

**Good senior secondary vocational
education: Educators' experiences with
subjectification and imagination's
heartwork at a Dutch college**

**A Thesis Submitted for the
Degree of Doctor of Education**

By

Jurgen Laurentius Johannes van Waes

**Department of Education, Brunel
University London**

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Welcome to this text, dear reader. I invite you onboard my train of thoughts.

Abstract

This study investigates how educators in Dutch senior secondary vocational education (SSVE) experience, conceptualise, enact 'good education'. It addresses a gap in the existing research by offering the first application of Hogan's 'imagination's heartwork' to the Dutch SSVE context. Combining the lenses of 'imagination's heartwork' with Biesta's domains of purpose of education, this study builds a bridge between the analytical and the continental European tradition of education research. The use of art in its various forms further adds to the new approach to research into Dutch SSVE.

Employing hermeneutic phenomenology, chosen for its strength in illuminating educators' embedded values and prejudices, the research draws on a survey of 30 SSVE educators and in-depth conversations with 12 participants. Analysis of the survey yielded six core themes, including education as fun and teacher involvement with their students. The fictionalised narratives resulting from the conversations show a myriad of perceptions about SSVE, such as 'SSVE as the strong foundation of the country' and 'the headmaster as an archetype for good education'. Contrary to the prevailing education measurement focus, this study advances hermeneutic phenomenology as a rigorous methodology for vocational education studies.

This study raises the question whether SSVE in its present form is actual education, and answers questions about the ways educators create opportunities for subjectification, in addition to Biesta's other domains. It proposes Dutch vocational colleges to position themselves as hospitable, educational sanctuaries. It underlines the flaws in the Dutch education system and policy and in doing so identifies a gap in SSVE research.

Eventually, this thesis makes a strong case for Hogan's 'imagination's heartwork' and Biesta's domains of purpose of education as guiding principles in Dutch SSVE and provide actionable insights for policymakers, administrators and educators committed to the emancipation of its students in a 21st century democratic Dutch society.

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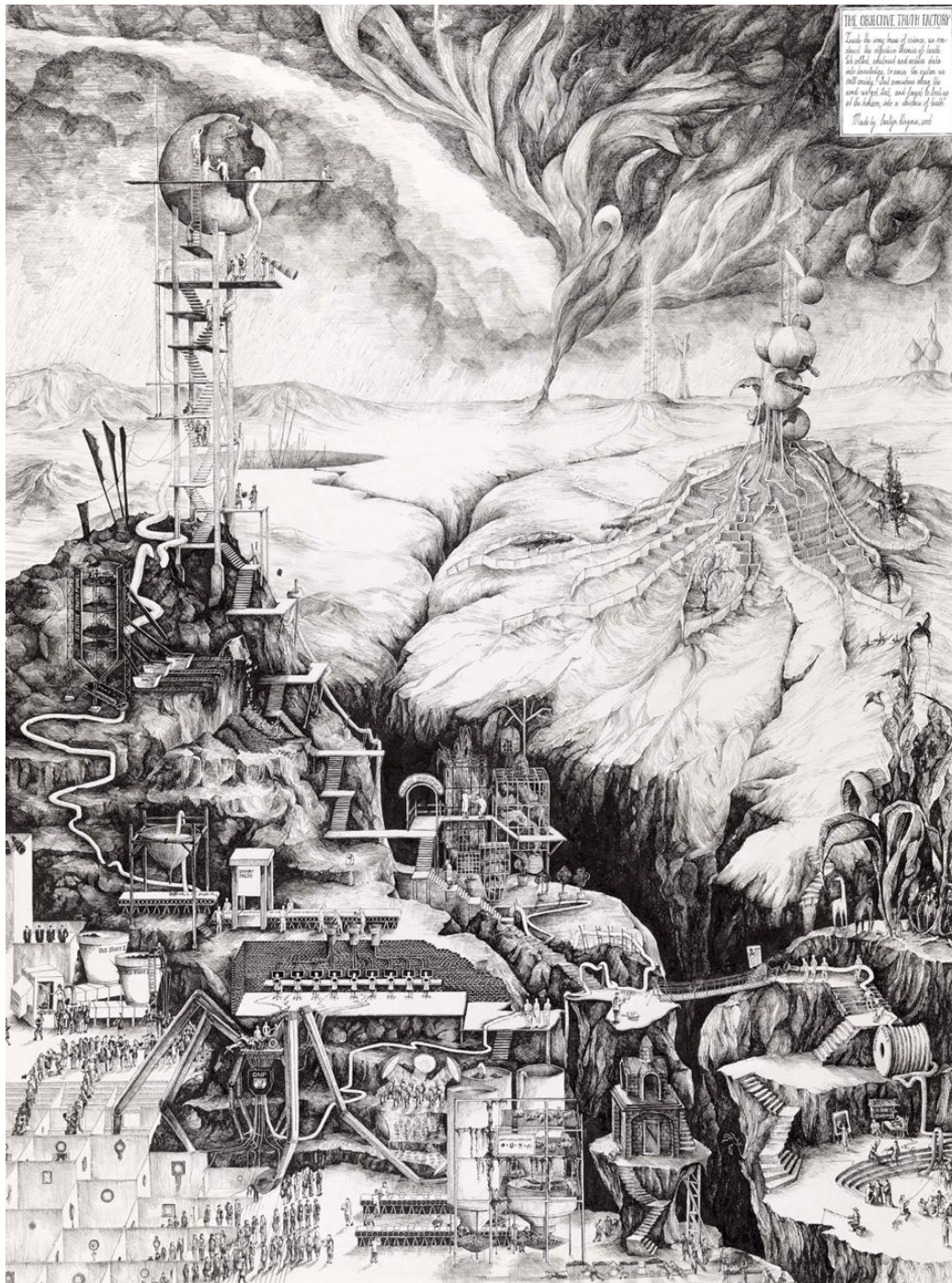


Figure 1 - Carlijn Kingma: The Objective Truth Factory

"I agree with Goethe when he says that to fully understand great creations it is insufficient to have seen the final form; you must also have listened to its process of becoming."

(Zweig, 2017, p. 164, my translation)

Acknowledgements

‘Welcome to this text, dear reader. I invite you onboard my train of thoughts’, the opening to my thesis reads. It is certainly my train of thoughts in the sense that all mistakes in this thesis are mine. For everything else I am indebted to many others who talked and listened to me in the process of becoming of this thesis. Most of all I am grateful to my late parents, John and Ria, who instilled in me the love for education.

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1 – General Introduction

My study ‘Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education: Educators’ Experiences with Subjectification and Imagination’s Heartwork at a Dutch college’ has some elements in it that require unpacking. In this introductory chapter, I set up a canvas for exploring the experiences of educators in Dutch Senior Secondary Vocational Education through the lenses of Biesta’s concept of ‘subjectification’ and what Hogan has termed ‘imagination’s heartwork’. This foundation is crucial to eventually provide a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education.

I will start by commenting on my use of art and language. From there, I proceed to an outline of the thesis plan before discussing the particularities of this research between two schools of thought about education research. Finally, I introduce my international audience to the Dutch education system.

1.1 Introduction to the thesis

1.1.1 Artful education research

The Objective Truth Factory (Kingma, 2016) is the image that opens my hermeneutic phenomenological study into Dutch educators’ experiences with good education at one institute for senior secondary vocational education in The Netherlands.

The way art conveys its message through experience rather than through cognition, makes it a powerful contribution to phenomenological research in education. Interaction with the views of the artist, as she voices them in a video on her website (Kingma, 2017) in this case, opens opportunities for hermeneutics. For this reason, I will use references to art and works of art throughout my work.

Kingma’s drawing depicts a dystopian scene of the beginning of knowledge. Knowledge is made in an ivory tower, forced through an objective truth funnel, and reduced in a binary press to ones and zeros ready for use in a society of efficiency, speed and growth. On the other side of a bridge too dangerous to cross we see the odd ones out, ‘resonating on beauty, values, morals and ethics, or how to harmonise our intellectual, social and cultural life.’ (Kingma, 2016). Crossing this bridge against all odds is what educators in senior secondary vocational education facilitate for their students, preparing them for a life in which they find a balance between these seemingly separated parts of the real world. How individual educators do this, in other words, how educators in SSVE create opportunities for their students’ subjectification in addition to preparing their students for work is uncovered in conversations I held with twelve of them.

In other words, when I use the term good education, what I refer to is Biesta's suggestion: education balancing the three domains of purpose, aimed at making sure that at some point students no longer need education but can live their own life, and live it well (Heimans & Biesta, 2020, p. 102).

1.1.2 On Language

The use of fine arts and its metaphors in this thesis is a means of explicating meaning in what is usually expressed through a different, more direct language. The role of language in this study cannot be underestimated, as it both creates and solves problems. I will discuss this in various sections of this thesis. When talking about continental European and Anglo-American analytical education research, I discuss the distinctly different meaning of commonly used terms. Describing the history of vocational education in The Netherlands, I explain why I choose to use the term 'educators' throughout this thesis. When introducing Biesta's domains of purpose of education, the change from the 'language of education' to the 'language of learning' is touched upon. When I position myself as a researcher, I talk about the importance of language and dialect in my personal life (see also van Waes, 2021). And, inevitably, language appears as a potential limitation of this research project, which is executed in Dutch yet written in English.

Apart from these issues, there is the matter of the particulars of accepted academic writing. As a reader of this thesis, I hope you will enjoy the tone and style of my writing. I find inspiration for this style in Douglas Hofstadter's words:

So many academics get so caught up in show-offy, jargon-filled fads and trends. Gradually they become immune to the goal of clear communications and to the joy of beautiful, simple, evocative, concrete language. (in Sword, 2017, p. 119).

It goes without saying that rigour and precision are called for in academic writing, yet I fully concur with the authors who claim

[m]yths about what makes academic writing "academic" need to be scrutinised and debunked for the sake of scholarship [...], rather than becoming an exercise in "painting by numbers." (Biesta et al., 2024, p. 124).

1.1.3 Chapter outline

Having discussed art and language, the remaining section of this chapter provides an outline of the content of my thesis, detailing the structure and focus of its chapters and sections. In it, I describe the process of making meaning from teachers' experiences of their own good education in terms of Biesta's three domains of purpose of education –qualification, socialisation and subjectification– and Hogan's concept of imagination's heartwork.

In the remainder of this **general introduction** chapter, I briefly outline the debate between analytical and continental thought about education research. For an introduction to the continental side of this debate, I draw on Dutch and Flemish researchers Van Kan and Elen et al. among others. For the analytical stance, I make use of the ideas of Peters and Bruner. When concluding good education research and good education may find itself in either school, I position myself as a teacher and a researcher on Carr's, Friesen's and Biesta's side.

Having described the theoretical background of my education research, I introduce the education system in which the research was conducted. In particular, I go into the position of senior secondary vocational education in the Dutch education system. At the age of 12 pupils stream into one of three tracks in secondary education: pre-university, general or vocational. At 16 the pupils in the vocational track start senior secondary vocational education, and after courses of 1 to 3 years they enter the labour market or continue their studies in higher vocational education.

After the practicalities of the Dutch education system, I focus on the law governing vocational education, and its concept of triple qualification. Senior secondary vocational education is to prepare its students for a job, for active participation in society, and for life-long development.

Having declared my theoretical stance and having introduced the education system and the law on vocational education, the final introductory remarks relate to the institute at which the participants in my study are employed.

Once I have constructed this frame for my canvas on good senior secondary vocational education, I proceed, in the **literature review**, sketching the main theoretical grounds on which my research questions are based, Biesta's three domains of purpose in education: qualification, socialisation, and subjectification (2016b). Subsequently, I relate this theory to Dutch senior secondary vocational education, discussing the concepts of language, coming into the world, responsibility, freedom and democracy.

In the next section in the literature review I depict critiques on Biesta's theory by several philosophers of education. Ideas related to subjectification in education, worked out by Ruitenberg (2016), Masschelein and Simons (2012), and Deumier et al. ((2024) complete this discussion. In what follows, I present an alternative view on education as offered by Hogan: imagination's heartwork (2010). In this theory Hogan presents education as an independent practice, in which quality is experienced quality and progression can be made through continuous care for educational practice, tradition and community.

A historical sketch of Dutch vocational education followed by three critical sociological and political comments on the state of affairs in Dutch society related to education completes the literature

review. All three critical authors, Dr. K. Putters (2019), Dr. H. Tjeenk Willink (2018) and Ir. M. van Vroonhoven MBA (2024), call for an increase in agency and responsibility for the professionals working in education. The historical development of senior secondary vocational education has led to experienced practitioners who qualify as teachers through a short part-time course. This contrasts with other tracks in the education system in which teachers qualify through a 4-year full time course in higher education. This contrast forms the basis for one of the research questions in this thesis.

At the end of the literature review, I present my views on good education at the institute at which the participants in my study are employed, which lead to the introduction of my four research questions:

- How do educators in Dutch senior secondary vocational education create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear?
- What does 'good education' mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch senior secondary vocational education?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch senior secondary vocational education?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

Now that the base layer has been applied it is time to prepare my pigments. In 'Towards Experienced Practice', as my **methodology** chapter is called, I make a case for hermeneutic phenomenology to study the experiences of educators at the institute. As in the previous chapter, I start with a concise history, and I continue with a discussion of the way Van Manen (2016a, 2016b) and Friesen (2012) relate hermeneutic phenomenology to education. I then proceed to an explanation of my decisions regarding my sampling strategy, and my data collection methods (questionnaire and semi-structured conversations). I underline the relevance of my approach to the explication of the data. In this approach, I combine phenomenological methods (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 2016b; Watts, 2014) with narrative and portraiture ones (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997; Legg, 2013). Appearing as a cameo in my canvas, I comment on my positionality as a researcher and explain why I consider myself both an insider and an outsider. In addition, I sketch my bio-pedagogical history. Also in this chapter, I discuss how Nel Noddings and bell hooks informed my ethical considerations. A preliminary sketch of one of the participants' portraits shows the decisions I made in several stages of my research. I conclude the methodology chapter by describing limitations to my approach.

The experiences of educators in senior secondary vocational education are on display in the 'Educational Experiences' exhibition rooms: the two **data presentation and explication** chapters,

‘Educational Experiences – A group picture’ and ‘Educational Experiences – Twelve Diptychs’. Data from the questionnaire are presented in the form of a group picture, which leads to the identification of six determining features of good senior secondary vocational education. Findings originating from twelve conversations with individual participants come to light in twelve individual portraits in diptych form, the left panels of which are fictionalised accounts of classes. The right panels are the result of a process of transcribing recorded conversations. Both wholistic¹ and selective re-reading and re-writing exposes the meaning of good senior secondary vocational education in the eyes of the participants.

In the **final** chapter, ‘The Meaning of Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education’, the findings presented in both ‘Educational Experiences’ chapters lead to answers to my research questions. In this exhibition catalogue, I link these findings to Biesta’s and Hogan’s theories and other literature discussed earlier, I point to the implications of my research for good senior secondary vocational education, and I present recommendations for Dutch vocational institutes in general, and the institute that allowed for time for me and the participants to complete this research in particular.

My work indicates the need for a turn towards attention for subjectification and imagination’s heartwork to allow for the provision of good senior secondary vocational education. Throughout my thesis, I develop a lens for this insight, added by recommendations to effect this turn in the final chapter.

With this thesis I further aim to make a case for qualitative research in Dutch senior secondary vocational education², and I present a hermeneutic phenomenological method to facilitate this type of research.

¹ Van Manen’s spelling (2016b, p. 92).

² In the remainder of this thesis I use the abbreviation SSVE to indicate Senior Secondary Vocational Education.

1.2 Introduction to two configurations of education research

This section contrasts the continental European and Anglo-American traditions in education research, situating the thesis within both these paradigms. This comparative perspective is particularly relevant for addressing the research questions related to the different influences on educators' ideas about good education.

My experiences in education, as a pupil in The Netherlands, as a student in Belgium and Russia and as a teacher in Moldova and The Netherlands, are all based in continental European pedagogical thought about education. Writing this thesis at a British university, rooted in the Anglo-American analytical tradition, this paragraph considers the question what I talk about when I talk about education and education research, and it marks off the playing field for interpretation of my thesis about good education.

Education, and research into education, for me has always been about *Pädagogik* and *Didaktik*. These are the two pillars of the independent field of education studies in the continental European tradition. *Pädagogik* combines education and upbringing and takes an interest in the child. Van Manen describes it as a 'primordial adult-child relation that is biological and cultural, ancient and present, mundane and mysterious, sensuous and sensitive to the ethical demand as it is experienced in pedagogical relations, situations, and actions' (van Manen, 2016a, p. 20). Van Kan gives a comparable description of the basis from which the continental approach of education has grown: based on *Pädagogik* (accompanying children in the process of their development) and *Didaktik* (teaching children skills and knowledge). Quoting Ponte & Ax (2012) he defines continental *Pädagogik* as follows:

This science seeks answers to questions about what kind of human beings children are and should become and how they can be raised toward becoming such human beings, taking into account the social context in which this process of upbringing takes place (Van Kan, 2013, p. 14).

The other pillar, *Didaktik*, is concerned with general and subject specific theories of teaching and learning, and with the relationship between the two³. In Dutch *Didaktik* a shift has taken place since

³ This shows essential differences in meaning between the word pairs *Pädagogik*/pedagogy and *Didaktik*/didactics. To avoid confusion, I use the German terms in this thesis.

the 1970s from model thinking to more empirical work, and parallel to this, the term *Didaktik* has given way to *onderwijskunde* which translates as ‘education science’ (Elen et al., 2006, p. 255).

Another cornerstone of continental European education lies in thought about the aims of education, which is reflected in the German education terminology. Whereas *Ausbildung*, *Erziehung* and *Bildung* can all be translated as ‘education’, in German these terms denote quite different concepts. The first term, *Ausbildung*, is used for a program at an educational institute or internship aimed at practical skills and specific knowledge for a profession. *Erziehung* and *Bildung* are more closely related to each other, as they both represent conscious processes of personal development. *Erziehung* is the ‘intentional process in which children or youth are influenced by educators (*Erziehenden* in German) in such a way that they develop desirable traits of character, behaviours and convictions, and suppress or avoid undesirable ones. The concept of *Bildung* emphasises self-development of character and personality which finds its origins in contact and confrontation with other people and unknown formative situations’ (Mandry, 2023, p. 417, my translation).

Scholars in the continental school regularly refer to foundational theories laid down by Rousseau, Schleiermacher and other giants of *Pädagogik*, *Erziehung* and *Bildung* constituting the discipline of education. In contrast, as recently as 1963 one of the leading figures in the Anglo-American analytical school, R.S. Peters found himself ‘unable to unearth any previous explicit attempt to demarcate the concept of ‘education’’ (Peters, 2010, p. 1). J.S. Bruner also shows an essentially different approach to education compared to continental European *Pädagogik* based education. The four themes in *The Process of Education* (1977): the role of structure in learning and how it may be made central in teaching; readiness for learning; the nature of intuition; the desire to learn and how it may be stimulated, clearly point to education as a subject for psychological research, rather than to education research as a discipline.

It is this search for the concepts of education and being educated in the Anglo-American tradition on the one hand and the search for what is educational in the continental European tradition on the other, that illustrates the contrasting outlooks on education. This in turn leads to a different conceptualisation of education research. Whereas in the continental European tradition education is a discipline in itself, in the Anglo-American analytical tradition it is sometimes considered ‘not a ‘proper’ academic discipline when compared to other disciplines’ (Wyse, 2020), but an applied field of study for other disciplines such as philosophy, history, sociology and psychology (Biesta, 2020a, p. 79; Furlong & Whitty, 2017, p. 14).

It may be clear that there is a striking difference between the two schools of thought concerning the essence of the field of education and education research. My study contains elements from both

traditions, as both approaches may contribute to the quality of Dutch senior secondary vocational education. Following Carr's point

that there are different (often opposed) ideas about education, and that the prospects of professional development and progress stand to be enhanced by an educated appreciation of a range of diverse and perhaps logically incompatible educational possibilities (2003, p. 3).

In the case of Dutch SSVE, philosophy of education can make a substantial contribution to its theoretical underpinning, whereas an approach from *Pädagogik* can contribute to daily practice, which is historically based on industry procedures and has more recently been influenced by insights from education science.

1.3 The Dutch Education System

Within both the European continental and the Anglo-American schools of thought, a range of varying education systems have been developed over the years. Therefore, the next logical step for me in writing this thesis is to provide an insight in the structure of the Dutch system to indicate the position of SSVE in it. When describing the historical development of vocational education in The Netherlands, I will come back to this issue in more detail. The subsequent sections delve into the specific policies, the structure and the societal roles of SSVE. This base layer is vital for exploring the possibilities for good education within the Dutch framework.

The Dutch education system is based on the following three characteristic elements:

- Early selection & streaming
- Transfer between streams
- Compulsory education between the ages of five and sixteen leading to a starting qualification⁴

Even though education is compulsory from the age of five, most children in The Netherlands start their career in education at the age of four. After eight years of primary education (groups 1 – 8), based on the so-called transition test and the school's advice, pupils continue their career in one of three tracks in secondary education: six years pre-university, five years senior general secondary, or four years pre-vocational education. Having completed pre-university education, pupils receive their starting qualification, and are over sixteen, which means that they may end their careers in

⁴ The starting qualification is an instrument to fight youth unemployment which was introduced in 2007. In addition to compulsory education, compulsory qualification is in place for youths between the ages of 16-18 who have not yet achieved a diploma at ISCED level 3.

education. Most however, continue into higher education at research universities or universities of applied sciences. The five-year senior secondary general programme also ends with a starting qualification and most pupils having reached the age of sixteen. This diploma grants the right of admission into bachelor programmes at universities of applied sciences, but not into those at research universities. With this diploma it is also possible to continue to year five of pre-university education. The diploma of pre-vocational education is different, as it is not considered a starting qualification, nor does it lead to admission into higher education. Having completed four years of pre-vocational secondary education, pupils can continue into year four of senior secondary general or year one of senior secondary vocational education (boxed in green in fig.2), which is the sector in education I will focus on in this thesis. Senior secondary vocational education is provided in institutes called MBO Colleges⁵.

⁵ In the Dutch system, and in this thesis, the word college is used for education institutes providing senior secondary vocational education. The majority of these colleges in the Netherlands are publicly funded and privately managed (a small minority are both privately funded and managed).

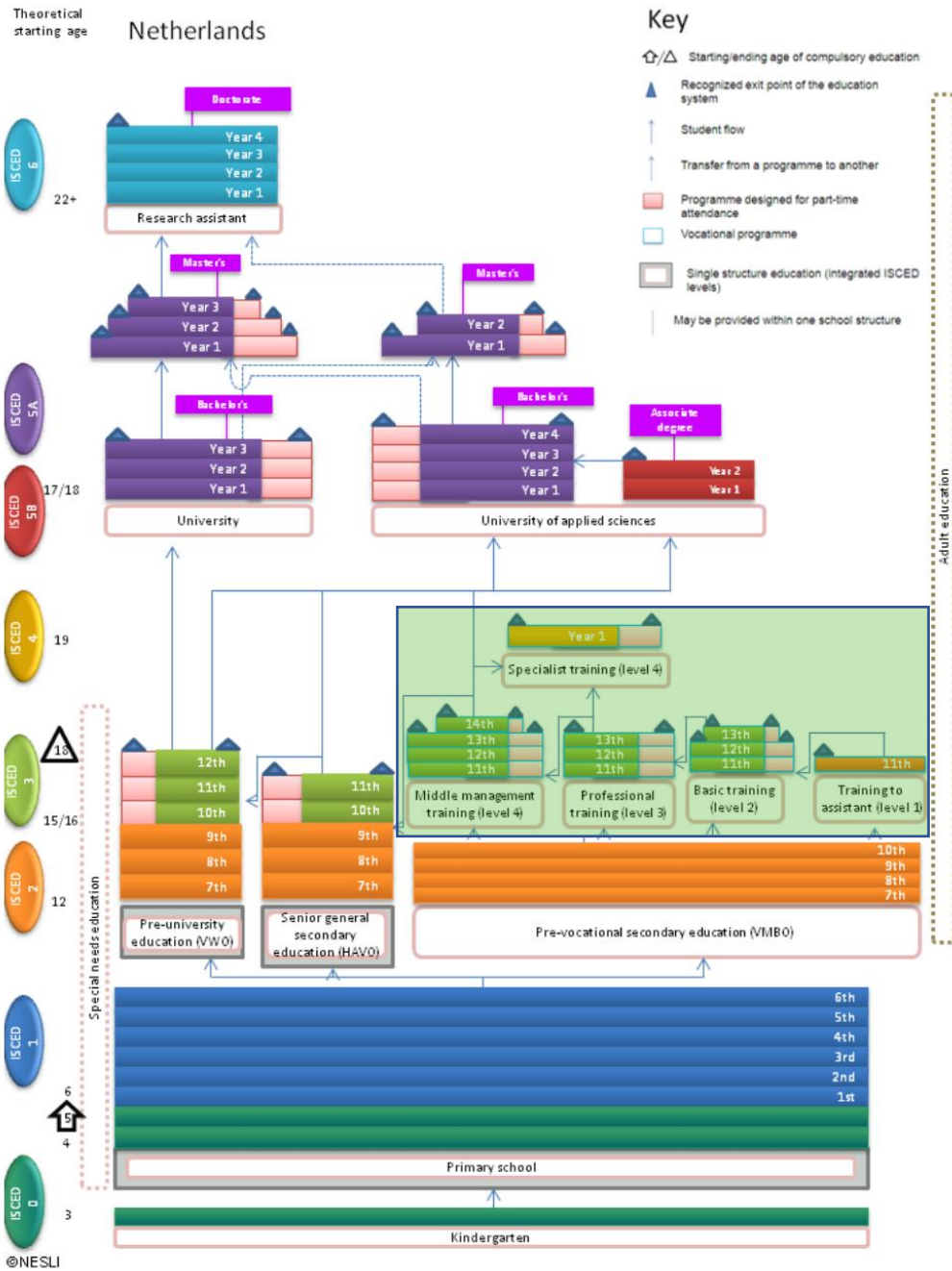


Figure 2 - The Dutch Education System (OECD, 2014, p. 18)

1.3.1 SSVE and its place in the system

Even though senior secondary vocational education is treated as one type of education –both in society and in policy– fig. 2 shows that in practice it is a complex system consisting of four levels in need of further explanation.

In principle, all levels in SSVE prepare their students for work. From level 4, it is also possible to continue studies at universities of applied sciences. The lower level (1) in SSVE is the only one not

commonly referred to by its number, and the only one not considered a starting qualification. At this level, called entry level, courses are offered which, after one year, lead to jobs at assistant level (21.6% in 2016), but more often to a level 2 course (47.2%) (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2018, p. 43). Level 2 qualifications, also called basic vocational qualifications, can be obtained in one to two years' time and prepare students for operational jobs such as hairdresser or mechanic. The next level consists of two-to-three-year courses, preparing students to do a job independently. Line cooks and receptionists are typically level 3 graduates. The highest level in Dutch SSVE, level 4, can be achieved through a one-year specialist course after a level 3 course, or through a three- or four-year middle management course.

Independent of the level of qualification, all school based senior secondary vocational courses include an industry based practical placement, ranging from 250 hours for a 1000 hours one year level two course, to 1350 hours for a 4000 hours 4 years level 4 qualification (Onderwijsinspectie, 2016). Another way to obtain a senior secondary vocational diploma is industry-based. This so called BBL pathway (opposed to the school-based BOL pathway described above) requires potential students to have a job in the industry, with an employer willing and able to offer vocational training, and to go to school for one or two days per week.

In the academic year 2019-2020 512,946 students were enrolled in SSVE (CBS, 2020a), whereas in the same year 337,255 pupils attended the final three years of pre-university and general secondary education combined (CBS, 2020b). This ratio indicates the relevance of SSVE for society: of all people in the final years of secondary education, a little over 60% are in senior secondary vocational education. It further indicates the need for SSVE to provide good education, which is broader than vocational training, if SSVE is to contribute to society as a whole. The system in which pupils are placed in their separate tracks at the age of 12 includes the risk of inequality. Pre-university and general secondary education have a broad curriculum and leave many opportunities for pupils to decide their future careers at a later age. Pupils in the (pre-) vocational track are taught fewer general subjects and decide their future careers early. Vocational training, Biesta's domain of qualification, and introduction to the world of work in a specific industry, can therefore not suffice as a curriculum in SSVE. As the next sections shows, this is a concern in national education policy.

1.3.2 The triple qualification

Having established its position in the education system and its relevance for society, I briefly want to introduce the purpose of SSVE as indicated in national policy. The 1996 law on vocational and adult education (WEB) requires vocational education to have a broader scope than just qualifying students for jobs. It prescribes vocational colleges to deliver programmes with a so-called triple qualification:

Qualification for work and career, qualification for citizenship and qualification for lifelong development - formerly called lifelong learning (de Bruijn et al., 2017, p. 3). Because of these three aims, the term triple qualification was minted for courses in SSVE.

The attainment targets of courses in senior secondary vocational education are laid down in so-called qualification profiles: descriptions of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed as a starting employee in the chosen field. These profiles are written by occupational-branch specific knowledge centres (SBB) in which social partners and education are represented, and which are subsequently established by the government (de Bruijn et al., 2017, p. 18).

The triple qualification and the use of qualification profiles ensure that SSVE curricula do not only contain job-specific courses. In particular the inclusion of qualification for citizenship supports Biesta's domain of socialisation in a broader sense than introducing students to the values and habits of their future field of work.

1.3.3 ROCs and the college

This section introduces ROCs, Regional Education Centres, and the specific vocational college where this research is conducted. This institutional context provides necessary insights into the practical realities of Dutch SSVE education.

Within the Dutch education system, SSVE is provided by multi-sectoral regional (vocational) education centres, ROCs and agricultural (vocational) education centres, AOCs. My research is conducted in one of the many college locations of one of the largest ROCs in the Netherlands, with 31,796 students in 2018-2019 (MBO-Raad, 2020). The ROC's policy in organising education is labelled 'small within large', meaning that all twenty colleges may formulate their own vision and organise education processes accordingly. However, the colleges are not the smallest entity, teams of educators are. Education teams develop their own education concepts befitting their courses and the target groups they cater for. The teacher teams at one college are represented by the educators taking part in this research project.

A college in the Amsterdam metropolitan area with 3958 students in 2018-2019 (ROC van Amsterdam, 2019) is where I do my research project. The college's mission statement promises students to 'offer education that challenges you to develop into an appreciated craftsman, an active citizen and a successful student.' This mission statement opens opportunities for educators. It refers to 'challenging' students and becoming 'appreciated' and as such include objectives for educators to do 'heartwork', either with a focus on the relationship with their subject matter, or on the

relationship with their students. At the same time, the call to provide challenging education supports educators to take initiatives for subjectification.

The mission statement guides the courses for any job at SSVE levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 that can be done at Schiphol Airport - only 15 minutes away from the college by public transport. The ambition of the college therefore is to be the leading Dutch school for aviation related education. This ambition is reflected in the 29 courses on offer ranging from facility management, airport security, aircraft maintenance, travel & hospitality services, airport logistics to cabin crew. These courses are primarily aimed at 16-to-19-year-olds, but are attended by older students as well, mainly those who need an additional diploma to further their careers.

1.4 Conclusion

In this introduction I have attempted to frame my thesis' canvas and claimed a position for it in between the continental European and analytical Anglo-American oeuvres. I outlined the position of SSVE in the Dutch education system, leaving aside problems inherent to that system. Further, I sketched the statutory purposes of SSVE and referred to the domains of purpose in education that make for good education according to Biesta. I already alluded to and will comment on the daylight between these two positions on the purposes of education in the following literature review. Finally, I marked out the college, the background for my empirical research. I showed its focus on vocational training, and indicated where room for a broader idea on vocational education can be found.

Now, it is time to choose a colour palette for my painting of good SSVE.

2 – Literature Review

Having framed my canvas in the introduction, I now introduce the colours that will paint the picture of good SSVE in present day Dutch society at the college. To do so, I will first present Biesta's theory of three domains of purpose in education. Critiques and additions to the theory are added, and to that background I paint Hogan's concept of imagination's heartwork. Once I have identified these theoretical positions on good education, I depict SSVE in its historical development and its functioning in present day Dutch society. Subsequently, a ray of light draws the attention to the college, the place where possible solutions can be found to the problems arising in the picture, its policy and the reasons why there is a possibility for good education there. In doing so, I illustrate that Gadamer's 'continual opposition between the educational task of the university and the practical utility which society and the state expect from it' (Gadamer, 1992, p. 59) is even more relevant for SSVE than it is for the university.

2.1 Good Education and its three domains of purpose in Dutch SSVE

'[T]he very point of education is to enhance the capacity of students to act, think and judge; the very point of education, to put it differently, is to make sure that at some point students no longer need education but can live their own life, and live it well.' (Heimans & Biesta, 2020, p. 102).

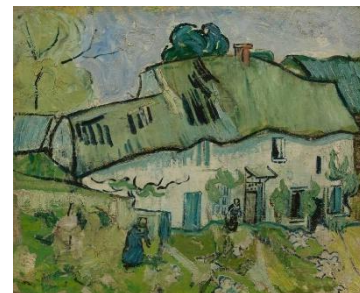
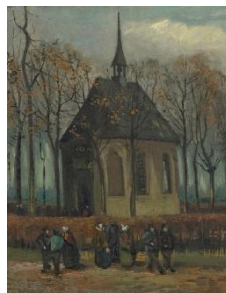
The pivotal concept in this research into Dutch SSVE is Gert Biesta's theory of good education and the domains of purpose of education, as developed in his four volume 'trilogy' *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (2016a), *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (2016b), *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013a) and *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (2017). Also, I refer to *Educational Research: An Unorthodox Introduction* (2020a), and *World-Centred Education: A View for the Present* (2022), as concepts developed earlier return in these two works. In this section I discuss Biesta's ideas from the point of view of Dutch SSVE, followed by a discussion of several critiques of Biesta's theory. Later in this chapter I discuss why Dutch SSVE can provide good education in these terms. Conversations with my participants, as presented in chapter 5 'Educational Experiences – Twelve Diptychs', disclose whether or not they experience good education in SSVE.

To understand Biesta, it is relevant to know what he considers common sense thinking about education: 'the insertion of newcomers into a particular order. Education is seen in terms of the creation of particular identities, the lifelong learner, the good citizen, the high-achieving student, and in terms of the creation of a competitive, stable, and successful social order. For this to be possible, the educational process itself has to be depicted as a technology, as an instrument that can

be put to work to bring about predetermined ends.’ (Biesta, 2016a, p. 99). Against these ideas about education, Biesta poses a view of education based on what education is for, rather than what it should produce.

Following the main argument Biesta makes in *Educational Research* (2020a), good education answers the question what it is for in function of three domains of purpose: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Qualification has to do with the ways in which students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to do certain things. In SSVE this relates to particular vocational knowledge and skills, but also to behavioural aspects of daily practice as a colleague in the workplace and as an account for business partners. Socialisation, the second domain, is the domain in which students are introduced into existing traditions, cultures and ways of being and doing. Apart from introducing students into general, societal traditions, SSVE plays an important role in vocational socialisation of their students, the process of becoming a competent starter in a particular vocational culture and tradition.

Because education also always impacts on the person (ibid, p. 34) and the world in general regularly asks something from subjects, Biesta suggests adding a third domain of purpose to these two commonly accepted ones: subjectification, the process of becoming a subject connecting education as a process of emancipation (Biesta, 2020a, p. 34)



Qualification

Socialisation

Subjectification

Figure 3 - Biesta's theory applied to vocational education explained through Van Gogh ⁶

⁶ Courtesy of Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation).

For someone to become a painter in Van Gogh's age, being able to draw in a lifelike fashion was a requirement belonging to the skill set of the trade, and therefore belongs to the purpose of qualification in an art school. Going outside, selecting a recognisable theme, and depicting it in a particular style, are elements of accepted practices of the trade and as such belong to the element of socialisation. The final picture though, is instantly

In the following paragraphs I will unpick a set of concepts Biesta uses to underpin the domain of subjectification and relate these to SSVE.

2.1.1 Underpinnings of subjectification

Language

In *Beyond Learning* (2016a), Biesta introduces language as a potential problem in thinking about education. One of the issues, to which I have already alluded, lies in the difference between the Anglo-American and the continental European traditions, each of which has developed their own education vocabulary, which is suitable in one tradition, but can have a different meaning when used in the other.

