



# FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

### On improving the links between education, culture and the arts

Public defense to obtain the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF ADULT EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**  
of  
**Mr. Lode Vermeersch**

which will take place on  
**21st of March 2017, 16:00**  
**Promotiezaal, D2.01**  
**Campus Etterbeek**

How to reach the VUB: <http://www.vub.ac.be/campus/brussels-humanities-sciences-engineering-campus>  
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Please confirm your attendance before : 17th of March 2017 via  
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#### Jury: INTERNAL:

Prof. dr. Katrien Struyven  
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel, PE)

Prof. dr. Katia Segers  
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel, ES)

#### EXTERNAL:

Prof. dr. Barend van Heusden  
(University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Prof. dr. Ernst Wagner  
(Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg,  
Germany)

Prof. dr. Franz Billmayer  
(Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, Austria)

#### Promotors:

Prof. dr. em. Willem Elias (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)  
Prof. dr. Koen Lombaerts (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)



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## Summary

The ability to participate in cultural activities is generally considered a basic human right. Yet, many people in our society are excluded from this type of participation, and for a lot of people even the questions what culture is and why culture needs to be considered important go unanswered. Responses to such fundamental challenges and questions can be manifold, they largely depend on one's view on what happens when people take part in culture. This doctoral thesis focuses on one specific dimension of this broad discussion: education. Cultural education is more than just participation; it involves reflection and growth. Culture, then, refers to both the content and the fruits of such an educational process.

The overall goal of this PhD project has been to detect and analyze links between education, culture, and the arts in order to arrive at a better understanding of the aims and nature of arts and cultural education. The dissertation addresses this matter from several interconnected perspectives. At the macro perspective, it analyzes the matter of access to culture. From the meso perspective, it examines the organization of cultural learning environments (elements such as collaboration, curricula, etc.). And finally some specific issues related to the micro level of classroom arts teaching are addressed.

An in-depth understanding of the links between education, culture, and the arts requires a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, this PhD combines different research techniques and relies on insights from cognitive, semiotic, and hermeneutic theory.

## Curriculum Vitae

Lode Vermeersch holds a master's degree in Adult Educational Sciences (VUB, 1998) and an advanced master's degree in Cultural Studies (KUB, 1999). As senior researcher, Lode has been affiliated with the Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA) at KULeuven since 2007. In 2012 he also joined the Department of Educational Sciences at VUB.

During the last ten years he was involved in numerous policy-oriented research projects. Most of his research publications are in the field of arts and cultural education, cultural policy, non-formal adult education, and literacy (low-literacy, visual literacy, multi-literacies, etc.). In his current research he seeks to find out how arts and cultural education works in formal and informal learning contexts.

His work is published in a range of edited volumes and peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Visual Literacy* and the *Arts Education Policy Review*. It has also been presented at national and international conferences.