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5 The canon in position: Recommendations and desiderata

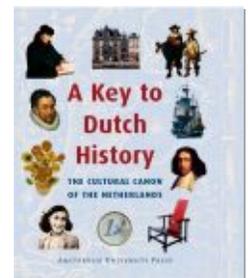
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The Canon in position

Recommendations and desiderata (including: at what price the canon?)

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The dead are at the mercy of the living.

ATTRIBUTED TO FRENCH POET CHARLES PÉGUY (1873-1914),
KILLED IN THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE

The committee will provide an overview of its main recommendations in this final chapter, ordered along thematic lines with references to the relevant chapters. In addition, we have addressed each recommendation to the party we feel is most qualified to ensure its implementation.

Some of our recommendations will require special funding, and any requests for such funding are merely implied. The committee did not regard it as its task to ask for financial support. A great deal of our proposals can be implemented on the basis of conviction and goodwill, within existing frameworks and means. Along the way, however, we have become increasingly aware of various voids, desiderata and new opportunities with regard to the canon. This is why we are calling on the involved parties – with an emphasis on politicians – to do what they so often do: vote money for issues they regard as important.

We believe this request is fully in line with the Innovation Platform's *2006-2016 Knowledge Investment Agenda*. This agenda calls for major additional investment to help the Netherlands become a "knowledge nation" in order to achieve optimal prosperity and well-being. The term knowledge investment generally calls to mind the sort of cutting edge technological research our country has been associated with for years – also see the windows on television, the port of Rotterdam and the natural gas deposit. However, we believe the quality of knowledge and innovation in this country would be well served by investment in general education and immaterial infrastructure. If knowledge

were to be narrowed down to mere product development in aid of the global, commercial marketplace, we will end up with a regrettably one-sided climate, which – ironically enough – may turn out to be anything but innovative. After all, creativity is all about finding connections between diverse elements, and the ability to think out of the box. Could it be a coincidence that the world’s most innovative economy, that of the US, is mainly driven by people who studied liberal arts prior to attending business school or receiving on-the-job training?⁹¹ British culture also places great value on a grounding in history or the classics prior to becoming, say, a banker or lawyer, while roman latin cultures seem to regard an intellectual background as a *sine qua non* for the higher levels of management. Studies of the psychology of learning have also shown that the stimulation of general knowledge during primary and secondary education can have a surprisingly positive effect on learning performance and later (professional) life.⁹² Viewed from this perspective, the canon represents a cultural capital with great potential yields.

The section below can thus be regarded as a list of concrete objectives in line with the additional billions per year advocated in the *Knowledge Investment Agenda*. Naturally, our wish list remains well within this amount. One of the most appealing aspects of this sector is, after all, the fact that incredible gains can be achieved at relatively low cost. The committee can scarcely imagine that a country that has professed such dedication to its history, canon, knowledge and education of late would not be able to find the financial means to do so. Each country, lest we forget, gets the canon it deserves, or – to a large extent – pays for.⁹³

91 Cf. Van Oostrom, currently going to press. Also see the influential ideas of professor Richard Florida on the creative city, arguing that industrial knowledge workers flourish best in a high-quality cultural ambiance.

92 With thanks to Prof. Jelle Jolles, Department of Neuropsychology, Maastricht University.

93 In 2000, US Congress unanimously approved a resolution to increase funding of history education following a study that showed the average American student had an extremely poor knowledge of history (Scheffer 2005, p. 16).

