

Visual culture is a pillar of Breda's cultural policy, with the wide-ranging offering providing a fertile basis for making the city's school pupils visually literate.

Images are playing an increasingly large role in society. To understand their significance and impact we need to understand the context of the user, the context of the production, formal aspects of the image itself *and* its social context. As Dubbelman and Smelik¹ say, 'Understanding the complexity of visual culture and being able to deal with it means being visually literate'. It is this *visual literacy* that is the objective of the ongoing guideline on visual culture of:

Teaching children and young people in Breda to understand how the significance of images comes into being and how this construed significance has an impact on the group, community or society in which it occurs.

Breda offers teachers and cultural organisations a set of working guidelines they can use in a two-year programme. This comprises the compulsory elements set by the central government and the national educational objectives, supplemented by cultural capital and specific educational objectives relating to visual culture. In this way, the programmes offered by Breda can replace and enrich existing teaching materials, while also providing a coherent base for inclusion within general cultural education and school activities.

The visual culture guideline shows pupils in Breda aged between 4 and 18 how to look at images in a critical and active manner, as well as how to use and produce images. To look critically at, use and produce images demands insight into how the significance of the image is achieved. Discovering the significance of an image means asking and finding answers to various basic questions. Cultuurwinkel Breda links these questions to the teaching guideline, with cultural capital and the attainment targets being key elements in the four domains that each deal with an aspect of visual culture. The various aspects of cultural capital have been put into a framework for each period of two school years and serve as a point of reference for the programme compilers (both for the school and the organisation).

The teaching guideline on visual culture ensures that the pupils become aware of the process of assigning significance by examining the basic questions within each of the four domains in each two-year period. The answers to the questions are tailored to the age, experience and learning objectives of the child or young person.

Domains

Subdomain I: Receptive ability

The first subdomain focuses on developing receptive ability:

Receptive ability: opening the pupil's mind to cultural expression. The emphasis in this subdomain is on works of art, with the following being the critical question in developing visual literacy:

'How was it made?' *Each image has its own language. Each separate element in an image refers, just like each word in a sentence, to a specific fact. The medium, the applied technique and visual aspects such as perspective, framework and montage together determine the meaning of the image.*

In primary education ('PE') this comes under attainment target 56 (Artistic Orientation):

PE/attainment target 56: Pupils should acquire some knowledge of and begin to appreciate aspects of their cultural heritage.

¹ Dubbelman, T.; Smelik, A. & Wervers, E. (2005) *Geletterd Kijken*. Enschede: SLO.

In the first stage of secondary school ('SE'), this is included in attainment target 50 (Art and Culture):
SE/attainment target 50: On the basis of some background knowledge pupils should learn to look at visual art, to listen to music and to watch and listen to theatre, dance or film performances.

In the later years of secondary education this capability is reflected in various aspects of Art Subjects I and Art Subjects II (at the VMBO level, i.e. pre-vocational secondary education) and Culture and the Arts, General Art and Fine Arts (at the HAVO [senior general secondary education] and VWO [pre-university education] levels).

Subdomain II: Creative ability

In the creative ability subdomain pupils become familiar with how an artist works by, for example, producing work themselves. The aim here is to develop their creative ability:

Creative ability: Pupils think, create and produce creatively. The emphasis is on pupils as makers (architects, artists or designers, for example) or on the pupils as creators of a work of art. The following is the central question with regard to developing visual literacy:

'Who made the image?' *Making images is an active process in which conscious choices are made. When selecting an image, an image producer rejects dozens of other options. These choices determine what we as spectators do or do not get to see.*

In primary education this is referred to as **attainment target 55** (Artistic Orientation):

PE/attainment target 55: Pupils learn to use images, language, music, games and movement to express feelings and experiences and to use them in communications.

In the first stage of secondary education this is described as follows in attainment targets 48 and 49 (Culture and the Arts):

SE/attainment target 48: Pupils use elementary skills to learn to examine and apply the powers of expression in various artistic disciplines to express their feelings, record experiences, shape their imagination and to communicate.