The issue Biesta draws our particular attention to is the gradual replacement of what he terms the language of education by the language of learning. Learning is the last thing educators should be concerned about, he admits to sometimes think. Biesta mentions four developments that have contributed to the increased language of learning: the impact of new -constructivist- theories of learning, the -postmodern- critique of authoritarian forms of teaching, the increased number of people involved in nonformal and informal learning, and the individualising impact of neoliberal politics on education. Two of the main resulting problems Biesta identifies are that 'learning' is a process term and that it is an individualising term – unlike 'education'. The problem with learning as a process term is that it is empty: it can only acquire meaning and become desirable once the content and the purpose are defined. The danger with learning as an individualising term is that as learning can only be done for oneself, attention in the educational debate shifts away from the relational element in education.

In the language of learning, the learner is seen as an individual consumer of education as a commodity. This in turn, makes schools providers of schooling aiming to fulfil the needs of the learner-customer, as defined by the learner-customer. In the case of SSVE this idea presents itself as a double problem. Not only the learner-customer desires to be taught according to their individual shopping list, also industry considers SSVE colleges to be providers of human resources according to employers' preferences.

recognisable as a Van Gogh. In the sense that this scene called for a response of the artist and could not have been rendered this way by any other painter, this picture is an example of Van Gogh's subjectification, and an example of what education should offer the opportunity for.

Biesta concludes that the language of learning, with its typical terminology of learning goals, league tables and ‘what works’, undermines professional thinking about what is desirable in education from a societal-democratic perspective. And not only professional thinking is undermined, but, as Pols found in his study in six Dutch colleges, while teachers in SSVE may have strong educational insights, a specific vocabulary to talk about their educational ideas is often lacking (2019, p. 16). This finding was corroborated by Priestley, Biesta and Robinson in their UK study into teacher agency, where they found an ‘absence of a robust professional discourse about teaching’ (2015, p. 57). This lack of vocabulary, discourse and therefore of voice of professionals may be one of the causes for the influence the language of learning has in Dutch education. The impact on Dutch society of parallels of this language of learning, related to neo-liberal political-economic thought, I describe when discussing Tjeenk-Willink, Putters and Van Vroonhoven in section 2.5.2 ‘Twenty-first Century SSVE’.

In opposition to the language of learning, Biesta poses the language of education, which is concerned with the question ‘How can we respond responsibly to, and how can we live peacefully with what and with whom is other?’ (2016a, p. 15). It considers learning to be something not to possess nor acquire through education, but as an event that occurs in response to a disturbance – often in the form of a difficult question asked by a teacher. In this language education provides opportunities for individuals to come into the world. This brings us to the principal colour of Biesta’s painting of subjectification.

Coming into the world

Recognising language as a potential problem in defining the purpose of education, I nevertheless discuss the idea of coming into the world as one of the central concepts of subjectification and education. Instead of following the popular, and originally Kantian, view of rational autonomy as the goal of education stimulating emancipation, cognitive development and moral development, Biesta develops his point of view from the tradition of primacy of intersubjective social practices, as found in Dewey and Habermas (Biesta, 2016a, p. 36).

With Dewey, Biesta argues these practices are practical meaning-guided and meaning-generating processes between engaged partners, in which what each does depends upon and influences what the other does. For education, this means that students cannot discover meaning through observation from the outside, as meaning is not embedded in objects, but in social practices. This meaning can only be presented through social practices. And as Dewey describes communication as encounters between subjects, communication in education adds to the unpredictability and ‘beautiful risk’ of education.

Combining the approaches of Dewey and Derrida, Biesta terms this approach deconstructive pragmatism (Biesta, 2013a, p. 26).

Before continuing the introduction of the underpinnings of subjectification, the concept of deconstructive pragmatism as introduced by Biesta needs to be discussed further. Biesta's choice for Dewey's pragmatism as described above, is a natural one when considering the influence of reform pedagogy on Dutch educational practice and the influence of Dutch educational researchers as Kohnstamm and Langeveld. Dewey's pragmatism seems to be the Anglo-American paradigm that is closest to continental European *Pädagogik*. They share the idea of social practices as the way to present meaning, to which Dewey adds the idea of social practices as communication between subjects.

At first sight, Biesta's choice for Derrida's deconstruction is a less natural one. However, Biesta turns to deconstruction not as a method of textual exegesis. What Biesta takes from Derrida is the idea of the necessity of otherness, which leads to the impossibility of a metaphysics of presence: there is no fixed foundation for truth, there is *écriture* and *différance* (Gadamer, 1989, p. 109). More importantly in the context of subjectification, Derrida's necessity of otherness, leaves room for the possibility of the unforeseeable (Caputo and Cook in Ruitenberg, 2016, p. IX). This possibility of the unforeseeable is what determines the idea of the open and generative character of communication (Biesta, 2013a, p. 26).

This defining element of communication is lacking in Dewey's theory. Therefore, Derrida is essential for Biesta to be able to claim Dewey's pragmatism must always be in deconstruction because it can only exist in communication, and communication always entails the risk of change and transformation (Biesta, 2013a, p. 41).

It is this deconstructive pragmatism that opens opportunities for subjectification in the practice of educators who are in conversation with their students. These opportunities arise when, accepting Derrida's point of the non-existence of a metaphysics of presence, both the student and the educator bring their equal meanings into the conversation with the other.

In a critique of humanism, Biesta suggests a shift away from the question what a subject *is*, to the question 'where the subject, as a unique, singular being *comes into presence*' (Biesta, 2016a, p. 41). The answer to this question is found in Arendt (1998) and Levinas (2015). In Arendt's concept of action, we find that subjectification occurs at the moment when an agent brings something new into to the world which is responded to by others. This idea forms the basis of Biesta's beautiful risk of

education. Levinas plays a similar role as Arendt in Biesta's theorising subjectification through the introduction of the next important colour on the palette, responsibility.

Responsibility

Biesta's discussion of the concept of responsibility in education is a multi-faceted one. Referring to Arendt, there is responsibility of educators for their students and responsibility of educators for the world. But at a different level, where Biesta sides with Levinas, responsibility is the basis of any human relationship. For clarification of this position, we need to consider the difference between the rational community originating in the Kantian tradition, and what Biesta terms the other community which comes into being through intersubjective social practices. In the rational community knowledge is communicated through *what* is said, whereas in the other community, which Biesta links to the community of education, meaning is generated through *who* is speaking.

Referring to Dewey he counters the common conception, held in the rational community, of education as the transmission of information without any transformation or distortion. From the point of view of the other community this distortion may be 'the point at which students begin to find their own, responsive and responsible voice' (Biesta, 2016a, p. 69).

Biesta reads Levinas' concept of responsibility for the other as the condition for appearance in the world, not defining a priori what being human is. Opposing the idea that we are human through consciousness –I think therefore I am– Levinas, in Biesta's reading, argues that a subject is through a relationship of infinite and unconditional responsibility for the Other (Levinas, 2018). In instances when this responsibility matters, when being is interrupted, uniqueness-as-irreplaceability, subjectivity, emerges. Levinas sees subjectivity as an event that might happen but will not necessarily happen.

For education, the consequences of this reasoning are that we cannot steer our students towards responsibility but can only organise education in a way that provides opportunities for students to recognise calls upon their uniqueness and possibilities of subjectivity. In *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013a), Biesta clarifies this point when he introduces the concept of creativity drawing on Caputo. This is not about creativity as it is often discussed in education, a characteristic that is worth developing in children and maintaining as one grows older. Biesta sees creativity as the act of generation, creation, and more in particular, he sees education as a contribution to the creation of subjectivity. Following Caputo's reading of Genesis, Biesta's creation is not creation ex nihilo, but a process of inspiration and affirmation that what is there already is good. Creation in other words is accepting the risk of life. And it is in this sense that teachers, educational processes and practices contribute to, and have responsibility for, the emergence of the subjectivity of students. Whether or

not the event of subjectification will occur, remains a risk (2013a). In other words, the responsibility of the educator is a responsibility for what is to come, without the knowledge of what is to come (2016a, p. 148).

Discussing the responsibility of teachers for their students, Biesta explicitly warns that even though education operates through communication, communication does not equal education, as it is the teacher who brings something new to the educational situation, which transcends the self of the “learner” (Biesta, 2013a, p. 46). This position places Biesta in opposition to constructivist thinking on education, from which the teacher has emerged as a facilitator of learning. Biesta distinguishes here between *learning from* and *being taught by*. The former being a way in which students bring what teachers do or say within their own circle of understanding –as is expected in the rational community– whereas the latter refers to the experience where someone causes an insight from the outside that a student was not aware of (Biesta, 2013a, p. 53). The fact that this experience cannot be produced at will by a teacher, indicates that teaching is a power relying on interaction. The role of the teacher, on the other hand, is an important one: providing difficult knowledge and inconvenient truths and working on the distinction between what is desired and what is desirable (Biesta, 2013a, p. 57).

As appearing in the world is always appearing in the world in response to a call by others, it is the response that makes someone a self (Biesta, 2016a, p. 50). We will see a comparable idea later, in the presentation of Hogan’s work on imagination’s heartwork when he refers to Gadamer’s concept of dialogue (Gadamer, 1990, p. 383) and speaks of love where Biesta focuses on responsibility. One of the tasks of education is to provide opportunities for students to respond to new experiences. It is at this point that Biesta refers to Arendt’s famous description of education:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (2006, p. 193)

This introduces the next aspect of responsibility. Apart from the educator’s responsibility to provide opportunities for students to respond, educators have a responsibility for the world. This is the responsibility to ‘create and keep in existence a “worldly space” through which new beginnings can come into presence’ (Biesta, 2016a, p. 107). One of the defining characteristics of this worldly space,

its freedom in plurality, and one of its constituent values, democracy, are the next two hues Biesta applies to education and subjectification.

Freedom in Plurality

The concept of freedom is indispensable for subjectification. Freedom, however, is to be understood in the Arendtian sense: not as the freedom to do whatever we want to do, but as freedom to bring something new into the world, which can only be real if it appears in public space. In other words, following Levinas, which can only be real when we are called upon by the other. Hence freedom is always and only freedom in plurality.

When Biesta talks about freedom and education, he talks about the question whether and how education can contribute to the freedom of the human subject. He identifies two contradictions, one having to do with education as a powerful intervention aimed at freedom, the other with equality as the objective of emancipatory education. The first contradiction, also known as the educational paradox, is based in the Enlightenment. More specifically, it originates from Kant's answer to the question: 'What is Enlightenment?'. Man's release from his self-incurred tutelage, can only be achieved through education. But if education is the path leading from dependence to autonomy, Kant's next question is justified: 'How do I cultivate freedom through coercion?' (Biesta, 2013a, p. 80; Kant, 1784). In education, this question has led to the rise of different types of progressive education, and the idea that ultimately a choice for the freedom of a child could only mean a choice against society. On the other hand, critical pedagogy focuses on the analysis of oppressive structures, assuming that emancipation can follow from insight into the structures that determine their situation. This implies that the process of emancipation needs a starting point from the outside, that there must be someone, an emancipator, to point out how the structures work. In other words, the process of emancipation depends on inequality and dependency.

For equality as the objective of emancipatory education, Biesta turns to Rancière, who sees emancipation as escaping from a minority (Biesta, 2013a, p. 84), as a personal action, instead of an intervention by someone else. Emancipation in Rancière's view does not start from a position of inequality, but from a fundamental position of equality. The moment equality is tested, being the moment when action is taken presupposing equality, emancipation is actualized. Therefore, emancipation can be seen as subjectification: it is a coming into a common world on one's own terms. Applying this line of thinking to education, Rancière introduces the concept of the fundamental equality of intelligence of all human beings. Education should not be the explanation of what is to be learned by a superior intelligence to an inferior one but should be the seduction to use one's intelligence. In this perspective the task of the teacher is to *interrogate* –What do you see?

What do you think about it? What do you make of it? – and to *verify* that the work is done with attention (Biesta, 2013a, p. 94). From Rancière’s equality of intelligence, it is but a small step to democracy.

Democracy

Biesta poses that the relationship between education and democracy is often considered a psychological one, when education seems to have the task to ‘produce’ democratic citizens. Democracy in that way is the endpoint of democratic education as a process of development, which coincides with an instrumental view of education for individuals and prepares students to fit in with the existing political system. Democracy in this sense is about identity and sameness. Biesta makes a plea for a social conception of democracy, aimed at plurality and difference through inclusive ways of social and political action. What is needed is not only education *for* democracy, but also education *through* democracy, which in practice may start from engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994, p. 13).

Arendt sees education as a separate realm from public and political life. Part of the task of the school is to gradually introduce the child to the world by adults who take responsibility for the world (Arendt, 2006, p. 192; Biesta, 2013a, p. 109). Using arguments from Arendt, Biesta makes a case for thinking differently about education and democracy. Political existence, existing together in plurality, is not something we can learn for, but does appear in the lives of children, both at school and outside. Because school, unlike society, can pause to reflect on and learn from political existence and moments in which freedom arises, it is important not to separate the realm of politics from education.

Combining these two insights, democracy can be described as the moment when everyone has the opportunity to bring beginnings into the world of plurality and difference. The role of education is to offer these opportunities and have students reflect on their experiences. Through reflection on the experience of being able to act, and even more through reflection on the experience of not being able to act, students may start to appreciate the fragility of democracy. These moments of pause and reflection are education’s contribution to democratic societies, without education being the producer of democratic citizens.

2.1.2 Conclusions on Biesta’s concept of Good Education

Having focused on the purpose of education and coming into the world as newcomers, Biesta explores what it is that makes up the practices and processes of and in education educational instead of machine-like (2013a, p. x). Taking the globalisation of education as a starting point, which aims at predictable, measurable and risk-free education, Biesta presents a convincing argument why

the aim of education should be oriented toward the freedom and independence of those being educated (2013a, p. 2). In line with Meirieu, Biesta puts forward that education is a way to offer opportunities for dialogue with what and who is other and that its concern lies in the transformation of what is desired into what is desirable, linking education to democracy.

His conviction that when we refer to learning we do not describe a naturally occurring phenomenon, but make normative judgments about desirable change, leads him to develop a critique against the 'politics of learning' in the light of the weakness of education. Eventually the politics of learning may lead to people adopting a politically designed learner identity based on an individual duty, rather than a right, to learn, aimed at social cohesion rather than democratic participation and focused on economic growth rather than human development. Eventually, following the path of a pedagogy of cause and effect and learning outcomes, it might be possible to eliminate unpredictability in education, making social reproduction, insertion into existing orders of being, doing and thinking possible. However, for education aiming for the coming into the world of free subjects, a pedagogy is needed that is willing to take the beautiful risk of education (Biesta, 2013a).

The realisation of a pedagogy taking this beautiful risk of education partially depends on the virtuosity of educators. Not on the mastery of the skill of teaching, to be assessed by a never-ending checklist of competencies, but on virtue-based teaching with a crucial role for judgment in unpredictable situations. Teachers constantly need to make judgments about how to balance the different domains of purpose: qualification, socialisation and subjectification, and about what is educationally desirable.

To what extent twenty-first century SSVE policy and the Dutch education system allows or hinders educators to balance these domains, i.e. the practical implications of national policy, I outline in paragraph 2.5.2 'Twenty-first Century SSVE'. To what extent an institutional policy influences educators I discuss in paragraph 2.6 'The College Revisited – Policy, Subjectification and Heartwork'. First, I want to draw some attention to theoretical critique on Biesta's thought.

2.2 Critiquing Biesta

Biesta's image of education may seem convincing but is evidently not supported by all. It is critiqued by representatives of the continental European and the Anglo-American schools of education alike. In the following sections various scholars provide insights into the strengths and limitations of Biesta's theory. This critique and these alternative perspectives are relevant to my thesis two ways: as part of literature study into subjectification and as a broad variety of potential influences on educators in SSVE.

2.2.1 Thomas Aastrup Rømer

In *Gert Biesta – Education between Bildung and post-structuralism* (2020), Rømer argues that Biesta, is a philosopher of *Bildung*, despite being a post-structuralist. In the first place, Rømer introduces Biesta's concept of emancipative ignorance as a starting point for educational agency, combining 'post-structuralism, existential philosophy and pragmatism in an ever-open negotiation of pedagogical concepts' (ibid., p. 34).

Following Von Humboldt's definition of *Bildung* as depending on 'linking [of] the self to the world to achieve the most general, most animated, and most unrestrained interplay' (2020, p. 35) and having linked Biesta to systems theory and post-structuralism, Rømer concludes that as systems theory excludes an outside independent world, and post-structuralism reduces both the self and the world to discursive processes and power structures, leaving no room for interplay, Biesta's starting point does not leave room for *Bildung*. However, Rømer recognises that, unlike many critics of *Bildung*, Biesta does not accept the concept of learning devoid of cultural content and of the world, due to his being influenced by Dewey, Arendt and Levinas.

Rømer continues to discuss Biesta's three domains of purpose of education: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. He argues Biesta uses the three domains in three different, almost contradicting ways. First as a descriptive analytical scheme in which the parallel domains are equal and sometimes overlap as in a Venn diagram. Upon closer inspection, however, there seems to be a normative difference between qualification and socialisation on the one hand, and subjectification on the other. With subjectification Biesta refers to Arendt's concept of 'unique appearance', whereas the other two domains remain restricted to what Rømer refers to as the uniform structures of subject matter. The third interpretation Rømer distinguishes in Biesta's approach to the domains of purpose is the one where subjectification is identified as the defining process of education. In this reading of the domains, qualification, socialisation and subjectification are no longer parallel processes: subjectification takes place during qualification and socialisation and only when this happens education takes place. In Rømer's view, this comes close to *Bildung*, even though the world (of qualification and socialisation) is still a kind of uniform power.

This leads to the following conclusion.

Social level	Self	World
Level of Ontology		

Structural (surface)	^A Learning	^B Qualification, socialisation, surroundings
Being (in-depth)	^C Subjectification	^D <i>Bildung</i> , worldification

Figure 4 - Thomas Aastrup Rømer: Biesta's ontological silence

'The philosophical reason why Biesta equates the World (B + D) with the structural world-level (B) and the ontological self-level (C), instead of the world-level's proper ontological position (D), is that his poststructuralist denial of *Bildung* causes him to lose sight of the ontological level of the World (D). [...] This lack of worldification is the reason why subjectification – despite Biesta's formidable philosophical struggle – have (sic) a conceptual tendency to collapse into A.

Thus, my overall critique is that Biesta's ontological silence regarding the world (D), which is a result of his post-structural cultural criticism, also ruins his chance of developing a fully-fledged concept of subjectification and of *Bildung*.' (ibid., p. 42). In 2020, the point Rømer made was a valid one.

Biesta's thoughts on the issue appeared only in 2022 with the publication of *World-Centred Education*.

2.2.2 Ton Jörg

In his review of *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (2011) Jörg raises objections to Biesta's theory from the point of view of complexity theory. His first point of criticism is that Biesta adopts a double normative stance on the topic of education, both by talking about *good* education and by introducing democracy as the purpose of education. In doing so, according to Jörg, Biesta limits the field of education and in addition ignores the discussion on complexity in education. This, Jörg claims, eventually leads to him remaining 'stubbornly locked into outdated paradigms'. A new possibility-oriented framework might make it possible 'to understand what Davis et al. (2005) have described as the task for education from such a possibility-oriented approach: 'an *enlargement* of the *possible* around what it means to educate and be educated' (p. 4; emphasis added). Based on this new framework, it might be envisioned '*how* to realise this ambition, and *how* to get the butterfly finally awake in the field of education (cf. Kauffman, 1995)' (Jörg, 2011, p. 112).

Jörg describes his main objection to Biesta as the limitation of the discussion on the question 'what is education *for*' to what is 'the most *desirable* direction' as this seems to exclude the role of complexity *for* education.

Concluding, Jörg presents his own 'argument for better thinking about "good" education: 'what might the reality of education look like, as a potential nonlinear complex reality, to make thinking about "good education" possible? Biesta seems very much in favour of an ends-oriented approach

instead of a possibility-oriented approach' but 'by opening up a new kind of nonlinear complex reality, it will be possible to *humanize* not only our sciences but also the concept of being of the human being as a real, complex human being, with unexpected, unlimited possibilities *in the real* within an expanded realm of possibilities within the field of education' (ibid., p. 114).

It may well be that Biesta's theory could lead to other possibilities had it been conceived from complexity theory. Having heard Biesta's ideas on the openness, semiosis and recursivity of education (Biesta, 2018), I am confident Jörg's claim about the exclusion of the role of complexity for education in Biesta's theory does not hold. Even though Jörg's conclusion about the unlimited possibilities for education which can arise from complexity theory may be valid in itself, it cannot be held against any researcher in the field of education if they choose to work from a different paradigm.

2.2.3 Vasco d'Agnese

In *Intentionality and Thinking as 'Hearing': A Response to Biesta's Agenda* (2015), d'Agnese adopts what he calls a Heideggerian reading to critique Biesta's philosophical position as expressed in *Philosophy of Education for the Public Good: Five challenges and an Agenda* (Biesta, 2013b). The first of three issues d'Agnese raises is Biesta underestimating knowledge's predominance and relativism. Secondly, he claims that the weakness of education can be understood better using a Heideggerian reading of intentionality. And finally, as Rømer does, d'Agnese comments on Biesta using concepts belonging to the perspective he challenges.

Quoting the *Agenda*, d'Agnese states Biesta's theoretical framework is grounded in postmodernism and provides 'a critique of the epistemological worldview, that is, a critique of the idea that our most basic, fundamental and original relationship with the world is a knowledge relationship and that everything else [...] is derived from and based upon it' (Biesta, 2013b, p. 582 in; d'Agnese, 2015, p. 253). From this, Biesta identifies a problem with humanism establishing what it means to be human. And in doing so, humanism prevents subjectification. To challenge this perspective, Biesta introduces Levinas' concept of uniqueness-as-irreplaceability. Education offering the possibility for this uniqueness to emerge is a sign of the weakness of education in Biesta's theory. D'Agnese, however, puts forward that a Heideggerian reading also provides a promising framework for a 'weak' understanding of education.

He challenges Biesta's idea to replace the pre-eminence of knowledge by an alternative ethico-political foundation, as this position is still one of a subject who stands over-and-against the world.

This position, founded on Plato's 'theoretical gaze' implies, according to d'Agnese, that ethics and politics in their own right cannot be considered and debated as distinct from Plato's faith in knowledge.

The second point d'Agnese raises is Biesta's understanding of intentionality. Comparing Biesta's understanding to Heidegger's: 'Recognition operates on the basis of intentionality, that is, *from a position where I feel safe and secure enough so as to be able to recognise the other*' (Biesta, 2013b, p. 589, emphasis added, in d'Agnese, 2015, p. 258) to 'As a physical phenomenon, intentionality is attributed to consciousness [...] and, in accord with the tradition of western philosophy, privileges theoretical directedness over the practical. To break the tradition entails surpassing the subject/object distinction in all its domain, including action. [...] Intentionality is first and foremost to be attributed to *Dasein*, not to consciousness' (Heidegger, 1945/2002, p. 42, in d'Agnese, 2015, p. 259) d'Agnese sees Biesta and Heidegger approaching intentionality differently, and concludes that Heidegger's makes the stronger case for education as a weak practice.

Finally, d'Agnese focuses on Biesta's choice of tools. In his *Agenda*, Biesta concludes that 'pursuing this existential approach calls for forms of philosophising that do not try to theorise from the outside – thus running the risk of overriding the existential, first-person perspective- but rather do so from the inside [...]. I even wish to suggest that to take a first person perspective is taking the educational perspective as it tries to take the encounter with the other seriously, rather than running the risk of explaining this encounter away' (Biesta, 2013b, p. 592). Siding with Heidegger, d'Agnese reasons that this first-person perspective does not provide a way to distinguish between the human being as a subject and the human being as an object. In this view the subjectification of human beings and the objectification of the world and truth are the same process. And in addition, a subject can experience the possibility of becoming an object to become a part of 'the world picture'.

To overcome instrumental thinking in education and to recover a 'weak' stance towards education, d'Agnese claims, it is not the first-person perspective that is needed, but a stance toward thinking about education in which thinking is 'hearing' and 'responding'.

Concluding, d'Agnese argues that education as a weak practice is in line with Heidegger's recovery of a 'weak way' toward the world and the truth, which can be seen in his view of being-in-the-world as 'thrownness' and the view of truth as *aletheia* or 'world disclosure'.

2.2.4 Tone Sævi

Does Gert Biesta's book, The Rediscovery of Teaching, matter to education? (2020) is Sævi's response to the book, rather than a review. This opens a different approach to Biesta's work: not from a

theoretical philosophical point of view, but from phenomenological praxis. And in turn this supports the claim that Biesta's interpretation of philosophy of education is philosophy for education, rather than philosophy about education.

Sævi appreciates *The Rediscovery of Teaching* in the sense that it 'manages to merge educational theory and phenomenological qualities of concreteness and openness, drawing these entities closer in a shared interest of providing alternatives to contemporary education' (2020, p. 130). She qualifies the book as 'useful in generating insights, allowing the reader to deconstruct the educative guarantee, providing new questions, angles and perspectives' (2020, p. 130) Sævi then proceeds to discuss a number of these, based on the chapters in the book. Her first conclusion, which answers the initial question, is that Biesta's work indeed matters to education, because it opens up a different outlook on education by rephrasing the question whether teaching matters, to how and to whom teaching matters. Sævi argues this leads to the question of a difficult type of freedom as an educational concern, namely the 'freedom to do what only I can do' (Biesta, 2017, p. 5 in Sævi, 2020, p. 131).

Sævi identifies the educational task described by Biesta as 'the task to arouse the desire to exist as a subject' and its difficulty lies in the fact that 'children and young people [do] not necessarily want to be grown-ups or actually see the point of being subjects to themselves and others.' From here, the discussion turns to Biesta's concepts of irreplaceability, resistance and world- and self-destruction. Eventually Sævi concludes '[m]aking the question of desirable desires alive in children and young persons, presupposes that the same question is a living question in the life of at least one of the adults significant to the child.' (ibid, p. 133) and we, educators, must start with ourselves before supporting others.

About Biesta's questions of the relationship between teaching and learning, Sævi remarks it goes to the heart of education and reflects on the responsibilities of the teacher. Unlike the idea that learning is the end-result of education, education needs to pay attention to questions of content, purpose and relationship. At this point Sævi's focus differs from Biesta's. Whereas for Biesta purpose is the main question, Sævi claims in education relationship is what prevents purpose from being meaningless. 'The reason is that if education is an existential endeavor, the human being is an underlying feature, although the human being should not be at the center, he or she is still the source of existential experience and is the subject of as well as subjected to education.' (ibid, p. 134).

An issue Sævi raises in contemporary education is that

[c]hildren and young people [...] are expected to adapt to a commonly accepted capitalist ideology' and '[p]olitical problems being turned into educational problems that education is expected to solve. Being a learner is all about understanding, rationality, sense-making, and paradoxically, the learner is at the center of the world at the same time as the learner is a tool for a political system. The existential and human problem thus is, that the child, in this system is expected to turn the world into an object, and existential questions regarding the natural and the social world become invisible, unspeakable, and outside our attention. This is of course not either or, but being oriented to learning as comprehension weakens the possibility to experience that the world addresses me or interrupts me with existential concerns (Sævi, 2020, pp. 134-135).

In Biesta, Sævi recognizes an idea of teaching that may address these problems when he asks whether it is possible to teach without aiming for learning. And this in turn has led to Sævi writing a phenomenological reflection about educational blindness.

In the chapter 'The Rediscovery of Teaching', Biesta raises the question of the experience of being taught as an existential alternative to a focus on learning and comprehension. For Sævi, this is a question where educational theory and phenomenological *Pädagogik* meet. Introducing Biesta's interpretation of transcendence, she goes on to describe the difference between a learner –who adapts 'to a stimulating and sense-making learning environment'– and a subject, who allows 'the other to interrupt my self-sufficient and ego-logical way of life, and [being] attentive to the otherness that addresses me from the outside world' (ibid., p. 136).

The chapter 'Don't be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters', in which Biesta focuses on teaching as an endeavour to open the student to his or her possible freedom, makes Sævi realise a teacher does not have to have the truth to be a good teacher.

[T]he teacher is a real teacher if he or she intends to open up the world to children and young people by showing the world to them and asking them to look at it with their own eyes and from the possibilities offered to them by the life they live in this world (ibid., p. 137).

A question that arises now is why teachers are required in this process in which learning (knowledge) and emancipation are not connected. With Biesta, Sævi concludes that a teacher's responsibility is required in situations in which students claim to be unable to think and act for themselves or express their unwillingness to do so.

When discussing the final chapter 'Asking the Impossible: Teaching as Dissensus', Sævi comes to the conclusion that the essence of teaching as dissensus is to believe in and trust the student's willingness to be a subject, who takes responsibility for letting otherness into their life.

Overall, Sævi concludes that Biesta provides an insight into how educational qualities cannot be easily contained or measured, because emancipatory education is a meeting with human freedom, freedom as action. '[T]eaching is a responsible gift that we encounter rather than chose when [...] students show up in our lives. Hence, the challenge to live in the middle ground oneself – as a teacher or adult – is perhaps the hardest life effort to take on, and the way of living that is most tempting to try to avoid.' (ibid., p. 139).

2.2.5 Megan J. Lavery

In *Gert J.J. Biesta, Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (2009), Megan J. Lavery expresses criticism, whilst also acknowledging Biesta's contribution to discussions in and on the philosophy of education. The main points she makes are Biesta's 'lack of appreciation for traditional humanism', causing him to 'lean too far in the direction of a pedagogy of interruption.' (ibid., p. 570). According to Lavery, Biesta's main argument against humanism is that it 'adopts a pre-conceived idea of the human.' She argues, however, that as Kant distinguishes between the phenomenal, knowable, being and the noumenal, unknowable, being motivated by good will, humanism does leave room to see the other as irreplaceable. Taking this idea further and drawing on Nietzsche's Schopenhauer as Educator (Nietzsche, 1997) Lavery argues that parallel to a pedagogy of interruption, a pedagogy of sustained attention to what we have "up to now truly loved" supports education for change.

2.2.6 Doris A. Santoro & Samuel D. Rocha

In their 2015 review of *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2015), Santoro & Rocha identify several ideas of which the potential consequences turn out to be more radical than Biesta describes. Firstly, starting from Biesta's claim that 'teaching may be achieved through the *product* of divine, natural, or human creation' (Biesta in Santoro & Rocha, 2015, p. 414) they claim a teacher does not necessarily have to be human, as long as something new is brought to an educational situation and identify Biesta's weak metaphysics. Another issue Santoro & Rocha discuss is the development of wisdom in human teachers according to Biesta. Biesta can discuss this as he differentiates between the existential level at which a teacher is not necessarily human, and the level at which society prepares 'individuals to fulfil roles as teachers' (ibid., p. 415), the institutional level. From interviews with US

teachers Santoro concluded earlier that the often heard claim ‘This is not teaching’ appeared in her interview transcripts when prescriptive pedagogical policies tried to reduce teaching to information transfer instead of teaching being seen as a professional and moral practice. Following this line of thinking, Santoro & Rocha agree with Biesta when he argues competency-based teacher education is problematic because it is not educational. As an alternative, Biesta presents a virtue-based approach to teaching, based on Aristotle, and he suggests that this virtuosity can be studied through interviews with experienced teachers. Santoro’s conclusion from such interviews is that whilst exhibiting virtuosity may have to do with wisdom, it is also dependent on context. This in conclusion leads to the question ‘Is there a way to insert the risk of a teaching *context* into virtuosity in order to appreciate fully the beautiful risk of teaching? This final question shows where the practical and existential concerns converge, again. It is here that the demand arises for entanglement of virtuosity and teaching context for those who insist on teaching.

2.3 Complementary Approaches

Apart from scholars critiquing Biesta, there are others who refer to Biesta as one of the sources of their own theory of education and schooling. In the following sections, I present three alternative perspectives on the phenomenon of good education: unlocking the world, in defence of the school, and decelerating education.

2.3.1 Ruitenberg’s *Unlocking the World*: Subjectification needs Hospitality

Whereas Biesta in his thinking about subjectification focuses on the circumstances in which subjectification emerges, Ruitenberg’s perspective is that of the host (2016). Building on Derrida and Rancière, who Biesta also considers influential for his work, Ruitenberg makes a case for education in an ethic of hospitality. She describes the teacher as the implaced host (Treanor, 2011, p. 63, in Ruitenberg, 2016, p. 35) in school. Being implaced does not imply permanent presence of the teacher. The ethic of hospitality in a school setting implies that the teacher leaves a place for their students to come into the world, represented in the curriculum. This in turn requires educators to be willing to hear students speaking back to this curriculum. Ruitenberg’s idea of the teacher as the implaced host clarifies Biesta’s concept of educational virtuosity (Biesta, 2013a, pp. 134-135) in the sense that it adds a possible, practical direction, towards hospitality, to Biesta’s more theoretical concept.

Another host in educational settings are the texts that are used. These may be more or less inviting or challenging, depending on the language in which they are written, and other texts they implicitly or explicitly refer to. With regard to these texts, the role of the educator is to assist the newcomer-student in navigating this language to eventually become at home with the texts. This combination

of educators' roles, as hosts, translators and listeners, leads to education that is aimed at democracy as described by Biesta, and opens opportunities for subjectification.

2.3.2 Masschelein and Simons' *In Defence of the School*: Subjectification needs School

The Dutch, original, title of Masschelein and Simons' work (2012) literally translates as *Apology of the school, a public affair*, and unmistakably hints at what follows. The authors clearly point out what the school is accused of by its opponents before venturing out to define what makes the school scholastic. Or, in other words, what makes the school educational and indispensable. Masschelein and Simons distinguish eight educational characteristics of the school:

- A matter of suspension (or freeing, detaching, placing between brackets)
- A matter of profanation (or making something available, becoming a public or common good)
- A matter of attention and of world (or opening up, creating interest, bringing to life, forming)
- A matter of technology (or practising, studying, discipline)
- A matter of equality (or being able to begin, in-difference)
- A matter of love (or amateurism, passion, presence and mastery)
- A matter of preparation (or being in form, being well-trained, being well educated, testing the limits)
- A matter of pedagogical responsibility (or exercising authority, bringing to life, bringing into the world)

Eventually, they conclude that schools are not about the obligation to learn or develop talents, but about experiencing opportunity. Consequently, this means that democratic education and subjectification need their own particular place to appear: a school.

As Ruitenberg, Masschelein and Simons present elements of good education that indicate possible practical insights in Biesta's position on the three domains of purpose. Their matters of profanation, attention and of world are clearly related to introducing a new generation into an existing world, and as such to the domain of socialisation. The matters of preparation and technology refer to the domain of qualification. And it is pedagogical responsibility that opens up opportunities for subjectification. Further, Masschelein and Simons' matter of equality echoes Biesta's freedom in plurality (Biesta, 2013a, p. 106) for which he draws on Rancière's fundamental equality of intelligence of all human beings.

The matters of suspension and of love add elements from and in education that add practical value to Biesta. Arendt and Biesta treat *scholé* as free time dedicated to education, suspended from both economics and politics. While Masschelein and Simons concur, they also focus on the place for this suspension, the school building which allows for ‘the possibility of lifting the weight of the social order – suspension – in the interest of making *free time*. The specific form ... presents, at the very least, the possibility of literally *becoming separated* from the time and space of the household, the society or the labour market’ (2013, p. 33, italics in original). This separation both in time and space allows for students in SSVE to set aside their ‘real world’ obligations and provides time for them to consider how they might respond to the world.

Looking at the matter of love, focus is on the teacher once again. When Biesta talks about teachers and teaching, he focuses on judgment and wisdom, *phronesis* (2013a, p. 134). And Ruitenberg’s teacher takes the position of the implaced host. Masschelein and Simons see the teacher as an amateur (2013, p. 67), someone who does their job out of love, which shows in small everyday gestures and behaviour. They identify love for the subject matter, and love for the student. It is this combination that leads to the teacher’s enthusiasm, which in turn inspires the students to focus on the subject at hand, temporarily suspended from its use in the world outside the school.

In other words, through the matter of suspension the school creates the time and place for subjectification and through the matter of love, the educator inspires students to work attentively and to want to become a subject. Masschelein and Simons’ matters of suspension and of love can therefore be seen as practice-oriented insights for educators wanting to create opportunities for subjectification.

2.3.3 *Decelerating Education*, other perspectives on the issue of subjectification

Deumier, Sævi and Korsgaard present exercises related to subjectification from philological, didactical and phenomenological perspectives (Deumier et al., 2024). Instead of speed and production, which have become prevalent in education, they make a case for slow education in which children experience education differently. Especially their ‘Exercise III’ is as relevant to SSVE as it is to other forms of education.

Teacher: “How many fingers do you have?”

