UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Het nieuwe theaterleren : een veldonderzoek naar de rol van theater binnen Culturele en Kunstzinnige Vorming op havo en vwo

Dieleman, C.

Publication date
2010

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Dieleman, C. (2010). *Het nieuwe theaterleren : een veldonderzoek naar de rol van theater binnen Culturele en Kunstzinnige Vorming op havo en vwo*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam]. Vossiuspers UvA.

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date:18 Nov 2026

Summary

In 1999 a new school subject was introduced in the Dutch education system. This new subject was called Culturele en Kunstzinnige Vorming (CKV), best translated as Cultural and Artistic Education. It is an interdisciplinary subject taught in the second half of the secondary school program, and is mandatory for all students. While 'traditional' arts education is aimed at active artistic creation, in CKV, cultural experiences and reflection on these experiences form the main targets. Cultural activities, such as visiting an art exhibition or a theatre performance, form the core element. CKV can thus be described as receptive rather than active art education. As in most countries, in The Netherlands theatre education has always come third behind education in visual arts and music. Drama and dance were only recently introduced as elective subjects, so visiting theatre performances as part of CKV was fairly new to the Dutch school system.

In my study, the cooperation of the Dutch educational field and the field of cultural production, c.q. the field of theatrical production, is investigated through a series of interviews with teachers, students and educators working for theatres, theatre companies and other cultural agencies. The choice for the use of qualitative, in-depth interviews rather than quantitative surveys was made after studying the debate between critical sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and sociologists who opt for a network-oriented approach, such as Howard Becker and Bruno Latour. The former explains social behavior of individuals through the existing social structure. Empirical research by Dutch sociologists has shown that participation in the so-called high culture is limited to those who have acquired this behavior in their youth. This fits well into Bourdieu's proposition that fundamental inequalities in society are the consequence of differences in social and cultural capital, acquired through years of socialization in the family and in the educational system. According to Bourdieu, art consumption should thus be analyzed as part of social behavior, and the opinions people express in interviews should therefore be evaluated according to their position in the social hierarchy. Latour, however, suggests that such a social structure does not exist. People and other (non-human) 'actors' are connected through a series of associations, and their choices and opinions are not motivated by some underlying structure. In his book on Actor-Network-Theory, Latour suggests that human actors are very well capable of reflecting on their actions in such a network and are not mere informants.

In chapter one the above debate is taken as a starting point for my own research. In addition, a summary is presented of the existing literature on theatre and education in the Netherlands. Chapter two offers an outline of the historical development of theatre education in the Netherlands. In chapter three, an up to date panorama is given of the position of theatre within the Dutch secondary school system. It contains not only an analysis of the school system itself, but also of the role theatres and theatre companies play in arts education. In chapter four, the results of 66 in-depth interviews with teachers, students and representatives of theatres and theatre companies are presented. Chapter five contains an analysis of a problem which frequently came up during the interviews and which is part of a major dispute between teachers that lecture CKV: the difficulty of which criteria should be applied when selecting cultural activities. An important initial objective of CKV is for students to learn how to make a meaningful choice out of the different artistic products, c.q. theatre performances, presented to them. According to some teachers, students should choose their own cultural activities. They argue that students will show more appreciation for art and culture when visiting performances which match their own cultural behavior. According to others, however, students should visit the kind of performances with which they are less familiar, so teachers should, at least to some extent, limit the freedom of choice. Since the government gives no other criterion than that cultural activities should be 'of recognized quality', the problem of choice and quality is left to the teachers and students themselves. The question is therefore whether there should be some kind of canon which can provide a starting point for CKV.

According to both Van Maanen, Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, and Eversmann, an important feature of an aesthetic (c.q. theatrical) experience is that there should be a form of challenge to enable proper appreciation of the work of art, c.q. theatre performance. This challenge depends on the receptive, emotional, intellectual and communicative skills of the viewer. In addition, within theatre, group processes play an important part in the reception process. In this study, it is argued that students should therefore be confronted with art works, c.q. theatre performances, that pose challenges to them which are balanced by their actual skills. This criterion of balance between skills and challenges could then be used by teachers and students to make a selection of performances for CKV. However, since most teachers only have a degree in visual arts, music or literature, they do not have specific knowledge and skills in theatre education. They especially lack an overview of the Dutch theatre, which is

known for its diversity and heterogeneity. It is argued that teachers should consult the education departments of theatres and theatre companies more often, not only for help with the selection of performances, but also with the preparatory activities that ensure a good match between the student skills and the challenges that the performances present to them.

Apart from this basic problem of selection of performances and the related debate between two main groups of teachers, the interviews give us an insight in the opinions of the 'actors' in the field of theatre education. Because there are only few guidelines for schools and individual teachers as to how CKV, and its equivalent in gymnasia, KCV (Classical Cultural Education), should be organized and what specific targets should be met, the field is mainly characterized by its diversity and heterogeneity. Apart from the lack of specific knowledge and skills, most teachers also mention a shortage of teaching hours, necessary for guiding the students in the development of their aesthetic skills, to be a major problem. Since CKV is not really graded with a mark, teachers also have a hard time convincing their students that the subject is just as important as for instance courses in math, history or Dutch language.

While on the part of schools and teachers the field of CKV is thus known for its diversity, most respondents from theatre companies are much more unanimous in the formulation of goals and means. Most theatre groups are travelling companies and thus they highly depend on theatres for the actual contact with schools and teachers. The educators from theatre companies prefer to prepare the students themselves, if possible outside the school area or - better still - within the theatre space itself. An acting workshop was mentioned by most respondents as the ideal preparation for visiting a performance. But at the same time, most theatre companies look for more durable co-operations with a small number of schools in their town of residence. Since theatre companies themselves have a hard time reaching individual students, they depend on theatres and school teachers to enable this contact.

Students themselves rarely take part in the networks in which school teachers and educators from theatre companies and theatres cooperate. Government officials and school directors were not interviewed, but they seem to have great influence on these networks. The lack of government rules gives school directors and school boards a great amount of freedom as to the quantity of time and money spent on arts education. As a consequence, Dutch secondary education can on the one hand be considered an

international frontrunner in arts education, on the other the actual amount and quality of theatre education each individual child receives still varies greatly.