Validation of a Steiner-Waldorf teacher education programme: auditing the programme

A report of the initial audit

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Project Summary
Steiner Waldorf (SW) education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). It provides a distinctive form of education. There are about 900 SW schools worldwide. SW schools in the UK are in the independent sector, but aspire to be state maintained to reduce the financial barriers to access. This process has recently begun in England (Woods et al. 2005) and is likely to spread across the UK. There is already a shortage of SW trained teachers and state-funding is likely to result in the expansion of SW education and thus further teacher shortages, unless SW teacher training can expand at the same time. The only teacher training course for SW education in Scotland is currently offered at the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School. Although students are continuously assessed on various assignments, completion of the programme does not currently carry any formal credit. This project has identified some of the necessary developments to the SW Teacher Training course to meet the requirements of validation by the University of Stirling, including QAA criteria for quality assurance. It has produced an audit tool and this report to allow the school and University to decide whether or not to proceed with the actual validation process.

Audit Summary
The Edinburgh Teacher Training Institute’s programme is a three year part time programme, which prepares students for a career as a teacher in a Steiner school. The programme currently carries no formal credit and is not recognised by the GTC. The key points emerging from the initial validation audit are as follows:
While basic course documentation is in place, there is a need to further document policies and procedures, in particular in relation to decision making processes (e.g. course design & review) and assessment processes (e.g. moderation). It would be possible to adopt several University of Stirling policies and procedures for these.
There needs to be further discussion about the best level of validation, both in relation to the future of SW education, the benefits for students and the national and local context, including the strategic interest of the University. Validation at PG Cert level is currently suggested.
There is a need to develop a coherent set of marking criteria for different kinds of assessment (e.g. essays, reflective log, clay models, paintings, performances, classroom practice) and these need to be implemented across the programme, together with a marking scheme and feedback sheets, which are compatible with those of the University.
Introduction

This report is the second outcome of the ESCalate project. The first outcome consisted of a ‘Gateway Document’ (GD) targeted at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and third party education providers, who are interested in the validation of third party educational programmes. The GD contains an introduction to the process of validation and an audit tool for use by HEIs and third party educational providers to help them make an initial assessment of the viability of programme validation.

This report documents the results of the initial audit of the teacher education programme offered by the Edinburgh Steiner Teacher Training Institute (ESTTI) at the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School in Scotland, for the purpose of assessing the possibilities for having this programme validated by the University of Stirling. We used the following documents in carrying out this initial audit:

1. Gateway Document as developed earlier in the project
2. Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF)
3. University of Stirling quality Handbook
4. Benchmarks for initial teacher education (as point of reference only)
5. Programme Validation Framework document used in validation of police course

First we provide a brief description of the ESTTI programme. Then, using the Programme Validation Framework and referring to existing course documentation, we provide a more detailed account of specific aspects of the programme. Next we report on the level at which the course could be validated. Finally, we provide an overview of the initial audit results.

Programme Description

Like the school curriculum itself, the teacher education programme provides a balance between academic, vocational and artistic studies. Students produce a broad range of outputs, including essays, drawings, paintings, clay-models, workbooks, lesson plans and theatrical performances. This multi-faceted approach, in which students are required to develop both an understanding of the SW curriculum through academic study as well as skills in a range of vocational and artistic areas, provides for both the challenges and the excitement of validating this programme. Currently the programme is structured as follows:

Year 1:
- An introduction to Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy and child development in the light of Anthroposophy
- Study of parts of some of the fundamental books by Rudolf Steiner
• An introduction to the work of the different areas of the school: Kindergarten, Lower School, and Upper School
• Goethean Science and artistic practice
• The role of the celebration of festivals in the school year
• Artistic courses in Eurhythmy, Creative Speech, Painting, Drawing, Modelling and Form Drawing

Year 2
• In depth study of Steiner’s insights into Child Development
• Curriculum Studies Classes 1 – 8
• Math teaching throughout the Lower School
• English teaching throughout the Lower School
• Windows into the teaching of Foreign Languages in the Lower School
• Poetry and Story telling
• Artistic courses in Eurhythmy, Creative Speech, Painting, Drawing, Modelling, Form drawing

