

STRONG TOGETHER

Report of the Arts and Cultural Education Conference - content and outcomes

'How do we choose content for arts and cultural education in Europe: what do we base these choices on and what is the main focus? This question lay at the heart of the two-day orientation conference on Arts and Cultural Education. Five countries were represented. Each gave a colourful impression of their strategy, perspectives, problems and successes. Government agencies, developers, advisors and administrators all have a role to play in the formulation of national guidelines. But who determines what? It is a process that is best described as an exhilarating search for a common foundation. The focus is on different levels: quantitatively in the relationship between the disciplines; and within the disciplines: on theory, competencies and general skills. With one question running through it all: what is quality and how is it monitored?'

This summary does not do full justice to the developments in arts and cultural education in the five countries. Further information can be found in the documents and presentations at cultuurprofielcholen.nl.

Guidelines, frameworks and curricula

Each country has its own approach and system: from setting non-compulsory attainment levels to elaborately formulated learning lines at school level. Along the way between these positions exist others like clearly defined compulsory learning goals and attainment levels or a national curriculum, a descriptive framework within which schools are free to work out their own programmes, or a list of supportive basic insights. As these guidelines are based on intrinsically different principles – for example, the UNESCO education pillars, research by Anne Bamford and others, or the analytical framework of human actions (cognitive science) – they are almost impossible to compare. They do, nevertheless, offer us insights that we can potentially incorporate in our own educational systems. Next to the kind of guidelines also the process for developing guidelines and frameworks is different in each country. However, giving administrators,

stakeholders or representatives of various parties a say in this process is seen as crucially important by all countries. For Finland this implies - at the utmost consequence - full confidence in the knowledge, experience and competence of and the feedback

Arts and Cultural Education Conference - content and outcomes

- date: 17 and 18 September 2013 at the National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (*Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst / LKCA*) in Utrecht;
- co-organised by Education Scotland, the University of Tartu (Estonia) and SLO (the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development);
- realised with the support of CIDREE, a consortium of European organisations for curriculum development, and the Network of Cultural Focus Schools;
- attended by delegates from Estonia, Finland, Scotland, Belgium and the Netherlands;
- programme: presentations by the five countries on the central theme – discussions during the climb of Dom Cathedral tower and dinner, visits to Baudartius College in Zutphen and Arte College in Lelystad – and a concluding activity on Day 2 to close the conference.
- *Baudartius College* in Zutphen en *Arte College* in Lelystad - met een samenvattende activiteit als afsluiting op dag twee.

from teachers.

Randomly conducted research has replaced regulatory inspections there. Scotland, on the other hand, applies a constant circular process of interaction in which teachers and pupils provide input for what ultimately becomes a dynamic set of

guidelines and principles. This process of 'drafting and formulating' to find a common foundation as well as a definition for arts and cultural education has a strong influence on the subsequent implementation of the outcomes – enthusiastic or otherwise. That is why it was no surprise to see so much interest in one another's working methods.



Arts education; the content

Next to the defining process and the type of guidelines each country also has its own clear signature in arts education itself. First, some contextualisation. Whereas one country which reserved only 4% of the compulsory curriculum for arts disciplines ended up near the bottom of the international table for hours spent on arts education, another reserved 14.5% and shone at the top. In Europe arts disciplines account, on average, for 8.3% of the compulsory curriculum. The training, status and salaries of teachers also vary widely from country to country. This context may appear to be unrelated to content but its impact on the effectiveness of the education should not be underestimated. The global

Estonia

The Estonian delegate Liia Jung described a situation in full development. Estonia is in an unusual position in that the educational system has been looking for its own intrinsic Estonian identity since independence in 1991. Two new national curricula have been introduced since 2010 and reforms are scheduled for implementation by school year 2013-2014. Among the spearheads are a more direct relationship with the everyday environment and modern life, a shift in emphasis to actual learning and the learning environment, new cross curricular concepts and themes, better facilitation for schools, and more criteria-led steering so that quality is less dependent on school leadership. A study is currently being conducted to assess the status of arts and cultural education in Estonian schools.

Liia Jung, art teacher in Tallinn and colleague of Piret Viirpalu (University of Tartu), is a member of various committees and focuses on international cooperation through INSEA projects, such as a recent project in collaboration with Sweden.

