Enter the Specialists - The Power of Dominant Discourse in Dutch Music Education

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Abstract

Dieser Artikel reflektiert die Macht der Diskurse bezogen auf den Musikunterricht an Grundschulen in den Niederlanden. Nach der Einführung der zentralen Konzepte von Kultur, Praxis, Diskurs und Macht wird der derzeit dominierende musikalische Diskurs in den Niederlanden in drei ineinander verschränkten Perspektiven dargestellt: Musik als Fachgebiet von Spezialisten, Musik als (im Wesentlichen instrumentale) Aufführung und Musik als Kunst. Anschließend wird ein zentrales Dokument zu aktuellen musikpädagogischen Entwicklungen in den niederländischen Grundschulen analysiert. Hierbei zeigt sich, dass vor allem die Perspektiven von Musik als Fachgebiet und (teilweise) Musik als (instrumentale) Aufführung stark in diesem Dokument präsent sind. Der Artikel endet mit dem Aufruf der Macht, die dominierende musikalische Diskurse in musikpädagogischen Debatten haben, mehr Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken.

Summary

In this article, the work of power through discourse in music education in primary schools in the Netherlands is examined. After introducing the central concepts of culture, practice, discourse, and power, the current dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands is presented as expressed in three nested perspectives: the perspective of music as a specialist domain, the perspective of music as (essentially instrumental) performance, and the perspective of music as Art. Then, a central document in current music educational developments in Dutch primary schools is analysed. It is demonstrated that specifically the perspectives of music as a specialist domain and (partly) music as (instrumental) performance have a strong presence in this document. The article concludes with an appeal for more attention to the workings of dominant musical discourse in music pedagogical debates.

Introduction

Schools, as societal institutions, have triple aims: qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta 2010). Qualification and socialization are potentially conflictual with subjectification (id.:22) and are intimately bound to the reproduction of society, as a host of critical research since Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) has shown. In current music pedagogical debates in the Netherlands, the contribution of music education to the socialization (e.g. 'learning to cooperate') and qualification ('contributing to the creative economy'; cf. Bisschop Boele 2013) of pupils is often emphasized. But given the highly personalized role music plays in the everyday life of individuals (Bisschop Boele 2014) it is music education's contribution to subjectification processes that might be the major argument for inclusion in the school curriculum (cf. Bisschop Boele 2015).

Current Dutch music education debates include discussions about definitions of music and music education as well as discussions about the value of certain activities as compared to others. I characterize such discussions eventually as struggles about matters of power: who decides about new developments in music education? In this article, I argue that current music education debates in the Netherlands are backed by an implicit but powerful dominant musical discourse fostering the reproductive character of music education's socialization and qualification goals. This dominant musical discourse should be made explicit continuously in order to make the music education debate a truly *pedagogical* debate, in which the three functions of education can be weighed unprejudiced against each other, and specifically the value of musical subjectification can be taken into account more seriously.

In this article, I will examine the work of power through discourse in music education in primary schools in the Netherlands. I will start with introducing some theoretical backgrounds concerning the central concepts of culture, practice, discourse, and power, stemming from practice theory as formulated by the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2002; 2006) and informed by ideas from Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. I will then concisely present the current dominant musical discourse as expressed from three nested perspectives: the perspective of music as a specialist domain, the perspective of music as (essentially instrumental) performance, and the perspective of music as Art. I will demonstrate the way this discourse exerts influence in current music educational debates in Dutch primary school education by analysing a central document behind the current *Meer Muziek in de Klas* (MMK; 'More Music in the Classroom') initiative in the Netherlands. I will end the article with some concluding remarks.

Culture, practice, discourse, and power

For this article, I will take practice theory in Andreas Reckwitz' formulation as a starting point. Practice theory is the theory which defines the human being as a 'homo culturalis', rather than a 'homo economicus' or 'homo sociologicus' (Reckwitz 2002:245-246). In practice theory, culture is defined as shared and contested 'ways of doing' and 'ways of saying' which exist only in practices, defined by Reckwitz as "routinized way[s] in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (id.:250). In a sense, this is a radical vision on culture: "Practice theory 'decentres' mind, texts and conversation. Simultaneously, it shifts bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routines to the centre of its vocabulary." (id.:259). As such, it asks for a fine-grained and careful analysis of practices as shared and contested 'ways of doing and saying' of

idiosyncratic individuals in everyday life, and therefore, I would argue, to a micro-sociological and ethnographic approach to research.

There is a connection between Reckwitz' definition of practices as 'ways of doing *and saying*' and the idea of discourse. Discourse may be seen as a specific verbal discursive practice in which 'regulated representations' are produced (Reckwitz 2006:44). Those regulated representations form our implicit cultural background against which we verbalize what we are; and in that sense they determine what is thinkable and what is unthinkable. Discourse thus is normative and exerts power – and at the same time, it is flexible and changes over time.

Of course, this description of discourse partly goes back on the ideas of Michel Foucault (e.g. Foucault 1970). Discourse, for Foucault, is directly connected to power. A discourse, as 'ways of saying', produces power; it includes and excludes. This power "is in fact locationless; it is decentralized, silent, inconspicuous, but all-pervasive" (Joas/Knöbl 2009:338). Another connection is that to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and specifically to his concept of doxa (e.g. Bourdieu 1977:164 ff.), where the interplay between habitus and doxa in a specific field leads to the positioning of actors in that field, and where the ideas of habitus and doxa are characterized by the fact that they are often implicit.