Didier: “Just a sec. Hmmm...one, two, three, four. Four.”

“And how many do I have?”

(Didier counts) “Five.”

“Does everyone have the same number of fingers?”

“Yup.”

“So how many fingers does Charles have?”

“Five.”

“And you?”

“I just told you.”

“But how many was that?”

“Oh, come on, four!”

“But I have five, right?”

“Yeah, but I have still got fewer.”

Here, the authors present an episode from Mollenhauer’s *Forgotten Connections* (2016, p. 90) to support their claim that it is educationally relevant to take time to consider possible meanings of experiential moments from a pedagogical point of view, rather than to focus on learning results or to draw on psychology or sociology to explain the moment. Giving this example, Deumier, Sævi and Korsgaard illustrate what Biesta terms the weakness of education, involving students as subjects of action and responsibility (Biesta, 2013a, p. 1). A limitation of room for deceleration, which may be caused by a call for efficiency in a system that has given way to the commodification of education, may undermine the underpinnings of Biesta’s domain of subjectification, c.q. democracy (Biesta, 2013a, p. 101).

Concluding, even though the exercises Deumier, Sævi and Korsgaard present are particularly relevant for children in earlier stages of education, their line of thought still holds good for SSVE as a plea for a shift in focus from training *skills* in the domain of qualification, to *experiencing* and *meaning* in the domain of subjectification.

2.4 Imagination’s Heartwork, an Alternative Approach to Good Education

Now that I have shown various points of critique on Biesta, and three complementary approaches, and before continuing to draw conclusions about their relevance for Dutch SSVE, I find it relevant to show an approach to education that does not refer to Biesta in any way, yet is very much concerned with good education: Pádraig Hogan’s idea of Imagination’s Heartwork (2010).

Like Biesta, who poses the domains of purpose of education as the defining characteristics of good education and refers to Aristotelian virtue ethics as one of his influences, Hogan traces his approach back to ancient Greece: Socrates’ idea about the human perspective on truth. Hogan describes education following MacIntyre’s definition of a practice:

By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 187, in Hogan, 2010, p. 35).

But unlike MacIntyre, Hogan draws the conclusion that education is in fact a practice in itself, instead of a subordinate human activity. This puts Hogan in a position that is close to the continental European stance on education, which makes his approach an interesting one to compare to Biesta's. A significant difference between the two is in their ethical theory. Instead of being bound to a particular ethical theory –Aristotelian virtue ethics and its further development in Biesta's case– Hogan claims that 'the family of virtues that is most necessary, as well as most promising for a practice [...] emerges from exploring the practice itself' (Hogan, 2010, p. 90).

Taking his conclusion about education as a practice in itself as a premise, Hogan continues describing the integrity of educational practice, as 'that which entitles practitioners to the freedom to pursue co-operatively the inherent benefits of the practice to high levels of excellence, with due accountability to the public but without undue interference from outside interests.' (Hogan, 2010, p. 39). A similar point is made by Biesta when discussing 'education between accountability and responsibility' (Biesta, 2016b). Both seem to agree on public accountability and relative independence of education but also acknowledge that what is termed accountability to the public is often not that, but service to economic or political aims. Hogan therefore pleads that in educational matters capable practitioners 'should be properly acknowledged as having a particular capability [...] that they should be expected to share the fruits of such capability in appropriately different ways with learners, parents and the public [...] and] that they should be given the necessary freedom to engage wholeheartedly in the practice, but in ways that remain accountable to learners, parents and society' (Hogan, 2010, p. 41). All of these elements return in Biesta's writing on teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Yet, whereas Hogan touches on the subject of practitioners co-operating to achieve excellence, Biesta makes it clear that this view may be part of the language of learning with teachers as authorities in control of education. In that sense, Hogan's view does not necessarily support Biesta's idea of education and teaching for subjectification (Biesta, 2017, p. 96).

Hogan's demand for an educational practice without undue interference from outside interests raises an interesting question about Dutch SSVE with regards to practitioners. As explained before, industry has a large say in the examination requirements for SSVE and provides a large part of any

course in SSVE in the form of internships. If we see this as interference from outside interests, this weakens the case for the integrity of SSVE as a practice. If schools and companies both are considered places where practitioners educate students, interference from outside interests does not appear and I make a plea to see it the latter way, because internship supervisors are expected to meet certain standards for coaching students on the job, and because the responsibility for finding qualified internship supervisors lies with the SSVE institutes. However, industry's influence on the examination requirements and on the content of the vocational part of the curriculum is less easily ignored.

A striking difference between the two authors is their source in Greek philosophy. Biesta's interpretation of Aristotelian virtue ethics applied to *Pädagogik* intrinsically differs from Hogan's application of Socratic, epistemological thought in education. Biesta asks the question 'What is education for?' and sees emancipation and democracy as the aims of education. Hogan approaches education as 'a collective kind of enquiry dedicated to seeking the truth' (Hogan, 2010, p. 46) accepting that learning is an unfinishable pursuit, as real wisdom lies beyond human capacity. In this process of truth finding, the role of the teacher is to create a safe learning environment in which (self) criticism can be freely practised.

This is the point from which Biesta and Hogan diverge, Biesta focusing on what education is for from an educational-theoretical point of view in *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (2017), and Hogan describing from a philosophy of education point of view what education is like as a practice aimed at 'the deliberate promotion of human learning through teaching.' (Hogan, 2010, p. 46). The human element that -according to Santoro and Rocha- is contingent in Biesta turns out to be a *conditio sine qua non* for education in Hogan. The role of a teacher in the human activity that is education is not only to instruct, but also to create a community of inquiry and of virtue, leading to what Dewey terms 'collateral learning' which happens in addition to learning the subject taught: 'collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes ... often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future.' (Dewey in Hogan, 2010, p. 54). According to Hogan, good teaching, leading to high quality learning, is teaching that is supportive of rather than suppressing the learner's individuality. And this is why the relationship between teachers and learners is at the forefront of Hogan's theory of education.

Taking the experienced quality of the relationship between teachers and learners as a standard, requires a move away from the idea of transmission of knowledge as the standard for education, even though Hogan recognizes three other relationships in education as well: the teacher's

relationship to the subject matter; the teacher's relationships with colleagues, parents and the public; and the teacher's self-understanding, giving the other relationships their interpretation and relative significance. Describing the relationship between teachers and learners, Hogan introduces the term *imagination's heartwork*, which developed from the term courtship as explained in *The Custody and Courtship of Experience* (1995). Recognising that teaching takes place in an unequal power relationship, the relationship between teachers and learners is characterized by *a decisive sense of care* (Hogan, 2010, p. 62, italics in original) pursuing its goals, but never forcing them on the learner. Kelchtermans qualifies this aspect as ethical *engagement or commitment* (2023, p. 107, italics in original). Seen this way, Hogan's views on teaching indicate a shift away from qualification to subjectification as the domain of purpose taking priority.

Combining the teacher's relationship to the subject matter with the relationship to the learner, Hogan concludes that to be *pedagogically* at home in a subject is to be possessed with diverse human qualities that enable the genuine voice of the subject to speak: to make well-judged overtures to the minds and hearts of students, especially differently disposed students (Hogan, 2010, p. 76). This *pedagogical imagination* as a defining element in education forms a bridge between Biesta's theoretically based *creativity* in education and experienced daily teaching practice.

A similar comparison can be made on the topic of love in education. Hogan uses this image to describe the unerotic love of a teacher for his/her learners. Unerotic, because the partners in this relationship do not have a choice but to be in the partnership, and because teachers must work to accept all learners and others they are in a relationship with. Again, Hogan stays closer to practice than Biesta does in his work on this subject. Writing about the teacher-student relationship, Biesta adopts Levinas' idea of uniqueness-as-irreplaceability. This idea provides opportunities for subjectification when a student is called to action by the other, and through that action appears in the world. This however does not take into account a number of particularities of education Hogan does refer to in his concept: the communal qualities of education and the contradicting demands on the teacher of *multiple* others.

This point becomes all the more relevant when Hogan writes about understanding. Prejudices complicate the acceptance of learners by teachers. However, drawing upon Gadamer and Heidegger, Hogan makes a case for prejudices as conditions of learning. Gadamer uses the term prejudice in the literal sense of the word: a judgement given before the final examining of all relevant elements (*'ein Urteil, das vor der endgültigen Prüfung aller sachlich bestimmenden Momente gefällt wird'*. (Gadamer, 1990, p. 275)). And because any situation requires interpretation before all elements can be examined, cognition and interpretation cannot be separated. This in turn

explains why in Hogan's theory of education, experienced quality is a defining standard. Also, if we accept that preconceptions, or prejudices, play a role in understanding, there are three consequences to consider. The first is the requirement to always remain self-critical and not have our preconceptions be influenced by 'fancies and popular conceptions' (Hogan, 2010, p. 105). Secondly, it is to be recognized that any progress in furthering understanding is to be seen as a temporary stage, not as a final destination. And thirdly, accepting partiality of our understanding, constructive criticism by others should be welcomed. Combining these three elements with the relationships of learning, Hogan draws a picture of the teacher as a pragmatic intermediary. And even though Biesta criticizes the hermeneutical tradition in *The Rediscovery of Teaching*, Hogan's teacher, defined as pragmatic intermediary, seems to be positioned exactly between the opposing positions Biesta describes as teaching-as-control and learning-as-freedom (Biesta, 2017, p. 56-57).

Another difference between Biesta and Hogan lies in the fact that Hogan explicitly places the teacher and their practice in a cultural tradition, whereas Biesta discusses education as a universal phenomenon. In doing so, Hogan seems to prioritise socialisation over subjectification when he introduces MacIntyre's promotion of antagonistic reading: engaging with texts from the standpoint of a particular tradition and its claim to truth. On the other hand, Hogan expresses his preference for Gadamer's concept 'the conversation that we are' (*Wir suchen von dem Gespräch aus, das wir sind, dem Dunkel der Sprache nahezukommen* (Gadamer, 1990, p. 383)). Even though our claim to truth has been formed -or at least influenced- by tradition and experience, every engagement with a new text and its voice is a conversation that provokes a response and has an effect on our understanding. This in turn opens up an opportunity for subjectification as any student's understanding can lead to breaking away from their introduction to tradition. When teachers allow for this to occur, they create opportunities for what Arendt describes as natality in education: 'to prepare them [children] in advance for the task of renewing a common world.' (Arendt, 2006, p. 14).

In addition, Hogan defines a mature educational practice in a way describing the triple qualification in Dutch SSVE and its teachers well:

It concentrates its best efforts [...] on identifying and cultivating each learner's own potentials and on nurturing a durable sense of identity and community in harmony with these potentials. By these means, it promotes the best balance between the realized capabilities of a population and the kinds of economic activity that are likely to be most productive for that population. In thus committing itself, a mature educational practice keeps a perceptive eye on lessons from history and also understands the necessity to keep its own heart in the right place (Hogan, 2010, p. 162).

Keeping the heart in the right place is in the hands of the teacher, the sense of community in SSVE is covered in the civic education requirements, qualifying for productive economic activity is SSVE's core business, and with an eye on history, we may say that lifelong development is one of the most important lessons.

Eventually, Hogan makes a plea for education as a self-critical practice, continuously re-forming itself through conversation based in professional care and love.

In spite of their differences, both Hogan and Biesta agree on an essential point. Both consider education to be an independent practice about which educational questions can be asked. And when Hogan claims that 'defensible educational efforts have everything to do with a joint renewal of attentive listening and with the readiness to take risks for learning' (Hogan, 2010, p. 50) it becomes clear that both authors promote the risk involved in education. Biesta distinguishes three domains of purpose in education, Hogan introduces education as a coherent family of practices characterised by four elements: a distinct and distinguished ancestry in Western civilisation ; sustenance and renewal of its practices drawing upon a distinctive, conversational tradition; the tradition contributes best to human welfare when it is accorded public recognition and trust; the public's trust in education is best advanced where educational practitioners remain regularly accountable to the public, but for benefits that are born of educational practice itself (Hogan, 2010, p. 149-150). Finally, both authors agree that quality in education is not a matter of counting data. In Hogan quality is experienced quality and progression can be made through continuous care for educational practice, tradition and community. In Biesta, quality of education is a function of the question 'What is education for?', to which one of his answers, in *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (2016b), is freedom and democracy.

From the point of view of Dutch SSVE, this puts Biesta and Hogan in similar positions, as both their theories match the requirements for preparation for the labour market and introducing newcomers into society. However, Dutch SSVE policy does not explicitly mention the core of Biesta's nor Hogan's work: subjectification and imagination's heartwork. Therefore, the question remains whether or not educators in Dutch SSVE, either purposefully or in a kairotic moment, create room for subjectification and heartwork in their daily practice. How this practice has come about, and what its position in Dutch society and its education system is, is the subject of section 2.5.

2.5 The development of SSVE

'It is insufficient to have seen the final form; you must also have listened to its process of becoming' (Zweig, 2017, p. 164), the quotation opening this thesis reads. Therefore, even though I introduced the present Dutch education system earlier, I will now sketch a historical development of SSVE

before describing the flawed state of Dutch society related to the education system. This historical overview of the unique development of Dutch SSVE sets the stage for understanding contemporary SSVE practices and policies and addresses how historical legacies influence current practice.

2.5.1 A historical overview

In the history of education in European democracies, vocational education has a special position. In the cradle of democracy, ancient Greece, general, broad and individual development towards civic virtue was the privilege of the free part of the population, namely those who had sufficient free time (*scholé*) on their hands for education. Their children were accompanied to school by a slave: a *pedagogos* (Biesta, 2020b, p. 8). The goal of this form of education, *paideia*, was to enable children and adolescents to lead an independent household and with a broader scope, to lead people and support the city's society and culture (de Rooy, 2018, p. 19).

Paideia was not accessible to those who needed their time to provide a living for themselves and their families, those classified as *animal laborans* and *homo faber* by Hanna Arendt (1998). Their children became apprentices of a *didaskalos*, who taught them a particular mechanical craft (Westermann, 1914, p. 605).

In the Middle Ages the division between general education and the apprenticeship system for vocational education persisted. The basis of vocational education remained the development of a craft, focusing on what Biesta terms qualification. The main form of general education in this period was no longer aimed at leading a household and leading people. In other words, a shift occurred within the domain of socialisation. Church based general education aimed at the moral, Christian development of its pupils. In monasteries, young monks learnt to read and copy religious texts and clerical documents. Outside monasteries, the first schools in the Netherlands were started by clergy in the seventh century: the Court School in Maastricht and the Cathedral School in Utrecht. Local parochial schools were soon to follow, in which pupils learnt reading, writing, singing and Latin grammar, essential for their roles as acolytes and choir boys in mass. As in antiquity, these schools were meant for the sons of the elite.

Training for vocations was given by master craftsmen or merchants organised in guilds. At a young age, boys could become apprentices of a master cobbler, cartwright, or candlemaker to learn the skills of the chosen craft or trade, and after some time its secrets. Successful apprentices were allowed by the guild to progress to the stage of journeyman, which gave them the right to work at a daily wage for other masters than their original one. Eventually, a journeyman could progress to the final level in their guild, that of master craftsman, by making his masterpiece, a piece of work that was to meet the highest standards of the guild. The apprenticeship was strictly regulated and laid

down in a contract determining its length, the mutual obligations and its cost (Bakker et al., 2006, pp. 447-448). The dissolution of the guilds in 1798 ended this regulated form of vocational education. Yet, it has left its traces in the stages of students' internships in present day SSVE. These start with a developmental stage, continue into a qualifying stage and end in an exam called proof of competence. However, if we accept subjectification is an essential domain of purpose of education, as I claim in this thesis, the guild system cannot actually be seen as education.

By the end of the 16th century, under the influence of the Reformation, the first orphanages had developed from earlier general hospitals run by monastic orders. Now that orphans lived in institutions separate from elderly, sick and others unable to take care of themselves, an opportunity opened for education. Influenced by religious *caritas* or humanist belief in education, orphanages provided evening courses for reading and writing, and vocational training by a craftsman for boys from the age of twelve. The orphans' earnings from their craft were then used to pay the orphanage. Boys were allowed to choose their craft, which often was regionally determined. Most orphans learnt their craft outside the orphanage, but to save costs and depending on the staff employed, some orphan tailors, cobblers, brewers, bakers and farmers learnt their skills in the orphanage. Some boys even had the chance to become gold smiths, painters or even barber-surgeons. In the 21st century, regional differentiation of available courses is still one of the cornerstones of the SSVE system.

By the seventeenth century, not all vocational training was in the hands of the guilds as many of the newly evolving professions in the Dutch Golden Age did not have a guild. And especially these professions required a specialist, professionally trained workforce. The rapidly growing nautical industry serves as an example. In port cities in the seventeenth century the first maritime schools were established, often led by helmsmen such as Claes Hendriksz Gietermaker. Gietermaker ran a school from his home at Brouwersgracht in Amsterdam, as well as a shop selling nautical books and instruments. The Dutch East India Company (VOC), established in 1602, acted as a stimulus for this kind of schools, as for its expeditions it only employed captains who had passed their exams. On the one hand, we see developments in vocational education being driven by economic growth. On the other hand, humanist thought –after all, both Spinoza and Descartes wrote and published in The Netherlands– lead to a call for more general education.

Also, there was a growing need for training with more content than what was offered by the guilds. For example, for barber-surgeons. To this end courses were developed in Amsterdam and Leiden including lectures in anatomy and anatomical practice. These courses were supervised by medical colleges (Bakker et al., 2006, p. 447).

The idea that education -in the sense of general, broad development- is not or ought not be for the privileged classes only originates in the Enlightenment. The idea is particularly well reflected in Kant's motto 'Sapere Aude' and his definition of Enlightenment: Man's release from his self-incurred tutelage by showing the courage to use one's own understanding (1784). In the 18th century, a Dutch example of the Enlightenment in practice is the Fundatie van Renswoude (1754), a foundation of Maria Duyst van Voorhout who bequeathed a million and a half guilders (approximately €14M by today's standards⁷) to orphanages in Delft, Utrecht and The Hague to separate smart boys and educate them in the arts and technology. This foundation, where pupils became craftsmen with a strong theoretical background, can be seen as a forerunner of present SSVE. Even though this form of education does not prepare for a life of leadership as general education and university education do, it is aimed at emancipation.

Another 18th century initiative were charities founded by local churches (*diaconie*, in Dutch): needlework and knitting school for girls, drawing schools for boys. Less fortunate were children who went to so called work schools, where they learnt to spin and weave and received some general education. As a rule, these work schools were forms of child labour rather than education.

Concluding, we see that in the Dutch Republic (1588-1795) vocational education has become more and more economically relevant for society and as a result was increasingly further institutionalised.

Only in the Batavia-French era (1795-1813), education became state organised. However, the initiatives of the Agent for National Education, the first Dutch secretary for education, and those of the Society for the common good (*Maatschappij tot nut van het algemeen*) focused primarily on patriotism and moral development of young children and left vocational education and training to the responsibility of industry (Pots, 1995). In 1863, the Dutch political reformer and prime minister Thorbecke included civic day schools and evening schools in a law to prepare people for crafts and agriculture. These schools, however, were aimed at general education: 'not to train for a specific industry, not turn schools into workhouses... not to teach details of practice proper, but to develop mind and senses in such a way that they become able for practice' (Slaman, 2018, p. 161).

The Industrial Revolution, which in The Netherlands took place in the late 19th century, did not bring any improvement in the situation: working class children were expected to work from a young age and acquired skills at work if necessary. With industrialisation, the need for skilled craftsmen and vocational education declined.

⁷ [Historical Currency Converter \(historicalstatistics.org\)](https://www.historicalstatistics.org/)

This changed with the 1919 Law on vocational programmes for craft-related and industry work (*Nijverheidsonderwijswet*), the first law governing vocational education. This law left the initiative for founding schools and determining the curriculum largely with private enterprise, in line with the predominant liberal capitalist economic policy of the time. Nevertheless, this law can be seen as the first step in centralising vocational education in The Netherlands, as it expresses parliament's distinct preference for vocational preparation taking place in schools -funded partly by national government- rather than through apprenticeships. Due to a generous subsidy provided within the law on vocational programmes for craft-related and industry work, the number of vocational schools rose by fifty percent (Honingh, 2008, p. 4), and the number of students increased from 75,000 to 154,000 between 1920 and 1945 (CBS, 2018).

After the second world war, The Netherlands -as well as many other Western European countries- entered a period of state managed, or socio-democratic, capitalism. The state promoted consumerism and actively steered economic development, not leaving these decisions to market forces (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 74). Yet, post-war Netherlands still applied Plato's dichotomy⁸ to a point at which higher, theoretical education was state organised, and lower, vocational training, was the responsibility of the institutions in need of trained workers, private enterprise.

However, the socio-democratic approach to the economy was reflected in the major policy change in education of the period, the Mammoth Law, so called because of the impact it had on the Dutch education landscape. With the 1968 Mammoth Law, which raised the school-leaving age to 16, secondary education became the standard and the practice of entering the workforce after primary education came to an end. The same law, officially called the *Law on Secondary Education (Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs WVO)*, replaced the 1919 *Law on vocational programmes for craft-related and industry work (Nijverheidsonderwijswet)* and brought vocational education into the sphere of influence of politics and education, without denying private enterprise a fair share of control.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a period of economic decline, the outlook on vocational education changed. Captains of industry advised the government on education in function of the national economy. This led to education policy comparable to what Carr describes:

⁸ 'Plato advocated a hierarchical system of education or training ranging from shorter spells of elementary (mainly practical and vocational) training for the less able, to protracted higher (theoretical or academic) education for the more able' (Carr, 2003, p. 201).

[T]o the extent that the more intangible qualitative benefits of education – those pertaining to enhanced personal growth – are harder to assess in any readily measurable way, there may be some understandable if not completely justifiable political tendency to focus on the more visibly productive aspects of education: in this light, good education is what produces measurable economic benefits (2003, p. 236).

In 1982 the Wagner committee, called after its chairman, the president of Shell, advised the government on the development of Dutch industry. In its report Wagner proposes the following four points of action to come to more fruitful cooperation between vocational education and labour organisations, for which he uses the term clients in the report. And as with the guilds system, this view on vocational training is not fertile soil for subjectification.

- Enhancing connections between vocational education and professional practice, by sharing responsibility for vocational education with private enterprise;
- Creating sufficient practical training outside school including regulations for the cost of education and rewards for production;
- Dividing vocational education into two phases. The first phase focusing on vocational preparation –in schools carrying full responsibility– and the second phase focusing on vocational qualification both in schools and on the job primarily under the responsibility of private enterprise;
- Merging and expanding the systems of so called short secondary vocational education (a form of very practice-oriented school-based education) and the apprenticeship system (a form of education in which pupils are trained in practice with additional education at school).

In response to the recession in the 1980s, a committee presided over by Philips' CEO Rauwenhoff produced a report entitled *Education and the Labour Market: towards a workable trajectory*. It claimed that anyone entering the labour market should at least have taken two years of secondary vocational education and thus have obtained a 'starting qualification' and proposed to cut social benefits for those without one in case of unemployment.

Wagner and Rauwenhoff show how in The Netherlands vocational education was seen as an instrument in economic policy and means to produce employees for private enterprise, very much in line with the historical development of vocational education. This view, which is still held by many,

explains the tensions that educators experience when trying to balance Biesta's three domains of purpose of education.

In this paradigm the law still governing vocational education today was passed, the 1996 WEB. The WEB (the law on vocational and adult education) separated vocational education from the mammoth law, merging the about 900 independent vocational schools into approximately 60 large Regional Educational Centres (ROCs) which in turn were governed as private companies (including directors and a board of governors) with an annual budget provided from public funds. The demands to be met by pupils for obtaining a diploma were set by employers (organised per economic sector in so called centres of knowledge – vocational education). ROCs were free to decide their curriculum leading to those diplomas. The one thing that had not changed since 1919: the government funded vocational education. And even though the government could not determine the vocational demands, it could –and did– set standards for students' rights and proper education. Everybody should be able to obtain a starting qualification at an ROC, even unmotivated pupils and pupils with severe learning disabilities should not drop out (Slaman, 2018, p. 172). With this combination of industry based economic demands and government guidance for emancipation of pupils in a vocational track SSVE entered the 21st century.

2.5.2 Twenty-first Century SSVE

Education in a flawed society

With the demands from industry and government guidance for SSVE, educational practice was not safeguarded from 'undue interference from outside interests.' (Hogan, 2010, p. 39). Nor was education the only professional practice suffering from these interests, as three influential public figures make clear. For these ideas on Dutch society, the world into which the graduates of vocational colleges appear, I refer to works by the former vice-president of the Dutch state council, Mr. H. Tjeenk Willink: *Groter denken, Kleiner doen (Thinking Larger, Acting Smaller)* (2018), and by the former director of the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP), Prof. Dr. K. Putters: *Veenbrand, smeulende kwesties in de welvarende samenleving (Peat Fire, smouldering issues in the affluent society)* (2019). In my third source for this paragraph, the Kohnstamm lecture by Ir. M. van Vroonhoven MBA, former Chair of the Executive Board of the Dutch Authority for the Financial Market (AFM), she makes a case for education reform in this flawed society (2024).

Tjeenk Willink takes a political approach in his pamphlet *Thinking Larger, Acting Smaller*. He articulates his fear for connections being lost within government organisations, between government and civil society, and within civil society, due to the decreasing influence of religion and ideologies, and due to the fact that social relations have become less firm –a claim Putters makes as

well (Tjeenk Willink, 2018, p. 7). In his view, the only remaining foundation uniting the Dutch is the democratic state under rule of law. Tjeenk Willink considers the democratic state under the rule of law to be a value laden concept rather than an organisational model and criticises political choices that have been made over the past thirty years based on what the government could no longer do because of financial reasons, instead of basing decisions on what a democratic government under the rule of law ought to do (ibid, p. 17). This lack of truly political debates, so he fears, might lead to neglect and thus the death of democracy. However, this can be prevented if individuals, both individually and collectively, both professionally and as concerned citizens, take a stance and raise their voice (ibid, p. 25). This stance echoes both Biesta's call for subjectification, as well as Hogan's thought on the educator's wholehearted engagement and accountability (Hogan, 2010, p. 41).

Up until the 1980s, The Netherlands was a so called pillarised country, a society stratified along denominational lines. In this system the relationship between the state and its subjects was relatively clear. The government either respected (sovereignty) or supported (subsidiarity) the autonomous space of –denominational– groups in society. Within this autonomous space the groups organised public services such as education based on their specific group views on humanity and society, which often differed from the political views of the government. With secularisation and the rise of individualisation in society, the autonomous space for groups seems to have dissolved and has not been replaced by an active role of individual citizenship in organising the *res publica* (Tjeenk Willink, 2018, p. 53).

To counter the effects of these developments in the democratic and the public sphere, Tjeenk Willink makes a plea for professional agency in the public sector, for action on a local scale aiming for fundamental changes on a national scale, for 'thinking larger, acting smaller'. All professionals in the public sector, according to Tjeenk Willink, work under three common conditions: they are dependent on policy (and funding) decided on by others; they are bound by the normative values of their professions; and they serve the interests of their clients, patients or pupils, who are individually different. This means that professionals in the public sector are in need of the liberty to act based on their personal professional judgement (ibid, p. 70). Managerialism, the education measurement industry and public-private partnerships have not been stimulating this liberty.

Before discussing the second author's work, it is noteworthy to realise that in Dutch, there are two words translating as society, *maatschappij* and *samenleving*. The former, *maatschappij*, originated in the 17th century and refers to a private company of people with a common economic interest or goal. The latter, *samenleving*, is a collocation of the Dutch words for 'together' and 'living'. The choice Putters makes in using the second term is a meaningful one. We may expect that his view will

be socio-cultural rather than socio-economic. As a side-step, it is quite remarkable that the 2020 Covid crisis led our liberal then prime minister to change his vocabulary. Until April 2020, *BV Nederland* –which translates as The Netherlands Private Limited– was his preferred way to refer to the country. In response to the public health crisis, he switched to *samenleving* as his term of choice.

One of the ‘smouldering issues’ in Putters’ work, life-long development, is a clear reference to one of the pillars of the triple qualification in SSVE. In his introduction, Putters states education is more than preparation for the labour market and economic value: it is also about personal development and one’s relation with society. Life-long development is not a matter of budget for education, but affects work, learning, care and living together and therefore life-long learning changes one’s identity (2019, p. 17). According to Putters, our society is living through a major change, comparable to the industrial revolution: a change from the welfare state to the information society, which is characterized by changes in technology, communication, labour market dynamics and social relationships. Flexible and part time work has become the new standard over the past 25 years, especially in jobs at senior secondary vocational level, and a series of gigs does not add up to what used to count as a full work week (ibid, p. 78). It is to be expected that we see this development towards shorter work relations reflected in new programmes in senior secondary vocational education.

Another issue Putters raises with regard to life-long development is of a different kind. Students are concerned about their future added value for society, and the ways their education contributes to that. They realise a diploma per se does not guarantee a strong position on the labour market and look to strengthen their position by taking extra courses, learning extra languages, and developing skills. For colleges to meet the expectations of these students, they need to be in continuous dialogue with the industry for which they educate (ibid, p. 84).

Finally, Putters makes a case for curricula focusing on becoming a good and educated person, as opposed to focusing on the value of a diploma on the labour market (ibid, p. 112). Even though this point is made about general secondary and pre-university education, it is also relevant in the discussion on the triple qualification and Biesta’s domains of purpose of education.

Van Vroonhoven echoes the points made by Putters and Tjeenk Willink in the context of education in her Kohnstamm lecture entitled *They who turn teachers into operators, create a society without a future* (2024). She shows that managerialism in the Dutch education system, or ‘quasi-scientific approach to data usage’ as she calls it, has led to an increased workload, stress, and teachers leaving the profession: ‘It is a beautiful and meaningful job, yet one with too many tasks, insufficient autonomy, too high external expectations, and too little support’ (2024, p. 17) The point Van

Vroonhoven makes is that the system with its focus on efficiency does not leave teachers sufficient time for their actual educational work but turns them into operators of commercial ready-made teaching materials. This in turn leads to a decreasing quality of education.

Van Vroonhoven finds a potential solution in the foundation of a teachers' association and sees teachers' interests supported by Parliament's Committee for Education's meeting in February 2024 (Vaste Commissie voor Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024). In this meeting the committee expressed the wish to see the autonomy of and appreciation for the teaching profession increase and the influence of executive boards on daily classroom practice decrease. The call 'give teachers their job back' which was voiced in the meeting touches in a practical way on Biesta's *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (2017). Also, Van Vroonhoven's plea for autonomy and a teachers' association opposing commercial interests chimes with Hogan's idea of education as an independent practice (2010, p. 39).

Informing Education policy: The Education Council and the SSVE council

National education policy, however, is not influenced by individual professionals. Two advisory bodies that have the most influence on national policy for Senior Secondary Vocational Education are the Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) and the SSVE Council (*MBO-raad*).

The Education Council

The Education Council is an independent governmental advisory body which advises the Minister, Parliament and local authorities. The Council provides advice, both solicited and unsolicited, to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. Moreover, the Council may be asked for advice by the Dutch upper and lower chambers of parliament. Local authorities can call on the Education Council in special cases of local education policy. The council is made up of eleven members from education, academia and public governance who are appointed by the government for four years. Evidently, the 426 publications (2010-2020) in the Education Council database cover all forms of education. Filtering for SSVE related publications reduces the total to 180. The following three are the ones that may leave room for vocational education with three domains of purpose.

Broadening the Scope for Teachers (Onderwijsraad, 2018) is a strategic long-term advice to parliament in which the Council makes a plea for a revision of teacher education structures and employment structures in education in view of present teacher shortages in technical subjects, which are particularly relevant in SSVE. The proposed revision is based on a view on education centralising the teacher as the most influential factor for good education. The essence of the teaching profession is described as teaching pupils, developing and shaping education, and testing

and evaluating education, irrespective of the sector⁹ a teacher works in. In other words, the essence of the teaching profession is independent of the pupils' age and of the subject taught. The work of teachers in all sectors in education is aimed at qualification, socialisation and subjectification. The teacher's task is to instil knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for further studies, work, or other aspects of their lives (qualification). Subsequently, teachers introduce pupils into cultural, professional and societal traditions and practices and into the rules, norms and values thereof, focusing on the realisation of 'constructive participation' in these traditions and practices (socialisation). Thirdly, education is about shaping a pupil as a person: about critical thinking and critical judgment, about morals and responsibility, and about adult independence (subjectification). (Onderwijsraad, 2018, p. 15)

The State of Education in The Netherlands (Onderwijsraad, 2019a), is another guidance document by the Education Council focusing on the quality of Education. Even though the main focus of the document is on the overly stratified education system causing socio-economic inequality, one of the pillars in *The State of Education* is the advice to direct more attention to the importance of broad education and citizenship. Apart from programs for excellency in SSVE, which focus primarily on qualification, critical thinking skills are added as an important task for citizenship education. The Education council further sees a development towards an increasing appreciation of vocational knowledge and skills, and the role of the teacher 'opening windows to the world for pupils and orienting them towards knowledge and skills they would not obtain by themselves' (ibid, p. 72). However, as an integral national policy for the domains of purpose in education is lacking, educational practice still shows unbalanced attention to qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Qualification being the domain receiving most, and subjectification the least focus. Due to the fact that qualification is easily measurable and subjectification is not, this imbalance is enhanced even further by the limited use of instruments for qualitative assessment in education research.

Pulling together for the school (Onderwijsraad, 2019b) the third and final Education Council paper discussed here, focuses on co-creation of education. In it, a plea is made for establishing regional networks to facilitate sharing supported by the government. As SSVE in The Netherlands is organised regionally, and is developed in cooperation between schools and industry, this advice, including educational service providers as stakeholders also, suits Dutch SSVE particularly well. The part of the advice advocating teachers' ownership of what is developed in co-creation, opens up another

⁹ Dutch education is considered to consist of 5 sectors, each represented in their sectoral council: primary, secondary, practical, SSVE, and HE.

opportunity for teachers to strike a balance between the three domains of purpose in their daily teaching experience.

The SSVE Council

In contrast to the Education Council, the SSVE Council is a public-private organisation. The SSVE Council is the Netherlands Association of SSVE colleges. The association represents all government funded colleges for secondary vocational education and training and adult education in the Netherlands. On behalf of its members, the SSVE Council promotes the collective interests of the sector, including educational innovations. The SSVE Council supports common activities of the colleges and acts as an employers' organisation. This council's publication database contains 266 documents, dated between 2009 and 2020, exclusively related to vocational education. Setting the SSVE Council's database filters to themes, the documents are categorized into the following six main themes: education and quality (75); education and the labour market (57); the junior secondary – senior secondary – higher vocational education pathway (36); a section for employers (46); governance, funding and accountability (33); internationalisation (24). At first sight, the council seems to be concerned mainly with the quality of senior secondary vocational education. A substantial number of the publications contain practical advice. For example, the service document on how to maintain standards during blended learning enforced by national covid-19 measures. Other papers research the gap between qualification profiles and fast developing vocational practice and only a few deal with the quality of education closer to the sense used in this thesis. One of these is a pamphlet entitled *Towards a shared and integral vision on research on, with and in SSVE* (Van der Meer et al., 2019), which argues the case for enquiry in SSVE in response to developments in society, flexibilisation of the labour market and the need for personal development in education. The most far-reaching document on the quality of education in the database is the *Governance agreement DoE – SSVE Council 2018-2022: Pride, trust and audacity*. In it, the council, representing the colleges, and the department of education communicate their mutual position on topics such as life-long learning, supporting vulnerable youths and regional innovation. The governance agreement states the quality of education at the colleges has improved, based on performance indicators such as the improvement of examination results and graduation numbers, the reduction in drop-out rates and the increase in quality control practices. In other words, quality is considered measurable. On the other hand, one of the aims of the agreement is stated as helping colleges to play a role in the improvement of society, supporting youths on their way to their own existence in society, which even though it does not imply it, at least leaves room for what Biesta terms subjectification.

So far, I have depicted a theoretical background for good education, presented a historical sketch, and a critical view of twenty-first century Dutch society and the position of education in it. In the following section, I focus on the place in which Senior Secondary Vocational Education comes into being, the college.

2.6 The College Revisited – Policy, Subjectification and Imagination’s Heartwork

In the previous paragraphs I drew a picture of Biesta’s and Hogan’s theories, of influencers of SSVE policy. I also indicated some of the opportunities offered and hindrances created for subjectification and imagination’s heartwork in Dutch society. Before listening to educators experiencing good SSVE, I will now return to the sketch of their place of work: the college, to show if there is room in its policy for educators to do heartwork and provide opportunity for their students’ subjectification.