"...wonderful to see the same questions in so many different cases."

economic crisis has not done much to promote the arts disciplines either. Our primary concern here, however, is content. The four disciplines – music,

visual arts, dance and drama – are accorded varying degrees of prominence but the first two are firmly anchored in the curriculum in all five countries. Occasionally the arts form part of another subject; for example, drama may fall under literature and dance under physical education. Or architecture and photography may be added. Such choices appear to be prompted mainly by circumstances or tradition. More attention was paid to the difference in emphasis between the compilation of a list of common concepts, a canon-like selection, or the outlining of content on the one hand, and the emphasis on competencies, interdisciplinary skills or '21st Century Skills' on the other. In other words, the content and skills (such as aestheticism) intrinsic to the discipline as opposed to general *'bildung'* skills (as social and citizenship skills). The Culture in the Mirror framework (*Cultuur in de Spiegel*) which the University of Groningen is developing on behalf of the Netherlands and Belgium, also met with considerable interest. The analytic structure of culture combined with the focus of on pupil development in metacognition is providing openings for new approaches to 'cultural education'.

It was considered important to discuss the question of 'how' as well as 'what'. How do our pupils learn and how should we give concrete shape and form to arts education, both now and in the future?

By the second day, all participants were eager to discuss the possibilities of a national framework for arts disciplines.

International confrontation: thoughts about form



Should arts education guidelines be compulsory? Should they point teachers in a specific direction? Or should they merely provide support? The delegates from the five countries, having worked on the basis of long-standing tradition

and experience, were pleasantly surprised to be confronted with other working methods during the conference. In fact, the encounter prompted them to think about alternative models for national curricula or guidelines. Do five attainment levels on an abstract scale offer enough anchors besides a large measure of freedom? Or is it necessary to refine

Anne Stolk: "I want to see my boss right away and pour out what I've heard."

learning goals and attainment levels in such a way that schools are better equipped to formulate their own learning lines? Then indeed learning lines will develop that can be

evaluated and compared. Or should learning lines be set out in detail beforehand: ready for use? Another option is to give teachers clear insight into what the academics and developers have in mind so that they can teach cultural disciplines with greater awareness.



Would a framework for the entire domain of cultural education then suffice? Or do teachers need more concrete documents and instruments to gain that insight? And how do you then monitor and evaluate the quality of curricula and how they are taught? Are inspections essential or could peer visitations play a role – and possibly replace inspections? Which of these methods offer openings for peer-to-peer evaluation and which offer guarantees for a basic level of quality? Each participant left to their home countries with different questions.

Differences & individuality



There were a few salient and valuable insights that merit special attention. The vast majority of the participants were charmed by the status of teachers in Finland: highly trained, trusted implicitly, and with no

designated inspectorate. That teachers' trust' – combined with the cultivation of expertise, starting with sound academic training – is Finland's greatest

asset ("That's what you need to deploy and mobilise"). The Scottish presentation elaborated on the ideas behind the *Curriculum for Excellence*: the four basic skills and attributes (creating, presenting, evaluating and appreciating) and the four capacities (learning to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor) and particularly the focus on the learning experience itself. Other notable points were responsibility and ownership on the part of administrators and pupils, as reflected in creative networks. One surprise element was the use of 'future tools' to help developers and teachers to anticipate what education should offer in 20 or 30 years. The Estonian delegates explained that the arts disciplines in Estonia are popular with boys as well as girls and that considerable importance is attached to connecting arts education with contemporary culture. There is deep respect for the large-scale reform process currently underway with a role for local parental boards, teachers, pupils and government bodies. *Cultuur in de Spiegel (Culture in the Mirror)* from Belgium and the Netherlands had already attracted attention. In the framework of *Culture in the Mirror* – based on a general theory of human cognition – it is argued that culture education is education in meta-cognition, in four basic skills (perception, imagination, conceptualization and analysis) and a variety of media (the human body, objects, language and graphic symbols). The Belgian delegation apprised us of the importance of stakeholders at all levels: a sound academic approach can and must go hand in hand with dialogue in the

Belgium

The Belgian presentation by Lode Vermeersch, Ankelien Kindekens and Katrien van Iseghem was notable for its thoroughness. The Belgian situation is complex: since culture does not fall within the remit of the national (federal) government, it is the Flemish government that is responsible for the cultural education curriculum. In addition, umbrella organisations and lobbies exert a powerful influence. The national curriculum is based on development goals, which act as directives, and attainment targets for various subjects and subject domains, which are compulsory. Interestingly, the subject-related attainment targets gradually disappear the further a pupil moves up the school. In other words, there are targets related to arts in primary schools and in lower secondary education but nearly none thereafter (only a few cross-curricular attainment targets). Nor are there criteria for teacher training in arts education, although there are some 'teacher profiles' that serve as guidelines.