Reckwitz, in his important work on subject cultures (2006), draws attention to the fact that discourses are hybrid and dynamic and that multiple discourses are at play in society at the same time. He describes how within a specific society various subject cultures – the way we think and act about what it means to be a subject – may play a role, each with their own discourse(s). In terms of history, for example, they may be residual, emergent, dominant or declining; in terms of power, subject cultures may be hegemonic, sub-hegemonic, non-hegemonic or even anti-hegemonic. I would here like to propose the idea that part of a subject culture is a 'musical subject culture', expressing and acting out ideas what it means to be a *musical* subject. This may lead to the question which musical discourses function in society, and which power positions they hold. In this article, I want to focus on the dominant discourse on music in present-day Dutch society and its relationship to the current debate about music education in Dutch primary schools.

Dominant musical discourse in Dutch contemporary everyday life

Musical discourses, as 'ways of saying', are expressed in normal everyday speaking about music. Although many different musical discourses play a role in our everyday talk about music, dominant discourse takes a specific form. It represents the ideas of what the amorphous 'we' representing the core of 'our' culture think about what it means to be musical in this world. Those ideas are owned by no one, often implicit but very pervasive. Individuals in Dutch society do, in one way or another, have to relate to dominant discourse, for example by explicitly phrasing and embracing it, by explicitly phrasing and contesting it, or – and I would suggest this is the position of the majority of Dutch individuals – by implicitly relating to it and positioning oneself vis-à-vis the dominant musical discourse. In that sense, the dominant musical discourse in contemporary Dutch society is a very specific set of ideas about what music 'essentially' is. These ideas in a sense govern our thinking, speaking, and acting, and have a powerful including *and* excluding side.

As dominant discourse remains largely implicit, it needs to be 'excavated' from our everyday ways of doing and saying in order to be represented. The following concise description is based on empirical work performed in an in-depth grounded theory study of lengthy narrative interviews with a theoretically

sampled set of 30 very heterogeneous individuals living in the Dutch province of Groningen (Bisschop Boele 2014; but cf. e.g. the notion of ‘institutionalized musicality’ in Cavicchi 2009). In the stories my interviewees told me, a specific ranking of musical behaviour took place. This ranking, expressing which behaviour is ‘really’ musical, may be described in three steps, three nested perspectives together forming the current dominant musical discourse in Dutch society.

In the first perspective, quintessentially, music behaviour is considered to be more ‘really musical’ when it was more specialized – and more specialized mostly meant practiced as a professional and/or infused by elements of formal learning (cf. Bisschop Boele 2011). In a second perspective, a next ranking operation is carried out in which not the amount of specialization of musical behaviour was key but rather the amount of specialization in a specific form of musical behaviour: the (instrumental) performance. Central in this perspective stands the idea of what Turino has termed ‘presentational music making’ (Turino 2008:26). Music, in essence, consists in the ‘concert format’ with a strict division between performers and listeners. In this format, playing an instrument is, as a specific form of specialization, judged higher than listening to music, and for playing an instrument the idea of craftsmanship is presented as central, together with the talent to be musical. Music, in this second perspective, in essence is not only a specialism but a specialism of a specific type: the talent-based craft of playing an instrument in a presentational setting.

In a third perspective, the instrumental specialism is connected to a very specific set of ideas derived from the Art Music world. Although this perspective – contrary to the perspectives of specialism and of the centrality of the (instrumental) performer – is far from unanimously shared, individuals often relate in some way or another to this perspective. This Art Music perspective is a very specific set of ideas with roots going back to the beginning of the modern era of the western world. The Art Music perspective incorporates the ideas of the two previously described elements of dominant discourse: the idea that music is a specialism, and the idea that music is the specialism of the talent-based craft of instrumental performance. But it goes further in that it combines those ideas with strong thoughts about on the one hand the expressivity of music, and on the other hand music as an artistic *object* – a ‘work’ of beauty.

Summing up, I suggest that a specific musical discourse consisting of three nested perspectives is dominant in contemporary Dutch society. The main idea in the first and most abstract perspective is that music essentially is a specialism. More concrete is the second perspective, in which music essentially is a specific form of specialism: the talent-based craftsmanship of performing on an instrument in front of an audience. The third perspective is again a more concrete form of the second: music essentially is a combination of craftsmanship and expressivity leading to works of Art. It is this cluster of pervasive perspectives on what music essentially is that the yardstick against which individuals in our society measure themselves. The three perspectives are represented in Figure 1 as three nested circles together forming the dominant musical discourse. In Figure 2, the main elements of dominant musical discourse are represented.