Year 3
For students intending to become class teachers there is a third year, which includes classroom observation and teaching practice of at least 9 weeks at a SW school.
Programme Validation Framework

Programme Inputs

Students
Currently, the programme attracts about 5-10 students every year. These students come from all walks of life, with or without previous qualifications. Some students are parents at the school interested to learn more about Steiner-Waldorf education. Some students have significant life experience and are looking for a change in direction and/or career. Some students have degrees or higher degrees or other qualification in creative or vocational subjects. The age of students is roughly between 24-55.

Publicity
Appendix I shows the promotional leaflet currently in use. Appendix II shows the programme booklet which is sent to enquirers and contains the aims and objectives of the programme. The school has a dedicated website with links to the teacher training course (http://www.steinerweb.org.uk/ttc.html). The course is listed on the website of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (http://www.steinervaldorf.org.uk/training.htm) and on many Steiner-Waldorf related websites around the world. Finally, the course is advertised annually in appropriate local and national media.

Admission criteria
Prospective students are currently not required to have any specific prior qualifications or experience. A prior degree and/or experience of working with children is desirable and an advantage. Applicants are judged on an individual basis in respect of their understanding for the need for openness and commitment to work with the ideas of anthroposophy and lifelong learning, a strong wish to work with children and an understanding of the need to be in sound physical, emotional and mental health.

Recruitment procedures
The course is advertised widely (see Publicity above) through advertisements, public talks, journals, open days in Steiner schools around the UK, Teacher Training Course ‘taster days’, website and word of mouth. An information pack is sent to enquirers. Potential students complete an application form and all candidates are interviewed by at least two course tutors. References and sponsors are followed up and police checks carried out.

Staff

Recruitment
There are three levels of staffing on the programme:
1. Programme co-ordinators (two staff)
2. Core Tutors & programme co-ordinators (seven staff in total)
3. Tutors, core tutors and programme co-ordinators (17 in total)

Core tutors are expected to be committed and active in the study and research of Anthroposophy and Steiner Waldorf Education. They should be able to provide evidence of experience of teaching within a SW context and have experience of or show potential as adult educators. The Programme Co-ordinators are permanent members of staff at the school who also have teaching and administrative duties besides the programme. Tutoring staff are usually drawn from current teachers in the school, but occasionally from outside the school. Recruitment generally occurs informally through personal contact and networking.

**Induction**

At the outset of their engagement as tutors on the programme, staff are given an overview of the programme, an explanation of how their teaching will fit in with that of other tutors and subjects, are briefed on time commitments and on standards and assessments. Where appropriate (for example with less experienced staff), they may be required to carry out some classroom observations of other tutors.

**Evaluation**

Staff evaluation takes place through weekly student feedback sessions and all new staff are observed in their practice by a Programme Co-ordinator.

**Dev/recognition**

There are termly study sessions on adult learning processes for tutors. Tutors can attend CPD provision across the country and internationally in both Steiner-Waldorf practice and mainstream practice. SWSF lists a range of CPD offering across the country with relevance to SW teachers ([http://www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk/prodev.htm](http://www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk/prodev.htm)), for example, the Easter Conference, subject specific courses, the Annual conference for teachers. Furthermore, there are conferences and courses specific to SW adult educators, for example at Emerson College and internationally, through the European Council of SW education. The courses are acknowledged within the SW education sector but carry no formal credit.

**Facilities**

**IT/Library**

Students have access to networked PC facilities at the school as and when required. There is a dedicated course library, containing several hundred books, videos, CDs, and DVDs. Students also have access to the library of the General Anthroposophical Society and of course to public libraries throughout Edinburgh.