In the light of Putters’ and Tjeenk Willink’s comments, which seem to corroborate MacIntyre’s claim that modern liberalism ‘for the most part precludes the voices of tradition outside liberalism from being heard’ (MacIntyre in Hogan, 2010, p. 130), how should we read the mission statement of the college, promising its students to ‘offer education that challenges you to develop into an appreciated craftsman, an active citizen and a successful student’?

Obviously, the mission statement is drafted with the triple qualification in mind, but the principal questions here are: who is to judge, and which criteria are used in this judgement? These two questions can be asked about many of the elements in the college’s promise. Does the individual student determine whether she is challenged by the education on offer, do the developers of the curricula do this, the educators, the board of directors, or even the inspectorate? In view of rising flexibility of work as depicted by Putters, who is to appreciate the craftsmanship of a graduate? Maybe it is their first employer, but what is that appreciation worth if your contract is for just a few hours per week? A student’s development into an active citizen as a goal for education is problematic in a different sense. Put simply, a citizen is an adult fully responsible for their own relationship with the society they are part of. But, if an institution -such as a school- tries to influence this relationship, in this case towards an active relationship, can a student who is susceptible be considered a subject even though she has not accepted full responsibility for her relationship with society? We may come to the conclusion that the objective to have students develop into active citizens –even though this may be desirable if we follow Tjeenk Willink’s line of thought– is in conflict with the purpose of education aiming for subjectification. Turning towards the final element in the college’s mission statement, there is room for a cynical conclusion: anyone graduating from the college is a successful student as they contribute to the statistics the school’s

success is measured by. However, linking this final promise to life-long learning my original questions may once again be asked, and we may add one, when is the right time to determine someone's success in life-long development?

However, judging the college by its mission statement –which may serve mainly as a marketing instrument– does not do it justice. From conversations with some of the agents in the education adventure, I will draw a clearer picture of what education at the college is about in chapters 4 and 5: 'Educational Experiences – A Group Picture' and 'Educational Experiences – Twelve Diptychs'.

2.7 Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education?

In the previous paragraphs, I presented many elements that influence SSVE and the way it is looked upon by different actors in the field of education and politics. Using concepts from both the European continental education theory and the Anglo-American analytical philosophical tradition, I now combine these elements in a view on good education in Dutch SSVE. This view will form the background against which I paint the focal point of my tableau, the empirical research presented in the chapters four and five.

Firstly, vocational education in particular ought to be good education, combining qualification, socialisation, and subjectification and enhancing the capacity of students to act, think and judge. In all types of education democratic and emancipatory education, or rather, education for democracy and education for emancipation, as Biesta has put forward, is an important condition for good education. The relevance of education for democracy and emancipation in vocational education (including SSVE) is even greater because children from families with a lower socio-economic status are more likely to be assigned into the vocational track in Dutch education rather than the general secondary or pre-university track. It is therefore remarkable that while Biesta's domains of purpose frequently appear in literature on primary and general secondary education, there is little on subjectification in SSVE.

Looking at qualification in Dutch SSVE, a first impression is that this domain of purpose is at the forefront of vocational colleges' attention. Public-private partnerships between colleges and businesses abound, about one third of the curriculum in senior secondary vocational education is delivered in internships, and industry has a large say in the content of the qualification profiles. As a result, senior secondary vocational graduates can be said to be well prepared for their chosen occupation. Whether they are equally well qualified to be successful in higher education is a different matter, though. Success rates in the first year of higher education compared to those of graduates from general secondary and pre-university suggests that they are not. However, those

who pass their first year in higher education are more likely to graduate than their counterparts with a general secondary background.

Biesta's observation about the task of schooling being more and more constructed as the effective production of predefined learning outcomes in a small number of subjects or with regard to a limited set of identities such as that of the good citizen or the effective life-long learner (Biesta, 2013a) applies directly to Dutch SSVE. This is partly because the exam criteria in the domain of qualification are set by industry, but also because of the requirements that are set in the WEB. The latter express a moral obligation to be an active citizen and a life-long learner, even though the term life-long learning has been replaced by life-long development, and it is only within this framework that educators are free to design and provide opportunities for subjectification. As I have shown before, Rømer makes a compelling case for subjectification in Biesta's theory being on a different level from qualification and socialisation. Consequently, the limitations set by industry and WEB may be seen as a limitation on opportunities for subjectification.

Secondly, education is a complex system; it is open, semiotic and recursive which makes it impossible to catch education as an object of research based on a stimulus-response model (Biesta, 2018). This is the case for primary and secondary general education, but even more so for senior secondary vocational education: the openness of the system is not limited to the school building but includes the enterprises in which students do their placements. Obviously, this decreases the role the school can play as a place for subjectification, as argued by Masschelein and Simons. And SSVE is different too because of the fact that one student's educators –teachers, instructors and coaches– come from various backgrounds, causing them to construct different realities. In other words, the recursivity of the system is greater than it is in general secondary education, with a majority of teachers from a background consisting in 4 years' teacher education in higher education, who are more likely to construct their realities similarly. I find it therefore relevant to look into differences in the experiences and practices of educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education. Following Santoro, I organise conversations with educators at the college to expose these potential differences.

Thirdly, based on Tjeenk Willink's call and seeing the development in SSVE policy as advised by both the Education Council and the SSVE Council there is a visible trend in society indicating a return to professional agency. What this means to educators in Dutch SSVE may depend not only on their professional background, but also on their interpretation of good education. While no educator is a proponent of bad education, I expect to find a large number of teachers raised in the neo-liberal framework and the language of learning, who consider the purpose of SSVE to be training students

for a particular job, and fewer who see education as an opportunity for students to come into the world as a subject.

When it comes to seeing education as a practice requiring Hogan's imagination's heartwork, I expect to find educators with a background in teacher education to talk about this more often than those with a background in industry, seeing that the former are educated in the tradition of *Pädagogik*, whereas those with a background in industry have literally left a place for newcomers to arrive, and in doing so are textbook examples of Ruitenberg's host. Whether they also fulfil the role of host in education remains to be examined.

In other words, the following questionnaires and conversations that make up the empirical part of my research project may answer the following questions:

- How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear?
- What does 'good education' mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

Once these questions are answered, I will reach a conclusion about the question why and how good education as an independent practice exists or is possible in Dutch SSVE. Whether the defining purpose, subjectification, is being considered or given room by educator-hosts and whether SSVE is an independent, weak practice taking place in a place that is a hospitable school in which educators do imagination's heartwork.

These questions are value-laden questions belonging to the world of education, rather than to the language of learning. This raises the question which approach suits research into educators' values, prejudices and actions. This methodological question will be subject of the following chapter.

3 – Towards Experienced Practice – a Methodology

I was particularly anxious that you should obtain information from experienced workmen...

Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1855)¹⁰

As I argued in the previous chapter, the question what good education entails is per se a value-laden one. In continental European education theory this question has been taken up in debates about ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’. This value-based starting point sets this thesis apart from evidence-based research into productivity and effectiveness of teaching methods, interventions or pedagogies. In this chapter I comment on the steps I took conducting this research and I argue why I choose hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology most suited to shed a necessary new light on research into Dutch SSVE.

The demands set in the WEB, the act governing adult and vocational education, which I discussed in the previous chapter, complicate the question what is educationally desirable for students in Dutch SSVE. In brief, the demands of industry in the domain of qualification play an important role in semi-public vocational education. This leaves the interests of introduction to society in its broadest sense (socialisation) and subjectification in the hands of SSVE institutions. As a result, educators’ educational values and ideals play an important role in the quality of everyday practical education.

Because of the importance of educators’ values for the way they educate students, I look into the ways educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students’ subjectification to appear.

Apart from this main question, I look into three related sub questions:

- What does ‘good education’ mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

These are the questions which for me

become[s] a kind of song into which the researcher breathes life not... because the question leads to an answer, but also because the question itself is infused in the researcher’s being. It creates a thirst to discover, to clarify, and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge (Moustakas in Friesen et al., 2012, p. 12).

¹⁰ Quotation taken from <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/library> (accessed 10-02-2021)

Researching the values and ideas of educators in SSVE requires a methodology which allows for understanding of the educators' practices, experiences and interpretations. In addition, the methodology of my research should fit both in Dutch educational practice—which is supported by education as an independent academic discipline— and in British education theory, stemming from education as an applied field of study (Biesta & Aldridge, 2021, p. 1449).

The combination of these requirements and convictions has led me to design a research method that may be classified as a form of hermeneutic phenomenology, which I will elaborate on in the next section.

3.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology in a nutshell: Husserl, Heidegger & Gadamer

Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience (van Manen, 2016b, p. 9). As this lived experience influences, if not determines, what an educator means by 'good education' and consequently how they create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear, lived experience is key for my research.

In the 20th century, Edmund Husserl developed phenomenology in the sense we talk about it today. The central question in philosophy, according to Husserl, should be the one about how reality appears to human consciousness (Aydin et al., 2007, p. 7). The life-world of phenomenology, therefore, is not identical to the world researched by the natural sciences, but—through human consciousness— takes the context into account. To be able to study phenomena intentionally, and 'go back to the things themselves' it is necessary to bracket any pre-conceived ideas about phenomena and suspend judgement. This process is known as phenomenological reduction. By means of careful description of variant experiences of a phenomenon the essence of the phenomenon can be seen intuitively (Lavery, S. M., 2003, p. 23).

Husserl's successor as a professor in Freiburg, Martin Heidegger, further developed Husserl's ideas, taking phenomenology in a different direction and in doing so became the founder of hermeneutic phenomenology. In phenomenology the focus can be said to be on the description and understanding of phenomena in themselves. Hermeneutic phenomenology recognises grasping a phenomenon involves not only seeing the things in themselves, and in addition is guided by the prejudices of the researcher: the phenomenon is always taken 'as something' (Aldridge, 2017, p. 69) by someone. For Heidegger, one of the constituent parts of this human being-in-the-world, or *Dasein*, is formed by historically lived experience. This historically lived experience is what is handed down by culture and is a background that is both part of a person and of the world, making person and world inseparable. As a consequence, research does not answer epistemological questions about how to understand the world but answers ontological questions about how to understand

being in the world. Applying this idea to the present study, this may be seen as research that is not interested in how to distinguish teaching methods that are more or less effective for learning, but as research interested in the appearance of an educational setting in which students and educators interact in a way that creates opportunities for qualification, socialisation and subjectification.

Seeing that understanding is dependent on a person's background, or fore-structure, understanding and interpretation are closely related. Even though understanding one's own experiences might be possible without it, communicating experiences or understandings with others requires the medium of written or verbal text. Interpreting these texts to come to an understanding of an experience free of inconsistencies is done by means of a hermeneutic circle: when examining text individual parts must be interpreted as determined by the whole, whilst the whole is determined by the individual parts (Debesay et al., 2008, p. 58).

Hans-Georg Gadamer philosophized hermeneutic phenomenology further. In *Truth and Method*, he introduces the concept *fusion of horizons* to describe the process of interpretation (1990, p. 311).

This horizon is 'the range of vision that includes everything seen from a particular vantage point' (Laverty, S. M., 2003, p. 25). The horizons that are to be fused in interpretation are those of the text and of the interpreter. In this process the interpreter is changed by the conversation with the text. And as this process can repeat itself continuously a final interpretation can never be reached. In other words, understanding is always the way in which something is understood at this moment.

Another of Gadamer's concepts is prejudice as conditions for understanding (1990, p. 281), which is in line with Heidegger's concept about historically lived experience. As all understanding is influenced by prejudice, the Husserlian process of bracketing becomes an impossible notion in hermeneutic phenomenology.

Concluding, we can say that after Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer hermeneutic phenomenology has become a human science methodology that is both descriptive, in being attentive to how things appear, and interpretative, in that lived experience is always experienced in a meaningful way, and in the way that experiences are captured in language (van Manen, 2016b, p. 180).

My choice for a hermeneutical phenomenological methodology, in a study based on Biesta's and Hogan's theories is supported by the fact that Biesta draws on Meirieu, who states pedagogy for democracy is to be concerned with being 'in permanent dialogue with others and with oneself' (2008, p. 12). The former part of this statement chimes with Biesta's concepts of appearing in the world in response to a call by others (2017, p. 50). The latter part of this statement echoes Hogan's fourth aspect of the relationships of learning: the teacher's relationship to himself (Hogan, 2010, p.

59). Meirieu's statement as a whole seems to be a good example of interpretation through fusion of horizons.

Having given a brief outline of hermeneutic phenomenology, in the next section, I will look into its role and interpretations in education.

3.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology and vocational education

Research into vocational education in particular lends itself to a phenomenological approach. In the Dutch education system, a graduate from any vocational course at SSVE level is considered a 'starting practitioner'. This term, found in the SBB qualification profiles, places the graduate in the world with others, more particularly in the world with others in the same vocational context. Seeing that one third of any course in SSVE consists in work placement experience, being in the vocational context is more than just a term on paper, but in effect opens the opportunity of being-in (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 43) the vocational world. After all, SSVE students are not just physically present in their work placement companies, they are also truly involved in the vocational context of their SSVE course.

Moreover, vocational education is often considered the type of education for pupils who learn by doing - as opposed to learning from books. In addition to the experiences of reading theory and listening to educators, SSVE adds the experience of space when students in the aircraft maintenance department work in a hangar. SSVE adds the experience of time when hospitality students practice identifying the right moment between a guest entering a hotel, and non-verbally and verbally welcoming them. And SSVE adds the experience of handling tools and machinery for loading aircraft, which will over time become the students' instruments ready-to-hand (Zuhandenheit, Heidegger, 2006, p. 69), as opposed to their present-at-hand physical state (Vorhandenheit, Heidegger, 2006, p. 71). This makes vocational education a type of education that focuses more strongly on embodied knowledge than other types of education for this age group. And it is precisely this embodied knowledge that gives meaning to the students' experience of being, of becoming a (starting) practitioner.

Apart from these arguments from a point of view of education policy and educational practice, there is substantial support to be found in education theory for the use of hermeneutic phenomenology in education research.

The first reason to use hermeneutic phenomenology in education research lies in the fact that education is a phenomenon, in contrast to plasma physics for example, about which many people hold firm beliefs based on common sense and personal experience. Making these prejudices –to use

Gadamer's term— explicit, as is common in hermeneutic phenomenological research, allows me to come to an understanding of the essential meaning of good education shared by educators.

Secondly, seeing that '[p]henomenology understands education as an existential project of human life and orients to how children and young people inherit, transform and live institutional, social, and cultural qualities of life' (Deumier et al., 2024, p. 31), a phenomenological approach lends itself particularly well to research into subjectification and imagination's heartwork in SSVE.

Especially in vocational education, I claim it is important to do hermeneutic phenomenological research and see it as a 'critical philosophy of action' (van Manen, 2016b, p. 154). As stated before, SSVE's primary concern seems to be the domain of qualification. In our case, that means the courses students take prepare them, through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a job at an airport. This stance carries the risk that students are considered as future workforce primarily (Gravett & Winstone, 2022, p. 365), which overlooks the pedagogical task of education, including the pedagogical task of the final type of education that SSVE is in many cases. It is hermeneutic phenomenological research that may deepen thought about the consequences of this one-dimensional view on SSVE for individual students, for cohorts and eventually for society as a whole.

In conclusion, I have come to find that hermeneutic phenomenology, termed 'the "missing link" between theory and practice' (Henriksson, 2012, p. 134) is the approach that best gives voice to educators' experiences in a type of education, vocational education, that is so well in tune with experiences of beings-in-the-world.

As I see it, from an ontological point of view my research is phenomenological, as it focuses on the lived experience of teaching. Together with the language focused approach common to hermeneutics, phenomenology allows me to understand the individual histories of educators as well as their experiences of subjectification and imagination's heartwork. This is why, through questioning and conversations, I aim to gain an insight into the way individual educators' histories work out in understanding experiences.

3.3 Contextual background and sampling strategy

In the previous section, I made a case for hermeneutic phenomenology as an appropriate methodological foundation for education research in SSVE. The methodology is particularly suited to the lived experiences of educators, and the embodied, practical nature of SSVE makes it a fertile ground for phenomenological inquiry.

In this section, I describe the steps and decisions I took during the research process.

As a basis for conversations about good education and imagination's heartwork I used educators' answers to a questionnaire (see appendix 3).

I reached out by institutional e-mail to all educators at the college to take part in my research on a voluntary basis. In this e-mail I introduced myself, and my research project (see appendix 2), expecting sufficiently differing respondents in terms of professional/educational background, subject matter and years of experience in SSVE. I sent out the first invitation to take part in my research in May 2021 and had collected 11 responses by the start of July. Sending a final reminder at the end of the school year led to 19 more respondents in the first week of the summer holiday (up to July 16th 2021).

Eventually, from these 30 participants, I excluded 1 because they had not responded to any of the open questions and 2 because their answers indicated they did not teach so did not meet the criteria for participation. I did include the manager who doubled as an English teacher, and the participant who only responded to one of the open questions. My examples and conclusions are therefore based on the data provided by 27 self-selected participants. Of these 27, 14 are qualified educators with a background in industry, 4 are qualified teachers, 7 are not yet qualified, and 2 indicated they are qualified differently. The chart on the following pages shows who they are. For reasons of anonymity, I coded the teaching teams of the participants. All participants are coded by a number, those who also took part in one of the conversations have their pseudonym added to their participant number.

participant	Age	Sex	Team	SSVE level ¹¹	Courses taught	Years of vocational field experience	Years of teaching experience at the college	Previous teaching experience	Type & years of teaching credentials held
01 Jennifer	30 - 39	F	1	2	career guidance & citizenship; vocational	10+	10+		pdg; 5-9
02	50 - 59	F	2	4	vocational	10+	1-4	trainer 25 yrs; university 17 yrs; SSVE 3 yrs	1st; 10+
03	60+	F	3	3	Dutch; maths	none	5-9	primary 5 yrs; 19 yrs NT2; 7 yrs junior vocational	other; 10+
04 Judy	60+	F	4	4	career guidance & citizenship	none	1-4	SSVE 10 yrs	pdg; 10+
05 Cathy	30 - 39	F	1	2	career guidance & citizenship; vocational	none	<1		none
06	60+	M	5	3	vocational	10+	<1		none
07 Fausto	50 - 59	M	6	4	many	10+	5-9	primary and secondary 4 yrs; 6 yrs SSVE	2nd; 10+
08 Jake	50 - 59	M	6	4	vocational	10+	10+	14 yrs	pdg; 5-9
09	50 - 59	F	6	4	vocational	10+	1-4	Founded an academy in the Antilles	pdg; 1-4
10	40 - 49	F	2	4	German	1-4	1-4	-	2nd; 5-9

¹¹ For clarification of SSVE levels, see fig. 2, p. 19

11	40 - 49	M	1	4	English	none	<1	SSVE 7 yrs	pdg; 10+
12	30 - 39	M	6	4	everything vocational, no generic courses	5-9	5-9		pdg; 5-9
13	50 - 59	M	7	3	vocational	10+	5-9	HE in English	none
14	50 - 59	M	4	4	vocational	10+	1-4		none
15 Isabel	40 - 49	F	7	4	career guidance; vocational	5-9	5-9		pdg; 1-4
16 Rudy	30 - 39	M	7	4	English	5-9	5-9		2nd; 1-4
17 Bret	50 - 59	M	7	4	vocational	5-9	5-9	HE 4 yrs; SSVE 3 yrs	pdg; 1-4
18	50 - 59	M	8	2	vocational	10+	1-4	0	None
19 Kathlene	60+	F	7	4	Dutch	none	1-4	SSVE 1 yr + internships in secondary	2nd; 1-4
20	50 - 59	M	1	4	vocational	10+	5-9		pdg; 5-9
21 Laura	40 - 49	F	2	4	career guidance; vocational	10+	5-9	SSVE lvl 4 2 yrs	pdg; 5-9
22	40 - 49	M	1	1	vocational	10+	5-9		pdg; 1-4
23 Leo	30 - 39	M	7	4	vocational	none	<1	SSVE 6 yrs	pdg; 5-9
24	40 - 49	F	1	1	Dutch	1-4	<1	upper secondary 1 yr	none
25	50 - 59	M	8	2	vocational	10+	1-4	none	none
26	50 - 59	F	2	4	career guidance; vocational	10+	5-9		pdg; 1-4

27	50-59	F	7	3	I do not teach any courses, yet am involved in all	none	10+	pre-university track 6 yrs	2nd; 10+
28 Antoine	50 - 59	M	5	2	career guidance; English	1-4	10+	secondary special needs 9 yrs / uni 9 yrs	pdg; 10+
29	50-59	M	-	-	I do not teach at the college	10+	-	-	pdg; 10+
30	60+	M	6	3	vocational	10+	1-4	type training 2 yrs, private vocational 6 yrs	other; 10+

Figure 5 - Participant classification data

From the responses to my survey, I selected voluntary participants for my conversations by stratified purposive sampling (Flick, 2018, p. 51). As a result, my partners in conversation (i.e. the named participants in the chart above) are both male and female, work in a variety of teams and come from both education and industry backgrounds. This last distinction is particularly relevant to my research, as ‘the world of adult people with different experiential background are not identical. Their earlier experiences do not have the same sedimented tradition, and they act and understand situations differently.’ (Bengtsson, 2013, p. 49).

This is why I look into the difference between two types of educators: the ‘school masters’, to use a term that came up in several conversations, and I.K. Brunel’s ‘experienced workmen’ that I referred to in the beginning of this chapter.

In October 2021 I sent out invitations to the 22 participants who had indicated to be willing to take part in the second step of my research, the conversations about good education. After a number of reminders, by the end of December 2021 I had completed 8 conversations, and 4 more took place in 2022. I concluded the data collection stage of the research on April 14th, 2022.

In summary, the contextual background and sampling strategy I outlined in this section ensure that I capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives from educators in Dutch SSVE. By including both participants with a background in industry and with a background in teacher education, I positioned the research project properly for exploring the differences between these groups. How I

ensure this research, with this contextual background and these participants, is trustworthy and truthful I discuss in the following section.

3.4 Trustworthy Research, My Instruments

If we see education as the deliberate promotion of human learning through teaching (Hogan, 2010, p. 52) with qualification, socialisation and subjectification as its domains of purpose, it is relevant to look not just at the process of teaching, as is frequently done in present education research into effective education. Following from Hogan's fourth aspect of relationships of learning, the teacher's relationship to himself or herself (2010, p. 63) we also must enquire into the person who teaches. After all, the Dutch 20th century pedagogue Philip Kohnstamm claims that 'it all hinges on the teacher as a person' (Oostdijk & Van Blijswijk, 2019, my translation). Nor is this point of view about the importance of the individual teacher contested by quantitative researchers with a different outlook on education, such as Marzano, who confirms that the impact made by decisions of individual teachers is far greater than the impact of decisions made at school level (2003, p. 71).

Almost by definition, in the relational practice that is education, a teacher adds a self to the conversation. The actions and attitudes of this teaching self are affected, either consciously or unconsciously, by earlier experiences, feelings and relationships (Fernández-Balboa, 2009, p. 148).

To raise teachers' awareness of influence of earlier experiences, and to find out about the self behind the educator, I had planned to ask participants in this enquiry to write their personal history in education, in other words, to write their bio-pedagogical history. Then I would ask participants to record one of their taught classes, subsequently followed by a reflection conversation.

However, asking potential participants to dedicate so much of their valuable time might have deterred many, leaving me with hardly any responses. Too many respondents on the other hand, could lead to too large a data set to analyse in the scope of this study. For this reason, I dropped the bio-pedagogical history and the recording from my research design and changed my initial questionnaire to one containing a limited number of prompts for writing about experiences in education, also known as critical incidents (Sikes et al. in Kelchtermans, 2023, p. 110), so as to discover the essence of their provision of education. Four colleagues, who for different reasons were excluded from taking part in my research, were so kind to test the questionnaire and provided useful feedback.

Asking my participants to describe a situation that characterises their experience as a pupil or student, for example, I opened a possibility to look into an early experience that may form the foundation of the educator's outlook on education.

The second critical incident I asked my participants to describe is the moment they decided to start their career in education. In the answers to this question, I expected to find different motivators between educators coming from teacher education, and those with substantial work experience in industry. This in turn may serve as an explanation of different opinions about the meaning of good education in SSVE.

Then, I asked my participants to share a moment which typifies their teaching. I trusted the answers to contain leads for me to identify the presence, or absence, of potential opportunities for subjectification created by educators in their daily practice.

These experiences combined with ideas about the future of SSVE and understandings of what good SSVE at MBO College Airport looks like, was to be completed by the participants in the conversations following the questionnaire¹².

The start of the conversations was based on the answers given in the questionnaire. Having described a typical classroom situation in their questionnaire answers, the participating educators talked about what it is they do, think and feel at moments they experience good education. Also, they were asked what their students do at these moments. Further, I prompted the participants to talk about people -or theory- that have influenced them in their teaching. Finally, I asked each of the participants for the meaning of the critical incidents they described, and what they meant by certain sentences or expressions they used in their answers to my questionnaire. In doing so, I aimed to trigger my partners in conversation to reflect on out of the ordinary experiences with education and 'shatter the taken-for-grantedness' of being an educator (Van Manen in Friesen, 2012, p. 51). In other words, in asking about experiences with and in education, I set out to create conversations with educators about the phenomenon of good SSVE. These conversations, seen as text (Gadamer, 1990, p. 391), do not only reveal the essence of these educator's education as a phenomenon. They may also have created opportunities for subjectification for the educator, through the opening question of the conversations: 'What do you experience, when you experience good education?'

In the conversations I had with my participants, I checked whether I had understood their written answers correctly, and whether I could use the sometimes harsh and sometimes possibly confronting terms they had written about themselves, such as when Cathy described her initial experiences as a pupil in secondary school as hell. Other potentially problematic passages appeared in Rudy's answers when he wrote about not being allowed to finish secondary school or allowing his

¹² Both the questionnaire and the conversations were held in Dutch, the native language of both the participants and the researcher.

pupils to come up with a thought experiment on drugs. In these, and similar, situations, all participants confirmed these were their words, and allowed me to use them.

Three of the conversations were held online for different reasons, and two of these differ markedly from the conversations held in person. In the first place, these were the longest of the twelve conversations, lasting 52 (Kathlene) and 56 (Leo) minutes. In contrast, the conversations held in person lasted on average 35-40 minutes. Secondly, in the online conversations it felt more difficult to keep my participants focused on their experiences with good education. Participants tended to focus on other elements of their educational practice, rather than their own experiences, such as the things that annoy them daily in colleagues, management and the school building in general. Also, they contain more opinions about and explanation of educational theory. These aspects I leave out of the respective left panels of my diptychs.

Taking place through a medium instead of 'immediately', which results i.a. in limited non-verbal communication, these online meetings sometimes seemed to lack the common language that eventually unites partners in conversation in a new commonality (Gadamer, 1990, p. 384, my translation) and allowed for both participants to remain true to their initial points of view. On the other hand, the online conversations sometimes appeared to offer a more comfortable setting for participants to share what they struggle with in class, or how their school career has not always progressed as planned. All three participants also created opportunities to talk about their love for education. These aspects enrich the right panels of these participants' diptychs and bring their stories closer to the essence of what educators experience as good SSVE.

I recorded the conversations and transcribed them verbatim, following Poland's guidelines (2001, p. 17). For several reasons I decided to transcribe the recordings myself. Firstly, because this forms the first engagement with the oral text after it was originally produced, which may lead to other insights than the first impression during the live conversation. This also presented me with a clearer insight into my own role in the conversation. Secondly, because the transcription process constituted the last meeting with the oral text, seeing that I wrote the explication from the written text. And thirdly for ethical reasons: as participants are informed with whom their data was to be shared, it would feel wrong to involve a transcription service.

This approach led to a collection of highly individual, yet relatable stories about experiences with and in education. These stories, whether they were originally written or told, express in what way an educator is in conversation with his or her educational practice. Their stories become part of the educators' practice as insights gained when recounting a story influence the educators' future practices.

Some of the stories may also function as anecdotes, ‘methodological device[s] in human science to make comprehensible some notion that easily eludes us’ (van Manen, 2016b, p. 116). To ensure the authenticity of my interpretations, I asked each participant for their comments on their story. In addition, an experienced educator with previous teaching experience at multiple ROCs read all twelve accounts and confirmed ‘empathic resonance’ (Sardello in Legg, 2013, p. 169, quotation marks in original) and the intersubjective perspective (Friesen, 2012, p. 42) I aimed to achieve (see appendix 4).

In the next section, I explain how the research instruments described above and the data they have provided lead to meaningful portraits.

3.5 Approaches to explication of the data

In my explication of the data from the questionnaires I followed the approach described in *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Smith et al., 2009). I took multiple steps, starting with the answers to the questionnaire. I marked answers, sentences, expressions that evoked a particular interpretation of concepts in *Pädagogik* in me, the reader-researcher. Subsequently, I grouped these interpretations into themes.

The marked answers, sentences and expressions are the basis for my return to the sources, the participants-colleagues. In individual conversations we talked about their answers in function of their experiences with good education. In the explication of these conversations, I looked for thematic statements using two of the three approaches Van Manen identifies: the wholistic reading approach and the selective reading approach (2016b, p. 93). The first leads to an overarching sentence expressing the meaning of good education according to each participant. The second approach involves reading and rereading each conversation transcript several times, to identify essential statements about the phenomenon of good education. In coding the statements, I follow the what/how system as described by Watts, leading to interpretative statements in the form ‘theme x as a y’ (2014, p. 5), or to be more concrete ‘smoking as a means to establish informal contact with students’.

The personal information provided by the participants in their answers to the questionnaire helped me to approach the transcribed conversation from the individual participant’s perspective and stay close to the data (Watts, 2014, p. 4).

The form in which I have chosen to present the explication of the conversations differs from the thematic approach of the explication of the questionnaires. Seeing that I look for opportunities in SSVE for the student-subject (Meirieu, 2019, pp. 98-99) to arrive, I present twelve diptychs

portraying the educator-subjects who talked to me about their experiences with good education. The 'left panel' of each of these diptychs is a fictionalised account of a classroom situation based on the anecdotes my participants chose to share. Each of these 'left panel' narratives (Legg, 2013, p. 176) is designed to achieve 'empathic resonance' (Sardello in Legg, 2013, p. 169, quotation marks in original). Because the original data from the conversations are in Dutch, and for stylistic reasons I chose to write the left panel narratives in my mother tongue. I then had them translated in Openai.com's free Chat GPT-4o mini, using the prompt 'Please translate the Dutch text into English. Keep the English title. Apply a literary style. This is the text:'. Finally, I made changes to the English text wherever the meaning diverged from the intentions of the original Dutch story.

Using narrative and portrait methodology (Bottery et al., 2009) I allow the educators to tell their stories and express their unique experiences and situations, while at the same time safeguarding their privacy by writing the stories up through my lens. In addition, this methodology allows me to uncover essences about good education in a way that only art can, unhindered by limitations stemming from participants' prejudices. This makes these narrative and portrait methods well suited for integration in the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology of this thesis. The method I apply is a way to 'approach the complexity of the present world with new metaphors; to uncover the undercurrents with art and philosophy and to look at one's own systems from within' (Van de Boel, 2025, my translation), where my 'present world' is the world of good education. Finally, this fictionalisation offers an insight into Dutch education, which other forms of reporting might not be able to convey to readers acquainted with other education systems and practices.

Further explication took place during the writing process. Writing, being a form of reflection on the conversations, led to new insights about the text and its meaning. Or, as Henriksson and Sævi put it, 'there is a compelling connection between reflection on the meaning of experiential accounts and the writing process' (2012, p. 67). In this sense, writing and explicating cannot be separated. In other words, 'writing exercises the ability to see' (van Manen, 2016b, p. 129). To bring out the hidden meanings of what has been said in the conversations, interpretation is an inevitable step in, or even an integral part of the analysis (Finlay, 2012, p. 23). This is why, in each right panel of the diptych I portray the educator through the lens of subjectification and imagination's heartwork. The next two chapters in this thesis, *Educational Experiences – A Group Picture* and *Educational Experiences – Twelve diptychs*, contain the result of this hermeneutic circle of reading, writing and explicating educators' voices on the phenomenon of good education.

In the section titled 'Twelve Diptychs', I present the interviews in the form of written portraits. Seeing the educators in these portraits as 'the great creations' Stefan Zweig mentions in the caption

to Figure 1 - Carlijn Kingma: *The Objective Truth Factory* that opens this thesis, my approach results both in showing their 'final form', and in depicting the 'process of becoming'. As with fine art portraits, every new encounter with the educator portrayed presents new insights and opens up new horizons to fuse with one's own.

Understanding and interpreting written portraits is possible because of the objectification of life (*Objektivierung des Lebens*) characterising the human sciences. Dilthey describes this as follows: 'In the realm of this objective mind, every single expression of life represents a universality (2017, p. 80, my translation). For the recognition of this universality Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis use the term resonance (1997, p. 247). And I trust my twelve portraits will resonate with educators and researchers.

Finding this commonality through a process of interpreting how one's personal history and ideas may have influenced a particular moment of teaching may be seen as hermeneutics. Concluding, in my explication I give voice to my participants' views on SSVE (Larkin et al., 2006) and stay close to the data (Watts, 2014). Also, I interpret these voices from a perspective of imagination's heartwork and subjectification.

In the following section, I present an example of this process of explication of the data.

3.5.1 Essential Cathy, a worked example

In this section, I describe the steps I took and decisions I made in the explication of the data I collected. Showing how I gathered data for the left panels of the diptychs, how I composed these, and how they were evaluated by participants, I make a case for the left panels to be seen as primary data.

To do so, I will follow the process that turned one of the participants who took part in both stages of the research into Cathy as depicted in a diptych in section 5.9. I start this section explaining my decisions. Here, Cathy's own words are italicised. Subsequently, I present the left panel of Cathy's diptych, showing where I used her words, and which part of the panel is fictionalised.

Cathy sent in the answers to the questionnaire in June 2021 within days of being approached. Her description of a determining experience as a pupil or student caught my eye:

'First year was hell, due to bullying. After that, I found my place and had a great time.'

Even though Cathy did not refer to vocational education here, what she described is the recognisable struggle of teenagers in secondary education between fitting in (related to socialisation), unsuccessful attempts of which can lead to being bullied, and finding their particular personal place (related to subjectification). Cathy describing this experience led me to believe that

she might have a story to tell about herself as a teacher offering opportunities for subjectification for her students with a keen eye for the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Also, in her answers to the questionnaire she clearly stated a number of hallmarks of what she considers to be good education. In the first place, she wrote *SSVE should offer a range of vocational practice trainings before students have to choose their diploma course*. In focusing on practice training, Cathy makes a clear reference to the domain of qualification. Her statement also includes openings for student autonomy in view of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). What is interesting in the scope of this research is the fact that offering students a range of practice trainings creates the obligation for them to discard some. This means students cannot be allowed to take the position of student-consumers but demands of them to be student-subjects (Meirieu, 2019, pp. 97-108). Secondly, Cathy stated her classes are based on *open and honest conversations*. This statement serves as an example of ‘involvement’, the fifth of the 6 themes identified in chapter 4 – Education Experienced – a Group Picture, and carries overtones of hermeneutics and the fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1990, p. 311).

Seeing that Cathy did not have a teaching qualification and decided to start a career in education because she was *dissatisfied with the quality of student-interns in her job as a manager* she clearly belonged to the group of educators with a background in industry. Whereas some participants in this group chose a career in education out of love for their industry, Cathy’s motive for starting a career in education was to improve, or even repair, education for her line of work. This position made her a participant of particular interest with regard to both meaning and data saturation.

Cathy’s statement about the quality of student-interns contributes to the identification of ‘vocational practice’ as a theme in the group picture. In this aspect, Cathy represents the majority opinion of educators with a background in industry.

Also, she volunteered to take part in the next stage of the research. Eventually, after a number of cancelled appointments, my conversation with Cathy took place in January 2022.

Before actually starting our conversation on good education, I needed to clear up a contradiction in Cathy’s information from the questionnaire: she had answered not to have any experience in the industry yet also declared elsewhere she used to be a manager in the industry. It turned out that 11 years of experience had made her decide to start a career in education to train students properly. Having come to this conclusion our conversation started with my question whether her job in education had delivered on her expectations so far.

Her ambivalent response, *‘both yes and no’*, opened a space for reflecting on the contrast between her expectations and the reality she encountered. The contrast she described, *between sending*

information and Pädagogik as the centre of educational practice, relates to my research question on the differences between educators from different backgrounds, which is why it features in both the left and right panels of Cathy's diptych.

