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Next steps for Cultural Education

A chapter of the publication *New
Foundations for Cultural Education*

Inhoud

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Next steps for Cultural Education

Since the publication of the first *Handreiking Basis voor Cultuureducatie* in 2016, there have been several developments that are in line with the outlined vision of the future. Consider the more integrated approach and the continuous learning trajectory for cultural education as proposed by the Art & Culture Development Team in the process of curriculum revision. Or the far-reaching cooperation between education and childcare in order to arrive at a more integrated approach in the ages of zero to twelve. The government's proposed 96% funding of childcare for children of working parents brings a fully funded integrated child center closer. On the other hand, the emphasis on Dutch language and arithmetic/mathematics in education has only increased and, together with citizenship and digital literacy, these subjects have been declared the core of education. This development has not strengthened the position of art and culture, but rather weakened it. It is still unclear what the balance in the new school curriculum will look like. The increased interest in the arts professional in leisure time and cultural participation is a positive development, but it does require additional funding at a time of increased inflation.

Some steps require adjustments in laws and regulations at the national level or an adjustment of policies at the municipal or provincial level. Other steps need to be taken by education or the cultural field. In the cultural field, we should consider both the art professional who provides cultural education for students to learn skills and knowledge, as well as cultural institutions that offer in-depth knowledge and skills to visitors and spectators through educational programs. In some cases, all that is needed is courage, perseverance and attention, although this is sometimes more difficult to achieve than a formal change.

Principles for sustainable cultural education

A structure for sustainable in-school and out-of-school cultural education is primarily about offering equal development opportunities for all children and young people up to the age of eighteen. Cultural education and participation make an essential contribution to a broad development and future opportunities for every child. For example, children with a high level of cultural baggage achieve significantly higher academic success rates in further education (Glorieux et al., 2015). Art and culture contribute to social cohesion, social-emotional and personal development and provide space for other ways of expressing and appreciating things. In doing so, they also contribute to an inclusive society in which issues are discussable.

Sustainable and high-quality cultural education means:

- a solid position in educational practice, with a continuous learning trajectory and connection with other learning areas and subjects;
- a sustainable connection between cultural education in education and beyond;
- a high-quality offer consisting of appropriate content, facilities and providers;
- a culturally rich living and learning environment with equal cultural development opportunities for all, at school and in leisure time;
- affordable and accessible facilities for introduction to art and culture, for practice, and for talent development.

We elaborate on these five elements in more detail below. In general, most of the actions to be taken can already be implemented without changes in laws, regulations or financing. Of course, these latter can support the actions and contribute to better implementation and quality. But equally important are the conviction and vision of those involved, and examples (Kox et al., 2020) and frameworks on how this can be worked out in practice. Knowledge sharing and networking are essential requirements for this.

Solid position in educational practice

The learning area of art and culture is one of the mandatory learning areas in formal education in The Netherlands. With the development of new core objectives and exam subjects, it seems that cultural education has a better position in the compulsory curriculum than has been the case for a long time. The subject 'ckv' will probably become part of the combination grade for all school types again and the curriculum revision provides for a continuous learning line from primary to secondary education and for the transition from one type of school to another.

However, education is ultimately done in the classroom and at the school, carried out by teachers and subject teachers, and supported by other professionals. All professionals involved must be sufficiently capable of fulfilling the core objectives and be able to inspire, guide and teach students. They also must feel sufficiently supported in this by the school management: in educational vision and in the space they are given to take care of the learning area. Within the overcrowded school schedules, this requires the connection with other learning areas and subjects as well.

To achieve this, the following elements are important:

Schools:

- have included a vision on cultural education in their school plans and have reserved sufficient budget and staff space for this in their budget;
- have a cultural coordinator who is sufficiently facilitated to serve as a contact point for the team and external parties for art and culture;
- employ one or more specialized teachers such as art teachers to take care of the learning area;
- ensure sufficient time and space in the schools' schedule to provide cultural education;
- work with a continuous learning trajectory for the learning area and coordinate this with other schools in the area for possible cooperation and a wider range of exam subjects;
- use art and culture in a conscious way to learn both *in* art and culture and *through* art and culture;
- work with integrated core objectives that include art and culture, for example in the form of projects and thematic education;
- provide quality assurance of cultural education in the form of monitoring at student and school level;
- train art teachers adequately and in line with the continuous learning pathway, and ensure sufficient additional training and development opportunities.

Governments:

- ensure that the Inspectorate of Education explicitly includes the position of art and culture in its inspection framework (central government);
- supervise adequate core objectives and examination structure (central government);
- take financial account of the requirements for art and culture in the maintenance and new construction of school buildings (municipalities);
- facilitate refresher courses for art teachers, coordinators and directorates (central government).

The cultural sector:

- supports the qualitative design of cultural education in a demand-oriented and dialogue-driven manner.

Sustainable connection within and outside education

Within the current set-up and structure of education, cultural education will always be limited to a broad introduction for all students and a certain amount of in-depth learning for students who ultimately choose one of the art exam subjects. For most students who want to discover whether active participation in art and culture suits them and want to deepen their knowledge, it is necessary that they also do so outside of formal education time. This can be done in consultation with or through out-of-school care, in the context of an integral child center, an enriched school day or a separate organization. But this can also be done by parents or young people who are independently looking for deepening, broadening and enrichment in the field of cultural education and participation.