**Learning support**

Members of the programme team are available for individual tutorials as and when required. Tutors are responsible for responding to the expressed needs of the course participants, dealing with any problems encountered and tracking individual progress. In addition, participants are encouraged to provide peer support for each other.
Course curriculum

Aims and objectives
Please see Appendix I

Course development
Course development is initiated through termly meetings of the programme co-ordinators with the core tutors (level 2 above, see under Staff), through team negotiations and in response to ongoing student feedback, the outcomes of an evaluation questionnaire at the end of Year 2 and the demands of local and national developments. The national guidelines from the SWSF Teacher Education Circle form a backdrop to these negotiations. It is the responsibility of the co-ordinators to implement agreed developments.

Course approval
Major changes to the programme are reported to and approved by the College of Teachers annually.

Course review
Review of the programme is carried out at least once every term, in response to student feedback, by the core group of tutors (level 2). This happens in the same meeting as the review of student progress.

2. Programme Process

Teaching

Rights
Students have the right to question any of the course content and method of delivery. They have right to attend all teaching sessions and to expect these to be well planned and structured. They have the right to expect staff to be punctual, to have full access to all relevant materials, regular feedback, individual and group tutorials at least once a term, but more often if required. They have the right to classroom placements. Finally, they have the right to express their views, be listened to and be respected as individuals in their own right.

Responsibilities
Students are expected to be punctual, to prioritise for the demands of the course, to hand in assignments on time, to be punctual for teaching practice placements and to dress in accordance with school guidelines. They are further expected to treat all matters concerning specific individual staff or pupils with the appropriate level of confidentiality and professionally.
Advisor
The course coordinators fulfil the role of advisor to all students and meet each student at least once a term to discuss progress. While course choice is not applicable, teaching placements may be elected at kindergarten or lower school level, in discussion with the advisor.

Supervision
Each student also has a named supervisor for first year and second year. Staff members from the core tutor group provide supervision on an individual and group basis, monitoring and feeding back on the student’s work in progress.

Placement
Please see Appendix III & IV for placement guidelines provided to students.

Monitoring/support
One of the programme co-ordinators is responsible for monitoring and supporting students on placements. Monitoring of classroom placements happens also through the class teacher. Feedback sessions with both the class teacher and the programme co-ordinator are timetabled at the start of each term.

Communication
As placements are usually at the school, communication between staff and students involved in the placements tends to be ongoing and informal. If a placement is outside the school, then communication will usually be through visits, discussion between class teacher, student and programme co-ordinator. Students are advised to keep a record of such meetings.

Reporting Mechanisms

Information
The flow of information is between (1) The College of Teachers; (2) Programme co-ordinators; (3) Core tutors and (4) Tutors.

Communication/course panels
The programme coordinators are key figures in ensuring the flow of communication between these different bodies. Regular meetings are held at level 1, 2 and 3 and information relevant to individual tutors is passed on verbally. The programme co-ordinators produce an annual report for the College of Teachers. The level 2 meetings are equivalent to course panel meetings.
Assessment

Nature of assessment
Assessment on the programme is continuous through course work and placements. There are no exams. Students produce a range of outputs, such as essays, reflective journals, drawings, paintings, performances and are observed teaching in a number of different classes.

Procedures
Assessed pieces of work are set in discussion with the students, with scope for the negotiation of individualised assessments. These are submitted to a deadline and then assessed by the appropriate tutor. Late submission is possible in negotiation with the tutor when there are valid reasons. Student work is not graded, but extensive feedback is given and unsatisfactory work needs to be resubmitted.

Criteria
Student work is marked through tutors’ professional judgement in the case of artefacts. A classroom assessment sheet is used for the assessment of teaching practice.

Resit/resubmission
There is currently no formal limit to the number of times a student may resubmit a piece of work, but in practice this is usually restricted to once only.

Progression
Currently the main criterion for progression is 85% attendance of classes and satisfactory submission of all pieces of required assessed work. Student progress is reviewed termly.

Lack of progress- requirement for withdrawal
Only occasionally does it become necessary to advice a student to withdraw from the programme. This is usually as a result of lack of attendance or failure to submit assessed pieces of work.