Cathy's experience of good education mainly lies in the importance she attributes to vocational practice. In the beginning of our conversation, she stressed how she enjoys '*indicating how things work in practice. The things you cannot learn from books.*' The example she described in detail about a lesson in cleaning therefore is the basis of the left panel of the diptych. The way the conversation naturally came to this topic, made me not ask the standard opening question for these conversations: 'what do you experience when you provide good education?', as the answer to that question was covered in Cathy's description of the feeling of satisfaction after class.

In addition to the topic of vocational practice, Cathy highlighted the importance of *openness, honesty and pitching in irrespective of one's position in the industry*. In her relatively new role as an educator, this shows in her teaching as well. She commonly asks her students how they liked class: '*How should we do thing differently next time?*' She explained this typifies her not only as an educator but as a colleague as well. She relates the openness and honesty topic to the values and norms in her class: because of her experiences with bullying in secondary school, she demands students to '*act normally towards each other*'.

Elements I left out of the diptych panels of Cathy are related to her describing the difference between level 2, 3, and 4 classes, as this part of our conversation did not contribute any meaningful addition to Cathy's ideas about good education or opportunities for subjectification. Neither did Cathy's remarks about the way she tries to move the college to invest in more classrooms and areas suited for vocational practice.

This way, I selected topics from this conversation and others that contribute to answering my research questions about the sources of educators' convictions, about the meaning of good education, and about the opportunities they offer for their students' subjectification to appear. I combined these into diptychs consisting of a left panel narrative, and a right panel thematic interpretation for each of the participants. In the following section I show how panel '5.9 left – Ugh Cathy' was created.

Cathy in conversation

That whole lesson (starts laughing) went pear-shaped because nothing worked. Powerpoint didn't work, the internet didn't work, movies didn't work, sound didn't work. (stops laughing) It was one big chaos in my head, but those guys just kept waiting very neatly.

cleaning is of course quite a yuck topic. They all think: Ugh, cleaning. I'm not going to clean anyway. And to get that in a way that they participate a bit, that they still like it all, and also do it without just: (mocking) 'mèh, I don't feel like it', er I think that makes it fun. And that you think: yes (laughs loudly). Nice and well done. I did get you mopping (laughs).

I once had a lady who was also about to become a grandmother and who called: eh my daughter who is giving birth. Yes, I actually want to go there, but I also have to work. Yes, you know, then we're just going to see what we can arrange now. And then I finally stayed a little longer myself, for example, I cleaned a toilet myself because at that moment I thought it was more important that she was with her daughter in the hospital eh with the delivery, than that she came to clean that toilet bowl. But yeah, after that I never had to beg her to do anything again because she was like, yes, but you did things for me too.

And I believe that it works exactly the same with students here at MBO. That if you are there, if you show that you are open and honest with them, that they are open and honest with you too. And that you can also make mistakes from both sides without being judged by them.

5.9 left – ‘Ugh, Cathy’

The PowerPoint isn't working, the internet is down, the audio won't play. It's utter chaos, at least in Cathy's mind. In the classroom, however, it's another story. No shouting, no mutiny. The students sit patiently, waiting for Cathy to regroup and explain today's plan: a hands-on session tackling one of the many aspects of facility management.

Practical work is usually a hit, but today, not everyone is enthusiastic. 'Ugh, miss, I'm not cleaning!' protests Danny, who, coincidentally, Cathy also mentors. His resistance will lead to a meaningful conversation later about his goals and why he chose this program in the first place. But for now, Cathy needs to turn things around. The calm start to the lesson has given way to murmurs of discontent and dealing with that is now her first priority.

She shares a story from her time as a manager. 'I got a call from my colleague Fatima once,' she begins. "She said, 'Uh, my daughter's in hospital about to give birth. I'm going to be a grandma, but I'm supposed to be at work.'" Cathy pauses, letting the students lean in. "I decided it was more important for her to be with her daughter. So I rolled up my sleeves and cleaned that toilet myself. But here's the thing. After that, I never had to beg her to cover shifts. If I called and said, 'I know you've already worked five days this week, but could you take on a sixth?' she'd always say, 'Of course, Cathy. You've done things for me, after all.'"

This lesson on compassionate leadership, and the value of pitching in, no matter your title, shifts the mood in the room. Before long, the students pick up their mops and get to work. **Laughter** echoes through the space as the cleaning begins.

'Well, miss,' Carol admits during the lesson evaluation, 'I didn't think I'd say this, but it was actually kind of fun.'

This time, Cathy's **trick** worked. I got you mopping! Mission accomplished.

Fictional elements

Cathy describes three different situations: one with technical problems, another about hands-on cleaning and one with a mentee. I have combined these into one class.

Cathy shared this story in our conversation, not in her class. Her remarks on openness and honesty and her belief 'it works exactly the same with students' turns it into something she could have shared in this class.

'**Laughter**' arises from a combination of student Carol's words and Cathy's laughing in our conversation.

'**trick**' is not related to this lesson, but is mentioned by Cathy: *But I sometimes have that feeling: 'I'll just do something'. And if it works out well, it works out well. And if it doesn't work out well, then I'm like 'oh my gosh. And now? (laughs) what should I do now? Get the next trick out of the trick box. See if that works.'*

As I stated before, some elements of our conversation have not made it into the diptych, because they lack relevance for Good SSVE through Biesta's and Hogan's lenses. I left out Cathy's views on her students' knowledge of the industry before enrolling. Nor did I include her views on different teaching methods for different course levels. Cathy's views on the value of SSVE diploma's not being sufficiently recognised in society, do also not appear in the diptych.

I sent Cathy's portrait to an experienced SSVE educator who is not involved in the college for peer debriefing¹³. These are his remarks confirming resonance (Lawrence-Lightfoot et al., 1997, p. 247):

A great deal is sometimes asked of a teacher's improvisational ability. However, that is generally a strong quality of teachers in SSVE. They can switch easily. Moreover, in many situations you can also draw on your own experiences, because that is the strength of SSVE and its teachers. It is also nice to read how, in this way, she can get students into the right flow.

How Cathy assesses my selection of data and the fictionalised elements I added, I show in section 3.7.2 'Further ethical considerations in practice'.

I chose to describe Cathy's process in this section because of the duration and the quality of the conversation. Lasting 45 minutes, it was neither extremely short, nor extremely long. Also, this conversation was one of the later ones, which means I was able to draw on some more experience as a researcher.

Finally, Cathy's initial experience with education is representative of others with a background in industry. Yet, her response to that experience, seeing herself primarily as an educator, is not.

In this section I have discussed my approach to the explication of the data from the questionnaire and conversations. It has shown that wholistic and selective reading are effective for uncovering themes and essences of educators' experiences. Further, it has shown that narrative and portraiture methods allow for rich, contextualised understanding of educators' interpretations of good education. In the following section, I discuss my own role in the research process and potential influences I may have on the educators-participants.

¹³ See appendix 4 for peer debriefing remarks regarding the other portraits.

3.6 Positionality

Just as education is characterised by an educator bringing a self to the conversation, in education research the researcher brings a self to the research. Therefore, one aspect of good qualitative research lies in permanent reflection on my position as a researcher. Part of this reflection lies in the way in which I became a researcher in education, and it is therefore informative, if not necessary, to share my bio-pedagogical history:

My career as a teacher started in September 1975 at the age of 6 as a pupil in primary school. Or maybe even earlier, as both my parents were teachers. My primary school was one of the two catholic schools in the Frisian village Wolvega, to which we had moved from the southern city of Tilburg that summer. The defining characteristic of the Mgr Scholtensschool was not so much its catholic background, as its reform pedagogy. At this Jenaplan school, education focused on community forming, peer learning, and celebrating moments together. Every week was opened and closed with a common meeting of all teachers and pupils, for which a different class was responsible each week. Every day started with a classroom sitting in a circle sharing stories. Also typical for this type of education, and maybe more importantly, classes consisted of pupils from different year groups (combining years 1,2,3 or years 4,5,6) working together. I distinctly remember the projects we did for a subject called 'world orientation': we went outside, caught insects in the park, collected frog spawn, made detailed descriptions (at least, that is what I thought at the time) and studied their development in jars in the classroom. Growing plants and vegetables in our part of the school garden is another one of these memories.

At the end of year six I was advised to go to the secondary school most of my friends were going to go to: a pre-vocational/general secondary bridge class¹⁴ 15 kilometres south of Wolvega. Of course, my friends and I rode our bikes there daily. It turned out to be an unsuccessful advice. Both socially and cognitively I did not fit in with the population, so after one year I was advised to go to a different school, 15 kilometres north of Wolvega and start in second year of the pre-university track. This marked the start of my career as a secondary school nomad. I found fitting in with a group that had been formed the year before difficult and I was bullied by my new classmates. To make things worse, the first-year subject matter at this school had been different from that at my old school, and I failed second year. Instead of resitting second year, I chose to take third year at general secondary level, which worked out well. And so, I passed into the fourth

¹⁴ A bridge class has marked the start of secondary education in The Netherlands since 1968. It delays the final streaming decision after primary education by one, two or at some schools three years.

year with the same group I had been in the year before. And then, the family moved, and I did my final year at a new school, progressing into pre-university education the next year in yet another new class. But things seemed to have changed. At this school I joined the baseball team and the film association, and though I was not an excellent student, for three years I felt at home here.

That feeling lasted in higher education. Having travelled abroad a lot with my parents, which was not as common in the 1970s and 1980s as it is nowadays, I enrolled at the University of Antwerp's Higher Institute for Translators and Interpreters, majoring in Russian and English. More importantly, the curriculum included many general courses, ranging from history and aesthetics to law and business economics. I graduated with honours and was awarded a grant to study in St. Petersburg for one year at the Herzen Pedagogical State University. 1993 turned out to be a life changing year, as this is when I taught my first English classes. My students came from all backgrounds and age groups, with a grandmother and her granddaughter at either end of the scale. They all had one thing in common though. They were convinced learning English was going to help them either to be successful immigrants in an English-speaking country, or to further their career in the new Russia in its development towards democracy.

This teaching experience caused me, after military service in The Netherlands, to start yet another study: teacher education. It took me two years (instead of the standard four) to graduate as a 2nd degree¹⁵ English teacher. By now, as a teacher trainee, I had seen and taught pre-vocational, general secondary, pre-university and SSVE classes, but jobs in education were hard to find.

Eventually I ended up working in the travel business for over 10 years, before I found my present job as a teacher of International Travel & Hospitality Management at the college in 2010. Ever since, I have enjoyed teaching students from my own experience and supervising them towards taking the next step in their lives in our society: higher education or a job. And this, in my opinion, entails more than teaching the tricks and secrets of the trade. Just to remind myself of that there is a quotation by Hannah Arendt hanging over my desk:

*'Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And **education**, too, is **where we decide whether we love our children enough** not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but **to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.**' (2006).*

¹⁵ Teacher education at Bachelor level in higher vocational education in The Netherlands leads to a 2nd degree diploma. At master's level a 1st degree diploma can be obtained. A 1st degree diploma is required to teach at general secondary and pre-university level in years 4, 5 and 6.

Having shared who I am as a teacher, it is also relevant to position myself as a researcher in and of SSVE.

Being both a colleague and a researcher of personal experiences puts me in a position of insider and outsider. At the outset of my research, I see myself as an insider because I believe I know from experience what teaching SSVE students from different backgrounds in the Amsterdam region is like. Therefore, I am able to relate to the stories and experiences of my participants (Reed, 2011, p. 34). In other words, I am aware of the context in which participants speak about good education, and of the 'role that context plays in the interpretation and explanation of the interview narrative' (Hamdan, 2009, p. 387).

Participants, likewise, know that I am a teacher at their college, a close colleague, or a friend-from-work. I also consider myself an insider because I share experiences with both groups of educators in my study: those who have completed formal teacher education and those who worked in the industry their students are educated for. In that sense both the narrators (participants) and the listener (researcher, i.e. I) share the same life-world (Kelchtermans, 2024, p. 207). These factors have encouraged participants to speak freely about their experiences and ideas on education. From a theoretical point of view, this position meets Gadamer's requirement that '[h]ermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the traditions from which it speaks.' (Gadamer in Lavery, S. M., 2003, p. 25).

On the other hand, being a researcher may create a distance between myself and my participants. Prejudice, about research in ivory towers outside daily reality, I believe, has a strong presence particularly in SSVE, because SSVE in itself is focused mainly on practical education rather than theoretical study. This idea, which Kingma expresses beautifully in her drawing which opens this thesis, may cause educators to decide not to take part in my study. The fact that I have the power to disclose their views, experiences and practices may also lead potential participants to not take part in this study.

Being who I am also makes me an outsider: I teach at only one of the many departments at the college, each of which has their own culture and ideas about education. Also, I am a white Dutch male in my fifties. All this puts me in a different place from several of the participants (see chart in paragraph 3.3 and appendix 1). Depending on their age and years of teaching experience, participants may see me as an authority or a dinosaur rather than as a peer.

What I hold to be true about SSVE may also make me an outsider rather than an insider. I quoted Moustakas earlier in this chapter to underline what this research, and the domains of purpose of

education mean to me. My research questions ‘become[s] a kind of song into which the researcher breathes life not... because the question leads to an answer, but also because the question itself is infused in the researcher’s being. It creates a thirst to discover, to clarify, and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge.’ (Moustakas in Friesen et al., 2012, p. 12). My position that in good SSVE educators leave room for subjectification and consciously relate to their subject matter, their students, themselves, and the public (including their colleagues), may not be shared. It may even be contested by participants. I expect some participants will be of the opinion that students should be practically trained according to the wishes of industry in an ever changing 21st century economy. In view of the impossibility to bracket my own preconceptions, as I discussed before, maintaining a position of disinterested researcher was a challenge in some situations. Yet, listening to the recordings, I believe my own views did not obstruct the flow of any of the conversations, nor did they seem to restrict the participants in sharing their experiences.

When this dual positionality influenced a conversation, it is noted in the right panel of the diptych.

Finally, as I study educators’ personal interpretations of experiences, I may seem an outsider. But because of shared common concerns and feelings, impressions and meanings (Friesen, 2012, p. 42) in my explication I am confident I have drawn an intersubjective perspective on good SSVE.

In conclusion, I am confident my dual positionality provides a unique perspective that allows for an enriched and deep understanding of the participants’ experiences.

3.7 Ethical considerations

In the previous section, my discussion of my own background and biases contribute to transparency and trustworthiness of this thesis. Emphasising ethical rigour and integrity, it is only logical to provide an ethical framework for my study in the following section.

Titling my thesis *Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education*, I have set the task for myself to do ‘good’ research, which raises the question what good research is. Just as one may ask what education is for, to determine what good education is (Biesta, 2016b, p. 21), I ask myself the question what my education research is for.

In the participant information accompanying the invitation to take part in my research, I describe the purpose of my research as follows:

The purpose of this study is to give meaning to what good education is in SSVE, and how this is experienced by educators from different backgrounds at our college. In other words, I want to hear about your experiences and thoughts about what makes our education good.

[...]

The outcomes of my study may inform future team developments.

So, on the one hand, I look into the present state of education at the college, discussing the notion of good education with the participants. On the other hand, I identify the possibility that these experiences and their meanings may be considered reasons for initiating changes. Both these elements have ethical implications for the way I undertake my research.

In the first place, when I talk about my research as ‘good’ research, I do not talk about strictly methodological issues, nor do I adhere to the maxim in the American No Child Left Behind policy that good research consists of experimental studies that yield prescriptions for action. Rather, with Hostetler, I claim ‘that good research requires our careful, ongoing attention to questions of human well-being, and I urge education researchers to think about how to achieve the conditions under which that attention can flourish’ (2005, p. 16). In addition to questions of human well-being, I claim questions of societal well-being, i.e. education for democracy, are equally important questions in good research. Hence my interest in educators ways of creating opportunities for their students’ subjectification.

3.7.1 Two ethical approaches

In the same way that education is a relational practice to which a teacher brings a self, as I wrote before, my research is a conversation between a researcher and individual participants, both bringing their selves to the conversation. It is therefore worthwhile to look to two ethical approaches underpinning my research.

The first, virtue ethics, is described as an agent-centred approach (Israel, 2015, p. 15). Participants put trust in me as a fellow teacher, and a more or less close colleague. On the basis of this trust participants assume I will do the right thing with their contributions. This trust, therefore, goes further than just regulatory compliance, or their supposed conviction that I am capable of following the ethical guidelines laid down by BERA.

Similar to education being a matter of moral responsibility for the other (Biesta, 2011, p. 208), education research also calls for moral responsibility. My participants’ trust demands of me to act accordingly, to reflect on my questions and questioning, to be aware of my position as a researcher. Ultimately, my choices influence the findings and may lead to changes in the way education is seen and takes place. It is therefore necessary to ask questions, and select expressed ideas in my writing, that recognise the value of each participant’s contribution, without betraying their trust (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p. 10).

In spite of the president of the board's oral permission to name the college in my thesis, I have decided not to, nor use participants' real names. In view of my participants' privacy, I also coded the teams they work in. Yet, participants may be recognised. Many of them voiced outspoken views which makes them identifiable for colleagues and others with who they share or shared their views on education in general or on education at the college. I decided to include these details whenever I felt the richness of description was to take priority over anonymity. Similarly, even though the name of the college nor the team names that coincide with the students' future fields of work do not appear in this thesis, the data I used to introduce the college, the stories of my participants and the previous section on positionality provide sufficient detail to identify the college for those who would want to.

Concluding, to paraphrase Macfarlane, my participants' trust commands me to be a jazz musician: not simply following notes on the page but improvising and thinking for myself (Macfarlane, 2010, p. A30, in Israel, 2015, p. 16).

The second approach to ethics in my research practice is an ethics of care. Just as teachers care for their students, it is only right for researchers to care for their participants. So even though I obtained written consent, and many participants explicitly repeated in their conversations I could use anything they say, before writing my conclusions, I sent my participants a draft of their portrait. This is when I asked them if they still allowed me to use their words. Thus, I act in line with BERA's ethical guidelines for educational research regarding consent (8) and privacy (40, 41) (BERA, 2018, pp. 9, 21). In planning the conversations, I ensured that they were held at the college, so in a familiar place for the participants. Eventually, some participants chose to have the conversation online. Others were forced to have an online conversation due to covid measures. Neither situation compromised the principle of securing a familiar place for the participants in question. I also ensured the conversations were planned during working hours, so as to not ask the participants to invest their free time in my research.

In line with Nodding's concept of natural care (Noddings, 1984, p. 4) I offered my participants the opportunity to volunteer or withhold information in the questionnaire and provided a comfortable environment for participants in the conversations. I arranged for a friendly welcome with drinks and introduced myself as, primarily, a fellow educator rather than a researcher, so as to create a relationship between equals in conversation about good education.

Eventually, I side with Van Manen when he says that 'Research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being. To care is to serve and to share our being with the one we love. We desire to truly know our loved one's very nature. And if our love is strong enough, we will not only

learn much about life, we also will come face to face with its mystery.’ (van Manen, 2016b, p. 5). The same goes for pedagogical tact in education, which implies that my research into good education is an act of care for loved colleagues who in turn care for and love their students.¹⁶

In combining these two approaches, virtue ethics and ethics of care, with their elements of trust and relational depth, I trust to create beneficial conditions to make meaning of my participants’ contributions.

3.7.2 Further ethical considerations in practice

Apart from ethical conduct, compliance with procedural guidelines is demanded. So before collecting data, I submitted my research plan to the University Research Ethics Committee at Brunel University London, through BREO (Brunel Research Ethics Online). Thus I ensured the university that my research meets national (British) and university requirements for ethical research. At a practical level, this means that the participant information sheet, the questionnaire, the interview/conversation schedule were approved, consent was obtained from the college’s president of the board, measures were in place for obtaining informed consent and compliance with health and safety measures was assured.

In addition, in line with virtue ethics and ethics of care, my conversation partners were given the opportunity to respond to the initial sketch of their portraits and suggest a different pseudonym prior to submission.

I sent the following message by e-mail requesting my participants’ permission to publish their story:

In the period between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 you and I held a conversation about good education. Based on what you told me then, I wrote a fictional lesson. You will find both the Dutch and the English version of ‘your’ lesson attached to this e-mail.

Of course, I do not want to publish your story without your consent. Therefore, I want to ask you if you recognize yourself in the sketch attached. If I misunderstood anything you told me, I will adapt the story. Also, I would like to hear if you want me to change your fictitious name.

¹⁶ While I believe this holds true, I am aware that from an attitude of care, upon completion of primary education, children (particularly from lower socio-economic backgrounds) are sometimes advised by their teachers to stream into a sub-optimal form of secondary education.

One of the participants had retired and appeared untraceable.

To complete the 'process of becoming' Cathy as described in section 3.5.1, I include the answer she sent me a week after I sent my request:

Hi Jorgen,

It has become a super fun piece! Totally sounds like my class, cool 😊😊

I am curious to see the publication, when will that be?

Best and hope to see you soon!

Other participants, too, responded enthusiastically to their left panel narratives: 'Beautifully written. It covers the essence, and I recognise myself' (Judy), and 'very special and almost moving to see how you managed to convey what I stand for as an educator' (Isabel). All participants agreed to have their portraits included in this thesis either in their proposed form or with adaptations.

Jake's message led me to delete a company name from the portrait:

I want to ask you to make a change. In the text, you specifically mention [company name].

Experience has taught me documents can quickly start living their own lives on the internet. I would like you to change the name into 'At my internship company' or 'later, in real life'.

For the rest, you can send it in. You may also use my real name if you wish.

Other changes were made based on similar remarks of other participants: the distance walked during a flight in Laura's story, Bret greeting his students, a clarification of Laura's position as a hybrid educator, and specifying the level of Jennifer's classes instead of using the terms 'lower' and 'higher'.

Asking my participants to react to the portraits and adapting them in the way the participants requested completes the part of the ethics process in which participants are actively involved. My participants' responses, too, serve as the means in which they reclaim my portraits as their own, affirming them as a truthful representation of our conversations. As a result, van Manen's phenomenological nod, recognizing a phenomenological description as an experience that we have had or could have had (van Manen, 2016b, p. 27), is provided by both an external experienced SSVE educator and the participants themselves, which is essential for the trustworthiness of the portraits as data.

3.8 Potential limitations

Considering the previous, my research can be schematised as follows.

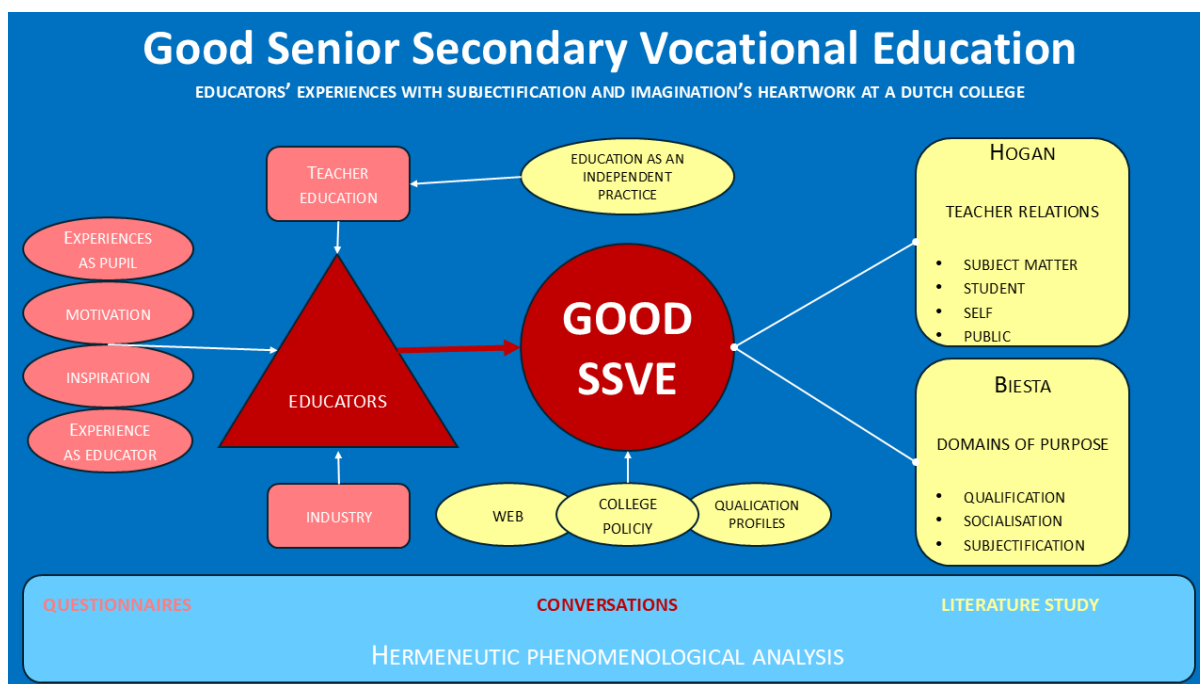


Figure 6 - Research scheme

This scheme, however, does not show the limitations of my research, which I will treat in the following five sections.

3.8.1 Robot Vacuum Cleaners

Before endeavouring to do hermeneutic phenomenological research related to Biesta's ideas about good education, I need to address the limits of a hermeneutical world view according to Biesta.

In *The Rediscovery of Teaching*, Biesta writes a paragraph entitled 'On Robot Vacuum Cleaners, Learning Environments, and the Hermeneutical Worldview' (2017, pp. 44-47). He chooses the term hermeneutical worldview because in a way of learning he describes (using the analogy of a robot vacuum cleaner), 'the human being -or learner as others might say- attempts to comprehend the world of which (s)he is a part through interpretation.' Biesta problematises this by stating that this 'worldview reduces 'the world "out there" to me', to one individual's interpretation.

In *Letting Art Teach*, Biesta opposes this hermeneutical attempt at understanding (art and) the world to an existential encounter with the world. This existential encounter then leads to questioning the world in a way that does not ask about understanding but asks us to be addressed and affected.

Without delving deep into Biesta's reasoning, in which he draws on Levinas, I claim that the point he makes does not hold for my research. My interpretation of the essence of good education in Dutch SSVE and opportunities for subjectification is formed through continuing fusion of horizons and a

hermeneutic circle, thus excluding the idiosyncratic view Biesta warns against, and leading to educators wondering about good education and their role in it.

3.8.2 Phenomenology and Critical theory

Another critique of my methodology stems from critical theory, which argues that phenomenology cannot be critical. However, if we accept that ‘the promise of engaging in phenomenology is that we return to our practice transformed’ (Aldridge, 2015, p. 123), phenomenology has the potential to create room for various aims in education, such as Biesta’s subjectification, Hogan’s imagination’s heartwork, or Ruitenberg’s ethic of hospitality. Just as these authors, I too share critical theory’s aim of emancipation through education. The contrast between critical theory and my hermeneutic phenomenological research does therefore not lie in criticality, nor in striving towards emancipation. The main difference is to be found in critical theory’s prejudice of schools representing an oppressive power system (Vlieghe & Zamojski, 2001, p. 40), as opposed to schools representing a sanctuary (Biesta, 2023, p. 58) outside the systems of both home, and economy and politics.

3.8.3 Lost in Translation

Another thought that springs to mind as a limitation is unrelated to the methodological underpinning of my thesis but is, not for the first time, language related. This point lays bare the difficulty of writing my thesis in English using concepts from continental European, primarily German, thought on education. I mentioned the difference between the word pairs *Pädagogik/Didaktik* and *pedagogy/didactics* before. Another case in point is found in Dilthey’s ideas about the objectification of life. This terminology works particularly well in German, but less so in English, simply because the lexical link between the German terms *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Geist* cannot be missed, whereas a similar link is absent in its English translations ‘human sciences’ and ‘mind’. This leads me to consider the possibility that experiences are different depending on the language they are captured in (van Manen, 2016b, p. 180). In the same vein, Ruitenberg comments a translated text may ‘close down possibilities engendered by the language in which the text was written.’ (2009, p. 68). This is a problem I encountered sometimes in rendering the conversations with my Dutch participants into English, and which became particularly apparent in the use of the Dutch word ‘leuk’ by educators in their questionnaire, which I discuss in section 4.6 Fun.

As others have commented before me, writing in a language that is not one’s own is simply more complex, less precise and might miss subtleties. As a Danish student once said, ‘Writing in English is like a bad hair day, [...] You can leave the house, but you’re not really comfortable with the situation.’ (Sword, 2017, p. 90).

On a more serious note, the questions about translations in hermeneutic phenomenological research are really about '[w]hat happens to the meaning of narrative data when they are translated' and about the extent to which it is 'allowed to edit the translation of fragments from transcriptions to ensure that their power as exemplary "evidence" remains intact without slipping into the pitfall of data fabrication' (Kelchtermans, 2024, pp. 214-215, quotation marks in original).

3.8.4 Limited Locus

A third limitation to my research can be said to be its limitation to one Dutch SSVE college. However, as any educational situation is unique, any research into educational practice is limited to its particular situation and circumstances. It is phenomenology's search for essences of a phenomenon that makes its depictions valid. In other words, the fact that with my participants and intended readers I share a common professional life-world, a school, allows me to use an intersubjective 'we' instead of a subjective 'I' (Friesen, 2012, p.42). Taking this point even further, I believe educators, staff and administrators at other Dutch SSVE colleges share a sufficiently large part of this life-world to make this research worthwhile for Dutch SSVE as a whole.

3.8.5 Personal Limitations

Finally, I realise full well that being an early career researcher means that thanks to valuable preparation by all those involved with the EdD program at Brunel University of London, and the efforts of my invaluable supervisors, my initial research skills have developed in the course of this research.

Most strikingly this has appeared to me in data collection through conversations: the later conversations have provided me with richer data than the earlier ones. In particular, I felt better able to nudge participants in later conversations towards relevant experiences concerning subjectification or heartwork, once they started talking enthusiastically about their prior work. In the earlier conversations, themes were discussed which led away from rather than towards my research questions. Also, in these earlier conversations, I sometimes found difficulty in making participants talk about their experiences rather than talk about their opinions.

Finally, seeing that conversations are not carefully prepared monologues and despite being aware of my position as a researcher, I may have influenced the sketches drawn by my participants in the conversations both by my questioning and my verbal and non-verbal responses to the narratives of the participants.

Throughout the period of data collection, it has remained more complex to manage the conversations that were held online due to the lack of direct interpersonal contact.

3.9 Brief Epistemology

In this chapter, I shared my methodological considerations and argued why and how I chose to 'listen to experienced workmen'. Before hearing their voices in the next chapter, that is to say before moving on the presentation and explication of my data, I share the poem *Brief Epistemology* (Van der Vegt, 2023, my translation).

The knowledge is there before she has a name for us
The knowledge knows she is knowledge
But she does not yet know of what
And the knowledge is lonely and sighs in the barrenness
The knowledge acquires
The knowledge acquires a basin of fire and flakes
The knowledge crumbles and flies away

The knowledge recollects herself
She curdles and ferments
The knowledge acquires a basin of slime and foam
She agonises in the bed
She braids her first strands
And the strands wash through the slush
But still the knowledge does not know of what

The knowledge does not adapt, the knowledge expands
She acquires a basin of flesh
She ties the flesh together with her strands
And she whines and proliferates in the cavities
That is how the body is raised
And the knowledge knows she is the knowledge of the body
The body is inspired by the knowledge
Why would the knowledge still dwell in the foam?
Do not ask what the knowledge can do for you, ask what you can do for the knowledge

The only thing I know is people turning their heads
The only thing I know is from Iberian gauge to standard gauge
The only thing I know is Rip van Winkle

The only thing I know is the law of cosines
The only thing I know is a water shortage
The only thing I know is chapter 2
The only thing I know is the Wow! signal
The only thing I know is from saxophone practice
The only thing I know is Somalian culture
The only thing I know is this

Only in the basin in which she is fertile the knowledge can tie herself together
Through the senses new strands add themselves to the knowledge
The senses are tight
Knowledge, once tied, cannot pass through the senses
The knowledge breaks down to rebuild herself elsewhere
The knowledge activates herself by tying herself up
In the flesh and in the foam the knowledge ties herself differently
The body swells as to encompass the knowledge
It does not yet know the knowledge is not there for him
Knowledge that is not tied together goes adrift
Loose strands of knowledge are expelled through the sweat glands
The knowledge squeezes meaning out via a painful path
Who would not want to join in her jubilation?

Han van der Vegt

This poem, which the author recited at the Expeditie Event¹⁷ in the Dutch city 's-Hertogenbosch on 10th May 2023, and which he kindly allowed me to print here, reflects in a way my journey as a researcher in education. I set out on this journey on the assumption there is knowledge to be found. Some early 'strands' I discarded, and in data collection I was confronted with many different 'only things I know'. Eventually though, when explicating the conversations, 'loose strands' were 'tied together' in a complex writing process, resulting in meaningful knowledge for SSVE.

¹⁷ The Expeditie Event (expedition event) was organised by the Dutch research group Expeditie Lerarenagenda (expedition teaching agenda). [About the Expedition » Expeditie Leraren Agenda](#)

4 – Educational Experiences – A Group Picture

This chapter reflects the lived experience, or at least the reported recollections, of educators at the college as expressed in writing (May - July 2021). The next chapter, Educational Experiences – Twelve Diptychs, reflects the lived experience expressed in conversations I had with my participants (October 2021 - April 2022). In both these chapters and in the concluding chapter ‘The Meaning of Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education’ italics mark my participants’ own words.

The presentation of these variant experiences of the phenomenon ‘good education’ here leads to its intuitive explication (Laverty, S. M., 2003, p. 23) in chapter 6, which answers the following questions:

- How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students’ subjectification to appear?
- What does ‘good education’ mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

In this chapter, I start drawing a general, thematically organised group picture of ideas and experiences that appeared in the answers the 27 participants whose profiles I presented in the previous chapter (see p. 72) gave in their questionnaires.

My explication of the data starts with the answers to the questionnaire. I marked answers, sentences, expressions that evoked a particular interpretation of concepts in *Pädagogik* in me, the reader. I identified the six most frequently appearing themes, leading to a group picture forming a general concept of ‘good education’ at the college. As might have been expected in vocational education, practice is a theme that is often mentioned as being essential for good education. Having fun is a more striking recurrent theme. Furthermore, this group picture indicates teaching is seen as a process aimed at development and independence of students by involved educators. And finally, respondents tend to answer questions in terms of feelings and sensory experience.

In the following description of these 6 themes – embodied experience, vocational practice, development, independence, involvement, and fun – I use numbers coinciding with fig. 5 (classification data) to refer to candidates who filled in the questionnaire only, and pseudonyms to refer to candidates who filled in the questionnaire and agreed to a conversation. Letters refer to the questions in the questionnaire in the following manner:

- a: Can you describe a defining experience in your school life as a pupil/student (primary, secondary, higher & further education)?

- b: Describe the moment you decided to become an educator. Why did you take that decision, and why did you take it at that moment?
- c: Can you describe an experience from one of your classes at the college which characterizes you as an educator?
- d: What does the role of the educator look like in future education at the College?
- e: Please add any remarks and or comments on my research, or additions to answers you gave before.

The questions a. and b. ask for educators' experiences before becoming educators. This is the period in which essential prejudices about education have formed. The subsequent questions, c. and d., present insights in the role in which they see themselves in the 'existential project of human life [oriented] to how children and young people inherit, transform and live institutional, social, and cultural qualities of life' (Deumier et al., 2024, p. 31) that is education. Both pairs of questions were constructed to provide insights into the extent to which the participants have experienced imagination's heartwork or subjectification in their careers in education.

4.1 Seeing is believing, embodied experience

A recurring theme in the answers to questionnaire is a hopeful one from the perspective of subjectification. In fifteen instances participants refer to establishing contact, supporting, or teaching students based on their individual needs. This is not to say that individual desires as voiced by students should be the focal point of good education. After all, as Biesta says (2017, p. 18), students may not yet realise what is desirable from an educational perspective, and students' desires may also differ from what society desires from education. The hope I refer to is caused by the educators' eye for the student as an individual, which may create opportunities for this individual student's subjectification.

This is all the more hopeful as educators write about this theme primarily in answer to my request to describe a characteristic experience from one of the classes they teach (question c). Three respondents address the theme of being seen individually as something they missed as pupils or students.

I had difficulty passing my exams and did not receive any support at that time, which caused a lot of stress (a-10).

I did not see the use of studying, mainly because my former teachers hardly showed any involvement, or none at all (a-19).

In the speech at my graduation ceremony a teacher said: 'we did not know you had it in you' (a-26).

Surprisingly, one of these respondents does not report the experience as a student influencing their present teaching.

One of the participants, Jake, describes this theme in terms of 'feeling at home'. After an incident in class, he writes,

The "victim" of this abusive language in this case was a Muslim boy with a beard. After class, out of personal interest, I asked him several questions about his Islamic background and his appearance. This made him feel he had a place where he felt at home again (c-Jake).

