# Culture in the Mirror
## Towards a continuous curriculum for culture education

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# Goals of the Culture in the Mirror research project

1. To develop *a theoretical framework* for arts and culture education (continuous curriculum 4 to 18+ years) – i.e.: *theory development and validation*

2. To *translate* this framework into a *matrix*, and tools, that would allow teachers and schools to develop a culture education curriculum which fits their specific needs – i.e.: *empirical curriculum design research*

3. To provide *an instrument for policy makers* for long-term decisions and quality evaluation – i.e.: *empirical policy research*

The project is carried out in cooperation by

1. The universities of Groningen, Brussels, and Leuven

2. The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO)

3. 14 schools for primary (6) and secondary (6) education

The project is supported by the Dutch and Flemish (Canon Cultuurcel) Ministries of Education; VSBfonds; SNS-Reaalfonds; The University of Groningen.

# Theory

› *Human cognition* is characterized by the fact that humans experience a *difference* between memory and actuality (difference; time). This generates *emotion*.

› *Culture* in a broad, anthropological sense is the cognitive process in which memories are used to deal with an ever-changing actuality (or 'here and now').

# Four cognitive strategies

The difference between stable memories and an unstable 'here and now' can be dealt with through four *cognitive strategies* – these are our 'basic skills':

Perception

Imagination

Conceptualization

Analysis

sensory (accommodation) | motor (assimilation)

*Perception of similarities*

*Imagination of possibilities*

episodic memory

semantic memory

*Analysis of structures*

*Conceptualization of categories*

Culture

# Media

› Related to the four strategies, we distinguish four types of media:

- The body (no perception without a body)
- Artifacts (no artifact without imagination)
- Language (no concepts without language)
- Graphic media (no structure without graphics)
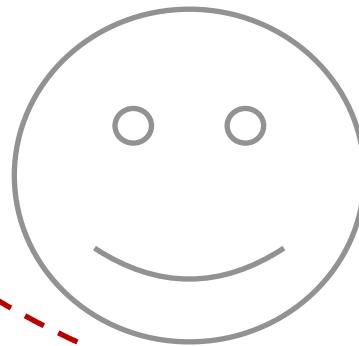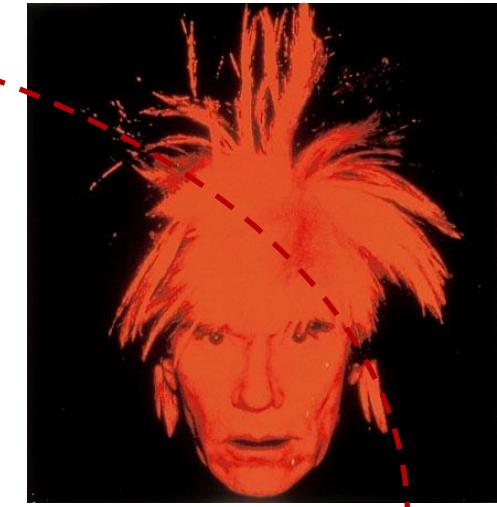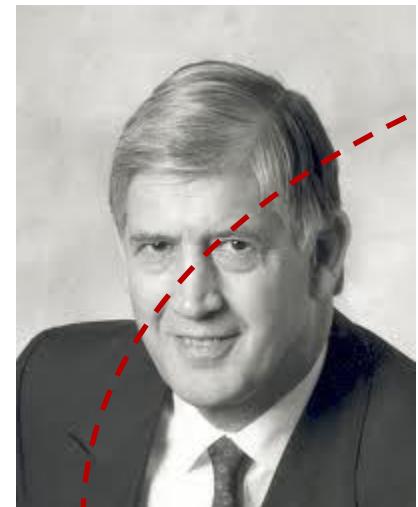
'human face',
'Gesicht', etc...

› Culture is very often about culture itself:
this is *cultural (self-) consciousness* or *metacognition*.

› Basic forms of cultural (self-) consciousness or meta-cognition are:
- Cultural self-perception (e.g.: the news)
- Cultural self-imagination (e.g.: the arts…)
- Cultural self-conceptualization or (self)understanding (e.g.: ideology; religion; philosophy)
- Cultural self-analysis (e.g.: science)

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- Cultural (self-) consciousness is so important because it provides the basis for conscious action

- Self-consciousness is:
  - Personal (individual)
  - Shared (collective; historical)
  - Human (universal)

- In *culture education* (the arts, history, the study of society, philosophy) cultural self-consciousness, in all its dimensions and aspects, is taught and developed.

# A culture education curriculum?

- A curriculum of culture education should take into account the *development*, in children, of the capacity for (self-) consciousness, or metacognition.

- This development provides schools and teachers with a strong hold for an integrated and continuous curriculum for culture education.

# A culture education curriculum (cont'd)

- (Self-) consciousness, or metacognition, in all its different dimensions, strongly develops during childhood and youth (Nelson et al.).

- We researched this development (4-18 years), in relation to:
  - their basic cognitive skills (perception, imagination, conceptualization and analysis),
  - their media skills, and
  - the cultural context in which they live.

# Empirical Research

The framework was translated into a matrix, and tools, that allow teachers and schools to develop a culture education curriculum which fits their specific needs.

In 12 schools for primary and secondary education, teams of teachers worked for 2 years with the Culture in the Mirror framework (2010-2012) – this resulted in a matrix curriculum and tools for the development of tailor-made culture education curricula (to be published early 2014).

# A matrix for a continuous curriculum

› We ask teachers (and other professionals) to reflect upon:

- Which topic(s), and why?
- Which cognitive skills, and why?
- Which media skills, and why?
- The relation to development (of skills as well as self-consciousness or metacognition)
- The relation to the curricular context (horizontally, in space, and vertically, in time)

On the basis of the theoretical framework, we developed and tested

› **guidelines** for **the cooperation** between schools and art institutions

› **criteria for the evaluation** of arts and culture education projects

› **guidelines and criteria** for **the assessment** of arts and culture education.

The research was / is made public through

› a matrix curriculum (guidelines, instructions, examples) for teachers (2014);
› a culture education handbook for students (2014);
› general publications for a targeted audience;
› lectures, interviews, (public) presentations;
› five regional conferences (2012);
› the creation of a team of ambassadors (experts);
› an academic course on culture education for middle and higher management.

Thank you for your attention

www.cultuurindespiegel.nl