SE/attainment target 49: Pupils learn to present their own artistic work to third parties, either alone or as part of a group.

In the later years of secondary education this ability is required in various aspects of the subjects Art Subjects I and Art Subjects II (at the VMBO level) and Culture and the Arts, General Art and Fine Arts (at the HAVO/VWO level).

Subdomain III: Reflective ability

The third subdomain focuses on developing the reflective ability:

Reflective ability: pupils are able to analyse, interpret and appreciate cultural expressions of themselves and others. The emphasis is on pupils as an audience experiencing a work of art. With regard to visual culture and visual literacy the focus is on the following question:

'Who was the image made for?' *Image producers have an objective and will therefore carefully gear the image to their target group. Does the message come across in the way they want it to? This can be challenging as not everyone sees the same thing in an image.*

In primary education this is part of attainment target 54 (Artistic Orientation):

PE/attainment target 54: Pupils learn to reflect on their own work and that of others.

In the first stage of secondary education it is covered by attainment targets 51 and 52 (Culture and the Arts):

SE/attainment target 51: Pupils use visual or auditory means to give an account of their participation in artistic activities, either as spectator or as participant.

SE/attainment target 52: Pupils learn to reflect on their own work and that of others, including that of artists, either verbally or in writing.

In the second stage of secondary education this ability is required in various aspects of the subjects History, Art Subjects I and Art Subjects II (VMBO) and History, Culture and the Arts, General Art and Fine Arts (HAVO/VWO).

Subdomain IV: Analytical ability

The fourth subdomain focuses on developing pupils' analytical abilities:

Analytical ability: pupils are able to search for and internalise information on cultural expression, and to apply this in their own work.

The focus in developing their visual literacy is on the following question:

'Why was the image made'? *It is not always easy to identify an image producer's objective. Several objectives may be pursued simultaneously, each evoking a certain expectation and each contributing to determining how an image is interpreted.*

This subdomain takes us outside Culture and the Arts in education and into the subject area of Humans & Society. In other words, attainment targets 37 and 38:

PE/attainment target 37: Pupils learn to behave, based on respect for generally accepted values and standards.