Not just Jake, who writes about feeling, but other participants as well use language that refers to embodied experience when writing about this topic. *'Making students feel they matter', 'students feeling proud of their achievements', 'I am a lively person, can grab their attention and hold it', and 'biting back', 'seeing students', 'putting in energy', "physical" teaching'* as opposed to online teaching, and *'damaged students'* are just a few examples of the way educators talk about the embodiment of their teaching, and of their interaction with students in particular.

4.2 Vocational practice

When writing about classes in SSVE no less than eleven participants explicitly talk about professional practice in the sense of practice informing education and the need for students to practice their skills in industry or in industry simulating school settings. Seeing the way education is organised and the way the college is laid out, with practical classrooms for all courses, this does not come as a surprise. After all, at SSVE levels 3 and 4 one third of a course's study load consists in company placements. Also, particular spaces in the college building cannot be called classrooms. There are several mock cabins, a hangar with about a dozen aircraft in it, and a warehouse which is also used by a well-known airline for training purposes of their logistics staff. These spaces align vocational education at the college with both Biesta's domain of qualification and with Hogan's relationship to the subject, especially for educators with a background in industry.

The theme of practice appears in answers to all questions (a-e), indicating educators see practical training as relevant in many areas.

As a student I was a big fan of problem-based education. Very practical and investigative (a-Laura).

I always really enjoyed training employees at previous sites and helping them find their way in their new environment. In the role of practical SSVE instructor, I saw a new challenge to pass on my practical knowledge to students and interns (b-9).

I feel like a fish in water when I give practical lessons here in our school's warehouse (c-30).

Creating education where the worlds of school and practice merge. Getting as many students as possible working on real assignments (e-26).

Practice influenced and/or continues to influence respondents' own experience as students, their decision to become an educator, daily teaching, their conception of the future role of the educator, and one respondent even used the final 'additional remarks' section of the questionnaire to stress the importance of practice in vocational education in addition to the point she had made before on this topic.

Some participants indicate they became educators because of their experiences in professional practice. As a manager, one found out there was a perpetual shortage of staff, which she decided to tackle by *taking future staff training into her own hands* (b-Cathy). Someone else opted for the same solution to fight her *dissatisfaction with the quality of new colleagues who had only recently graduated* (b-Laura). Both Cathy and Laura are fervent supporters of practical education.

Contrary to my expectations, the importance of vocational practice is recognised equally by educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education. Yet, assuming all participants support the idea of education in practice would not be acceptable. In the first place, obviously, because what is not said cannot be heard and should not be assumed. In the second place because –in response to the question to depict the future role of teachers at the college– one of the participants explicitly says:

I try to teach as much as I can. Education is aimed at getting you out of the classroom and that is the exact opposite of what I want (d-21).

This participant defines teaching as teaching in a classroom. In his convictions about good education, he is closer to Masschelein and Simons in their claim for recognition of the scholastic in schools (2013) and to Arendt's concept of school in between home and public life (2006). This position opposes the trend in SSVE to focus on skills development through practical training at school and in the industry.

4.3 Development

Participants seem to agree on one of the purposes of SSVE: growth, development, or as one of the educators writes *'becoming adult'* (d-14). Contributing to this goal however appears only once as a characteristic of present teaching, when Isabel describes an international exchange programme.

It fosters international orientation, intercultural competence, and personal development. The latter is especially valuable, as students enrich themselves with greater self-confidence, pride in what they have achieved, and even more enthusiasm for their studies (c-Isabel).

All 6 other references to development are made when describing the future role of educators at the college. Isabel and three others furthermore identify development not, or not only, as a purpose to be achieved in students, but as a requirement for educators themselves.

When writing about the topic of development, one of the respondents opens a door to room for subjectification saying that a future educator should *'allow for room for personal growth and appreciate the process of becoming adult'* (d-14).

The fact that participants write about development or growth is not, in itself, particularly educational. Anyone in the age range of students in SSVE will grow and develop, in other words *'criminals need to ... develop as well'* (Biesta, 2022, p. vi). Indeed, looking at the context of the answers, it becomes clear that educators interpret these terms quite differently. Some use it as development towards predetermined learning goals (d-Jennifer, d-Jake), relating development to Biesta's qualification. Others focus on self-development (d-19), relating development to Hogan's teacher's relationship to himself or herself. Still others refer to both learning goals and self-development (d-Judy, c-Isabel).

The appearance of the concept of development in so many instances by many participants seems to indicate that development is one of the defining concepts of good education in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE. However, the broad variety of interpretations of the concept of development shows there is hardly a common understanding between educators of what the desired development is. This, in turn, makes it impossible to agree on the way education should stimulate this desired development.

4.4 Independence

Specifying what development leads to, I have found eleven references to some form of independence. Some participants use that particular term, other describing it as *'active world citizen'* (d-Jennifer), or *'societal awareness'* (d-4). Jennifer clearly refers to independence in the world outside and after school. And so do Jake and Laura when they refer to their students' future line of

work and private life (d-Laura). Others refer to independence as a characteristic of student behaviour in class (c-4, c-25), or as a general characteristic of education (a-Antoine, a-4).

I was taught at a Montessori school, which provides a large amount of freedom and responsibility. University felt more like some kind of distance learning course (a-3).

One of the educators refers to independence as a goal of education in a critical sense, writing that future education should be aimed at good reading skills and the ability to see through mechanisms in society to prevent students from becoming '*prey and pawns of large businesses*' (d-15).

As in the development theme, participants use the term independence in different ways. Jennifer and participant 4 clearly refer to independence as an element of Biesta's domain of subjectification. On the other hand, Laura's example of independence, being able to do the job you are expected to do independently, puts independence within the domain of socialisation.

The concept of independence is, however, less problematic than the concept of development described in the previous section. Independence in all of its forms presented by the respondents is related to one of Biesta's domains of purpose, whether it refers to independently taking responsibility for the quality of one's work as a mechanic (qualification), actively participating in society (socialisation), or resisting to become '*prey and a pawn of large businesses*' (subjectification).

4.5 Involvement

Independence, from the point of view of educators, goes hand in hand with care for the student as a person rather than as a learner only. Here we see over half of the participants making a reference to Hogan's teacher's relationship to the student. Whether as a coach, a motivator or a source of inspiration, no less than sixteen respondents reflect on personal involvement with their students. One of them describes the future role of educators at the college as follows:

Someone students can always call upon during their studies. Someone who points the way to the future (d-15).

Combining elements from Arendt (2006), Noddings (1984), Masschelein & Simons (2013), and Bastiaansen (2021), it is in this concept that SSVE shows itself to be education rather than vocational training.

4.6 Fun

The final general thought recurring regularly in the questionnaire is the concept of fun. Generally speaking, the Dutch word *leuk* is used freely and often in many situations and can be translated in different ways: 'nice', 'amusing', 'pleasant' or in this case 'fun'.

Respondents apply the concept mainly in three different ways. In the first place when talking about the moment they decided to pursue a career in education.

A little voice in my mind always told me I'd be fun in the classroom (b-Bret).

I expected it to be kind of fun (b-Kathlene).

Secondly, fun is experienced by educators while teaching.

Teaching is really fun, but side issues often are not (e-Kathlene).

And finally, fun is considered an experience students should get in education, sometimes in line with experiences educators had in their youth.

I'm always in for a bit of fun in class (c-27).

I had a fun time, and still think about it often (a-9).

My whole school career was quite pleasant. I liked going to school. I had most fun in SSVE (a-17).

One educator further mentions appreciating the students' sense of humour (c-3). In contrast to the idea of fun, one respondent remembers she used to think '*school was stupid*' (a-27). Someone else experienced school as a source of stress (a-15). And Cathy even describes her first year in secondary school as '*hell*' (a-Cathy).

In itself, the concept of fun poses a more serious problem than the concept of development discussed above. Whereas students might flourish when they enjoy their education, the concept of fun is more superficial than joy. When fun becomes an aim of education, the question should be raised whether what students desire (fun) is educationally desirable. Fun might be interpreted as the opposite of the interruption Biesta claims is a necessity for subjectification (Biesta, 2005, p. 36). And fun, too, seems to obstruct Masschelein and Simons' 'matter of attention and of world' that define the school as scholastic (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, pp. 44–45). They clarify this concept quoting Daniel Pennac describing his teachers:

All I know is that the three of them had a passion for communicating their subjects. Armed with that passion, they tracked me down in the pit of my despondency and didn't give up until I had both feet planted firmly in their lessons [...] I [...] forgot myself a bit, tucked myself

between brackets, got rid of the me who, before encountering these teachers, had stopped me from feeling I was really there (Daniel Pennac in Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 45, italics in original).

It may be interesting to see how a potential future further study may clarify questions on the meaning educators in SSVE attach to the concept of fun, how experiencing education as fun differs from enjoying education, and whether fun education can be good education.

4.7 To conclude

The 6 themes of which the group picture consists: embodied experience, vocational practice, development, independence, involvement, and fun, paint an image of the aims and methods of SSVE at the college. These themes offer an insight into the multifaceted nature of SSVE and express the involvement of the educator-participants with care in heartwork. In addition, some of these themes are well suited to the need for subjectification.

These themes, too, give an insight into the question what educators mean when they talk about 'good education'. It should be practical, embodied and fun, aimed at development and independence and provided by involved educators. The answers of the participants do not provide concrete examples of educators creating opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear. Yet, the themes embodied experience, development and involvement indicate participants are aware of the importance of subjectification. In addition, Laura and Cathy provide examples of their own subjectification when they decided to become educators confronted by problematic situations at work.

The six themes identified in this chapter formed part of the preparation for conversations with twelve voluntary participants about their answers and their experiences with and views on good education. The next chapter delves deeper into twelve individual educators' experiences and presents each in the form of a diptych consisting in a fictionalised account left panel and a right panel describing their experiences and views. The concluding chapter of my thesis, 'The Meaning of Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education', brings together the group picture, the following twelve diptychs, and the theories on subjectification and imagination's heartwork.

5 – Educational Experiences – Twelve Diptychs

Whereas the previous chapter, ‘Educational Experiences – A Group Picture’, reflects the lived experience, or at least the reported recollections, of educators at the college as expressed in writing (May - July 2021), this chapter reflects the lived experience expressed in conversations I had with my participants (October 2021 - April 2022).

Preparing and having these conversations with colleagues I often wondered: am I turning into a teacher-researcher with his ‘subjectification’ hobby horse? In the writing process, becoming more and more convinced of the essence of subjectification for SSVE, I more often experienced what Van Manen describes as ‘interrogating something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being’ (van Manen, 2016b, p.43).

The presentation of these variant experiences of the phenomenon ‘good education’ in these two chapters leads to its intuitive explication (Laverty, S. M., 2003, p.23) in chapter 6, which answers the following questions:

- How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students’ subjectification to appear?
- What does ‘good education’ mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

Out of the 27 participants whose answers I discussed in previous chapter, twelve volunteered to a conversation about what they experience as good education. In the following section, my ‘Gallery of Honour’, a diptych of each of them is on display.

The ‘left panels’ depict a class in the life of the participant, which I constructed from the examples discussed in our conversation. I use fictionalised narratives because this art form allows me to uncover essences about good education, unhindered by potential prejudices of the participant. These portraits were read by a third party experienced educator who confirmed empathic resonance and an intersubjective perspective. The participants in turn confirmed their portraits to be true to life, and in doing so reclaimed them as their own.

The right panels have a title, resulting from a wholistic reading approach (van Manen, 2016b, p. 93), which expresses one of the main thoughts underlying that educator’s view of good education. This title is followed by a short introduction of the participant and continues with excerpts from the

conversations expressing their experiences and views. These experiences and views have subtitles indicating the general idea expressed during the related section of our conversation.

Some of the right panels in this gallery also mention the education theories on which the participants base their education. These insights from education theory and research were either explicitly mentioned by participants or merely alluded to.

As in the previous chapter, direct quotations and ideas voiced by my participants are italicised.

In general, the diptychs present 12 particular views on good SSVE. Some of the classroom experiences presented contain examples of opportunities for subjectification, other excerpts from the conversations I held with my colleague-participants show the wide range of influences on these educators. The implications that appear from these explications for 'good education' at the college are discussed in the next chapter, 'The Meaning of Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education'.

The diptychs are presented in chronological order of the conversations, between October 2021 and April 2022.

Please allow me to introduce Fausto, Rudy, Judy, Bret, Antoine, Jake, Laura, Kathlene, Cathy, Isabel, Leo and Jennifer.

5.1 left – Fausto’s Stories

A burst of laughter echoes through the room, where Fausto stands surrounded by a group of young men. Remarkable, given the subject at hand: discussing a dense and highly theoretical exam. Like Fausto, the students are techies at heart, and theory isn’t their strong suit. But it’s crucial. If they aim to work on a European level, these are the types of exam questions they’ll face. It’s practice for the real thing, and Fausto, with his humour and tales from his days as an aircraft mechanic, manages to keep their attention fixed on the material.

These are final-year students, not the wide-eyed first-years still bewildered by their new environment, but seasoned students who have completed their internships. Now, under Fausto’s guidance, they tackle a demanding, optional part of their curriculum. It’s not required, but it demands real dedication. The students visibly enjoy his thrilling story about flying low over the Canadian wilderness.

Yesterday was different. One of the boys had balked at installing a tricky locking wire. ‘One way or another, that piece needs to fit’ said the technician in Fausto. But Jeremy, sulking, muttered, ‘I’m not doing it.’

The educator in Fausto took the boy aside for a quiet word. It didn’t take long to discover the real problem: Jeremy’s mother was struggling with her health. The locking wire wasn’t the issue. Today, though, he’s laughing hard with his classmates. Is it because his teacher took a moment before class to ask how his mother was doing?

One more story, another adventure from his travels, and then it’s time for the boys to head to their next lesson. Is it pure chance that Fausto wraps up exactly on time? Probably not. Fausto is not only a skilled aircraft mechanic but also a certified teacher, steeped in the art of lesson planning and reflection.

Yet he’s no “soft touch” educator. For Fausto, things either work, or they don’t, just like in engineering. And if it’s a student who isn’t working, Fausto is crystal clear: the choice is theirs. Either you change, or we find another path for you. It’s a formative decision Fausto himself once faced, in no uncertain terms.

5.1 right – Learning Outcomes as either A or B

On a sunny October afternoon, in a small, but well-lit room at the back of the school building on the first floor near the fire escape, Fausto shared his experiences with good education.

Fausto teaches many different courses to SSVE level 4 students in the aircraft maintenance department and has done so for between 5 to 9 years. For 4 years he taught in primary and secondary education and before that Fausto had a career in aircraft maintenance in the air force for over 10 years. He has held his 2nd degree teacher qualification for over 10 years. A particular memory of his school days is *'a conversation between my mentor, my father, and the undersigned, in which it was made very clear to me what was expected of me.'* In his view, future teachers at College Airport should be *'more of a pedagogue, which I have come to find an underdeveloped aspect of SSVE'*. With this statement, he underlines the importance of Hogan's teacher's relationship to the student.

Modern students

One of his experiences involves having students obtain their European Aircraft Maintenance Licence (AML). Seeing that Fausto used to have such a licence himself, he feels the urge to make his students pass this external examination, even though it is not part of the college's curriculum. Over the years Fausto has compiled a large corpus of materials for his *'boys'* to practice for these *old-fashioned language-based exams*. He identifies the nature of these exams as problematic for what he terms *'modern students.'* However, when during company visits he meets a former student signing off aircraft, for which they need their AML, Fausto experiences satisfaction about his contribution to that person's success, both in terms of qualification and socialisation.

Building rapport

Having had a career in aircraft maintenance in the air force for over 10 years, Fausto shares many stories from professional practice with his students. His experiences with *repair jobs in Iceland, or with flying at low altitudes in Canada* are used to raise enthusiasm for the industry, as well as to show the AML is needed for particular jobs.

However important the AML may be, Fausto does not force any of his students to prepare for the exam, because he is aware some students will pursue a career in a different line of work, go on to higher education, or

after four years of aircraft maintenance education, they say: 'You know what, I am going to take up Chinese gardening'.

This choice of expression typifies one of the ways Fausto builds rapport with his students. Apart from sharing stories from his professional background, and humour, Fausto shows a genuine interest in his students, as the fictionalised account above shows. By starting a conversation with Jeremy, Fausto gets him to explain his behaviour and to choose to change it. This is an example of Fausto's

way to create an opportunity for Biesta's subjectification and also shows Fausto in what Hogan terms the relationship to the student. His enthusiastic stories from his previous career in aircraft maintenance show his relationship to the subject being taught and Biesta's domain of qualification.

Critical teacher

Helping his students pass the exams for their AML, even though this is not part of the curriculum, is an example of Fausto and his colleagues making use of the room for agency Dutch SSVE offers.

Fausto is not just concerned with his own teaching but is also critical of the education system. For example, when he discusses preparation for the AML not being funded in SSVE, whereas it is required by airlines.

Another element he is worried about is the way our education is organized. Especially the fact that *up to 50% of educators in primary education are unqualified.*

I find the person in front of the class an important factor

Also, *many technicians who teach in SSVE are not particularly strong pedagogues.* And even though Fausto claims strong pedagogues are *prone to never-ending deliberations*, in general he believes *Pädagogik* has turned into an underdeveloped aspect of SSVE.

Finally, Fausto indicates the philosophy behind education policy is focused on budget, rather than good education. *Good education starts with good education policy. Now that that is absent, because public money is being spent without being monitored by the government, Dutch education continuously scores lower in international rankings.*

Influences

In Fausto we meet a teacher who belongs in SSVE and takes pride in being a teacher. He has working experience in the industry he teaches about as well as in primary and general secondary education. In addition, he already held his teacher qualifications when he started teaching in SSVE. He uses his working experience to introduce his students to the profession of their choice and in doing so works in the domain of purpose of qualification. Besides, the stories he tells are full of details about working within the industry, and as such function as methods for socialisation.

Fausto's views on good education are obviously influenced by his career and personal life.

As a technician and former air force, Fausto is in favour of binary thinking: either something works, or it does not. *It is either A or B and dealing with pass marks for 55% questions answered correctly in a test is complex:*

I would rather not fly a plane that has been 55% repaired.

In other words, with regards to student performance, Fausto clearly takes a binary, outcome-based position focused on qualification.

Yet, as a graduate from teacher education, Fausto also stresses the importance of reflection and *Pädagogik* in teaching. A certain memory of his school days helps Fausto in his relationships with ‘difficult’ students.

As a teacher, I would dislike my younger student-self. I think I was a challenging student. One night my teacher, Mr S., told me and my father “It is very simple: either you start doing things differently, or you leave school without a diploma”. When we left my father told me: “I will return to this institute only once more: at your graduation”.

This approach of being very clear and leaving no room for doubt is one that Fausto applies himself as well, in a slightly adapted form. He asks students for their opinion on their behaviour first and then offers to help if they choose to change. This is another way in which Fausto creates opportunities for subjectification. Yet, with regards to the communicative-relational aspect of teaching, Fausto focuses on what he calls *clarity*.

Bringing the French film *Être et Avoir* into our conversation, Fausto stresses the importance of personal approaches in education in addition to transfer of knowledge. Especially in primary education, in which Fausto worked before starting his SSVE career, this attention to *Pädagogik* plays an important role. Yet in SSVE too, Fausto has experienced, it should not be left out.

Concluding, in introducing an extra-curricular topic, and in his analysis of the way education is being funded, Fausto shows himself to be an agentic, critical teacher, who is aware of Hogan’s relationship of the teacher to himself, and who works towards all three of Biesta’s domains of purpose of education.

5.2 left – Rudy’s Thought Experiment

As every week, Rudy’s students shuffle in a little awkwardly. Sure, they all speak English at roughly the same level, but they miss their usual classmates and find “those from the other classes” a bit intimidating. Still, it’s undeniable: they make faster progress in this mixed group.

“If today you feel like you’re doing a lot of the work yourself or that I’m not explaining things in a highly structured way, that’s intentional,” Rudy begins. “I want to see if this works because I get the feeling I’m doing too much, which means you don’t get the chance to learn on your own.”

With that, he casually drops the terms adjective, adverb, suffix, and affix into the room and sets the students to work in small groups. “Figure out what they are and how they’re used,” he instructs.

In small groups, the students dive into the task. Marvin stands out, hyper-productive and full of excellent examples, but he frequently seeks Rudy’s reassurance. Rudy gently nudges him toward independence, encouraging him to trust his own instincts and embrace the idea of making mistakes. At the same time, Rudy can’t help but feel proud that this student is at least trying to find answers on his own.

Halfway through the lesson, Rudy pauses their work and asks each group to share its approach. “At first, we wrote down examples ourselves and tried to figure it out, but that didn’t work,” Helen, who is on the green team explains. “Then we looked it up on the internet, found examples, and after that, we created our own again.”

Later, as the groups dive back into their puzzles, Rudy makes his rounds, asking what motivated them to choose particular adjectives. For Rudy, connecting the material to the students’ own world is key. If exercises like these encourage critical thinking, creativity, or innovative ideas he even welcomes pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable in a regular school setting.

And so, he finds himself discussing the development of a cost-saving hash grinder with one group and the perfect, unsolvable murder with another. Odd topics? “Not at all,” Rudy assures them. “It’s perfectly fine to be curious about such things.”

Rudy’s openness and the freedom he offers dissolve the initial discomfort in the room like snow in the sun. By the end of the hour, Helen, Marvin and all others are fully engaged, but then it’s time for everyone to return to their familiar classrooms. Everyone except Rudy, who heads off to his next experiment.

5.2 right – Education as a Super Easy Concept

Rudy is a qualified 2nd degree English teacher, teaching at level 4. Also, he is a technology expert. It is therefore not surprising this conversation is held via Zoom. With him at home, and myself in one of the meeting rooms at school.

Both his career in the hospitality industry and his career in education have lasted for 5 to 9 years. His reason for going into education as a teacher relates to the fact he wants *‘to make a difference. There are too many egos without life experience deciding about the lives of individuals. The student is the centre (not teachers / teaching).’* An important revelation occurred to Rudy as student in higher vocational education:

That is when I discovered the whole world has always praised education too highly. It is really super easy. Why does everybody make such a fuss? What is important in education is to make the students feel they matter.

In the future, teachers will achieve that *not through teaching classes, but through coaching and learning*. This may imply a shift away from Masschelein and Simons’ scholastic element of education, yet the coaching element in Rudy’s future education implies a strongly developed relationship to the student as put forward by Hogan.

Free thinking

Rudy describes himself as a *free thinker*, and experiments in his classes quite often.

Freedom is a central concept in Rudy’s teaching as well as in his views on education. Voicing overtones of subjectification, he says to be in favour of *abolishing rules and protocols that potentially limit a student in finding their place in society*:

For example, our minimum 80% attendance rule. Some students will simply never achieve that. In my opinion that does not mean they are bad students, or that they are not going to develop successfully into a beautiful person in society.

Disappear to let students appear

From his experiments, Rudy has learnt that *the less the class needs him, the better he likes his role as an educator*.

This reasoning is in line with a remark in Rudy’s questionnaire saying:

There are too many egos without life experience deciding about the lives of individuals.

When asked to elaborate, Rudy explains he sees too many people in education with their own outlook on the world without looking at ‘what really works scientifically’. So, they stay with what is the most comfortable way of teaching for them, instead of working in a way that has proven to be the most efficient for learners.

When talking about good education, Rudy specifically indicates he sees *digital learning environments combined with coaching as the way forward. The starting point for a learner should not be what the teacher or the curriculum prescribes, but what makes the learner wonder.* This concept leaves a broad range of opportunities for his students’ subjectification, as their choices determine the direction a class might take.

How do you experience this problem? What kind of problem is this anyway? And then I can start looking which solutions we can find.

Another direction Rudy sees as positive for SSVE is for students to *‘develop towards a profile that is useful in society’* rather than focusing on vocational skills. And he would be willing to *sacrifice grammar instruction for topics like personal development, creative skills, innovative thinking or critical research*, so that students can

work on themselves, or taste and feel what it is they like.

From the way Rudy talks about education, it becomes obvious that Biesta’s subjectification plays an important role in his views, even though he also seems to see effectiveness as one of the main goals of good education.

Limited room

Like Fausto, Rudy is a textbook example of an educator making use of the room SSVE in the Netherlands offers for agency. And he states explicitly *‘the more influence you are able to wield, the more engaged you become and the more fun it is.’*

However, as an innovator he has also experienced the limitations of possibilities at the college. When trying to offer classes to all students in the course at their own level, irrespective of the year group and class they were in, it turned to be impossible to schedule eventually.

An annoying self

Experimenting with classes seems to be related to Rudy’s experiences as a pupil in secondary education. His ambition is to provide education in a different way than what was provided to him, because he felt he was *not allowed to have an opinion about the way it was provided.* This is a clear example of an educator whose views on education have been influenced not only by theory, but also

by personal experiences. In principle, Rudy is convinced *every individual wants to learn and wants to learn quickly. Good education is education that can adapt to whatever it is an individual needs. This means education needs to offer freedom. Freedom for every learner to show what they are good at and qualify at a suitable level. Of course, combining the needs of individual learners with the needs of society.* This shows Rudy to be aware of Hogan's relationship to the public and of Biesta's domain of socialisation.

Rudy sees that presently this is what is going on in Dutch SSVE:

Somehow, I think I find myself in a period in society in which this change is happening. Because I hear ever more often from institutes, teachers and education visionaries. So, when hearing about a skills passport, or qualifications based on skills instead of education or courses. I always get very excited about that.

Upon reflection on his former self, Rudy identifies himself as *an annoying pupil, always interrupting teachers' explanations* because he was triggered by what was being said. He then needed answers to his questions before being able to follow his teacher's line of thought. And even though he now qualifies this as annoying and egotistical, this process of slowing down, or speeding up, is exactly what he wishes his students to do, thus illustrating what Aldridge calls the logical priority of the question. This question of education originates spontaneously and leads to tension between learning and lesson planning, it concerns an issue that is at stake for both the student and the object of study, and it transforms students (Aldridge, 2013).

Influences

Quite explicitly, Rudy recognises the influence his own school career has had on his outlook on education. Primarily, his behaviour as a pupil has influenced his idea of the role of the teacher as a 'guide on the side', responding to students' desire for learning. And secondly, the fact he was not allowed to proceed to the final class at HAVO (5-year general secondary education) for not meeting requirements for a course he has *never needed since*, makes him a supporter of a set of micro credentials¹⁸ as a replacement for a diploma.

In many aspects Rudy follows contemporary trends in the Dutch education narrative: he is at the forefront of digitalisation, supports the view of teachers as coaches and is convinced of the direction the lifelong learning movement takes. On the other hand, in our conversation Rudy's words echo

¹⁸ In Dutch SSVE, micro credentials are compact learning units with standalone labour-market value that can be used to upskill individuals after they have obtained their initial qualification.

Ivan Illich and his thoughts seem to develop along similar lines as Emile Bojesen's concept of passive education (2018). In that respect Rudy's view go much further than that of most in Dutch education.

5.3 left – Judy’s Students are Good the Way they Are

#@\$!, beep-school, Seriously?! F... idiot, Screw him, Well, I’m definitely not doing that... &%\$@#!

No, Judy’s mentor hour isn’t off to the start she’d planned, with her group storming in like this. She knows her students’ schedules by heart and immediately understands the source of their frustration: her colleague Dirk has, once again, poured all his energy into passionately showcasing his vast subject knowledge while completely losing sight of his students along the way.

And sure enough, it’s true. Dirk’s enthusiasm for his subject collided headlong with the frustration of students who didn’t understand a word of it, leaving some sent out of class and others stuck with punishment exercises. Now, it’s up to Judy to smooth things over. And luckily, this happens to be her strength, because in Judy’s eyes, rebellious behaviour is just a clumsy cry for attention, a silent “I want to, but I can’t.”

She quickly scraps her lesson plan and decides to give the students time to work independently. Not without structure, though. First, she makes them set clear goals for what they want to achieve during the hour. Once that’s done, she takes the time to sit down individually with the students and unpack their anger.

‘What subjects do you find easy, Jim? Can you afford to put less effort into those? And which ones are difficult?’ she gently asks. To Suyan, she highlights how admirable it is that he always shows up, despite his challenging home situation. And for Mark, who feels stupid for not understanding Dirk’s explanation, Judy reassures him, ‘This has nothing to do with being stupid.’ That bit of comfort is all Mark needs to finally tackle his dreaded punishment work.

She calls Lindsey and Rebecca up to her desk: ‘Look, this is just not the agreement we made. You’re making it harder for me to maintain the calm we’ve worked so hard for here.’ The disturbance is neutralized, and when Judy returns to the classroom, the rest of the group is still diligently working, even though not everyone has met the goals they set at the beginning of class.

Returns? Yes, because Geoff, a special needs student from another class, had needed her outside for a moment. He stood there, teary-eyed at the door. ‘My alarm didn’t go off,’ he sobbed, ‘and now I overslept, and it’s the first time I’ve ever been late, and now they won’t let me into class.’ ‘What’s bothering you most about that?’ Judy asks calmly. ‘Well, this is the hardest subject, and now I’m going to miss it, and I won’t understand anything anymore.’ The rule is simple: if you’re late, you can’t join the class. But Judy takes Geoff by the arm, walks him to his classroom, and consults her

colleague. Together, they decide to make an exception, just this once, so he can follow the lesson after all.

Judy not only carries her students but also her colleagues with her genuine involvement.

5.3 right – Teaching as Genuine Involvement

Judy responded very enthusiastically to the questionnaire and has talked to me before about the importance of *Pädagogik* in general and Biesta's theory in particular for SSVE. On a bright October afternoon, we discussed Judy's experiences in education from her point of view as a qualified care coordinator¹⁹ and a pedagogical coach with a master's degree in special educational needs and thirty-five years of experience under her belt.

Judy describes her feelings as a pupil as follows:

Primary school was a Montessori school, very comfortable and safe. Secondary education at a comprehensive school. Too big, too schoolish and too rigid. Hardly any good memories. Higher vocational education: youth work, learning experience on a personal level!

At the time of this conversation, Judy worked as a career-and-citizenship teacher and as a care coordinator. Rather than starting with a recent experience from one of her classes, Judy makes a bold opening statement:

The most important in education, in SSVE, is our pedagogical duty we all have. And I see that is heavily underrated in SSVE. It is all about knowledge, knowledge transfer, grades and it is a judgemental culture.

Judy claims this is in part caused by the *large number of educators coming from industry*, as opposed to others like herself with a background in *Pädagogik*. In her view, this leads to an *opposite, wrong way of educating students. The basic position of educators should be the willingness to see students for who they are, including their personal and domestic circumstances*. In this brief opening, Judy shows her view on good education, what has influenced her to come to this view, and what she experiences as the difference between educators based on their professional background.

Questioning students on their behaviour, aimed at finding out the background of it by listening to their answers, is a sign of empathy. And once a student experiences empathy from their educator, a student-educator relationship starts to build. As this relationship is the be all and end all of

¹⁹ The role of a care coordinator (zoco in Dutch) is comparable to that of a senco in English education.

education, every educator should learn how to become truly interested in their student as a person (cf. Bastiaansen's attentive involvement (2021)).

Writing about education of the future, Judy reveals that what appeals to her is

to give students responsibility for their development and to invest in the talents he or she has. My classes are student-centred, and students can develop at their own level and pace. Progress and the drive for self-development are valuable. In a familiar and safe learning environment students will experience they are good the way they are.

However, an issue Judy and her colleagues do not agree on is the interpretation of student-centred education. In some colleagues' view, this means that *students should be taught the knowledge required by industry in the most effective and efficient way, so that they can start their career in as short a time as possible. In other words: all that matters is knowledge, knowledge and knowledge.* In the eyes of these educators, SSVE needs to focus mainly on Biesta's domain of qualification. Others, the minority Judy finds herself in, consider *student-centred education to be education focussing on Bildung of the human being-student*, i.e. the domains of socialisation and subjectification.

Agentic co-creators

A defining moment in Judy's career was the year she was asked to develop and teach a course for childcare workers together with just one colleague. The first year of this course, Judy describes as *the best year of her life because she and her colleague taught all classes, guaranteed all Dutch, English and Arts & Crafts classes were related to childcare, and continuously asked for feedback from their 14 students. With support from industry, they created good education together.* All this happened, as Judy lovingly says,

somewhere in a small classroom about which you wonder how for god's sake one can hold out in it.

This example clearly shows the conditions Judy created to provide opportunities for her students' subjectification.

At this moment, Judy finds herself in a team that has recently introduced the maker education concept. This approach provides students the *autonomy to choose the product showing their understanding of the learning content that suits their individual preferences.* In Judy's opinion, this concept *appeals to students' autonomy and respects them for who they are.* An element Judy underlines is that *autonomy needs to be taught as well, seeing that first-year students in particular require, and request, a more structured approach. Yet, once they understand how the course works, they are introduced to external projects for which in third year they need to find creative innovative*

solutions. In other words, this concept makes use of increasing levels of complexity (Van Merriënboer, 2019, p. 5). As an example, Judy describes a flower bulb company wanting to transport their products to Hong-Kong. After finding out which steps are needed (structured), students are challenged to find a way to make the process more sustainable (creative).

Apart from these thoughts, Judy also shares several emotions she experiences in education. Talking about group formation, and her individual approach of students, she says: *'I think it is an amazing job! I really really find SSVE very beautiful'*. And when describing a case of a student suffering from adhd, who successfully recovered after a prolonged period of absence due to an incident during work placement, she says: *'that just really makes me very happy'*.

When discussing school rules, we come to speak about education having a task in the development of our students' moral compass. Judy's position, reflecting Arendt's (2006) and Levinas' (2015) philosophies, is *that in education students should be allowed to find out what suits them and what doesn't, not individually, but always in relation to others because:*

We are all in the world together.

5.4 left – Preparation is Bret's Key

Bret enters the classroom, places his bag on the desk, and begins his ritual of setting up. Handouts, materials for interactive exercises, and his lesson outline for the next ninety minutes are neatly arranged by the time the students file in.

After a friendly 'good morning', Bret begins his lesson with a brief explanation, naturally peppered with an anecdote drawn from his own experiences in the field. This leads into an assignment, previously uploaded to the electronic learning environment. Most of the students dive right in, but Bret frequently has to remind a few to put their phones away. Initially, he enforces the rule strictly, but playing the role of disciplinarian doesn't come naturally to him. Eventually, he lets the wandering phones slide. Despite this, the students manage to complete the assignment within the planned twenty minutes.

Next, it's time for something more dynamic: a quiz on handling hotel guests, where the students are actually encouraged to take out their phones. The energy shifts as the activity engages the entire group.

With the first forty-five minutes of the lesson behind them, the students grow restless. A German test looms later in the day, and many still need to study. Sensing the rising tension, Bret quickly adapts. While diverging from his lesson plan wasn't part of the plan, he knows he has other sessions with this group later in the week to catch up on today's material.

He levels with the class. 'Alright, everyone, I want to cover a bit more theory with you today. After that, you'll get the final half hour to prepare for your German test. And in the last ten minutes, I'd like to see you quiz each other. This means, though, that we'll have to make up for today's material in our other lessons this week. Deal?'

The relief is palpable. Bret's flexibility wins him enthusiastic praise from the students, a return on investment for his careful preparation and instinctive empathy. The moment reinforces Bret's vision of what great teaching should be: creating a comfortable, safe space that's focused on learning, both in and about vocational practice.

5.4 right – Vocational Education as the Strong Foundation of our Country

Bret and I are part of the same team, so we meet almost daily. This conversation felt somewhat more formal than our usual ones but turned comfortable quite soon.

Bret used to work in the industry for over five years before becoming a teacher in higher education. Bret has been at the college for over five years now and has obtained his PDG. An important

experience in education for Bret was his time abroad from 12 to 18 years of age, when he attended an international school. When his job was at risk in the 2008 financial crisis, he decided to become a teacher following the

ever present voice in his head telling him he would like to stand in front of a class.

However, Bret is the only respondent who has not described a situation in his questionnaire answers that characterises him as an educator.

When asked, at the beginning of our conversation, how Bret experiences good education, he surprises me, saying that *few questions are signs of a good class*. Further, he is of the opinion the element of *explaining and conveying knowledge makes for good education*. This makes him the first participant who does not mention the relationship to the student as a mark of good education.

Bret recognises several issues that may hinder good education:

On Monday morning at 8.30 am half of them are absent, at 3 pm they're all tired.