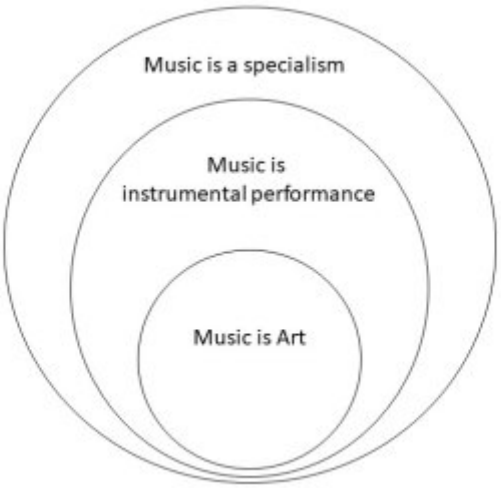

Figure 1 Three nested perspectives forming the dominant musical discourse

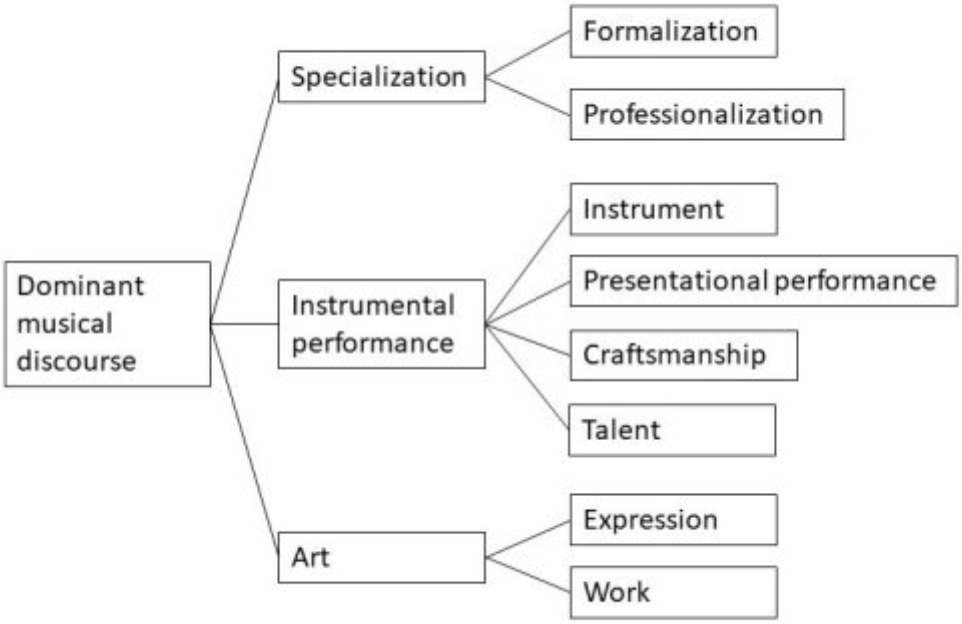

Figure 2 The main elements of dominant musical discourse

We may now examine how this dominant musical discourse exerts influence in current music education debates. This influence is, because it is discourse, often implicit and hidden; and the 'carriers' of this discourse are not to be seen as guilty of deliberately influencing discussions in order to reach personal or institutional gains. Precisely because it is discourse, its workings are much more decentered, de-personalized, and subtle than that. In the continuation of this article I can give no more than a first impression of how the three nested perspectives of dominant musical discourse can be used as an

analytical tool to study its influence on music education debates. The following sections aim at showing a possible direction such an analysis might take and the results we might expect from such an analysis.

The example of Meer Muziek in de Klas

As a case study, I will focus on a document which was decisively instrumental in making the current *Meer Muziek in de Klas* (MMK; 'More Music in the Classroom' – see www.meermuziekindeklas.nl) initiative the leading initiative in the development of music education in primary schools in the Netherlands. MMK was founded after the minister of education had ordered a committee to advise her on how to stimulate music education in primary schools. The committee's advice (Gehrels et al. 2014) led to a Letter to Parliament (Ministerie van OCW 2014) in which the minister announced the installation of a temporary Platform for Music Education. This became MMK.

MMK has formulated three lines of action: fostering awareness of the importance of music education, professional development of teachers and developing teaching methods, and regional rooting. MMK is financed by the government until 2020 for 25 M€. Private partners have joined MMK with the ambition to furnish another 25 M€ during that period. Recently, a parliamentary motion has been accepted asking the Minister of Education to continue fostering music education after 2020 (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal 2017). MMK is currently very visible in the Dutch (music) education landscape, due to a number of activities. One is that it stimulated national television to produce and broadcast a show in which primary schools compete against each other musically. Another one is that part of the 25 M€ budget has gone to a grant programme, which is accessible to primary schools mainly. A third important element contributing to the visibility of MMK is that it attracted influential public figures to the platform, including a team of 20 high profile MMK 'ambassadors', with HRH Queen Maxima as honorary chair.

MMK thus is, when it comes to visibility, a huge success. It has contributed greatly to putting music education more to the centre of the educational agenda, and has led to much more enthusiasm for music education in primary schools, and more involvement in the debate on music education from people outside the standard music pedagogical circles. MMK in its activities at first sight does not seem to take any specific position regarding the 'whats' and 'hows' of music education. The basic message is: every primary school pupil deserves music education, and MMK mobilizes all forces working towards that goal. On the front page of its website, we read:

> **"Structural music education for all 1.6 million primary school pupils in 2020.**
> Music in a unique way contributes to children's development, research shows again and again. For example, it fosters socio-emotional development and the development of the brain. That is why music education in primary schools is so important. It is music that lays the foundations for empathy, social connection, quality of life, creativity, listening to each other and openness for differences: indispensable values in our society. Music is everywhere; it is an element of our daily life. In class, it leads to a positive school climate in which pupils tune in to each other. Music in the classroom is not a non-committal choice, it is a necessity! (www.meermuziekindeklas.nl, accessed 15-12-2017)."

The website then goes on to state which activities it undertakes or supports, but does not seem to take an explicit pedagogical or political position in any way.

It is precisely this non-positional character of MMK, however, that must be questioned. From the viewpoint of social theory since the interpretive turn in the 1970s, there is no such thing as a non-position in the world. Worlds are pre-interpreted constructions by definition. Reckwitz explicitly refers to “the implicit, tacit or unconscious layer of knowledge which enables a symbolic organization of reality. The basic distinctions and schemes of this knowledge lay down which desires are regarded as desirable and which norms are considered to be legitimate; moreover, these cognitive-symbolic structures … reproduce a social order even in cases in which a normative consensus does not exist.” (Reckwitz 2002:246).

My contention is that, in not taking position in music education debates, MMK risks that in fact it does take position. It runs the risk of siding implicitly with dominant musical discourse and therefore in reproducing existing power structures and the ensuing inequalities. The roots hereof already lie in the advisory document (Gehrels et al. 2014) which led to the start of the MMK initiative. In the remainder of this article, I will show how elements of the three perspectives of the dominant musical discourse pictured above take a prominent place within this document.