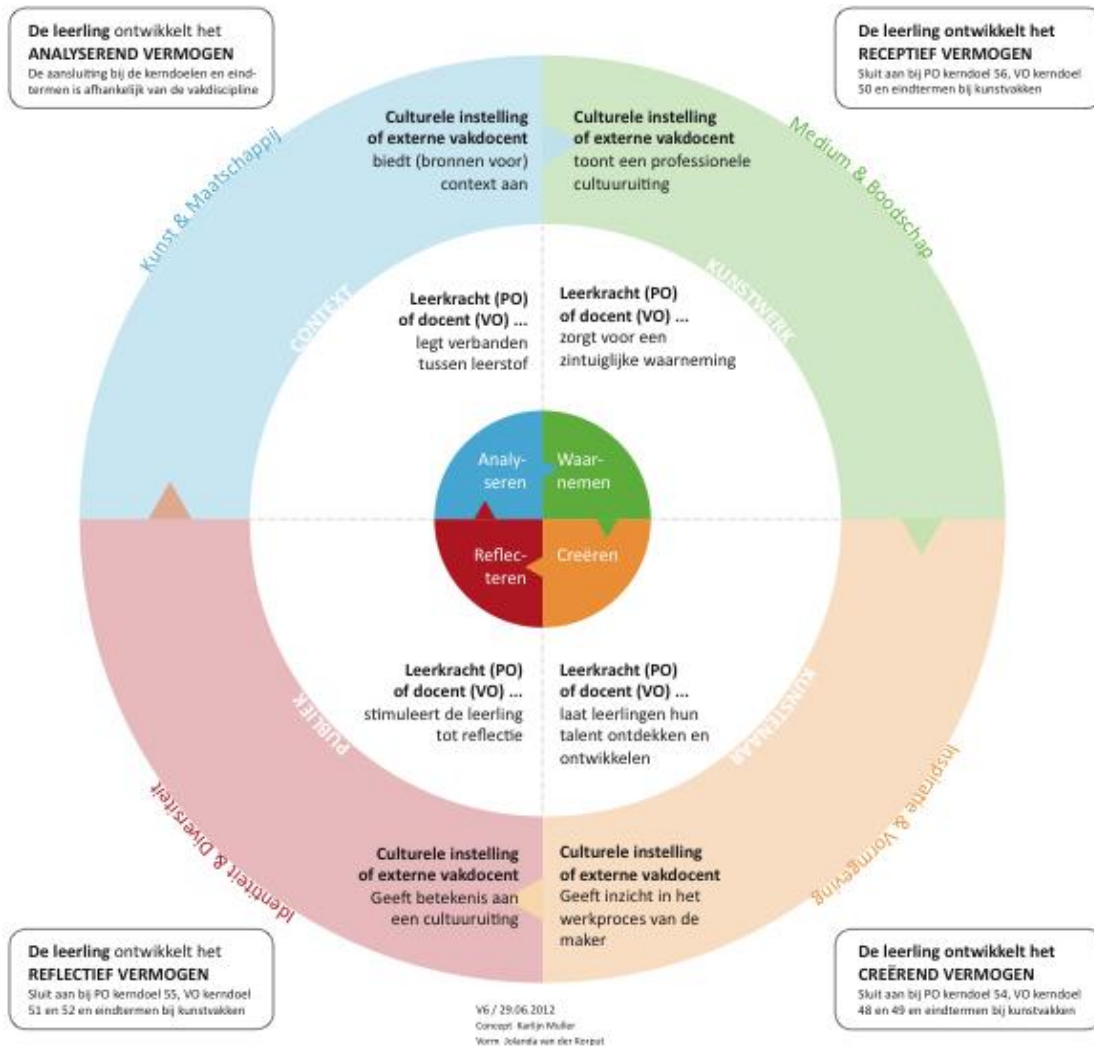
PE/attainment target 38: Pupils learn the principal elements of religious and ideological beliefs playing an important role in Dutch multicultural society, and learn how to deal with differences in opinions respectfully.

In the first stage of secondary education this comes under attainment targets 36 and 38 of Humans and Society.

SE/attainment target 36: Pupils learn to ask meaningful questions about social issues and phenomena, to take and defend substantiated views on them and to deal with criticism respectfully.

SE/attainment target 38: Pupils learn to form a contemporary view of their own environment, the Netherlands, Europe and the world so that they can place phenomena and developments into the context of their own environment.

In the second stage of secondary education this ability is required in various aspects of Art Subjects I and Art Subjects II (VMBO) and Culture and the Arts, General Art and Fine Arts (HAVO/VWO).



Pupils develop ANALYTICAL ABILITY.
Alignment with attainment targets
and final qualifications
depends on subject discipline.

Pupils develop RECEPTIVE ABILITY.
Aligns with PE attainment target 56,
SE attainment target 50
and final qualifications for art subjects.

ART & SOCIETY

MEDIUM & MESSAGE

Cultural organisation or external specialist teacher provides contextual sources.

Cultural organisation or external specialist teacher shows a professional expression of culture.

CONTEXT

WORK OF ART

Teachers in PE or SE make links with course material.

Teachers in PE or SE provide sensory perceptions.

ANALYZING / OBSERVING

REFLECTING / CREATING

Teachers in PE or SE encourage pupils to reflect.

Teachers in PE or SE allow pupils to discover and develop their talents.

AUDIENCE

ARTIST

Cultural organisation or specialist teacher gives meaning to cultural expression.

Cultural organisation or specialist teacher provides insight into the maker's working processes.

IDENTITY & DIVERSITY

INSPIRATION & DESIGN

Pupils develop REFLECTIVE ABILITIES.
Aligns with PE attainment target 55, SE attainment targets 51 and 52 and final qualifications for art subjects.

Pupils develop CREATIVE ABILITIES.
Aligns with PE attainment target 54, SE attainment targets 48 and 49 and final qualifications for art subjects.