The national curricula are mandatory and obsolete. For pupils in Belgium there are fewer compulsory hours for arts education than for pupils in other countries. The current government has announced, though, to pay specific attention to the development of arts and cultural education in its policy. Belgium is working hard on an innovative national curriculum based on a solid foundation of academic research, including work by Anne Bamford, the *Cultuur in de Spiegel (Culture in the Mirror)* framework by Barend van Heusden and the OESO report *Art for Art's Sake* (much welcomed for its support for arts disciplines), which is scheduled for implementation in 2016. Research is often carried out in partnership or in consultation with the Netherlands. In the near future Belgium will be looking into the possibilities of developing the Culture in the Mirror framework at school level.

Lode Vermeersch from KUL (University of Leuven) and Ankelien Kindekens are both employed by VUB (VU University, Brussels) and Katrien van Iseghem works for CANON Cultural Unit (CANON Cultuurcel, Flemish government).

Karl Desloovere (AKOV agency for quality in education, Belgium): "It's so exciting to see different countries pursuing the same quest. I'll be taking something home from each country: dialogue with curriculum administrators, community involvement, incubators for creative industry, evaluation by pupils, ..."

field. There was also considerable interest in the network in which teacher training programmes come



together every two months to share knowledge and

Finland

Mikko Hartikainen explained how the Finnish education system realises its high standards and outcomes. The current curriculum system of Finland was created over the past 40 years. Today the curriculum development is seen as an ongoing process in Finland. The educational equality is secured through national steering and support. Key tools include education acts and decrees, as well as the national core curricula. The steering system can be seen as the mutual relation between national and local decision-making. The national policies and core curriculum set common goals and operating principles which emphasize the significance of local curriculum process and its implementation. Teachers enjoy a large measure of freedom and trust within the framework of local curriculum and it may be adjusted when necessary. The arts education has a long tradition and acknowledged status in Finnish general education. Music, visual arts and crafts as separate subjects are part of the compulsory core curriculum in the 9-year basic education. Today the average classroom time used for arts education is about 15 to 16 percent of total classroom time of basic education. However, the majority of compulsory hours dedicated to the arts are taught at grades 1-6 (ISCED 1). The outcomes reported by a recent assessment study on learning outcomes in music, visual arts and crafts were adequate or satisfactory at best, depending on the subject. The current reform of basic education aims at strengthening arts education, among other goals. The reform programme of the entire general education was launched in 2012 and it is due for completion in 2016/2017. The national core curricula for each school form are prepared under the leadership of the Finnish Education Board. FNBE is pursuing to create a solid basis for discussion and interaction. The preparation processes are open building on an extensive cooperation in which all stakeholders can contribute. FNBE has also built partnerships with teacher education faculties and regional agencies regarding curriculum research and support for municipalities and schools. Teachers are much respected in Finland and a considerable importance is attached to trust. At the same time, investments are being made in initial teacher education and continuing professional development. In general, teachers are willing to apply new pedagogical innovations in order to develop their teaching practices. Teachers in Finland are very autonomous and they are recognised as keys to quality in education.

Mikko Hartikainen works at the Finnish National Board of Education and is deeply involved in current curriculum reform.

Mikko Hartikainen: "...mindblowing and I believe that the development of a common language is the key to understanding the bigger picture."

experience. The experiment that the Network of

Cultural Focus Schools in the Netherlands conducted with incubators – partnerships between schools and the creative sector – raised the question whether more learning should take place outside school in the future.

What we have in common

Some points met with very little response or discussion but definitely generated a sense of cohesion. We are, after all, pursuing the same objective. A comparison of the five presentations showed that certain concepts featured in all the curricula and attainment levels:

- Aesthetics, aesthetic awareness and skills for studying arts (and critical evaluation);
- Awareness of personal identity, national culture and cultural diversity in the world;
- The development of self-expression and a personal language to convey the fruits of the imagination, the discovery and development of personal interests;
- Creativity and - subsequently - creative thinking, and an innovative and analytical mindset;
- Connective learning and the ability to transfer what is learned to other subjects and disciplines (e.g. in interdisciplinary projects).