The document was subjected to coding (see Charmaz 2006) with the help of the qualitative analysis software package Atlas.Ti, vs. 8.1. The coding started off as a relatively open form of initial thematic coding, where the three nested perspectives of the dominant discourse of music were treated as overarching codes functioning as sensitizing concepts for the analysis, and the elements within each of these codes (see Figure 2) were applied in the analysis as initial sub-codes but where refined (adding sub-subcodes if possible) or reformulated when the analysis made that possible. The analysis will be presented below for each of the three main codes consecutively. I suggest here that the ‘codes’ used below may be interpreted in two ways: they are codes in the sense of textual labels resulting from a coding process (Charmaz 2006), but may also be seen as what Andreas Reckwitz (2006:35-39) describes as ‘cultural codes’ which function to make fundamental classifications within a culture possible.

The perspective of specialization

The first code, ‘specialization’, embraces two subcodes. The first subcode, ‘formalization of musical learning’, refers to the idea that music learning is a formalized process. In the document analysed, this subcode can be subdivided in four underlying sub-subcodes. The first one is ‘the primacy of school for musical development’. In the document, it is not only made clear that the task of music education in schools is to help develop children, but that that musical development actually takes place – or ought to take place – primarily in school, and that schools form the basis for musical development outside of school. This musical development outside of school again consists primarily of formalized learning as offered in institutional contexts such as music schools, private music teaching practices, or structured music ensembles. The document claims quite early: “School is the place where the basis for (…) development is laid, which can be continued after and outside of school” (Gehrels et al 2014:4).

A second sub-subcode of the formalization of musical learning is the primacy of knowledge and skills over attitude. In Dutch music education in school, the idea that music education fosters competencies is prevalent. The Dutch national institute for curriculum development SLO sees competencies as consisting of a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes (www.kunstzinnigeorientatie.slo.nl/leerlijnen/ generieke-competenties, accessed 21-12-2017). In the document analysed, skills and knowledge are mentioned

regularly – with skills being defined as instrumental performance skills which are supported by theoretical and historical knowledge – whereas attitudes are not mentioned. The document for example states: “Music education (…) starts in all cases with learning to sing and to sing together; it is about training the ear and the rhythmic feeling. Next, there will be attention for instruments and pupils will play and play together. Theory and history is [sic] gradually part of the teaching programme.”(id.:14).

A third sub-subcode is the ordering of music learning in normative sequences. This is expressed in a variety of ways in the document, as an answer to the explicit question of the minister of education concerning teaching methods best suited for incorporation in schools. The idea of ‘longitudinal learning pathways’ is stressed throughout the document. It is the task of music and didactic experts to formulate these pathways and to formally approve them, where after designers of teaching materials can incorporate them in teaching materials, which, again, will be assessed by specialists. It then is the task of the national education inspection to ensure the quality of music education by making sure that these pathways are used in teaching. All this must ensure “the organization and much needed quality enhancement in music education” in order to not “get stuck in discussions on teaching methods” (id.:14). It will also ensure that pupils enter secondary school with comparable musical levels; and as a model the highly formalized Flemish ‘Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs’ system is mentioned.

A final sub-subcode lies not so much in the text but in what is absent from the text. Nowhere is there a mention of competing pedagogical philosophies or of didactic strategies. Those debates are currently very strong internationally as well as in the Netherlands, and the absence of any reference to discussions about for example pupil-centered education or personalized learning is especially amazing considering the fact that one of the three authors of the document is the chairman of the Dutch sector organization of primary schools. The three sub-subcodes as mentioned above are not presented as possibilities amongst other options (which they obviously are) and no legitimization is given for the strong ideas that music education in school is the basis of musical development in children, that this development is all about skills underpinned by knowledge, or that this development can be described in terms of normative sequences. I term this fourth sub-subcode the ‘naturalness of choices made’.

Turning to ‘professionalization of music (learning)’, the second subcode of ‘specialization’, of course it first must be acknowledged that education is by definition a professional field, and that therefore it is to be expected that educational policy documents will have a professionalized character and a professional target group of readers. However, the term professionalization in this article rather points to the fact that dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands formulates ‘true musicality’ with the role model of the music professional in mind. From this perspective, two sub-subcodes have been determined within the document.