Examination Board or equivalent
The level 2 meeting convenes at the end of each term to discuss student progress. At the end of each year, this committee awards a Diploma to students who have successfully completed the two – or three year programme.

QA
Student input SSLC, questionnaires
At the end of each day’s classes there is an ‘echo’ session where students are given the opportunity to provide feedback to programme staff. There is an evaluation questionnaire at the end of Year 2.
Appeals
There is no appeal procedure because the programme does not currently carry any formal credit. Problems are usually resolved informally through individual meetings.

Grievance
The school itself has a grievance procedure for staff, but there is currently no grievance procedure for students.

Disciplinary
There is no formal disciplinary procedure, and disciplinary cases have never happened. Problems are resolved informally.

External examining
There is currently no external examining, as the programme carries no formal credit.

Student record
Student records are kept in a hard copy files in one of the core tutors’ office, to which only staff has access.

Course review
The programme is evaluated and reviewed at agreed intervals in line with the SWSF recommendations. Participants are invited to take an active part in the evaluation and review process throughout the programme (see above under Curriculum), through termly review discussion sessions, individual logs of work undertaken, in individual tutorials and by filling in evaluation forms at the end of the programme.

Equal opportunities
ESTTI aims to treat all staff and students with respect and ensure they are not subjected to unfair discrimination. All staff and students, whether current or potential, should expect to receive fair and equal treatment when applying to or working as members of ESTTI. ESTTI does not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, colour, disability, ethnic or socio-economic background, family circumstances, religion, political persuasion, sexual orientation, or any other irrelevant distinction and is committed to work with diversity in a wholly positive way.

Health & Safety
Health and Safety issues are in line with on-site H&S policies and are the responsibility of the programme management team.
Programme Outputs

Learning outcomes

Level/breadth/depth/knowledge/skills
There are generic learning outcomes (Appendix II), besides the general aims and objectives (Appendix I).

Awarding criteria
85% attendance and satisfactory completion of all assessed work.

Articulation
This is currently not relevant.

Non-completion
Where students fail to meet the awarding criteria they are unable to graduate from the course.

Certification
The programme is recognised nationally as a valid preparation for teaching in a Steiner school.

Multiple exit routes
Currently, students who do not wish to become teachers in a Steiner school may exit the programme after the second year with a certificate of completion.

Monitoring and Review
The items under this heading have partly been addressed under previous headings and can partly not be described yet. They will become more relevant at a later stage in the validation process.

Proposal form
The items under this heading are not supplied at this stage, as the programme is being redeveloped in response to the audit.
Level at which the course could be validated

It is envisaged that the programme in its current form could be validated at PG Certificate level (SCQF Level 11). If SW education is going to expand across the UK, then there will be an increasing demand for teachers. Moreover, if SW education is going to become state-funded, then it will be in the interest of all stakeholders that SW teachers are graduates and become eligible for GTC registration. It is possible that the GTC(S) will in future consider separate registration for Steiner teachers, or that there will be a demand on SW teachers to become state-qualified. For example, in the proposals for a DfES-funded Hereford Steiner Academy in England, there is currently no demand on Steiner teachers to become state-qualified, but this may change in the future. Given the level and content of the present programme offered by ESTTI and the benefits of moving to a graduate teaching force in SW schools, validation at PG Cert level seems the best way forward.

Overview of the initial audit results

The following descriptions were used as case examples in the Gateway Document. They are here developed in slightly more depth to provide a small number of concrete programme development needs. Please read this section in conjunction with the audit tool part of the Gateway Document and note that the audit tool and therefore these audit results are not comprehensive, but a first indication of required developments only.

Assessment

Does your institution have effective procedures for designing, approving, supervising and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards?

At ESTTI there are three levels of programme operation/management:
1. Programme co-ordinators
2. Core tutors (including programme co-ordinators)
3. All tutors (including programme co-ordinators and core tutors)

At level 1 and 2 at last one meeting takes place every term. At level 2 discussions take place about all pedagogical aspects of the programme, including assessment strategies, and decisions are made, which are then implemented by co-ordinators (level 1) and disseminated to all core staff (level 2). The meetings are minuted, providing an audit trail of the decision-making process. Thus all four functions of design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies are addressed through these committees.