Recommendations

With regard to the report

- Stimulate a broad debate on this report and the associated design in the world of politics, education and general society, and ensure follow-up – *Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW)*

With regard to the design (all processes under the supervision of the Ministry of OCW)

- Produce high-quality chart (in various formats) and provide to schools and other relevant parties (Recommendation 1, § 2.3)
- Commission development of treasure chest containing objects from the windows (Recommendation 2, § 2.3)
- Commission management and expansion of *entoen.nu* website (Recommendation 3, § 2.3)
- Assess how creative subjects such as Culture and the Arts (CKV) can be anchored even more firmly in the design, in terms of both content and didactics (Recommendation 6, § 3.1.1)
- Further reflection on the place of the canon in the upper forms of secondary education (Recommendation 8, § 3.3.1)
- Consider the initiation of a process aimed at developing an international canon for the Dutch education sector. (Recommendation 27, § 4.1)

The education sector

- Discuss this report at individual *schools*, both at *management level* and in the relevant *sections* (Recommendation 28, § 4.2)
- Discuss this report in *teachers' associations*
– *General primary school teachers' associations; Secondary school teachers' associations for History, Geography, Dutch, Culture/Culture and the Arts and Social Studies* (Recommendation 29, § 4.2)
- Support and encourage initiatives to develop didactics (including stimulating assignments and testing) as part of the canon's design – *Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 4, § 3.1)
- A greater focus on subject content at PABOs and teacher-training institutes
– *managements of PABOs and teacher training institutes, and Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 11, § 3.2)

- School television: a series of programmes on the canon with a length of approximately fifteen minutes per window
– *Teleac/NOT* (Recommendation 18, § 3.3)
- Develop refresher courses
– *National educational centres in cooperation with Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 12, § 3.2)
- Assess the condition of school libraries (especially in primary schools) and provide support if necessary
– *Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 5, § 3.1.1)
- Commission studies with regard to excursions in Primary and Secondary Education and provide support if necessary
– *Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 15, § 3.3)
- Higher education: assess how the concept of “the most advanced school of citizenship” can be given concrete form
– *VSNU, HBO-council* (Recommendation 10, § 3.1.3)

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Provinces and municipalities

- Local canon initiatives in collaboration with educational and heritage institutions at local level
– *Erfgoed actueel and VNG* (Recommendation 7, § 3.1.1)
- Assess (potential for) collaborations between schools and cultural institutions, and stimulate where possible
– *VNG, Culture & School* (Recommendation 20, § 3.3)

Cultural institutions

- Further the debate on this report and the issues it raises within the cultural and heritage sector
– *to be supervised by Ministry of OCW, Department of Culture* (Recommendation 13, § 3.3)
- Discuss the options for activities geared to this design
– *Royal Association of Dutch Archivists, National archive, provincial and municipal archives* (Recommendation 17, § 3.3)
- Hold consultations on the development of relevant initiatives
– *Netherlands Museum Association* (Recommendation 21, § 3.3)
- Hold consultations on the development of relevant initiatives
– *Association of Public Libraries* (Recommendation 22, § 3.3)
- Hold consultations on the development of relevant initiatives
– *Public Broadcasting Service* (Recommendation 23, § 3.3)

- Develop digital domain “the canon in Dutch literature”
 - *Digital Library of Dutch Literature* (Recommendation 9, § 3.1.3)
- Link excursion sites to entoen.nu
 - *Netherlands Museum Association* (Recommendation 14, § 3.3)
- Exploration of “eyewitnesses in the classroom” project
 - *Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 16, § 3.3)
- Link digital media archives to the canon site
 - *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (NIBG), archive and library sector* (Recommendation 19, § 3.3)

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Market and society

- Hold consultations on the development of relevant initiatives
 - *Educational publishers* (Recommendation 24, § 3.4)
- Explore the possibilities (local and national) for canon-related information on signposts along the Dutch road network
 - *Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Water Management, ANWB* (Recommendation 25, § 3.4)

With regard to the process

- Establish and stimulate Willem van Oranje Fund
 - *Parliament in collaboration with the Innovation Platform* (Recommendation 26, § 3.5)
- Respond to main points of criticism and debate sparked by this report
 - *Canon Committee (Spring of 2007), under the supervision of Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 30, § 4.2)
- Reassess the Dutch Canon in five years time
 - *Ministry of OCW* (Recommendation 31, § 4.2)