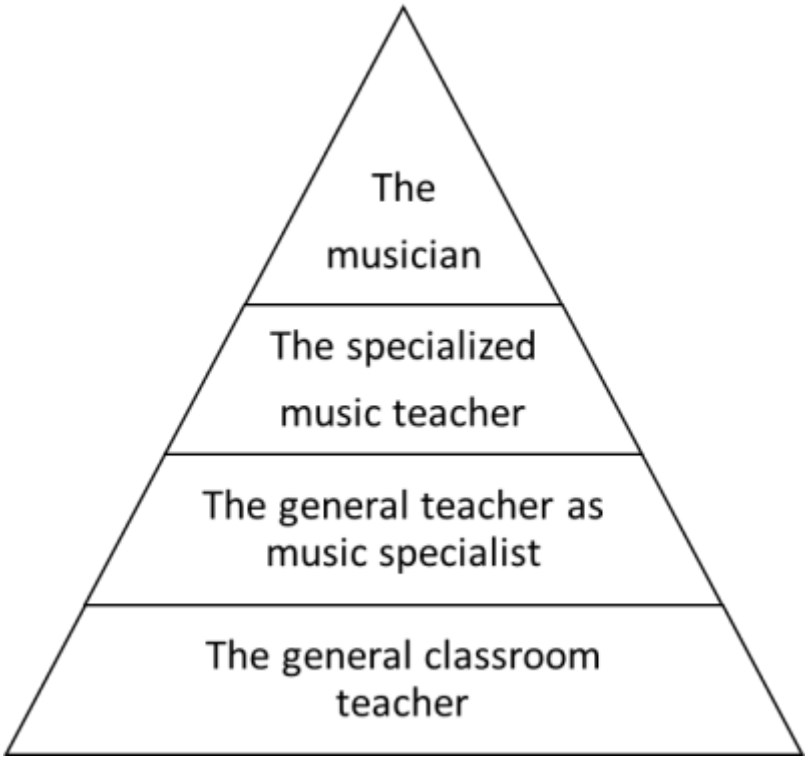

Figure 3 The professional musical pyramid

The first sub-subcode is ‘the professional musical pyramid’. Within the document, it is made clear that a pyramid of music professionals exists. At the bottom of the pyramid is the general classroom teacher. S/he is depicted as currently not very capable to teach music in the classroom: “the current generation of general classroom teachers [is] insufficiently educated and not experienced in teaching music” (id.:16). When sufficiently educated, a second layer of professionalism within the pyramid may form, consisting of general classroom teachers specialized in music: “schools could attract teachers with such a specialism, who could teach not only their own group but also other groups music” (id.:17). A third layer in the pyramid consists of specialized music teachers. The document states that these have nearly disappeared from schools altogether but that “of course the committee would applaud it if throughout the Netherlands specialized music teachers could be appointed” (id.:16). These specialized music teachers are “the authentic role model” (id.:17) for pupils. Therefore at several places the idea of ‘co-teaching’ of general classroom teachers and specialized music teachers is propagated, taking place in between their respective educational institutes: the Schools of Education and the Conservatoires, respectively. Finally, directly after mentioning the specialized music teacher as the role model, another role model is introduced – or rather: the specialized music teacher is presented not as a teacher but as a performing musician: “Children imitate the musical behaviour of the musician. Specialized music teachers show in their non-verbal behaviour what music and music practice is all about” (ibid.).

A second sub-subcode is ‘the school as in need of professional help’. Throughout the document, the school is depicted as in need of professional help. Of course this is based on the idea that music education in schools currently is in the hands of the lower strata of the professional pyramid. Music education is in the document described as a responsibility which cannot be given to primary schools alone: “The Minister and the Parliament share the vision that it is a right of every child (…) to obtain music education of good quality,

no matter place or character of the school. It is unwanted and unrealistic to give that responsibility exclusively to the schools" (id.:7). Therefore, specialists will help schools in training their teachers, in making and assessing the value of teaching materials, and even in formulating their questions, because "quality will only result from a joint effort en will only arise at those places where the question has been formulated in the right way" (id.:9). A strong helping hand to the schools must come from the institutionalized music field: professional musicians and ensembles such as orchestras, music venues, institutionalized amateur music practices such as choirs and wind bands, and professional music teaching institutes such as municipal or private music schools. In return, they will benefit from better music education: "The raised level [of music education] will strengthen the professional sector and the sector of the amateur arts" (id.:18).

Summarizing, the first perspective of the dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands is the perspective of (teaching) music as a specialism (see Figure 4). In the document analysed, this perspective comes back in ideas about the formalization and professionalization of music and musical learning. Musical learning is described as formalized learning, where in-school learning lays the basis for musical learning outside school, such learning is a question of learning skills underpinned by knowledge, and can be ordered in normative learning sequences. Moreover, this vision of learning is not problematized but presented as the 'normal' vision of music learning. Teaching music is also a specialism because those who teach music can be ordered in a 'professional pyramid', with at the bottom the ignorant general classroom teacher and at the top the pedagogically able performing musician. Because schools are painted as incapable in music teaching issues, they must rely on others, and especially on players from the Dutch institutionalized music world.

