

SURFING THE WAVE OF EMERGENT RENEWAL:
RE-IMAGINING STEINER'S VISION
FOR TEACHERS' RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Abstract

In the dissertation I identify from the literature and my professional experience a set of problems and need-related concerns that pertain to the professional learning of Steiner teachers; I then explore their genealogy and address their resolution through critical analysis and creative synthesis. A ternary design element that supports the achievement of three closely interconnected research goals underpins the dissertation: I undertake a *theoretical study* and two *case studies*. Based on the premise that *Living Thinking* lies at the heart of Steiner's philosophy and of his pedagogical vision for teachers' professional learning and research, following the first design element, I describe in a dialogical-phenomenological way and interpret hermeneutically, heuristically and intuitively key features of *Living Thinking*. In line with the second and third design elements and the practical orientation of the research pathway, I investigate the educational implications of these features in relation to teachers' professional learning, firstly in the context of tertiary courses and secondly, in school based teacher research.

Taking into consideration the further claims that *Living Thinking* is an imaginative, inspirational and intuitive thinking (Steiner, 1999) that can be strengthened through Contemplative Inquiry (Zajonc, 2009) and practice, in the case studies I followed the "participatory turn" in action research (Heron & Reason, 2008; Kemmis, 2008) and in transpersonal psychology (Ferrer, 2002; Ferrer & Puente, 2013). Co-researching with other educators and teachers, we set out to explore together the influence of *Living Thinking* on our professional learning through participatory events and participatory knowing. Building on the dialogical orientation (Bakhtin, 1981) of the dissertation towards transdisciplinary research (Brown, 2010) and exchange with mainstream education we applied a double lens: we turned a critical focus *inwards* to investigate elements within Steiner education that spotlight *what can be done better*; and turning the focus *outwards*, we set out to determine what a reconstructive survey of Steiner education has to contribute towards potentially positive and creative synergies with other pedagogies and philosophies. Drawing on the emergent findings from the critical theoretical inquiry and the two case studies I constructed a "design anatomy" (AITSL, 2014) which identifies "components" relating to professional learning course design, and "elements" that describe creative capacities, learning processes and research methods. On the basis of this design anatomy and the underpinning conceptual framework the dissertation makes recommendations that support the embedding of features of *Living Thinking* in tertiary and school-based professional learning courses.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| ACARA | Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority |
| AR | Action Research |
| AGQTP | Australian Government Quality Teacher Program |
| AITSL | Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership |
| ASCF | Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework |
| ASTER | Australian Steiner Teachers, Educators and Researchers |
| ATNR | Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex |
| CI | Contemplative Inquiry |
| CRI | Critical Reflection Inventory |
| DBR | Design Based Research |
| DIL | Design Inquiry Learning |
| GCPD | Graduate Certificate in Professional Development |
| GCSE | Graduate Certificate in Steiner Education |
| HP | Hermeneutic Phenomenology |
| IMP | Integral Methodological Pluralism |
| kl | Kindle Location (rather than p. for page reference) |
| LDS | Learning Design Studio |
| LPL | Leading Professional Learning |
| PAR | Participatory Action Research |
| PD | Professional Development |
| PL | Professional Learning |
| PMI | Plus, Minus, Interest Survey (De Bono, 2007) |
| PPW | Participatory Pattern Workshops |
| RSSA | Rudolf Steiner Schools of Australia, an Association (now SEA) |
| RTM | Representational Theory of Mind |
| SEA | Steiner Education Australia |
| STAR | Steiner Teacher Action Research |
| TR | Teacher Research |

Key Terms

Living Thinking

Professional Learning

Teacher Research

Steiner Education

Contemplative Inquiry

Aesthetics

Creativity

Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition

Anthroposophy

Soul-Spiritual

Theoria, Poiesis and Praxis