Needless to say, the deployment and exploration of modern technology and media literacy as a means of preparing young people for the future was high on all

Scotland

Ron Cowie kept us alert at the end of the day with a quote from Marc Prensky: "Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach". The Scottish government has eschewed sweeping reforms and opted for an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders – including the pupils and their parents – in order to build a basis for a national curriculum that is under continuous review. The strategy is set out in the Curriculum for Excellence, which includes learning lines of development (experiences and outcomes) for pupils from the age of 3 to 15, from Early level to Fourth level, and is described as a broad general education (BGE). The curriculum for pupils from the age of 16 to 18 builds on the learning in the BGE and is described as the senior phase and it is during this phase that most pupils will undertake national qualifications courses. The curriculum does not just concern itself with content, but also with changes in approaches to learning and teaching and assessment. In Scotland, it is important that the guidance and principles in relation to national policy give schools and practitioners the freedom and professional trust to provide expressive arts education that meets needs at a local level while ensuring that children and young people develop the four capacities that underpin the national curriculum. These are: to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor - which largely equates to UNESCO's four pillars of learning: to know, to do, to live together and to be. The focus is on developing skills, knowledge and understanding and attributes in three significant aspects: creating; presenting; evaluating and appreciating. In the wider curriculum, some skills and attributes apply across the board to all curriculum areas; one of these is creativity! There are clear goals for all disciplines within expressive arts but as schools are relatively free to adopt individual approaches to implementing the curriculum, it can be quite challenging to monitor progression in learning in a consistent way and to identify and share innovation. Aileen Monaghan was unfortunately unable to attend the conference. However, Ron Cowie was able to provide a contribution on behalf of Education Scotland in his role as Senior Education Officer.

Ron Cowie: "I am pleasantly surprised by the idea of working with a cultural focus and by the use of learning domains, working in learning plazas and in a part-time context, particularly if you think in terms of where education is heading in the next 20-30 years."

the agendas. Within the described consensus the individual variations are striking. In Estonia the focus is on learning through confrontation with the living



environment and field trips. In Belgium significance is attached to arts disciplines as a medium for developing social skills, cooperation and personal responsibility. In Finland the focus is primarily on 'learning by doing', geared to exploratory learning and the creation of a sustainable society. Scotland looks at learning itself and favours a cluster of learning experiences that develop a range of skills including those that relate to analysis, investigation and reflection. The Netherlands is notable for its diversity but there is a clear movement which accords a central place to cultural interpretation and reflection.



Practice

The encounter with how things work in practice in the schools in Zutphen and Almere on Day 2 provided examples of how arts and cultural education can be organised. The discussions

on guidelines, frameworks and professionalization from the previous day were revisited in a practical context. The schools showed how concrete expression can be given to different ideas, quality criteria and principles. Baudartius College in Zutphen

has opted for an arts development line alongside the sport, technology and plus-line. In Arte College in Almere the entire school curriculum is based on arts and culture. This has subsequently determined both the layout of the building and the timetable. It was fascinating to see how two schools from the same association and with the same set of quality standards could differ so widely. Clearly, without a national curriculum, and given a large measure of autonomy and freedom, these schools can make their own choices. It was good to take these impressions home. It is and remains clear that the school is the place where it happens.

Summary of spearheads and follow-up

The activities revealed various issues that need further discussion, development and follow-up. First, the question of autonomy: how far should attainment levels and learning goals be compulsory? Should they or should they not be specified in detail? Comments from the participants stressed the difficulty of striking a balance between freedom and flexibility for the teacher on the one hand and basic quality criteria and quantifiable norms on the other. This, in turn, raises the question of what kind of framework should be developed to legitimise, support or improve arts and cultural education at national level. A clear framework does, after all, form the basis for a common understanding as it establishes a common language for discussing rudimentary concepts. Only then can we be sure that

Jaap Bakkelo: "I'd like to see every teacher in Europe learn from one another like this."