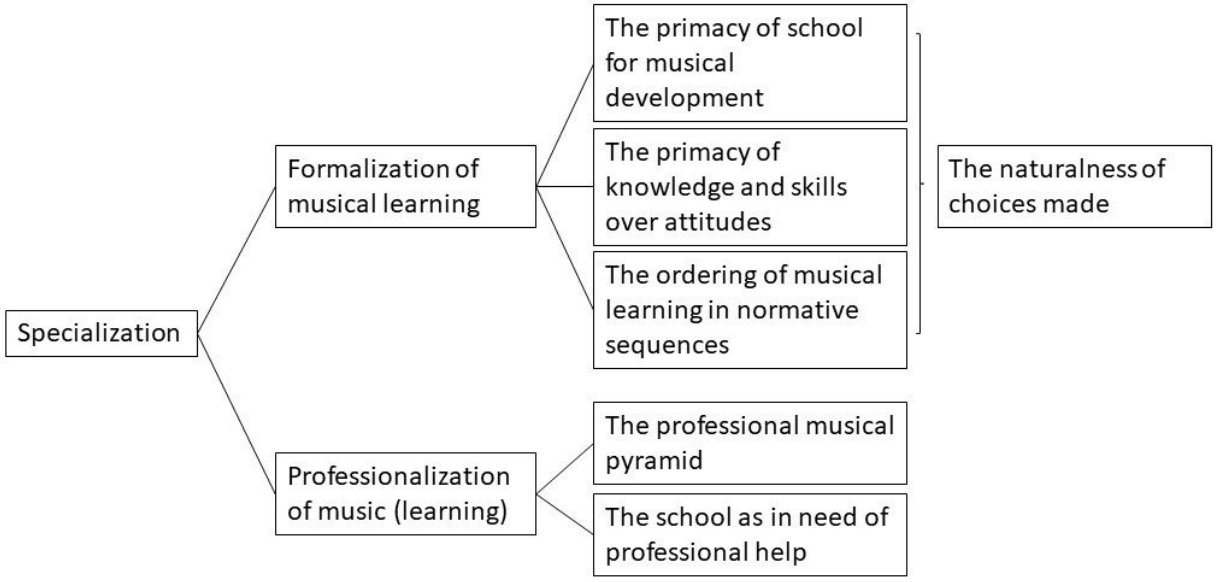

Figure 4 Music (education) as a specialism in Gehrels et al. 2014

The perspective of instrumental performance

We now turn to an analysis regarding the second perspective of the dominant musical discourse: music as essentially instrumental performance. The code of ‘instrumental performance’ contains four sub-codes: ‘presentational performance’, ‘the instrument’, ‘craftsmanship’, and ‘talent’. In the document, the first two sub-codes, and especially the second one, are very present, whereas the third and fourth codes are nearly absent.

The idea of presentational performance, where the emblematic socio-musical situation is depicted as the live concert with a strict division between musicians and audience, in the document is present in the way the musical domain is summarized. One of the standard ways to do that is to speak of “music and music practice” (id.:11,13,17), implicating there is a domain of performance and a ‘rest-domain’. Other phrases are more explicit; there is a division in “singing, music making [playing an instrument EBB], and music listening” (id.:3,4,5), “singing together, playing together, and valuing music” (id.:11). The characterization of the musical infrastructure surrounding schools as consisting of “music schools, wind bands, choirs and other amateur music, and also state-subsidized institutions and music venues” (id.:20) also suggests a division in musical places as either places to be musically active (as an amateur) or to be present as an audience listening to professionals.

Within this implicit division between ‘active’ and ‘receptive’ musical behaviour, stress is laid on the active, which brings us to the second sub-code: the instrument. A number of sub-subcodes emerged from the analysis of the document.

The first sub-subcode is ‘performance as music education’s goal’. When the desired situation in 2020 is pictured, the document states: “All ambitions will eventually lead to more and better music practice by children, within and outside of schools” (id.:11). It is implicated that schools that make an extra effort in music education do that “for example by teaching children to play instruments and let them play in an orchestra” (id.:14). Not only is performance the final goal of music education in primary schools, it also is the beginning: “Music education (…) starts in all cases with learning to sing and to sing together. (…) After that there is attention for instruments and pupils start to play and play together.” (id.:18). As a side note, the status of singing as performance is ambivalent (cf. Bisschop Boele 2014:194-195): on the one hand side, references to performance opportunities outside school consistently refer not only to instrumental ensembles but also to choirs. On the other hand, the document often speaks of “singing and making music” (e.g. id.:4) as an equivalent of “singing and playing an instrument (e.g. id.:17), suggesting that singing is not at the core of what ‘making music’ is.

A second sub-subcode, ‘the musician as the role model’ functions throughout the text. This subcode, connected to the musical pyramid sketched above, becomes especially clear in two instances. The document seems to imply that in the cases where music education could gain quality, this is due to the fact that teachers have not concentrated on music education, “consequently often themselves miss the experience in singing and making music [sic]” (id.:7), and therefore they do not know how to teach music. And in what I consider a core passage in the document, the following is stated:

> “In good music education children start to experience music as a form of communication. And through active participation in the lesson, they learn to develop themselves artistically.

> Specialist music teachers are the authentic role model. Children imitate the musical behaviour of the musician. Specialist music teachers show in their non-verbal artistic behaviour what music and music practice is all about. General group teachers know the group, and know how they can foster participation amongst pupils and differentiate in aptitude and level (id.:17)."

A third sub-subcode follows from the second: ‘inspirational instrumental didactics’. When teaching methods are discussed, it is stated that teaching should be “assessed for quality and depth by looking at the taking on of music-pedagogical visions, such as the Music Learning Theory (…), ‘Guildhall’- skills, the Kodály-approach (…) and Da Capo.” (id.:17) Of them, the first one is a theory of the development of ‘audiation’ in a broader sense; the other three are all intimately connected to the development of music performance skills.

A fourth sub-subcode is ‘music teaching in school for music performance outside school’. In different places, it is stressed that there is an intimate connection between in-school music education and out-of-school music performance, and it is stressed that “for the fostering of the development of musical quality of children a broad strategy for music inside, outside and after school is very important” (id.:11). The relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ is sequential: “School is the place where the basis for this [musical] development can be laid, which after and outside of school can be continued” (id.:4). When it comes to a description of what happens ‘after and outside of school’, the document usually refers to amateur wind bands, amateur symphony orchestras, ensembles, choirs, music schools (e.g. id.:11,14,20). And the intimate connection between music education in primary schools and music making outside school is stressed when it is declared that “the raised level [due to music education in school] also reinforces the professional sector and the sector of the amateur arts” (id.:18).

Finally, a fifth sub-subcode is ‘the traditional performance setting’. As may have become clear from the above, the abundant references to situations where music is (mostly instrumentally) performed is coloured by references to traditional and mostly heavily institutionalized forms of music performance: choirs, wind bands, (symphony) orchestras, ‘ensembles’, and music schools. The document states that music education is ‘genre free’, meaning that all genres can be incorporated in music education; id.:14,18. However, there is no mention whatsoever in the document of alternative music performance settings such as for example rock and pop bands, urban music ‘posses’, or Electronic Dance Music producers. The mentioning of the (actually very heterogeneous) cultural infrastructure of Rotterdam combined with the remark that “the trick is to mobilize that what is already there – music schools, wind bands, choirs and other amateur music, and also state-subsidized institutions and music venues” (id.:19-20) is completely off-balance in that respect.