When working on a qualitative continuous learning trajectory for cultural education during the formal school period, it is important that the non-formal, extracurricular education connects to it appropriately. This means, on the one hand, that the student must be given the space and opportunity to deepen and acquire skills in extracurricular education, and on the other hand, that these more far-reaching skills and insights do not form an obstacle to formal cultural education at school. This requires a good mutual balance and the skills of the teachers in both formal and non-formal education to respond to this.

Ideally, formal and non-formal education, not just for art and culture, should come together in an integrated approach and can be offered in a diverse and varied manner. This makes it easier to make connections and also overcomes practical objections such as travel distances and availability. In this situation, too, however, it is necessary that there are sufficient opportunities for participation and even more extensive deepening outside this broader context, because there will always be limits to what can be offered within the broad context of an integrated school system.

In all cases, this requires a connection and coordination from the school with the cultural environment. Time and space must be made available for this, with clear points of contact on both sides. Points of contact with knowledge and overview of what is happening within the school

context and what is happening in the cultural environment (Van den Eijnden et al., 2015).

To achieve this, the following elements are important:

Schools:

- enter into an integral partnership with out-of-school care and non-formal cultural education;
- align the content of their ongoing cultural education curriculum with the (partly yet to be formed) frameworks and curricula of non-formal cultural education;
- have a cultural coordinator who is sufficiently facilitated to serve as point of contact for the team and external parties for art and culture;
- employ one or more specialized teachers such as art teachers to enable a good connection in terms of content;
- train art professionals capable of collaborating with education and of providing further training.

Governments:

- facilitate a coherent support structure for the connection between education and the cultural field by providing intermediary persons and organizations at local, regional and national level (central government, provinces, municipalities);
- facilitate a structure for non-formal cultural education, which provides clarity to users and providers about the requirements that qualitative non-formal cultural education must meet (state, provinces, municipalities);
- offer education and the cultural field the opportunity to work together more intensively and in a more varied way, for example by dealing differently with teaching time (central government, provinces, municipalities);
- facilitate the continuing education and training for art teachers, coordinators and directorates (central government);
- facilitate low-threshold access to cultural education in the vicinity of children and young people (municipalities);
- stimulate cooperation between culture, education and the broader welfare approach (central government, provinces, municipalities).

The cultural sector:

- connects to and works from a continuous qualitative learning pathway, in line with and enriching and deepening the formal continuous learning trajectory of cultural education, using framework curricula or other national framework documents for this purpose;
- works with qualified teachers, appropriate to the content and target group;
- is connected to and part of an intermediary structure for connection between education and the cultural field;
- makes clear the intrinsic and social added value of cultural education and art and culture in general.

For the most part, the above actions are already possible within current regulations and funding; only for teaching time and continuing training additional regulation and possibly funding is needed.

High-quality offerings

A good anchoring of both formal and non-formal cultural education is a requirement for achieving a high-quality offer. The quality of education is then determined by good teachers, good content and good material. In the case of cultural education, this involves facilitating both active and passive participation, so that people can get started themselves, but also to take note of what professionals and amateurs in art and culture have to share.

To achieve this, the following elements are important:

Schools:

- have sufficient suitable spaces and materials to provide high-quality cultural education;
- work with teachers qualified for the target group with the right pedagogical and didactic skills and adequate, up-to-date professional knowledge;
- train subject teachers for both formal and non-formal (extracurricular) cultural education, at an appropriate subject level with corresponding pedagogical and didactic skills;
- work with clear end and intermediate goals for cultural education;
- ensure an appropriate monitoring and tracking system to monitor both the development of the student and the quality of education;
- provide appropriate in-service training for the updating and expansion of the knowledge and skills of the subject teacher;
- share developed material, knowledge and experience to support and develop the overall quality.

Governments:

- provide sufficient facilities and activities in a rich cultural environment to enable encounters, acquaintances and education in the field of art and culture (provinces, municipalities).

The cultural sector:

- works with qualified teachers for the target group with appropriate pedagogical and didactic skills and adequate and up-to-date professional knowledge;
- works with continuous learning pathways, framework curricula or frameworks to which activities and efforts are aligned;
- provides an inspiring and diverse offer: enriching, in-depth and in line with the cultural background of children and young people;
- provides an appropriate monitoring and tracking system to monitor both the development of the student and the quality of education;
- shares developed material, knowledge and experience to support and develop the overall quality.

Culturally rich learning and living environment

Students learn and develop in a broader context than just school and extracurricular teaching situations. They also learn through contact with others, with their parents, their peers, as well as by coming into contact with expressions and activities of professionals and amateurs in the field of art and culture. Their own knowledge and skills also improve when they can be used at other times and in other contexts. For high-quality and sustainable cultural education it is therefore important that children and young people can come into contact with a wide variety of art and culture at different times in their living environment, sometimes appropriate to their experience and preferences, sometimes clearly inappropriate. Only in this way can equal cultural development opportunities be offered to all at school and in their free time.

