

Cultural education

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A foundation for the cultural development of children, the path that they will follow from a first introduction to art and culture to the development of their own talents, is laid at primary school. The school also makes art and culture accessible for pupils who would not come into contact with it at home. Furthermore, the school has a formative role which is essential in teaching children to function in a complex, pluriform and fast-changing society. Finally, cultural education can make a contribution to the development of cross-cutting skills, such as analysis, evaluation and creation.

The Education Council and the Council for Culture have noted that cultural education often has a marginal place in the curriculum of primary schools. Education in art and culture is increasingly being sidelined away from schools and teachers. For one reason or another, schools have not so far succeeded in giving cultural education the place it deserves. There is also a lack of coordination among the various layers of government surrounding this theme, resulting in a fragmented cultural infrastructure.

The State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science has asked the two Councils to issue joint recommendations on how schools can be supported to provide a high standard of cultural education. The Councils were also asked how, following on from this, cultural institutions can produce an offering that is in line with the core objectives of education.

The Councils advise schools to retake control of teaching art and culture. Cultural education needs to return to the heart of education: this is where the quality improvement starts. The help of cultural organisations, centres of expertise, teacher training programmes and government bodies should preferably be used to help raise levels of expertise among schools and teachers. The Councils make the following key recommendations and propose a staged approach.

Give schools more control of content

The Councils recommend that a cultural education reference framework be developed. This provides an overview of the unbroken line that links knowledge, skills and attitudes that all pupils will need in their cultural career. The reference framework must make clear that cultural education is not an island, but is inextricably linked with other areas of learning. It will also reveal possibilities for more advanced education. Furthermore, the Councils recommend that schools make cultural education part of the evaluation cycle. This will demand an extension of the monitoring and assessment toolkits so that teachers can gain better insight into, monitor and assess the development of the cultural education of pupils.

Encourage expertise within the school

The Councils believe that teachers should be able to teach pupils a broad foundation of knowledge and skills in the field of cultural education. Every school must possess sufficient expertise to give substantive and coherent shape to cultural education. This requires training for both prospective and existing teachers. The passions and talents of teachers and parents could be better utilised, as could local cultural facilities. Teacher training programmes – for primary school teachers and specialised art teachers – could introduce the basic knowledge for

cultural education in their curricula and use it to develop in-service training programmes for existing primary school teachers, specialist art teachers and education officers of cultural institutions.

Ensure the cultural infrastructure serves the school

Cultural institutions should increase cooperation with each other and with schools. Ideally, the educational offering will be developed in consultation with the education community. The fledgling Knowledge Institute for Cultural Education and Amateur Art (*Kennisinstituut voor Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst*) could direct regional and local educational support, identify important developments and disseminate knowledge. The government could focus more on supervision and make existing arrangements more coherent. It is also important that the responsibilities in terms of (local) support are shared clearly.