The third and fourth sub-codes of the second perspective of the dominant musical discourse are ‘craft’ and ‘talent’. Both of them are much less visible in the document. The idea that music education should focus on instrumental performance and that craftsmanship is an essential element may be said to speak from the continuous suggestion within the document that ‘musical skills’ – mostly equated with performance skills (singing and especially playing an instrument) – must be central in music education in primary schools; and also that good quality music education in school is the prerequisite for the further development of those skills outside school. ‘Talent’ as a term is only used in the document once, to refer to the existence of talent contests in the media as a sign of the importance of music in children’s life. ‘Aptitude’ is used once, when the importance of differentiation “with regards to aptitude and level” (id.:17) in primary school music education is mentioned.

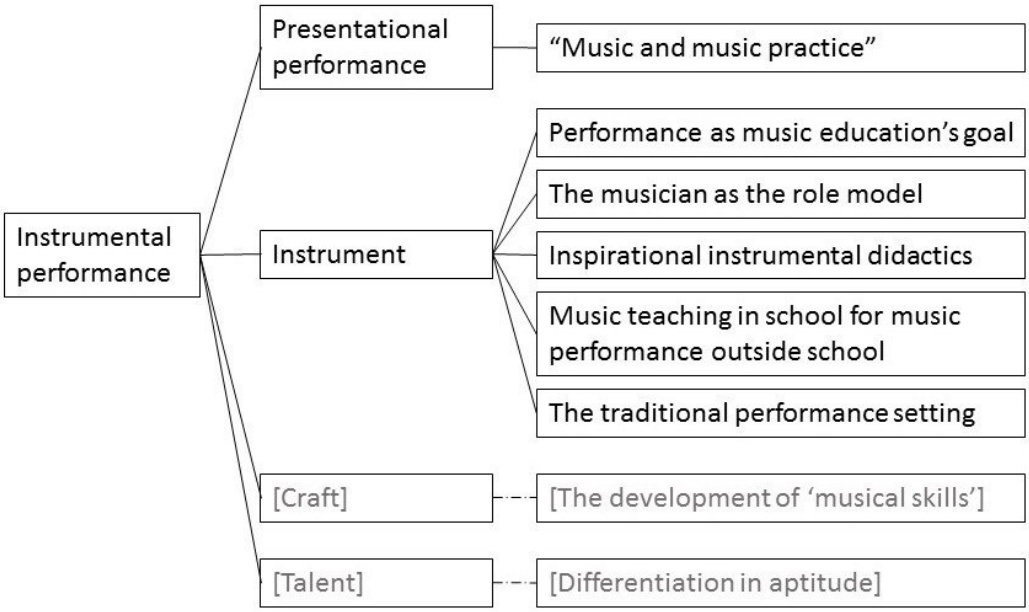

Figure 5 Music (education) as instrumental performance in Gehrels et al. 2014

Summarizing, the second perspective of the dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands is the perspective of music as predominantly instrumental performance (see Figure 5). In the document analysed, this perspective mainly comes back in ideas about presentational performance and about the centrality of playing an instrument. The ideas of craftsmanship and talent, present in dominant musical discourse in general, are only very implicitly mentioned in this document. Especially the idea that music is instrumental performance is expressed in the document in a variety of ways. The fostering of the quality of (instrumental) performance is presented as the final goal of music education in primary schools, and the musician is presented as a role model for pupils and teachers. Instrumental didactic methods are presented as an inspiration for music education in primary schools, and concrete instrumental performance settings are presented as benefiting from music education in school. Finally, the performance settings mentioned are limited to traditional and institutionalized settings only.

The perspective of Music as Art

Finally, there is the third perspective of the musical dominant discourse: Music as Art. The two sub-codes – music as 'expression', and the musical 'work' – do not figure as such in the document. One might argue that, by referring to presentational performance in traditional performance setting (choirs, wind bands, orchestras, 'ensembles') as well as to the professional musician as a role model, this perspective is implicitly implied, but it is not explicitly addressed in the document. References in the document to the 'artistic' may be taken as references to the Music as Art-perspective: "Learning to sing, make music and listening to music does (…) serve a cultural and artistic goal" (id.:4) as well as other goals, and artistic development through 'active participation' is stressed, as well as the 'non-verbal artistic behaviour' of the specialized music teacher (id.:17). But in general, the Music as Art-perspective is not referred to in explicit ways.

The complete picture of the expression of the three perspectives of the dominant musical discourse in the analysed document is depicted in Figure 6.