Required development:

- To document the programme’s assessment strategy
- To record procedures for the design, approval, supervision and review of assessment strategies within programme documentation and ensure that all staff are familiar with them. This might be achieved by the compilation of a staff handbook, which covers all of the programme’s policies and procedures (not just
Those relating to assessment strategies), or through the documentation and dissemination of individual policies and procedures via the currently established structure of committees and meetings.

- To consider rationalising the function of different meetings. Curriculum design and approval may be done on an annual basis, with supervision (monitoring) and review being conducted termly, recorded termly, but reported to a Programme Board meeting annually. This would be equivalent to the procedures in place at the University. ESTTI is a very small organisation and therefore it is appropriate that the number of meetings is kept small. At the University of Stirling, programme boards are usually held once a year, while exam boards are held every semester. Thus, the ESTTI meetings cover curriculum, evaluation and student progress. Therefore ESTTI could consider having separate termly meetings to discuss student progress only and reduce the number of programme meetings to one per year.

**Does your institution have effective procedures for the consistent implementation of assessment practices which ensure an award is pitched at the appropriate level and student performance is judged against this?**

ESTTI’s programme currently carries no formal credit and students’ work is marked, but not graded. Furthermore, student work is generally marked by one member of staff only.

**Required development:**
- To design assessment criteria, marking schemes and feedback sheets appropriate to the nature and level of assignments.
- To ensure all staff are conversant with these
- To implement a system of moderation to ensure reliability and consistency of marking and feedback across the programme.
- To document criteria, marking schemes and moderation procedures and monitor their implementation through the committee structures.

**Does your institution have effective, clear, and consistent policies in respect of the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners? Where there is more than one such body, are the relative powers of each clearly defined?**

Individual tutors currently mark student work and there are no assessment panels. The Level 2 meetings function as exam boards, with delegated authority from to the school’s College of Teachers. The core tutor group includes programme co-ordinators and core tutors.

**Required development:**
- To write and implement an effective, clear and consistent policy which sets out the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of the examination committee.
**Programme approval, monitoring and review**

How does your institution ensure that the overriding responsibility of the academic authority (e.g. senate or academic board) to set, maintain and assure standards is respected and that any delegation of power by the academic authority to approve or review programmes is properly defined and exercised?

The academic authority is delegated from the college of Teachers to the core group of tutors, most of whom are teachers at the school. The College of Teachers governs the learning and teaching side of the school. The group of core tutors reports back to the College of Teachers through an annual report.

**Required development**

- For validation, this arrangement needs to be adapted to ensure that the academic standards are overseen by the University of Stirling. Thus, an annual report from the ESTTI programme team, meeting the requirements of the University would be required to be submitted to the Institute of Education’s Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee for approval.
- Programme review taking place through Level 2 committee meetings should include a member of the University’s academic staff to ensure compliance with the University’s policies and procedures.
- Programme approval would need to go through the established procedures at the University.

**Does your institution periodically review the continuing validity and relevance of programme aims and intended learning outcomes?**

The ESTTI programme currently has a set of aims and objectives (Appendix I) and generic learning outcomes (Appendix II). The relevance and continuing validity of these are periodically reviewed through Level 1 and Level 2 committee meetings and through the national SWSF Teacher Education Circle.

ESTTI currently does not involve an external examiner, who takes a broad overview of students' knowledge and competencies. However, it has excellent working relationships with professionals in the field of Steiner Education, who are involved in national discussions around issues of SW teacher education.

Programme validity and relevance is regularly monitored through the various levels of programme management, mentioned earlier, through the involvement of ESTTI staff in national debates on Steiner education and Teacher Education (Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship Teacher Education Circle) and a general awareness of the requirements for mainstream ITE programmes.