The Netherlands

Henk Visscher and Astrid Rass were quizzed on various key policies in arts and cultural education in the Netherlands. It appears that Dutch teachers enjoy a large measure of freedom in the implementation of core goals and attainment levels: there are significant differences between schools with and without a cultural focus and also between the various schools with a cultural focus. Though this freedom confers certain advantages, it compromises cohesion and limits the possibilities for assessing the teaching and measuring the learning outcomes. A common framework like the one in the Culture in the Mirror project could offer support as it will develop a common language, clarify the content of cultural education, relate cultural education to the development of the child and deepen the insight into the quality and status of the discipline. The schools with a cultural focus (Cultural Focus Schools) are united through an association which sets quality standards independent of government policy and inspectorates. Various instruments, documents and supervision programmes have been developed for support purposes. Both systems are in need of new evaluation methods for arts disciplines.

Astrid Rass works for SLO, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development and is involved in the Culture in the Mirror research project and the Cultural Focus Schools. Henk Visscher is Chair of the Network of Cultural Focus Schools and teaches at Thorbecke secondary school in Rotterdam.

Astrid Rass: "I really want to stay in touch and get new ideas. The CIDREE platform offers good opportunities for this."

we are talking about the same thing. Another recurrent discussion topic was quality and quality monitoring with or without inspections or visitations. University-led research, clearly defined frameworks, of elaborated (model) learning lines, clearly formulated standards and portfolios are cited as potentially decisive factors in quality improvements and therefore require further discussion. Quality monitoring or – in some cases – quality control was a recurrent discussion point, even though everyone agrees with principles such as bottom-up, peer-to-peer and visitations. Everything



revolves, in the long run, around feedback, support and reinforcement. Are inspections really needed? This question brings us to 'teachers trust'. How can

Baudartius College, Zutphen

Baudartius College profiles itself on five fronts, including culture and the arts. The profiles are implemented in the first two school years. Each pupil chooses one. The pupils who opt for the culture and the arts profile will have three extra hours of art over and above the compulsory hours, but within the regular timetable. In addition, for the non-arts disciplines there are interdisciplinary mini-projects or art-related assignments within a cultural context at least three times a year. The teachers of the culture and the arts profile (and the non-arts teachers) develop the curriculum and work out projects in teacher workshops. Three times a year an exhibition week is held in which several disciplines partake. The pupils update and maintain a portfolio through the social-media tool *Pinterest*. Every year a musical is staged

Arte College, Lelystad

The pupils at Arte College welcomed us in English, served us lunch, held a presentation and showed us around. This reflected a high degree of self-confidence and independence on the part of both the pupils and the educational policy at the school. Arte College is a young school, located in a new building with spacious rooms. The rooms – learning plazas – have a vast surface area, where large groups of pupils work independently under the supervision of teaching staff. The school profiles itself with Arte hours, Arte rules, Arte skills and Arte weeks. Traditional school subjects have been replaced by learning domains, a working format that not only fits in with one of the central themes of the school – teamwork – but also offers flexibility as teachers can support and replace each other. Twenty-first century skills (such as teamwork, creativity, ict-literacy, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking and social and cultural competencies) form a constant theme that runs through the whole educational set-up. The pupils end their school career with a showpiece. Collaboration is sought regularly with external players such as art institutes, artists and further education organisations. The school offers individualised programmes as part of its aim to achieve cohesion by combining general goals and general motives with personal input.

an educational system give teachers the trust, responsibility and individual role that they deserve? And what criteria would a professionalization

programme have to meet? Professionalism and trust are essential if teachers are to deliver quality. Building self-confidence is the other – more emancipated – standpoint: a teacher gains confidence when he is proud of his work, is good at his job, is eager to learn and builds networks to learn from others. But also, simply by achieving good scores nationally and internationally. Finally, one topic that touched on the economic value of arts and cultural education – which apparently triggers debate in every country at times of crisis – is the relationship that education can build with the creative industry, in which 'industry' refers to all the activities around the arts disciplines. Partnerships with these players are an inspiring prospect that must be discussed and explored further in order to determine both the form and learning conditions. They would offer valuable experience as a preparation for life itself and not only the artistic professions.

Amid an inspiring and invigorating atmosphere - in which we all felt we were pursuing the same aims and benefitted from sharing knowledge and experience - the conference in Almere ended on Wednesday. But not without promising to seek a follow-up in a LinkedIn forum and to hold another conference in *the future hosted by one of the other participants*.

Colophon

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Further information:

Documents and presentations can be found at:

cultuurprofielscholen.nl/...arts-and-culture-education

The conference highlights can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cVV5ocEjJM>