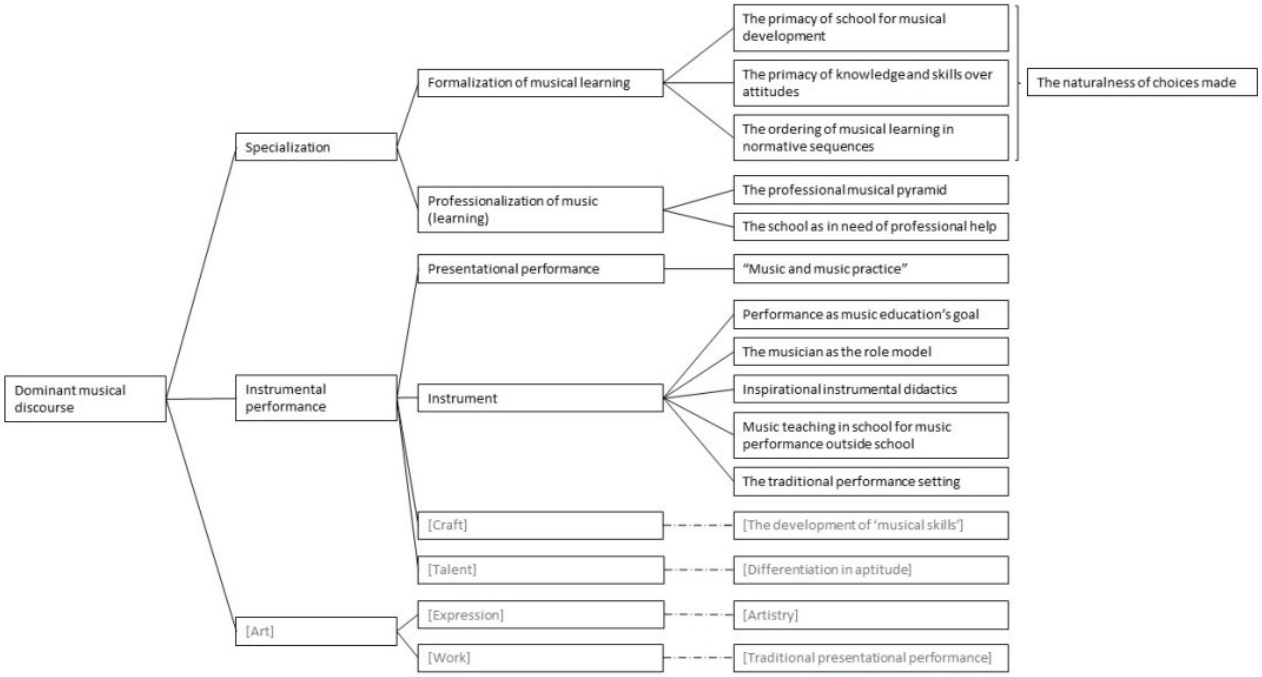

Figure 6 Complete overview of elements of dominant musical discourse in Gehrels et al. 2014.

Conclusion

In this article, I have demonstrated how the three perspectives of dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands are reflected in a recent key document in current music pedagogical developments in the Netherlands. Dominant musical discourse in the Netherlands consists of three nested perspectives: music as specialization, music as instrumental performance, and music as Art (see Figure 1). Analysis of the document shows how the first and parts of the second perspective are expressed continuously within the document.

The perspective of specialization comes back in descriptions of musical learning as formalized learning in school, which lays the basis for musical learning outside school. This formalized learning focuses on learning skills underpinned by knowledge, and is ordered in normative learning sequences. This vision on musical learning as essentially formal learning is presented as 'normal'. Specialization also is reflected in the presence of an implicit 'professional pyramid', with at the bottom the general classroom teacher and at the top the performing musician, and in the idea that schools must rely on the specialist knowledge of players from the Dutch institutionalized music world in music teaching issues.

The perspective of music as predominantly instrumental performance is reflected in ideas about the divisions between musicians and audiences (the 'presentational performance') and about the centrality of playing an instrument; the latter plays an important role in the document. Performance quality is depicted as music education's ultimate goal; the musician is the role model; instrumental didactic methods are the inspiration for music education in school settings; and concrete instrumental performance settings – mainly

presented in its traditional and institutionalized forms – are presented as benefiting from music education in school.

The analysis makes clear that the third perspective of dominant musical discourse – music as Art, consisting of the elements ‘expression’ and the musical ‘work’ – and also two elements from the second perspective of dominant musical discourse – instrumental performance as a combination of craftsmanship and talent – are much less present in the document. I would like to make two remarks. One is that, as said earlier in this article, the elements ‘craft’, ‘talent’, ‘expression’ and the ‘work’ are implied heavily in the document through the focus on instrumental performance, the role model of the professional musician, as well as the focus on the traditional performance setting. The other remark is that a possible explanation of the understating of precisely those four elements may be due to the fact that the authors of the document may have realized that in a document about general music education for all pupils from primary schools, a stress on the Music as Art-perspective and on the craftsmanship and talent elements of dominant musical discourse would be out of place.

This brings me to a final point. In this article, I gave a first rough sketch of an analysis of Dutch music pedagogical debates considered from a practice theoretical lens in which discourses, hegemonies, and power positions take centre stage. I deliberately use the words ‘rough sketch’ because this article is only meant as a first pointer in this direction. Further research is required, in which a much wider analysis of practices and documents should be performed. I also deliberately use the word ‘lens’ because the perspective of discourse, hegemony and power is only a possible lens – and a possible critical one. The MMK initiative can equally well be studied as a powerful and successful initiative to get the importance of music education across the footlight and to encourage primary schools, schools of education, conservatoires, governments and cultural institutions to take action as well as convincing the lay public of the importance of music education – a much more positive angle.

Both angles may be equally ‘true’. Nevertheless, I would suggest that a critical study such as presented in this article is important. In the introduction of this article, I stated that there is a tension in music pedagogy between the socialization and qualification aims of music education on the one hand, and subjectification on the other hand (Biesta 2010). I also stated that stressing socialization and qualification aims may result in schools reproducing inequalities in society, and that dominant discourse plays a pivotal role in these processes. From that perspective, an initiative such as MMK, which means to foster the quality of music education for every child, benefits from a critical awareness of the discourse elements in its music pedagogical assumptions. One of the important roles of research in music education is to make this influence of mostly implicit dominant musical discourse in music education explicit.

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Zitieren

Gerne dürfen Sie aus diesem Artikel zitieren. Folgende Angaben sind zusammenhängend mit dem Zitat zu nennen:

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