To achieve this, the following elements are important:

Schools:

- coordinate with each other about the offer and exchange of cultural education, for example by making agreements about the mutual distribution and exchange of art exam subjects and students;
- jointly tackle cultural projects with and for the environment;
- encourage the participation of children and young people in cultural education and participation outside school hours, for example by cooperating with out-of-school care, information, introduction or the use of the Culture card.

Governments:

- coordinate locally, regionally and provincially what is needed to stimulate and maintain a rich and varied cultural environment. To this end, they also map out the environment (provinces, municipalities);
- establish a culture law that sets out the responsibilities and minimum commitment for a rich and varied cultural environment so that it is safeguarded throughout the country. It also includes frameworks on what this should look like as a minimum and how participation should be made possible for everyone (central government);
- establish policies and install cultural combination officers that strengthen the connection between schools and the cultural field (municipalities);
- ensure knowledge sharing at local, regional and national level (central government, provinces, municipalities);
- ensure a legal alignment of regulations and funding for education, childcare and extracurricular activities so that cooperation and integral coordination are improved, for example in the area of teaching hours and requirements for childcare (central government).

The cultural sector:

- collaborates with and connects to other areas, both with schools and other (cultural) organizations for a rich learning environment;
- coordinates on the provision and exchange of activities in the field of cultural education;

- provides an inspiring and diverse offer: enriching, in-depth and in line with the cultural background of children and young people;
- jointly tackles cultural projects with and for the environment.

The above actions are largely already possible within current regulations and funding. Additional legislation is only needed concerning a culture law and the equalization of education and childcare. In order to be able to offer a rich day arrangement to all children, childcare must be accessible to all children, both by letting go of the work requirement and by making childcare freely accessible or affordable.

Affordable and accessible facilities

Sufficient presence of cultural activities in the immediate vicinity is no guarantee that they will be used equally by everyone. Issues such as affordability and accessibility are important, but so are identity, meeting needs and recognition for different backgrounds. For example, it is known that low-income families do not always use facilities such as a Youth Culture Fund. Out of ignorance, but also out of fear that the support will stop after one or two years and their child will be disappointed.

In order to achieve affordable and accessible facilities, the following elements are important:

Schools:

- take into account the diversity in the students' backgrounds in connection with the cultural environment of the school, also in relation to a possible extracurricular follow-up trajectory, and work together with relevant welfare organizations;
- have an eye for the application of the cultural activities at school in the home situation. Consider, for example, working with materials that can be found in everyone's home for music lessons or visual arts lessons, such as packaging materials and everyday utensils;
- coordinate their cultural education with each other and possibly also open it up to students from other schools with a similar need for cultural education. Consider, for example, the alignment of the art exam subjects offered.

Governments:

- coordinate the support and design of their cultural environment with those directly involved, governments and parties in a wider region in order to arrive at an appropriate composition (provinces, municipalities);
- support not only the cultural infrastructure, but also include financial and physical accessibility to this infrastructure. Consider, for example, transport options, safe travelling to and from activities, cultural vouchers for families in disadvantaged situations (provinces, municipalities);
- stimulate and facilitate the coordination of a diverse cultural offer in their environment (provinces, municipalities);
- stimulate cooperation between culture, education and the broader welfare approach (central government, provinces, municipalities).

The cultural sector:

- considers how participation can be made as accessible as possible when developing activities and offerings;
- ensures a diverse range of products that are mutually coordinated with each other and maintains mutual contact about this;
- provides referral and growth opportunities within cultural education, in which, in addition to substantive talent development, attention is also paid to the accessibility and recognizability of the various identities and backgrounds;
- works with governments, education and welfare for a broader approach.

Final remarks

The world of cultural education is a complex composed whole, with many parties influencing how and with what quality the cultural activity of the student is fulfilled. Many of the imperfections in regulation, funding and support are compensated for by the enthusiasm and drive of those who want to bring cultural education to the growing child. As a result, not all difficulties or limitations are always disclosed or revealed in time. This seems to send a message to society that no matter what happens, cultural activities will always be there.

Although art and culture are inextricably linked to being human, impoverishment and cultural poverty can certainly occur. A gradual erosion of facilities or neglect will imperceptibly lead to the disappearance of a diversity of expressions, which in turn will cause fewer people to feel addressed and more people to get the feeling that it is not their culture or that art and culture is not for them.

This means that we cannot assume that with sufficient vision and enthusiasm for art and culture, things will work out by themselves. It requires an active attitude to keep the value of culture, art and heritage visible and experienceable, and activism and idealism to achieve a better society. Continuous investment in and development of cultural education in the broadest sense of the word will remain necessary to provide a growing generation with sufficient knowledge, skills and appreciation for their own cultural background and that of anyone else. Culture is of value, but culture makers are certainly not defenseless. This resilience will continue to be desperately needed in the near future. With this document, we want to give a foundation and direction to the boundless energy that exists in the sector to make culture, art and heritage part of everyone's life. Every single day.

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