I like to tell others that I attended a Steiner/Waldorf School.
- At school, I often felt excluded.
- Teachers were often helpless in the face of aggressive confrontations between pupils.

21. The following question lists statements that describe the impact that your Steiner/Waldorf School teachers, school trips and camps, internships, school events) had on your personal development.

Please indicate by selecting the relevant statement to what extent you agree or disagree.

(Ordinal scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.)

**SELF DETERMINATION:**

On my capacity to express my opinion to others

On my capacity to think independently

On my capacity to assess my strengths and weaknesses

On my capacity for critical thought

On my ability to navigate new media (such as TV, PC, Internet, Smartphone)

On my willingness to engage with topics that interest me less than others

On my professional career aspiration

On my capacity to make my own judgment on an issue

**EXPERIENCE OF MEANINGFULNESS:**

On my joy of learning

On my ability to see myself as the creator of my own destiny

On my capacity to see specific developments on the planet in an interconnected way

**SOCIAL SKILLS:**

On my interest in socio-political issues

On my interest in engaging with others' opinions

On my capacity to work in a team

On my capacity to resolve conflicts with others

On my ability to accept my own shortcomings

On my willingness to get to know people from other cultures

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

On my creative capacity

On my capacity for resilience

On my capacity to engage with strangers

On my capacity to look confidently into the future

On my self-esteem (in the sense of "I am worth something")

On my self-confidence (in the sense of: "I can do something")

**ATTITUDE TO SUSTAINABILITY:**

On my sense of responsibility towards the environment (Such as waste separation, consumerism, travel)  
On my awareness of personal health (such as diet, drinking alcohol, smoking)  
On my knowledge of the complexity of the natural world (such as biodiversity, conservation of species)

PERSONAL PREFERENCES:

On my enjoyment of music  
On my appreciation of literature  
On my enjoyment of nature  
On my appreciation of art

22. Did you have tutoring or learning support during your time at the Steiner/Waldorf School?  
(Yes/No answer)

Comment box: If yes, in which subject and which year level

23. Apart from the statements mentioned above, which *other aspects* of your experiences at the Steiner/Waldorf School do you consider to be positive or negative today?

Comment box: The POSITIVE aspects were

Comment box: The NEGATIVE aspects were

24. If you had the choice, would you go to a Steiner/Waldorf School again today?  
YES/NO, If NO say why not.

25. Do you understand the anthroposophical foundations of Steiner /Waldorf education?

26. Do any aspects of *anthroposophy* have any *relevance/meaning* in your life now? YES/NO,  
If yes in what context?

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

27. What do you think are the most important challenges that Steiner/Waldorf schools face today?

SOCIAL COMMITMENT

28. Are you politically active? YES/NO, If YES, please specify what form of political activity.

29. Are you participating in a non-profit association, or working as a volunteer?  
YES/NO, If YES, please specify what kind of activity?

PERSONAL INFORMATION

30. When were you born?

31. Please specify your gender  
Male/female/diverse/prefer not to answer.

32. What is your mother tongue/language you speak at home?  
English, Other, namely ...

33. Do your children attend a Steiner/Waldorf School?

Yes

Yes, but only until the end of Primary School/If YES, which school, for example?

NO

NO, but I home school my children in the Steiner/Waldorf method.

34. Have you applied aspects of Steiner/Waldorf educational philosophy when raising your children?

YES/NO/

If YES, what aspects, for example?

35. Do you belong to or participate in a religious community?

YES/NO/

If so, which community?

36. What was the most important thing for you personally, that you learned or have experienced at the Steiner/Waldorf school?

**Thank you very much for your response.**

Australian Steiner Graduate Outcomes Research Project

Are you willing to participate in a focus group interview with 7 alumni from your Steiner/Waldorf School?

If yes, please click on this email link [mcarey@usc.edu.au](mailto:mcarey@usc.edu.au) and type the name of your Steiner/Waldorf school in the Subject field