Another aspect of good education according to Bret is a clear framework for students. *It has to be clear what they can and cannot do. In addition, a good lesson plan in combination with experience will make a teacher and his class 'reach Rome at the end of your 90 minutes'.*

Trust

The tone at which Bret tells stories about noisy classes and what causes unrest in students makes him come across as a teacher with whom students want to share their problems.

He explains this by referring to his introduction to Leary during his PDG course. He interprets *Leary's rose (1955)* as a guideline for interaction and communication and sometimes chooses to talk with students at their level, sometimes as the teacher who is above their students. *This way he is able to invest in a relationship of trust, which establishes itself in two to three months.*

Bret indicates he has experimented with Leary's rose:

I tested it once, just because. I thought I'd have a look. If I take up an authoritarian position, it creates an aversion in students. You immediately lose all credit you had built up before. So, I learnt from that. Of course, you may sometimes pull rank, like "Guys, this is my class and I want you to do so and so". And of course they will grumble, but eventually they appreciate your clarity.

In the end, Bret hopes students will say they learnt something and *learnt it in a way that was safe and comfortable* for them. He thinks he can provide that because of his experience in the industry,

which makes it possible to *make theory come alive by talking about real life practice*. Yet, that also means it is not a good idea to keep teaching till retirement, because you will be

telling stories about practice from an era in which they had not even been born.

This example underlines the importance Bret attaches to Hogan's relationship to the subject being taught.

Not teaching

Apart from teaching regular classes, Bret is responsible for running the college's internal travel agency together with students. As these students do not really constitute a class, and even though formally he teaches, Bret does not see this as teaching, but rather as '*a great hobby and a business*' in which he supervises students for three to four months. And even though the students learn a lot about running and operating a travel agency, Bret seems not very much convinced about his contribution. He relates this to the fact that *the organisation is rather chaotic*. He has identified a number of hiccups and translated these into a task for Paul, one of his students. Bret has listed points of improvement and expressed his wish to work in a more structured way at the travel agency and now has to leave it to Paul to come up with an operational plan. But as this is a long stretch from classical teaching, Bret is not convinced this is a form of teaching he appreciates.

And maybe this has to do with the reason he started a career in education. After losing his job in the financial crisis in 2009 he remembered people had always told him he was good in explaining things to children and had a fun way of dealing with them. So, when he accidentally met someone at a higher education institute, he asked how to apply for a job there. This career path may explain why Bret does not refer to *Pädagogik* when he talks about his influences and has a rather strong focus on qualification and socialisation over subjectification.

Future SSVE

Bret's ideal image of SSVE is marked by hybrid learning. To make his case, he refers to what he hears from students, and from adults as well saying '*I should not have been in school so long*' or '*I learnt everything in practice. I spent 4 years at school but learnt much more in 1 year at work.*' Bret is convinced, based on experiences during covid lockdowns, online teaching does not have much of a future, but SSVE in the future will take place outside school buildings for a large part, even though he does not have in mind what that means for general subjects such as Dutch, foreign languages and maths. Even though Bret seems to make a case for diminishing the scholastic in SSVE, he is convinced that SSVE in itself will not disappear, as it is '*the strong foundation our country rests on*'.

5.5 left – Antoine, One of the Guys

It's early morning, and Antoine stands outside, cigarette in hand, chatting with Damian. In this informal moment, a story unfolds: his girlfriend has kicked him out, just as his parents had done before her. Now, he's been sleeping at work. Damian appreciates Antoine's no-fuss approach: 'You don't send me to therapists or make a big deal if I miss a day. That's why I can trust you.' This men-among-men attitude fosters connection, allowing Antoine to ease into his lessons right after this first smoke of the school day.

On his way back inside, Antoine casually tells another student to finish his cigarette quickly, reminding him there's no time for another before Dutch class with Mr. Van Dooremalen starts. Then, with unhurried confidence, he strolls onto the school grounds, ready for his own class.

That laid-back demeanour is a hallmark of Antoine's teaching style. Since it's early, and some of his students have come straight from their night shifts, his lesson begins with coffee. Naturally, being an English class, everything is named and discussed in English. But don't mistake his casual tone for leniency. When Antoine signals it's time to work, the students get to it. 'No, we're not playing Kahoot right now. It's grammar time: the future tense.'

One of the rules they cover is the use of 'will' for spontaneous actions prompted by a remark. Antoine draws on their coffee moment earlier. "If you tell me you've had barely any sleep and you're exhausted, I respond with, 'I will get you a cup of coffee.'" The students are now tasked with practicing on their own, though not everyone takes it seriously.

One of the older students, Mohammed, who's here to earn a diploma for a better paycheck, is visibly annoyed by the antics of his younger classmate Tim. Turning to him, he says, 'Hey, buddy, we don't do that here,' restoring order to the room. With a class of mixed ages, older men chasing career advancements and younger ones still finding their footing, Antoine's classroom management often takes care of itself.

A bit more practice, and most students get the concept, though not all. To help, Antoine drops his pen on the floor. Kieran responds instinctively, 'I will pick it up for you,' and the lightbulb finally goes off for everyone. Lesson accomplished.

Antoine wishes his students a good day and reminds them to enjoy the Ajax match later that evening. Then, he takes a quick lap through the hallways, shaking hands and waving at students,

before heading to the teachers' lounge. Once there, he makes a call to the company²⁰ employing his students, discussing if there's any way to adjust their night shifts prior to the days they have early classes.

Antoine, ever the advocate, knows that sometimes it takes more than grammar lessons to help his students succeed.

5.5 right – The Headmaster as an Archetype for Good Education

An afternoon in November. I am in the same office as I was when talking to Fausto, waiting for Antoine, a colleague I with whom I used to work closely until he switched teams and started working as an English teacher and a mentor for level 2 students. He has held his PDG for over 10 years. His secondary school career did not go well at a strict school. He started in pre-university, then general secondary, and finally left school to work for a year before he found a school, a Christian one, which offered more freedom, which he liked and from which he graduated. Antoine ended up as an educator by chance. *'Actually, I just drifted into education.'* Being in an administrative role in an HEI, he was invited by a teacher to join him to a lecture at an SSVE college. *One thing led to another: a career as an educator.*

Good education in Antoine's class happens when he is able to *find a connection between the course content and his pupils' daily practice in logistics*. And when his *students are seized by it*. These statements illustrate Antoine's eye for the relationship to the student as described by Hogan.

Relationships

In his written answers, Antoine shows to be well aware that many students at level 2 are *damaged*, which is why he usually stays calm and accepts things even though they cross a line. But sometimes he bites back:

Not long ago, Pete threw a book at my head. He ran off, and I chased him. Not to have a good talk! Luckily, Pete outran me. After suspension and a letter in which he apologised we had a short talk and continued working. Pete's behaviour can be understood if you know more about his background. Ugly divorce of his parents, living alone without really being up for it yet, add a bit of drugs in the mix and there is the cocktail that blocks him studying and functioning well. In real life, you would never want to see a guy like that again. But all things considered, you carry on together.

²⁰ Antoine teaches work-based pathway classes in which employees from one particular company attend school one or two days per week.

In our conversation, Antoine provides some more examples of students with complex backgrounds. Ranging from *living alone while parents live in a large house in the Maldives to being locked in at night to prevent them from going out to commit burglary with an older brother*. Whenever students like these are late, Antoine's response is usually one of understanding.

Antoine is convinced it is part of the job of a teacher *to have a feel for these circumstances and to find ways to smoke a peace pipe with students whenever necessary. Seeing these guys are still young, you need to look for the human side of life and realise they were not born under the same lucky star* as Antoine was:

Raised in the 1970s, well how free can you grow up? White parents, white male, beautiful place to live, not a very hard worker and still ended up well.

According to Antoine, *good education is small scale education. With a fixed group of teachers throughout a student's school career. That is the way to know all students and provide a safe environment. A building plays a role in this*. In their new building Antoine's team is spread out over three different floors, so *whenever a student needs to get something, they can easily stay away for a while because nobody knows that student needs to be in English class, in room this and that, with Antoine*.

This topic in our conversation is in line with Antoine's questionnaire, in which he states how, in an ideal world of education, *there are only small schools of no more than 240 pupils, with no more than 22 pupils per class. Teams are small, and lines to management are short. This enables schools to put their shoulder to the wheel in a common attempt to provide high quality education*.

Learning by doing

In addition to size and place, there is another characteristic of good SSVE, which is its practicality. As a teacher of English at a vocational college, Antoine reflects on the justification of including English as a subject in the curriculum for level 2 logistics students. He starts by saying he does not teach topics because they are in the course book, but because they are exam requirements. Eventually, he finds justification in work practice and job opportunities for his students. *Companies in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, such as Schiphol Airport and Flora Holland, are internationally oriented, and if students want to become lorry drivers, the necessity to speak English is obvious*. Also, at a local level, Antoine can show his students English is a relevant subject. This is how Antoine reflects on Hogan's relationship to the subject taught, as well as on the relationship to the outside world. Bearing in mind what is commonly expected of a lorry driver, Antoine shows himself to teach with a focus on Biesta's domain of socialisation.

Guys, go out into the street here and watch: 80% of businesses use English. Luckily, in The Netherlands we are so good at it we hardly notice it, yet it is daily reality. So, there you see: in your world you need to be able to handle communicating in English.

Ideally, Antoine envisages a logistics course responsible for all logistic processes at the college. At the moment, there is one day of practice for a forklift certificate and one day of practice for a reach truck certificate. In Antoine's view it would be so much *better if our students would receive all deliveries for the college and then distribute them to their final destinations. This would provide a safe working environment in which you are allowed to make mistakes. And as they carry the responsibility for real school processes, students would make progress quicker. Because, after all, these guys learn by doing.* Giving students the responsibility for these real life processes would also realise the consequences of their choices, and as such serves as an example of the way Antoine creates opportunities for subjectification.

Subjectification

Earlier this week, Antoine held a conversation with one of his mentees about his choice to do a course at level 3 instead of the more demanding level 4.

Well, you know, Marc, realise you made this choice yourself, which has consequences. You could have opted for level 4, yet you chose level 3 because you quickly want to get the diploma which is needed for a fixed contract. So, you chose to study at a lower level. And that has its consequences: sometimes you have the feeling it is too easy for you. And sometimes you must follow classes you wonder why they are being taught. Well, that is because this is a level 3 course.

After the student had admitted this made sense, Antoine asked if the student had thought about a solution and Marc said he wanted to fast track through the course. Antoine explained the demands (*finishing 10 instead of 2 practical assignments by January*) and potential practical complications such as working in shifts, raising a family etcetera, but did allow the student to follow the path he had laid out for himself, thus creating an opportunity for Marc's subjectification to appear.

On the other hand, there are situations in which Antoine thinks education should be stricter. Drawing on socialisation, he mentions the physical nature of working in logistics, and the overall conservative attitude which makes it an *unfit environment for that slender student with yellow and red hair, who has 20 earrings*. Yet he was not advised to enrol in a different course. Antoine's broader issue lies in the ease with which students can progress from level 1 to level 3. Due to a system of bonus points and dispensation students can graduate and progress *without actually*

having performed at pass level. According to Antoine, this is a clear case of bad, rather than good education.

In principle, and that is what I find strange, you can pass with a mark of 4,5²¹ for Dutch. So far, you do not necessarily have to pass elective courses, including English. Citizenship education, not mandatory either. Then you do your work placement, and you are sent off three or four times. The fifth time your boss says “well, you only need to do two more months, so alright, I’ll accept this piece of work”. So, in the end you have not done anything right, but you will graduate.

Situations like these decrease the value of diplomas and conflict with Antoine’s professional pride. Also, he finds it unfair towards top performing students: a diploma and a grade list should reflect a student’s achievements, not just whether they passed. And *in the real world it is the story that goes with the grade that makes the difference.*

I teach this Kurdish student who says he is very bad at English. And he is. So I told him “Imagine this guy who naturally scores 9’s at English, yet his final grade is a 7. You used to score 2’s, yet your final grade is a 4. In a job interview the other guy will simply say he did not care too much because it was too easy for him, whereas you can say you worked hard and improved. I think in today’s world it is you who will be hired.

The good teacher

When asked about role models and influences on his teaching Antoine explains *he never was an ideal student, just looking out of the window, doodling, trying to draw comics, dreaming of becoming a comic book writer, if only he had been a better artist. So, he never planned to become a teacher. Yet with 20 years of experience under his belt he now feels he is reaching the top.*

However, his upbringing did have an influence, in the sense that Antoine was *raised with the idea one needed to do good. So when he was offered a job nobody else wanted to do: teaching ‘these weird practical education’²² pupils in Amsterdam’, he stepped in.*

Another reason to become a teacher, and maybe the most influential one, was the worst teacher in secondary school, *a true dictator who hit students quite hard and just required you to copy the board in silence.* In other words, in his teaching, Antoine is the total opposite: *he knows the jokes that*

²¹ Student work in The Netherlands is graded on a scale of 1 – 10. The minimum pass mark is 5,5.

²² Practical education (praktijkonderwijs) is a 5-year type of junior secondary education for pupils with an IQ of 55-80

work; recognises the moments he needs to be strict, and when to pretend he has not seen something; has experienced which methods work best to teach the future tense in English; realises when it is time to play a Kahoot quiz; and feels when it is time to not be serious. As he told a mother visiting an open day with her son and husband: *'Do you know what makes our course so good? We are men amongst each other. And you know us: on the couch, beer, simple.'* His behaviour and convictions make Antoine feel like an old-fashioned headmaster. Defining a *headmaster as the person you trust, who goes the extra mile, pats you on the back, but also gives a reality check when needed.*

5.6 left – Jake’s System

The instructions are clear. A damaged aircraft crate sits ready, and in four hours, it must be airworthy again. Four students divide the tasks among themselves and their classmates. In no time, everyone is eager to get started. Overconfidence, especially when it comes to properly securing the aircraft before diving into repairs, is swiftly addressed. A few students are called out and immediately acknowledge their missteps. Within moments, the entire group is working skillfully and efficiently.

Jake’s role in this exercise? Handing over the reins to students learning to lead, coaching with constructive feedback, and, perhaps most challenging of all, restraining his own enthusiasm for technical systems when it’s better to let the students figure things out.

For a moment, tension rises. Words echo through the hangar that cross the line. Jake doesn’t leave this to the student leaders but steps in himself. His response is unequivocal: everyone in his lesson must feel free to be themselves, but always with respect for others.

After hours of intense work, Jake lightens the mood with a pointed joke: *‘Would you let your mother board this flight?’* It’s a reminder that no matter how much someone loves the intricacies of aircraft mechanics, human factors remain crucial, responsible for over 80% of aviation accidents. As future mechanics, students must take responsibility for the quality of their work.

‘But,’ John protests, ‘in real life, we’ll do this, sure, but here at school? It’s a bit much, isn’t it? And it’s freezing in the hangar, so it’s fine as is, right?’

Jake doesn’t let him off the hook. He demands an ethical professional attitude from his students, one that prioritizes accountability. And he models this ethic himself, showing them what it means to take their responsibilities seriously, not just as mechanics, but as professionals.

After class, Jake pulls Patrick aside, the student who had earlier borne the brunt of a classmate’s prejudice. Opening the conversation with curiosity about the student’s religion, drawing from his own upbringing, Jake shows genuine interest. This thoughtful engagement fosters a sense of safety and belonging in Jake’s lessons, ensuring that students feel at home not only in his classroom but at school as a whole.

5.6 right – Education as Kindling a Flame

As the usual office space is unavailable, I have invited Jake to join me in a, more comfortable, meeting room.

Jake has been involved in education for over 24 years. He holds a PDG, which he obtained 5 to 9 years ago, in the course of his teaching career at the college. As a pupil at school, Jake, contrary to his fellow teenagers, *was a real goody-two-shoes*, always trying to remain polite and not hurt anyone's feelings. 'Avoiding conflict, I made it through secondary school' he writes in one of the questionnaire answers. After graduating from the level 4 course, he now teaches at the college. Jake pursued a career as a *techie* until he found that he

just went to work every day but particularly looked forward to those days he was allowed to instruct others.

This feeling led him to accept a job as an instructor at his old school. When asked about a situation characterising him as a teacher, Jake wrote:

I try to make students grow. My motto is: Education is not just teaching a profession; it is mainly lighting a fire.

As a source of inspiration, Jake mentions 'an ancient philosopher who once said if you want someone to become a sailor you should not teach him to build a boat, but to yearn for the sea'²³ and for Jake education is comparable. Starting from his own enthusiasm for technology and engineering, i.e. Hogan's relationship to the subject, he wants to make his students just as enthusiastic as he is. Continuing from there, Jake's vision of the future teacher is that 'once the fire has been lit, you only need to facilitate and coach. In our profession [his former technical profession, JvW] it is important that students are able to assess whether their work meets quality standards'. In this example, we see how teaching a professional standard (socialisation), turns into a call on the students to be critical of themselves (subjectification).

On the road

When asked about good education, Jake refers to his first class in his PDG course. There he was taught

there is a learning objective or an end goal per class, per course, and there is a student sitting in front of you. And every student is different. And you find out what he needs to reach that goal and you go on that road together.

²³ Reference to French writer François de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) (*Citadelle*, Gallimard, 1948, no pagination) Créer le navire ce n'est point tisser les toiles, forger les clous, lire les astres, mais bien donner le goût de la mer.

Jake's students work on practical cases, and he teaches theory classes to whole groups, whereas in his workshops students work in pairs. This pair work prepares them for their practical exams in which they need to perform individually. During pair work, Jake sees that two distinct individuals are at work, with whom he can work on soft skills and competences on a personal basis. Doing so, he is really on a road together with each student and in doing so pays great attention to the relationship of the teacher to the student.

Teaching as a game

Finding out how a particular students can reach their goal; Jake sees *a sort of a game*. He asks questions that make his students talk about their technical knowledge. Seeing they are allowed to write down only 5 to 10 technical terms, the story they tell is not a *'reading trick or a copy-and-paste trick'*. Finding out which competences a student needs to work on for his exams is a matter of simulating their exam assignments. *'They are confronted with an unknown problem and after about an hour of browsing through the books, they need to explain their solution.'* In this game, Jake sees himself as a coach or supervisor. This example, as well as the class depicted in the left panel of Jake's dyptich, indicate Jake challenges his students to make their own decisions, which is his way to create opportunities for subjectification.

Ethics

In our conversation and in the answers to the questionnaire, Jake mentions ethics a number of times. He points out he has had a religious upbringing and is interested in the way other people think about and experience religion. From his own point of view, he appreciates that *people become happy and feel safe because of their belief*. He strives to create that same atmosphere in his classes so that everybody *'feels at home'* in his class. He states his norms and values are *'aviation and human focused. And I think everybody -and I am typically Dutch in that respect- is equal and should be treated equally.'* To clarify he adds

The moment I notice something is not right in class, I open the conversation saying: "Now stop that. You know, outside the gate I cannot see what you do, but as soon as you are in my class, these things do not happen. You can be yourself here but need to be respectful towards others. And towards me, and I am respectful towards you".

When asked, Jake confirms the hangar he teaches in invites students to feel at home, as it is full of planes, which is where teenage boys want to be. To that, Jake adds that if students feel unsafe, it is more likely to be caused by teachers than by the building.

Influences

Jake is one of the participants in this round of conversations who is quite clear about who has influenced his teaching. I mentioned De Saint-Exupéry before, who has influenced Jake in his view of education as a way to kindle a flame in students. When Jake talks about his aim to make students feel at home, because he is convinced students cannot learn if they do not feel safe, he refers to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Also, he mentions an author he has discovered recently, Van der Hilst²⁴, who has stated, in Jake's words:

Education is often aimed at what students should become. But students do not want to become anything, they want to be something. So, education should be organised in a way that appreciates what they are, and how they can develop that.

Another large influence on Jake's approach to teaching comes from an experience as a pupil. For years he was told '*don't you understand by now?*', which undermined his self-confidence. Having experienced such a harmful approach for motivation, Jake has decided to be a patient teacher with an eye for the private circumstances of his students. In his own words: '*If I do not show an interest in a student, I cannot supervise him either.*' And he experiences this approach leads to students accepting him as their teacher and coach. This prior experience of Jake's shows how Hogan's teacher's self-understanding informs his relationship to the student.

Education as a working system

Being an engineer, Jake expresses his passion for complex, sophisticated engineering and he talks about the joy he experienced designing and building his own electricity network, heating system and internet connections at home. He loves making systems work. Self-reflection on this has brought him to the conclusion that he has the need to approach *education as a working system* as well, and he has taken the initiative to show new colleagues this well-structured system too. *Starting from the Ministry of Education to the curriculum as it is taught daily.* Here Jake combines the relationship to the subject he teaches and the relationship to himself.

²⁴ Ben van der Hilst, *Het leren organiseren* (organising learning), [vd-hilst.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](https://vd-hilst.pdf.wordpress.com)

5.7 left – Learning to Learn with Laura

The airport has been a whirlwind of activity, and Laura's shift is drawing to a close. The students under her supervision, mostly interns, fidget nervously, checking their phones. Will I catch my train home? In their preoccupation, they forget the needs of the passengers they are meant to assist. It's as if they live in a fantasy where catching that train matters more than anything, where the life of a flight attendant is all about glamorous trips to palm-lined beaches. But the reality of working at an airport? It's navigating the stress of countless travellers, and on board it's walking seven kilometres in a single shift and staying cheerful even when a passenger throws up on your shoes.

Laura's lessons don't sugarcoat the truth. If that shatters your dream, this job isn't for you. Teacher Laura trains future colleagues for manager Laura, people she hopes will make the job a little more enjoyable to share.

The school year is well underway, and by now, the first-years know the drill: lessons go faster if they don't cause disruptions and behave themselves. With a test scheduled three weeks away, today's session starts with a planning exercise. Laura asks her students what's important and what isn't. Unsurprisingly, their plans are littered with work shifts and a stolen hour of Netflix. But Laura doesn't let that slide.

'So, what are you watching on Netflix?' she asks. 'You've got a French exam in three weeks, right? Why not pick a French series? That way, Netflix isn't just relaxing, it's helping you learn.'

'Oh, yes of course!' The student's surprise is genuine. Moments like these stick.

The practical part of Laura's lesson generates the most excitement: role-playing scenarios where students print boarding passes and check in passengers for flights. The theoretical background, however, demands more effort and attention, and enthusiasm wanes. Even a fun, educational video on the topic Laura shares doesn't resonate with everyone. Rather than repeat or raise her voice, Laura tries a different approach. She asks a classmate to explain the concept in their own words. And just like that, the lightbulbs go on.

The lesson ends with a lively Kahoot quiz, followed by an open conversation: What worked? What didn't? What did you do differently this time? Some of the answers intrigue Laura, sparking ideas for an entirely new approach to the material, something that might capture her students' interest in fresh ways.

And so, the lesson concludes. The students have learnt what Laura set out to teach, and she walks away reflecting on how she might present the topic differently next time.

5.7 right – Learning as a Form of Getting It

My conversation with Laura takes place on the same afternoon and in the same meeting room as the conversation with Jake.

Laura teaches typical vocational classes for airport and airline service staff and is a mentor for level 4 students. She has worked in aviation for over 10 years and has been with the college as a hybrid educator²⁵ for over 5. She holds a PDG. As a student at one of the predecessors of the college she enjoyed problem-based education because of its practicality and the research the students had to do. As a teacher she enjoys the moments when students *'get why': why they need to learn what we offer and why that is important at the airport*. In her opinion, *the educator of the future has a coaching role, coaching students towards becoming more responsible, both in their private lives as well as in their future profession*.

Co-creation

In the introduction to our conversation late afternoon Laura underlines the usefulness of defining the subjective concept of good education and laying that definition down.

What she experiences in good education is her students' energy, enthusiasm and curiosity. Laura is energised when conversations lead to students understanding why they must do the things they do. On the other side of the spectrum, with another one of the topics she teaches, she finds it *difficult to follow a method that prescribes students to work on a reflection report for 25 minutes, especially when students are finished in 10*.

An explanation for the use of these kind of methods Laura sees in the involvement of management: *there is a minimum number of hours that need to be filled, and it is a safe choice to use methods written by educationalists 'who do not teach themselves'*. This can easily be explained to parents, students and the inspectorate because it is all based on science. Laura, however, finds the content and the reasoning behind the use of these methods poor.

As a response, she takes the liberty to change things, write fun assignments, and links her own work to the standardised method. Often this is work on *topics Laura thinks are important, students think are important, yet the method avoids*. So, like Fausto, Rudy and Judy, Laura shows herself to be yet another agentic educator in SSVE.

²⁵ In Dutch SSVE, hybrid educators work part-time at their college and part-time in industry. These educators are considered particularly well-equipped to teach students about the most up-to-date vocational practices and developments.

Qualification

Laura then underlines that it is not her objective to make all students want to become stewardesses. She does not see herself as an *idealistic teacher* supervising and raising students. She simply wants to have good staff working for her at the airport. Obviously, Laura stresses the importance of qualification based on her relationship to the subject she teaches.

Yet, earlier she explained how she wants to provide good education for her students. She has the idea sometimes education is *too soft for its students. What matters eventually is the skill set, competencies and attitudes students have that will make them successful air hostesses. You need to spike their interest, and that is not easily achieved in English class or Dutch class.*

Conversation

Having established the domain of qualification is most important in Laura's view, we continue talking about the way students are taught at the college. It strikes Laura that many colleagues' preferred way of teaching is lecturing supported by PowerPoints in a classroom with a traditional seating arrangement. According to Laura, this creates '*knowledge consumers*' who do not know what to do after three years of education. Practically, this also leads to problems, as our students are not able to just sit still and listen. This results in a 20-minute-long presentation lasting an hour and a half because of all the policing educators need to do.

Using new media would trigger students' curiosity. Another element is supporting students in planning their study, teaching them to determine what is important to study and what is not, making mind-maps with them. Another tip Laura gives from her own teaching practice is to have other students explain theory if a student does not understand her explanation.

Whenever students only need to learn facts in a particular course, Laura believes the course should be offered online, though not as a self-study course. Other courses, such as the airport ground handling course she teaches, should be offered as blended learning: practice, where students actually are at an airport check in desk printing boarding passes, and background information in the form of a kahoot or a video explaining why processes are what they are. These, the students should watch before the start of class so that they can be worked on further in class. This description of a course clearly brings socialisation to the fore.

The most important element in teaching, however, is to keep the conversation with students going. You may conclude a particular method seems to work well, or not. But the students can tell you how they experience the approach. As an educator you continuously need to be aware which forms you want to use to achieve which goal and ask yourself how you can achieve your learning goals. Here,

Laura's view is in line with Hogan's teacher's self-understanding. Drawing from a different source, Laura tells me she is inspired by and applies Diana Laurillard's conversational framework (2001). That implies, too, that when a student has a very different idea about education, she would be a *curious listener and try to find a middle ground between what is good for this student, and what is good for the rest of the group; accepting that what is interesting for one student, may be less interesting for another.*

Education as a service

The common ground between her job as an educator and her job at the airport, Laura finds in helping people on their way: students, colleagues, or passengers. When asked, she also sees parallels in parenting. *Both teaching and parenting are about guiding the other towards growing responsibility, and both require setting and maintaining boundaries.* For Laura this also means *being honest with students and instilling a growth mindset, so that they are not afraid to make mistakes and accept the consequences of their mistakes.*

If you behave like this at work, I do not want you in my team at the airport. I would rather you did ...

In that respect Laura is *surprised by the fact that educators usually try to cover up their own mistakes or avoid the risk of making any.* At this point in our conversation, mentioning responsibility and accepting consequences Laura for the first time refers to elements of subjectification in her classes.

For both her work at the airport and in teaching, Laura believes, *being service minded is of the utmost importance. The difference being the duration: at the airport it is only a short moment of contact with a passenger, in SSVE you need a good relationship with students for the 3 years they are taking your course.*

5.8 left – Kathlene’s Eye for Students

The hour is over, and Kathlene feels she has given a truly good lesson. She senses it almost physically, and in her mind, she knows that various elements have seamlessly come together. In conveying knowledge, she was sufficiently flexible, attentive to both the group as a whole and to the individual needs of each student at the right moment. She felt seen during the lesson, and she, in turn, saw her students. This mutual connection enabled her to use her techniques and craft to create ideal conditions for the transfer of knowledge, skills, and social engagement. In short, she achieved the purpose of the lesson. She offered something valuable to her students, something they were ready to receive.

And what is valuable? It’s something that resonates with what already exists within a student, building upon it or uncovering a new aspect. For instance, what already exists might be a student’s aspiration to secure an internship at that one exciting company. What the lesson adds is twofold: guiding students to consider what that company might want to know about them and teaching them how to craft a motivation letter that stands out positively.

Of course, not every lesson goes so smoothly. Sometimes, she reaches only half the students, or just ten percent of her message lands. At times, external obstacles force Kathlene to improvise so extensively that the lesson’s purpose gets lost. For instance, a classroom might be so cold that students remain bundled in their coats, creating a stifling atmosphere. And if she follows policy and insists they take off their coats, the ensuing discomfort and unrest might make teaching impossible. But today, the room was warm.

Other times, it’s the social dynamics among students that pose a challenge. Here, Kathlene has a repertoire of techniques. After identifying what’s happening, she decides: is the disruption minor enough to let slide, does a student need a light nudge or a name call to refocus, or does the issue demand her full attention to resolve before continuing with the lesson?

In today’s successful lesson, these challenges didn’t arise, but sometimes a student will demand everyone’s attention by impulsively sharing a thought that just has to come out. Even in such moments, Kathlene relies on her craft. She firmly believes that investing in a strong bond with students and recognising their roles within the group can make all the difference. She once thought all students deserved equal attention, but she has since learnt otherwise. Students who crave attention often genuinely need more of it to establish a connection. This mutual understanding helps them navigate how best to work together. With one student, she might crack a joke, while another requires a gentler approach, easily offended. With some, a conflict might precede the development of a good relationship. Fortunately, her classes are small this year, making it easier to

nurture these bonds. A happy side effect? Students are more forgiving when Kathlene, as is her weakness, forgets their names.

Another obstacle can be the students' own goals for their education, goals a teacher might neither know nor imagine. Some students are in school solely because they must be, ticking a box on their way to a dream job or further studies. When a student's heart is not in their program, teaching them becomes a greater challenge.

The environment, too, can hinder good teaching. Kathlene finds the halls and classrooms where she teaches dishearteningly dreary. Good education, she believes, thrives in clean and inviting spaces.

But in the past hour, these kinds of obstacles were almost non-existent. While education inherently involves unpredictable outcomes, this lesson's objectives were achieved in a structured way. Every student was engaged, maintaining focus even during moments when others took centre stage. The activities Kathlene had devised inspired students to ask questions, give answers, and make fellow students participate more deeply. This collaboration between students is, for her, a cornerstone of good education. It's where she sees students grow as individuals. And if some may take longer to reach the right mode, she is unbothered. What troubles her more are students who seem so conditioned by school that they've lost the ability to take initiative or venture beyond the conventional. In those moments, she wonders: how long will it take before you rediscover your true self, before you dare to think outside the box again?

With such reflections, her workday ends, filled with inspiration to return tomorrow. For designing lessons, teaching, and working with students daily is the essence of the education Kathlene lives for.

5.8 right – Teaching as Opening Doors of Perception

As our school is in partial lockdown, and we should socially distance, Kathlene and I meet online. This conversation about good education has turned out to be one of the longer ones. Whereas some educators talked about their ideas on education Kathlene uses phrases indicating how she experiences her teaching and the processes taking place in her classes.

Kathlene was a journalist before she became a teacher about five years ago. She holds a 2nd degree teaching qualification as a Dutch language teacher. As a teenager, in secondary school, she was confronted with the fact that she was not the best of class anymore, as she used to be in primary school. Her reason for becoming a teacher was a prosaic one: the availability of permanent positions for people of a certain age. Kathlene shines when she can *work with students' individual needs: what can they do, how are they doing, how can I stimulate them to make the most of it?* And this is related to her views of the role of the future educator in SSVE: *a sounding board, a source of support and*

information, a role model, someone offering structure and direction, someone who sets boundaries, someone who points out ideas and opportunities, someone who sees a student's ideas and opportunities and stimulates these. Someone showing perspective. She clearly sees the future educator in SSVE as *someone who adds to what students may discover independently*, and in this way opens possible moments for their students' subjectification.

The risk

Kathlene summarizes her approach to teaching as *'You cannot always predict the outcomes of your teaching.'* And in doing so, she paraphrases Biesta's *Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013a). Of course, there also needs to be *a well-structured plan in your course, classes need to be goal oriented, yet the goal may be reached differently from what was planned. This may also happen during planned peer learning*, which Kathlene is a supporter of.

Value

To ensure her Dutch writing classes are valuable to students, Kathlene has devised a mistakes ranking. Category 1 mistakes cannot be made. Category 2 mistakes may not be made by students in SSVE level 3 and 4. And finally, category 3 mistakes are mistakes that are regularly made by many in daily life. Therefore, these mistakes *'are not of the utmost importance.'* She prefers teaching practical Dutch skills to explaining complex grammatical concepts. This is aligned with SSVE's focus on practice rather than theory.

When discussing this issue in our conversation, it becomes clear that it is not straightforward to determine what is important to teach and what is not, as *knowledge is the basis for skills development*. In addition, *language is a living thing, so what is correct and what is not changes over time and depends on interpretation*. This realisation leads Kathlene to conclude good education needs to be flexible.

Teamwork

Educators who realise the importance of peer learning and enjoy preparing classes that make students interact with the subject matter and with each other, experience their work as 'an endless source of new knowledge and information'. There are however, according to Kathlene, other elements in the work of an educator that make the work less enjoyable. These issues are usually related to the organisation of education: rules and regulations, schedules, meetings etcetera. What annoys her, is the fact that whereas colleagues take the responsibility to improve their individual classes, it is unclear who should take responsibility for the improvement of the quality of education at team level. *It is, of course, attractive to determine what happens in your classes individually, but*

for the quality of education it would be advisable to take decisions together. Eventually, she is of the opinion, management should address the issue and make the team take responsibility.

Seeing is believing

Kathlene immediately mentions her teacher education (2nd degree Dutch teacher) as the most important source of inspiration for her teaching. She describes an experience during one of her school placements:

The lower levels of pre-vocational secondary education are really very difficult to teach. It is only about upbringing²⁶. At that school there was one teacher who could wrap these children around her little finger. And I did not get how she did it. So I spent many hours in her classes. Just watched: what is it that you are doing? In my classes they were throwing paper balls at me and stuff. Of course, it is related to your personality, but I noticed what she did as well: she really had 26 pairs of eyes. She saw exactly what every child was doing. And I think in the beginning I only thought about myself. In due course I learnt to see who is in that class, who they are, what they do. And I learnt how they respond to me, and how I respond to them. That has turned out to be a very valuable insight.

Seeing students for who they are has become an important characteristic of Kathlene's professional self-image, and as such provides an example of a teacher's relationship to herself. She tells me it has made her realise good teaching in SSVE is difficult because you cannot imagine why students chose a particular course. *Not every student is passionate about their school or the job they are being educated for. Some want to continue to higher education, others want to become a stewardess, others still choose a course because they can pass without too much effort.*

But it is not just seeing students that makes for good education. Kathlene is of the opinion that the environment is also part of good education: a beautiful and enjoyable environment, relating to what your education is about contributes to good education. In saying so, she underlines the importance of the concept of perception of lived space (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 299).

Conclusion

Kathlene is an educator with a clear view on good education. She starts from Fenstermacher's definition of teaching (in Praetorius & Charalambous, 2023, p. 257):

²⁶ In Dutch the word 'education' sometimes translates as 'opvoeding en onderwijs' (≈upbringing and schooling). Here, Kathlene refers to the first of these two constituent parts of education.

- There is a person, P, who possesses some
- content, C, and who
- intends to convey or impart C to
- a person, R, who initially lacks C, such that
- P and R engage in a relationship for the purpose of R's acquiring C.

To this, Kathlene adds elements, such as teamwork and opening doors, that are essential for this relationship to contribute to what she calls good education, as well as common obstacles from daily practice that hinder good education.

5.9 left – ‘Ugh, Cathy’

The PowerPoint isn't working, the internet is down, the audio won't play. It's utter chaos, at least in Cathy's mind. In the classroom, however, it's another story. No shouting, no mutiny. The students sit patiently, waiting for Cathy to regroup and explain today's plan: a hands-on session tackling one of the many aspects of facility management.

Practical work is usually a hit, but today, not everyone is enthusiastic. 'Ugh, miss, I'm not cleaning!' protests Danny - who, coincidentally, Cathy also mentors. His resistance will lead to a meaningful conversation later about his goals and why he chose this program in the first place. But for now, Cathy needs to turn things around. The calm start to the lesson has given way to murmurs of discontent and dealing with that is now her first priority.