There are currently no nationally agreed competency statements for Steiner teacher education. However, professionals of other Steiner teacher training courses in the UK, who are part of the Teaching Education Circle for Steiner Education regularly meet to describe, reflect, compare and feedback on each other's provision. Validation of the ESTTI programme may provide an initial benchmark for the establishment of national standards against which other programmes could then be mapped. This process is likely
to be accelerated if state funding for SW education becomes more widely available throughout the UK.

Each teaching day concludes with an ‘echo’ session where students meet with tutors and course co-ordinators to discuss their thoughts and feelings about what they have learnt. There are also regular formal and informal progress meetings between tutors. However, no formal minutes are currently taken at these meetings.

**Required development**

- To document by whom, how and when the aims, objectives and learning outcomes are reviewed and ensure a cycle of review is clearly established and implemented.
- To document the outcomes of such reviews through Programme Board meetings and Programme Review forms as used at the University.
- To report annually on the continuing validity and relevance of its programme, through the University’s Programme Review procedures.
- To put in place a system whereby external examiners were involved in exam board meetings. Alternatively, an exam board could be established using the existing systems at the University.
- To work towards nationally agreed standards for SW initial teacher education through the SWSF Teacher Education Circle.
- To formalise termly student-staff committee meetings, where students are given an opportunity to comment on the programme, with brief replies by staff. These meetings could be minuted by students. The minutes would then need to be discussed at level 2 meetings and decisions made on appropriate adjustments to the programme, within the limits of approval documents. These would then be implemented through the programme co-ordinators. ESTTI could adopt the University’s Module Review and Programme Review processes for this purpose.

**Placement Learning**

*Where placement learning is an intended part of a programme of study, has your institution ensured that its responsibilities for placement learning are clearly defined?*

The ESTTI course involves several blocks of classroom practice. ESTTI always arranges placements on behalf of students. Normally students are placed with classes inside the institution to which the course is attached (the school), although students do have the option of placements at other schools, in Scotland, across the UK or even abroad. Students on the ESTTI course are not currently required to meet standards laid down by government or by professional registration bodies such as the General Teaching Council. However, among the community of Steiner/Waldorf teacher training courses, a measure of coordination is provided by the previously mentioned Teacher Education Circle (TEC). Under the auspices of the TEC there is an informal agreement about the minimum required time that Waldorf student teachers should be on placement in a classroom. For example, first year students should spend a minimum of six weeks observing in a classroom. Currently, during their placements students are assessed both by one of the
course co-ordinators and by the observing class teacher, with a Class Teacher Assessment Form, which is also used for peer appraisal among teachers in the school.

**Required development**

- To clearly define and document in more detail the exact responsibilities of the ESTTI in organising placements, the responsibilities of the school for providing the placements and the responsibilities of students for carrying out such placements.
- To document exactly what students can expect from placements and how they will be assessed. To review and formalise the use of the Assessment Form and moderation procedures similar to those on the taught elements of the programme, with clear assessment criteria and marking procedures.

**Can your institution assure itself that placement providers know what their responsibilities are during the period of placement learning?**

ESTTI normally places students within the school. The teachers in whose classes the students are placed are therefore colleagues of the course co-ordinator, who assesses student placements. The process has therefore been informal, given that no formal credit is awarded for completing the programme. The assessment of classroom practice is formative, both through the Class Teacher Assessment Form and oral feedback from the class teacher to the programme coordinator. In addition, students are required to record their placement experiences in a journal, which serves as a repository for the student’s lesson plans, child observation notes, artistic work, classroom observation notes and diary of self evaluation through reflection. In this way students can demonstrate that they have received the opportunities and experiences they are entitled to, as well as highlight areas of strength and weakness upon which further professional development can be based. The use of this document ensures course requirements are met.

**Required development**

- To formalise and document the assessment arrangements for placements (see above) and detail the responsibilities of the programme co-ordinator, the class teacher and the student and including the requirements of class teachers in their role as assessors. To make sure that staff and students are familiar with these requirements.