She shares a story from her time as a manager. 'I got a call from my colleague Fatima once,' she begins. "She said, 'Uh, my daughter's in hospital about to give birth. I'm going to be a grandma, but I'm supposed to be at work.'" Cathy pauses, letting the students lean in. "I decided it was more important for her to be with her daughter. So I rolled up my sleeves and cleaned that toilet myself. But here's the thing, after that, I never had to beg her to cover shifts. If I called and said, 'I know you've already worked five days this week, but could you take on a sixth?' she'd always say, 'Of course, Cathy. You've done things for me, after all.'"

This lesson on compassionate leadership and the value of pitching in, no matter your title, shifts the mood in the room. Before long, the students pick up their mops and get to work. Laughter echoes through the space as the cleaning begins.

'Well, miss,' Carol admits during the lesson evaluation, 'I didn't think I'd say this, but it was actually kind of fun.'

This time, Cathy's trick worked. I got you mopping! Mission accomplished.

5.9 right – SSVE as a Broad Base

After several times trying, Cathy and I meet in one of the least pleasant meeting rooms at the college: in spite of its size and however comfortable the chairs, the lack of daylight makes it a bit of a gloomy place. This sense disappears once Cathy starts talking enthusiastically about teaching.

Cathy held a management position in facility services before. At the time of the conversation, she is in her first year as an educator and does not yet hold a PDG. She describes her first year as a pupil in secondary education as *a hell, because of bullying*, '*...afterwards, I found my place and had a top time*'. As a manager, she found qualified staff hard to find, so to change that situation, she decided

to make a career change and become an educator. The future role of the educator is '*facility, hospitality, practical (more cooking, washing, ironing)*', i.e. a focus on the domain of qualification. Most of her students study facility management at SSVE level 2. Apart from teaching facility management, she is a study career & citizenship teacher. Her classes are typically spaces for open, honest conversation and debate about any topic. Her hopes for future SSVE are that it becomes more practice oriented and starts with a broader base, or *try-out* as she calls it, *including e.g. cleaning, carpentry, cooking, brick laying etc. followed by specialist courses or work.*

Cathy indicates that on the one hand her new career as a teacher meets her expectations, yet on the other it does not. What she likes, as she expected, is teaching in general, and teaching about the profession she loves in particular. *The transfer of practical knowledge, sharing experience and explaining what working life is like, the things you cannot learn from books, is what generates enthusiasm in students and is what teaching has given her.*

What she had not expected is that this element is only about 40% of the job, the other 60% being about dealing with *Pädagogik* and students personally, *taking them by the hand and help them develop.*

Learning by doing

In general, Cathy has come to find students at SSVE level 2 prefer to learn by doing, rather than learning by *listening to someone standing in front of a whiteboard*. Also, she usually asks students at the end of class how they liked it, if anything could be done differently, whether they want more or less of anything. In general, Cathy wants to find out if there is anything to make it more enjoyable, better, or more challenging, because she realises *not attending class is not an option for students who want to obtain a diploma*. Obviously, Hogan's teacher's relationship to the student comes naturally to Cathy.

Idealism

In the beginning of our conversation Cathy told me she started her career in education because she '*wanted to change the world*'. Her ideal was to improve the facility industry by training new employees better, expecting students to be motivated for a career in the industry, and for school. In hindsight she calls this '*idealism caused by a lack of knowledge*'. This is not to say she is not idealistic anymore. For example, she finds she can make a difference through

great conversations with students. Then, why ARE you here? What do you want to achieve by means of this course? Because, you ARE here. You did enrol for something. So you do not want to work in facility management. Okay, but what do you want, what is your purpose in

life, what do you want to become? What do you want to do once you leave school, what do you want to work towards, and why, and why have you chosen to do this instead of healthcare, or ICT, or anything?

It is conversations like these that determine Cathy's view of present day SSVE students, their motives, the way they make their choices and their reasons for these choices.

Open and honest conversations characterise Cathy. She has experienced that being open and honest leads to students being open and honest too, allowing for others, including their teacher, to make mistakes. It is in these conversations and subsequent behaviour that Cathy's students show subjectification.

Inspiration

When asked about influences on her teaching, Cathy mentions a series of books by Kaldenbach, which are relevant to find out the life world of students at levels 1 to 4 in SSVE: *99 tips for street culture* and *99 tips for macho guys*²⁷.

An equally important influence is the exchange of experiences with fellow students in her PDG course. Sharing experiences has led Cathy to realise similarly problematic situations occur in all classes, so the occurrence is not necessarily her doing. Also, this exchange teaches her different approaches to solve problems in fields such as designing classes, teaching, how to deal with unruly students, what to do when students refuse to leave when asked and what to do in case of a fight.

Still, much of Cathy's behaviour as a teacher comes naturally, and is not consciously planned.

An example of that natural behaviour is her *radar for bullying*. As a child she was a victim of it, which has caused her to act immediately whenever she has a hunch about one of her students being excluded by others. In a broader sense, it has also determined her view on normal interaction:

Having values and norms. I do not care about anyone's background, gender, sexual preferences or whatever. We are all human, and you just talk to each other. If you do not, as far as I am concerned, you can beat it. Then I do not need you in my class. The same goes for calling names. I have very specific rules. My tolerance levels are high, but if you cross the line, I will become angry. And when I am angry, I am really angry, and you will need to make a great effort to put it right again.

²⁷ Cathy cites the titles of these books by heart in Dutch. The books by Hans Kaldenbach she refers to are *Korte Lontjes!*, *99 tips voor het omgaan met jongeren in de klas* and *Machomannetjes, 99 tips om de straatcultuur terug te dringen uit uw school*.

Cathy indicates this conviction may stem from her own behaviour in secondary school, when she had misbehaved and was even called to the dean's office. So, she recognises young people are trying to find and cross boundaries. And she is positive crossing boundaries must have consequences. In this sense, Cathy's focus in education lies with socialisation.

Good teaching

When asked, Cathy hesitates to call herself a good educator. '*I just do things*', is her main argument, and much of what she does feels as if it comes from a box of tricks. Yet most of the things she does turn out well.

Once, a student had completely lost it in one of my colleague's classes. And I still do not know what, but obviously I said something to win his confidence. And ever since I have been his confidante, his go-to teacher, more so than his mentor. He stays in after class to tell me his life story. So, clearly, I did something, a trick, but I do not know what, so it feels like a trick.

Also, she is of the opinion that there is room for improvement from the point of view of vocational practice. Her team used to teach more practical classes, such as cleaning. '*We explain it, but do not let them do it.*' For Cathy, it goes without saying that a level 2 graduate can clean, and a level 4 graduate cannot only plan cleaning, but can clean too. More in particular, she thinks it an improvement if level 2 courses were to start with a year of very practical courses, such as cleaning, cooking, security and hospitality. Students would then choose one of these as their major for the following year based on experience.

A final improvement Cathy supports is related to the value of the SSVE diploma. This issue has both an internal and an external dimension. Internally, it is a matter of emulating the working life. As an experienced facility manager, Cathy sometimes feels *education is too soft on students. Even if students refuse to do the work they are expected to do, they are allowed to continue their studies.*

The external dimension is a political one. SSVE institutes are partly funded based on students graduating within the nominal duration of their course. An effect of this form of funding is that any institute needs their students to graduate as quickly as possible. Even if that is not in the interest of the student or the quality of teaching. According to Cathy, if a student is not able to follow a course, they should get the chance to leave, mend whatever needs mending in their lives and then come back. *Providing too much care in education instead of professionals providing the care needed, and accepting substandard student work leads to grade creep. It would be better if we accepted students to take more time to meet standards, and graduate later.*

5.10 left – Presenting: Isabel

Confidence radiates from one, while the other is visibly shaken, nerves tightening around their throat like a noose: Isabel's first-year students are giving presentations today.

Aaron begins the session, flamboyant as ever, exuding his trademark flair. Even when he's not focused on class content, Aaron commands attention. His introduction of Naples as a holiday destination is a masterclass in delivery, complete with stunning visuals. He presents with the ease of someone accustomed to standing before an audience, weaving his knowledge effortlessly into the narrative. The room hangs on his every word, captivated by the allure of sipping espresso in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. Of course, Aaron's study trip to Naples six weeks ago plays no small role in the excellence of his presentation.

At the other end of the spectrum sits Esther. The memory of her breakdown and tears during her first presentation still lingers in everyone's minds, especially in her own. But her choice to present on the Côte d'Azur proves inspired. She finds strength in her affection for this beautiful holiday region, even daring to sprinkle humour into her delivery.

Esther isn't the only one hard at work. The students acting as the audience have been tasked with sharing their feedback and questions, fostering a collaborative atmosphere. Isabel, meanwhile, listens carefully, not just to what's being said but to the subtle cues of body language. When the session ends, she offers an honest and heartfelt compliment: *'You've made such remarkable progress, Esther!'*

Next up is Jacques. He lingers at the edge of the classroom, hesitant. When he finally steps forward, the truth emerges: he didn't start preparing in time and hasn't finished his presentation. It's a disappointment, and 'no hard feelings', but there's no escaping the consequences - Jacques fails the assignment.

Rather than let this derail the class, Isabel refocuses her students, asking them to discuss the presentations with each other. She prompts them to consider what they need to improve their own skills as presenters. As they talk, Isabel moves from group to group, listening attentively to their reflections. 'How do you plan to approach that?' she asks one student. 'What resources will you need?' she inquires of another.

With Jacques, she takes a different approach, pulling him aside for a one-on-one conversation. Together, they craft a detailed plan: How much time does he realistically need to prepare? When will he set aside time to work on the presentation? With this roadmap in place, Isabel offers him a second chance - he'll present next Wednesday.

As the class comes to a close, Isabel gathers her students' thoughts. What did they learn today? Are they satisfied with the lesson? She hopes Esther, too, recognizes her own growth - that while her presentation still has room for improvement, she has come a long way since that shaky first attempt earlier in the year.

5.10 right – School as Fertile Soil

Isabel and I work together closely on a daily basis. Our conversation takes place in one of the classrooms, after classes for the day have ended.

Isabel worked in the travel and hospitality industry for up to 9 years before becoming a teacher, a job she has held for over 5 years. She obtained a post-Higher Education degree in the 00s and completed her PDG in 2020. Isabel sees her job as the *'ideal combination of my experience and my ambition'* as she used to work as a youth worker before. Education now and in the future is about contact between people and Isabel hopes *'we will be the accessible, reliable, and professional anchor in our students' school careers.'*

Fertile soil

In our conversation, Isabel tells me she thinks she provides good education if students experience recognition. The type of recognition she has in mind is one that leads to usefulness and applicability of what has been offered by the teacher. Yet, this is not necessarily related to usefulness and applicability in a professional setting, but good education is education that enriches the students' own practice.

As a teacher, you can enjoy good education in evaluation of classes with students, when they tell you what they have learnt, and that coincides with the competences you tried to transfer to them.

Isabel stresses that being satisfied with one's teaching should not be confused with good education. As a teacher she can be satisfied with an interactive lesson during which students participated actively and shared their views. *This can only be classified as good education though, when students have become wiser or have learnt something from it, for example from having done things wrong.*

Isabel aims to contribute to this kind of learning by making her classes recognisable, so that students can make the transfer from theory to useful practice. And she does this by offering students choices. Especially with her first-year students, Isabel focuses on the freedom to choose their own learning path. Students choose their own pace and proceed by trial-and-error. Apart from student autonomy, what characterises Isabel's teaching is student self-reflection and a safe environment. This approach resonates strongly with Biesta's subjectification.

Flowers grow best in fertile soil, Isabel thinks, which is why it is important for teachers to create a stimulating and pleasant environment. Isabel refers to Maslow's pyramid of needs here but also says *'life is too short to be unkind to one another'*. Clarifying what she means, she refers to Esther's case: It would not have been helpful to criticise her for her earlier performance. Instead, *open and honest feedback on how to improve helped her* to shine in the situation depicted above.

Learning environment

Discussing Isabel's experiences as a pupil and a student, she stresses that circumstances for learning were always positive. As a pupil, and consumer of education, it was not always clear what teachers did exactly, but in general they stimulated Isabel. The one exception was a home economics teacher in whose class it felt embarrassing to give an incorrect answer, which made Isabel experience more pressure than with other teachers. Overall, she was happy at school, partly because of the absence of bullying.

As a teacher, she has learnt to prevent bullying by being pro-active about it from the beginning. In her early years at the college, Isabel learnt to use the norming phase in new groups to draw a red line at bullying. This has led to students telling her they appreciate the atmosphere at school and in her classes in particular.

Isabel's motivation for becoming a teacher grew for about a year before she took the step, even though she had considered it before. It just appeared to combine several elements she enjoyed in her prior careers in care and in the travel industry. This has since proven absolutely true. She is *honest with students, which allows them to trust her, to feel safe and to grow*. This growth Isabel observes especially in foreign exchange programs she joins with her students. For example, when she went to Riga for two weeks with a number of students. She describes the impact this had on them, how they realised they were given the opportunity to study abroad (as they called it). For Isabel, *it was rewarding to experience the self-actualisation in students out of their comfort zone, speaking a foreign language, being hospitable, and using soft skills to connect with their Latvian peers*.

Teaching for happiness

Transfer of knowledge, which belongs to Biesta's domain of qualification, is not the primary goal of education, Isabel claims. *When after graduation a student decides not to continue in the industry or a related course in higher education, our education may still have contributed positively to the growth of this student as a person and therefore be considered successful*.

Simply to just find your balance and know what you want and what you want to develop further. It helps in finding happiness, I think.

It is interesting to see that, in saying this, Isabel links the process of subjectification to finding happiness.

According to Isabel, the school building helps in a way. It is spacious and the entrance and atrium are welcoming. It is acceptably well-equipped and meant to make students feel at ease. The student council has their own premises and whenever students want to do something special, such as recording a video clip, they are provided materials and room.

An element for improvement at management level is the support for the quality of education. In the sense that managers should be better equipped to make teachers provide good quality education. Stressing Hogan's relationship to the student, Isabel finds one element of education quality, especially for a hospitality course, is face-to-face contact. Engagement with students (and between students) is essential for inclusion of all students in education. And parallel to that, engagement with guests in the hospitality industry is essential if you want to exceed their expectations.

In education, the difference was felt especially after covid lockdown:

You can say you are available online, that they can call, or you can schedule Zoom-meeting hours, but now you just step outside into the hallway, and you are bound to have a one-to-one with a student leading to something. That is the fertile soil that brings life.

5.11 left – Leo’s Morning Routine

It’s 8:30 AM, and the entire class waits for Leo. Yes, the *entire* class. For Leo, this is nothing unusual, though other teachers might find it a small miracle, especially for a subject like Financial Management, a discipline heavy with calculations, hardly the kind of work these students eagerly sign up for.

Leo swings open the classroom door, and the students file in, each claiming their preferred spot. Sheryl gravitates toward the power outlet to keep her laptop charged, Britt cozies up by the radiator, Cherise and her friends claim the back row, while Latifa and Khadija choose to sit as close to Leo as possible, eager to soak in his stories without distraction.

The lesson begins with a review of a homework assignment. The students present their solutions, and Leo’s questions cut to the heart of what matters: ‘What information did you use?’ ‘Where did you find it?’ ‘Why do you think that’s a good source for this task?’ ‘How else could you have presented this information?’ His approach is clear, he wants them to think for themselves.

Leo doesn’t shy away from sharing this goal with the group. Manfred, the cheeky one in this group, tries his luck: ‘Sir, how do we know you’re a reliable source for saying that?’ The room erupts in laughter, and Leo diffuses the moment with a witty comeback, seamlessly steering the focus back to the task at hand.

Next, Leo shifts gears. ‘Dylan, what are we doing next? You want to start a business? Great. Dylan’s starting a business. Dylan, pick a partner from the class. That’s your co-founder.’ Dylan chooses Mo. ‘Mo, what are we selling? Okay, Dylan and Mo, go build this business. How much profit do you need to make? That much? No, we shouldn’t aim so high, Dylan. Oh yes we should, Mo. Reaching for the stars, let’s go for it.’

The classroom dynamic becomes a lively interplay reminiscent of a puppet show. Dylan and Mo hash out their imaginary business while the rest of the class offers unsolicited advice, increasingly drawn into the unfolding scenario. Leo’s probing questions flesh out the business plan, prompting the class to calculate whether Dylan and Mo’s venture would turn a profit.

The calculations prove tricky, and Leo takes the time to dissect the wrong answers. ‘What kind of thinking or math error led to this result?’ ‘Who can explain the steps to get to the right answer?’

In the end, Dylan and Mo’s thought experiment fails to turn a profit. Yet Leo’s morning is anything but a failure. It’s a triumph, not just because students thank him for the lesson or wish him a good day as they leave, but because he’s witnessed something more significant. The students who, mere

weeks ago, couldn't cobble together a decent budget are now showing real progress. For Leo, that's the real profit.

5.11 right – Teaching as Pouring Truth into Brains

Leo and I meet online. Not because school is in lockdown, but because Leo prefers to meet on a day I work from home.

Leo is in his first year at the college. He holds a PDG and has 6 years of experience at a different SSVE college. In secondary school and in higher education, he took his time yet eventually finished two master's degrees.

Leo entered his career in education by chance: unhappy in his job as a commercial account manager, in a conversation someone advised him to respond to a vacancy at a school.

He describes himself as an approachable teacher, always up for some fun with his students. Just like many participants before him, he has a strong and positive relationship to his students. He sees his students as future professionals, who he expects to act accordingly with regards to their responsibilities.

Good education

At the start of our conversation, Leo recognises the fact that good education can be defined in many ways. He is convinced there is always room for improvement in teaching, so good education also implies teachers visit each other's classes and provide feedback based on their observations and their knowledge of pedagogical and didactical theory.

Reflection on his own practice, again one of Hogan's relationships, is the third element that constitutes good education according to Leo.

Apart from this good execution of classes, good preparation is also indispensable. In preparation, the qualification profile is the lodestar. It determines your thinking about the objective of each class. You should not teach because your schedule tells you, but you need to think in advance about why you teach a class. That implies you plan each class and evaluate afterwards with the students.

Is it going to be an assignment, or a guest lecture, are you going to teach from the front, do the students need to prepare in advance? ... Are you going to flip the classroom, and do you offer room for coaching? It all depends on what is needed for the topic at hand.

Just like Kathlene, Leo shows he considers the importance of lived space when he talks about the physical layout of the classroom. *Tables in a row generate other expectations with students than*

tables in groups. So thinking about the appearance of the classroom also supports achievement of the class' objective.

And I think anything that contributes to a consciously chosen learning objective is good education.

Focus

When teaching, Leo finds it complex to determine whether his teaching is actually good. He remarks that *'it is difficult to quantify', because students may be messing about for a bit, but the class as a whole may still be good. It is essential 'I am in control of the process', including any deviation of the path. This means his lesson plans are not rigid but allow for flexibility whenever students need a quicker or a slower pace. An indicator of a successful class is when you see pennies drop*, Leo says, echoing Laura's *'getting it'*. For that to happen, you may need to start classes with mindfulness exercises, Leo states, because he has noticed students are hardly present. *They may be present physically, but by the end of the day they have no recollection of what was said in class in the morning*. Leo does not think this is solely due to distraction by smartphones. His point of view is

smartphones are the origin of the problem, in combination with the individualisation of society, in combination with the humongous stream of information. I think this generation simply cannot channel it, deal with it.

In voicing this position, Leo refers to Hogan's least mentioned relationship, the educator's relationship to the public, or in this case, to society.

Knowledge

Apart from this point of view on society and its effects on students, Leo depicts an essential change in the role of knowledge in education. In his questionnaire he stated

You could actually stop using textbooks and collect information online together with the students, assess its quality and share it in the group to discuss.

In our conversation Leo explains when he was young, he had to visit a library if he did not know about a topic. *Now, the answer to any question is available within seconds. 'There is hardly anything left you cannot know about'. This leads to a changing role of knowledge: seeing that information is freely available if you know how to find it, asking students to reproduce it to pass a test is no longer a sensible approach in vocational education*. Here, Leo refers to the RTTI model, a teaching and testing method developed by Dutch company Docent Plus aimed at continuous measurement of four dimensions (Reproduction, Application 1, Application 2, Insight) providing students and teachers with information about a student's learning process (Verra & Drost, 2023).

The skill that is required nowadays, says Leo, is to assess the quality of the source of information used. The next step is the ability to apply the information.

This, however, leads to the question what students must know despite the fact they can look it up if they do not. Echoing Hogan's teacher's relationship to the public once more Leo says

You can only hope your students and their parents trust the teacher and the school when it comes to the information presented.

Of course, some issues are easy enough to deal with. But in the end, Leo is of the opinion that particularly in citizenship classes a teacher can make people think for themselves.

Good examples

Leo came into teaching at the age of 30, after multiple studies, and he recalls examples of good teaching and good teachers. One of the forms he describes and appreciates is the flipped classroom: *students had to read five articles before class, and discussed them in class, with the teacher as a moderator. This challenges students to become critical thinkers.*

Another example, someone Leo acknowledges as his role model, was an inspired teacher who always went the extra mile.

He created assignments in which companies actually played a role: People from Philips visited. "Guys, we have this problem. What do you think?" All of us went to a large data centre in Lelystad to see how it worked.

From this teacher Leo learnt to be an inspired teacher, yet he admits to not inviting many guest speakers, nor does he take his students to relevant places outside school. This point of self-criticism is another example of Leo as Hogan's self-understanding teacher.

Helpful

Leo identifies as a helpful person. As an educator Leo finds his helpful attitude empowers his students to take their own decisions, thus offering opportunities for subjectification.

To me not a single student is the same as another. So, if someone starts and scores 8/10 or 9/10 in my subject, I aim at 10/10 or 11/10. And if someone starts and scores 2/10, I am floating on air when their end score is 4/10. I think it is all about their growth. Challenge each student at their own level. And I also supervised students who started thinking they would want to work in tourism but eventually chose architecture or healthcare. Well, great! But I like to ask critical questions so a decision like this leads to a little talk with me asking "Why? What do you base this on? How did you come to this decision?" ... I will help them think

things through thoroughly but will never fit anyone into an education straitjacket. For god's sake, do what you like!

Good teaching

Towards the end of our conversation, when we discuss teaching, Leo stresses the importance of mistakes. *On the one hand, educators should pay more attention to incorrect answers than to correct answers. However, doing so is not always in line with an educator's time planning and therefore wrong answers are quite often corrected, but remain unexplained.*

On the other hand, Leo refers to Dweck's growth mindset theory when he says teachers should show that making mistakes is not something to be ashamed of, it is a challenge.

Learning to dance may take me 1000 hours and you only 10. That does not mean I cannot dance, it means I need to put more effort into it than someone else. The question is: are you willing to do so, or aren't you? And the same goes for maths.

In this conversation, and in the class presented in 'Leo's Morning Routine', Leo often gives examples of the way he creates opportunities for subjectification by letting his students make their own decisions and accept the consequences.

5.12 left – Jennifer’s Lesson at School

Last week, Jennifer took her class outside to practice in the real world of hotel facility management at the airport. Today, she’s back at school with her favourite type of students, those studying at level 2, and, for Jennifer’s lesson, they’re all present.

The theme of today’s career orientation class is planning. The conversation quickly veers toward the price of gasoline when Pauline mentions how expensive it has become to commute to school. Swiftly adapting, Jennifer shifts the discussion from planning school assignments to budgeting expenses, asking the students to make a breakdown: ‘What’s coming in, and how much are you spending?’

‘Well,’ Prince exclaims, ‘filling up my scooter costs me twelve euros now, and back in the days it used to be four or five!’ Jennifer suppresses a smile at the nineteen-year-old’s use of the expression ‘back in the days’ and prompts them to continue: ‘How often do you fill up, and what does that mean for your monthly budget?’

It’s this flexibility, meeting her students where their concerns in real life lie and tying those concerns back to the lesson theme, that makes Jennifer so passionate about teaching this group. With students at level 3 and 4 forging a personal connection is trickier. They’re more reserved, sticking to the script, which means a lesson plan can be carried out exactly as written, no matter how hard Jennifer tries to provoke them or spark their creativity. Their lesson on planning had quite a different outlook. After Jennifer’s structured explanation, everyone spent 20 focused minutes creating cleaning schedules for workplace environments, from meeting rooms to restrooms.

To wrap up the lesson, and to assess their understanding, Jennifer asks the students to design a crossword puzzle on the theme of planning. The idea is a hit, and the students eagerly dive into the task. The results, though, present Jennifer with a dilemma. All the students deliver excellent work: their puzzles reflect a solid grasp of the terminology, with some even incorporating the earlier discussion about fuel costs. But Boris has submitted a word search instead of a crossword puzzle, complete with definitions for the terms he has hidden.

Once again, Jennifer’s creativity provides a solution. She grades the work as satisfactory and adjusts the evaluation criteria. Boris has demonstrated his understanding of the subject through his puzzle, even if he did not use the prescribed format. The deviation does not detract from the quality of the work.

And so, another successful lesson comes to an end. ‘Bye miss, see you next time.’ Next time, Jennifer already knows, will be something practical again. After all, good education balances good theory lessons with hands-on experience.

5.12 right – Beauty as a Measure for Education

Jennifer was the first respondent to the questionnaire, and the twelfth and final participant in the conversation phase of my research. In a way, she makes the empirical research come full circle. We meet in April 2022 in the meeting room in which I talked to Cathy before.

Jennifer, an educator of 10 years at the college started her career at the college in administrative support, after a career of over 10 years in facility management. *‘One day I was asked to replace a sick colleague. I agreed and from that moment my love for education was ignited.’* Jennifer holds a PDG, which she obtained during her teaching career. Most of her students study at SSVE level 2. Apart from teaching facility management, she is a study career & citizenship²⁸ teacher.

When asked to describe a typical situation as an educator, she wrote

That student who walked on the tables and tore down the classroom. I discovered he could neither read nor write. Designed a customized program with him and stressed what he could do without looking at what he could not. The flexibility I apply, improvising, that really is a strength of mine.

When asked to describe the future role of an educator at the college, her view combines all three of Biesta’s domains: qualification, socialisation and subjectification.

A teacher as a coach, more in contact with students, focus on development and growth. Grooming students as active world citizens. Apart from that also offering the vocational content, but mainly the practical side of it.

She goes on to describe a situation that is typical of her role as a coach in contact with one of her students.

-So, what kind of things did you do then?

-Well, you know, things. Yeah, theft.

-I thought they found a gun in your boot too. So that is more like armed robbery, right?

-Yes miss

-So what have you learnt from it?

-That I should not do this stuff, miss

²⁸ Study career & citizenship (LOB in Dutch) is a mandatory course in Dutch SSVE, focusing on study skills, student development and citizenship.

-Okay. You know, just make sure you stay in the grey area.

And he was gobsmacked and stared at me.

-So, you aren't mad at me?

-It's been two years, and who am I to blame you anyways? I just want you to think about what you did and avoid that mistake in the future.

Balance

In our conversation Jennifer indicated she experiences beautiful education when she sees students are stimulated to do their best, when they are motivated, and when they want to go to school. To provide this, Jennifer combines theory and practice in her classes and makes sure her students feel they are seen and heard and in doing so, she stresses her relationship to the student.

Good education, according to Jennifer, is not rigid but flexible with regards to what happens in the world and how students feel. *And only cooperation between students, teachers and school can lead to good education.*

On a personal level, good education makes Jennifer experience happiness, which in turn motivates her to reflect on her practice and to make even more beautiful materials, classes and education.

This happy feeling occurs when everything comes together. That also includes the possibility for a very well-prepared class, about which she has high expectations in advance to turn out horrible; and for a mediocre class on paper to develop into the most fantastic class in practice. These examples indicate that Jennifer is well aware of Hogan's teacher's relationship to herself.

Challenge

In her practice as a mentor, Jennifer comes across a typical dilemma. *On the one hand, students react unpleasantly surprised when teachers change their routines to improve their classes. 'Sir started doing this and this. And it was okay, but it was weird too'. On the other hand, students are not able to concentrate when they are confronted with an hour of frontal teaching. Education needs to be challenging, and what challenges Jennifer's students is practical education, and seeing and experiencing how things work in a real working environment.* Jennifer makes a plea for gradual and continuous change because *'this year's excellent education may not be so good next year.'*

This implies teachers need a certain liberty to create education that suits their students.

Equally important, is the students' ability to think broadly, outside the box. What follows is Jennifer's illustration of how Biesta's subjectification and its necessity to make choices is hard for students.

For example, we have a process called 'prepares spaces for use.' And then you explain: a space might be a meeting room, but it also might be a toilet, a front office desk somewhere. A space is a very broad concept. And then, when we practice, there are students who indeed make a choice. "I am going to prepare the toilet for use". "Fine, go and do it." And others start preparing an auditorium. That is when you see it all come together. So, it does not result in a fail for one and a pass for the other because of their different choices. Preparing a space for use is a broad concept, and it does not matter that you do it this way and someone else does it differently.

Space-in-between

Jennifer indicates she is a strong supporter of practical education at school. *Especially for the facility management team she is a member of, it is important to show students the jobs and the type of work they are qualified to do after graduation. The team takes their students to many different places already, and Jennifer sees room for improvement of practical courses at school. Because the school, as an organisation, deals with several processes her students need to master, such as building management, supplies, logistics, catering, and hospitality. So, it would be a logical step to have students practice their skills and contribute to the daily running of the school.*

We tried for years, but these initiatives had too fixed a pattern. We should be able to respond flexibly to current tasks: let's get a student from this class, one from the other, and one from the third, and let's go and do it. That way they learn an incredible lot. They should not be hanging around all day waiting for a useful assignment that may or may not come.

Unfortunately, initiatives for this way of working were often frustrated by a lack of enthusiasm or willingness on the part of other teams and staff. Jennifer indicates this may be one of the reasons her team looks for fun practical education experiences in the outside world.

Young Jennifer

Jennifer never liked school when she was a child. She changed schools often and had to make new friends time and time again, had to get used to a different curriculum and new materials. When you do not like primary school, secondary is not much fun either.

School was never my thing, it really wasn't. If anyone had told me sixteen years ago, I would make a career in education, I should have laughed at them.

Yet, this negative experience with school, Jennifer finds, helps her understand her students who have regularly been told they are not good at anything and therefore dislike school. However, Jennifer's own experience has led her to believe that her students can make it provided they make a serious effort.

I am absolutely honest with them: you need to work super hard for it. It is not always going to be fun, and you must not do things you want to at times. And it is not going to be easy, not at all even. But if you really want this, and you are willing to work very hard, there is a chance you can make it. Or not, and then you need a plan B.

The fact she struggled with education herself, and sharing that story with her students, 'creates some kind of goodwill' which in turn leads to conversations about the students' problems in their private lives. It is that relationship with their educators which enhances their chances at success at school.

5.13 Discussing the gallery of honour

The gallery of honour with its twelve diptychs has shown education at the college, in the hands of educators supportive of good education, turns out to be particularly varied.

Fausto's approach is characterised by his use of humour and personal anecdotes, engaging students through relatable and practical examples. Rudy's experimental style, on the other hand, encourages students to explore, develop critical thinking and autonomy. Judy, with her background in special educational needs, focuses on empathy, strong relationships and *Pädagogik*, whereas Bret is an advocate of effective teaching through well-structured and well-prepared lessons. Relaxed and approachable as he is, Antoine emphasises the connection between course content and his students' daily professional lives. Both Laura and Jake combine their vocational backgrounds and their personal ethical frameworks to instil autonomy and responsibility in his students. Yet Jake does so from his wish to '*kindle a flame*' in his students, whereas Laura's priority lies with improvement of service provision in the industry. Kathlene hopes her classes and her relationship with her students point each individual student to rich future possibilities and is committed to flexible lesson plans if circumstances so dictate. Cathy on the other hand, equally aware of the importance of her relationship with students, focuses on very concrete practical vocational skills. Isabel values student engagement and is committed to self-reflection in a supportive classroom community. Leo applies his views on information, knowledge and lesson planning to stimulate the development of his students and their critical thinking skills. And finally, Jennifer balances individual student needs with creating a warm and supportive classroom climate for all.

5.13.1 A Kaleidoscope

In the previous two chapters, we made our acquaintance with twelve named educators and their anonymous colleagues, and we have seen what it is that has influenced them to become the educators they are.

In addition to the themes related to good education which appeared from the questionnaire, embodied experience, vocational practice, development, independence, involvement and fun, the individual conversations provided insights into the wide range of sources for these themes. In the following chapter I distinguish between the sources of influence which appeared in conversations with educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education.

Experiences as pupils or students are mentioned by many as having influenced their views on good education (Fausto, Rudy, Antoine, Jake, Laura, Kathlene, Cathy, Leo and Jennifer) but are not mentioned or even denied as having had an influence by others (Judy, Bret, Isabel).

One participant, Fausto, mentions a French movie about a village teacher he was asked to watch in teacher education as a defining experience for his view on good education. In doing so, he is the only participant explicitly mentioning art as inspiration. Surprisingly, seeing that in addition to mentioning art, he also makes references to *Pädagogik*, he does not seem to leave much room for subjectification in his classes on technical subjects where '*either A or B*' prevails.

Bret goes even further, making a plea for a form of practical education which comes closer to training than to education.

Antoine and Jennifer do not explicitly refer to any educational theory in our conversations. Yet, their ideas on good education, which are closely related to both imagination's heartwork and subjectification, appear in the conversations. An example of this can be seen in Antoine referring to the experience of place when talking about small scale schools. Isabel in turn makes a reference to the welcoming and well-equipped school building. Leo comments on the influence of the layout of a classroom on the experience of education. This implicit experience of place is also an element of interest for Kathlene, who mentions how classroom temperature noticeably influences student behaviour.

Kathleen further alludes to collective teacher efficacy, which is a strong determiner of school achievement (Eells, 2011, p. xiii).

Of all participants, Rudy, Judy, Isabel, and Kathlene most clearly show there is room for subjectification in their classes. Yet talking to Rudy, he is convinced that when students want to learn quickly, this is what education should offer. Thus, he seems to ignore the element of interruption and the school as time and place in-between. Judy, on the other hand, focuses most of all participants on seeing students as they are, on *Pädagogik*, and on being in the world together, the combination of which cannot but leave room for subjectification. Kathlene not only refers to subjectification when she wonders when certain students will '*rediscover their true selves*' but also relates to Hogan's idea of being pedagogically at home in the subject matter (2010, p. 76). In doing so she exceeds the expectations of the participants who see the future educator in the role of a coach who only guides individual learning processes. Fausto's remark about *students taking up Chinese gardening* clearly supports subjectification. Yet his description of the way he assesses student work as *either A or B*, does not seem to leave the same amount of room.

Overall, an interesting array of influences are mentioned, both from teacher education, pdg courses and individual reading. I present the following list of names and theories to indicate the diverse schools of thought on education that appear to have an influence on present day SSVE: Biesta, *Bildung*, blended learning, de Saint-Exupéry, growth mindset, hybrid learning, Kaldenbach, Laurillard,

learning goals, Leary's rose, maker-education, Maslow, Montessori, *Pädagogik*, peer learning, RTTI, student-centred education, Tuckman's stages of team development, van der Hilst, van Merriënboer.

5.13.2 A Lens

'[I]mages are only absolute depictions of sensible objects, while ideas are notions of objects determined by relations.' (Rousseau, 1979, p.107). Therefore, it is time now to discuss what the literature review, and my group picture and diptychs mean for 'good education' at the college through the lens of subjectification, and find answers to the questions:

- How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear?
- What does 'good education' mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

6 – The Meaning of Good Senior Secondary Vocational Education

In the previous chapter I presented and discussed experiences and ideas related to good vocational education as expressed by the participants in my study. In this chapter I answer the research questions that formed the basis of my research. Then, I discuss the impact this research may have on the development of good education both at the college in which the research took place, and at other Dutch colleges. Finally, I will indicate a possible, desirable, direction for further study into good senior secondary vocational education.

6.1 Answering the research questions

This research started with an interest to answer these four research questions

- How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear?
- What does 'good education' mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?
- What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

6.1.1 What differences in practices, experiences and interpretations are discernible between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education?

Looking at the final question first, it must be noted that there are just four participants with a background in teacher education who answered the questionnaire. Furthermore, seeing the numerous trajectories into a career in education, including lifelong development programmes, it remains to be seen whether the dichotomy proposed here is tenable: most educators with a background in industry were introduced in education through a PDG course and many of the respondents in this category have subsequently achieved full bachelor's or master's degrees in education while teaching at the college.

Yet, in one of the answers to the questionnaire, there is a striking similarity in the answers of educators with a background in teacher education. When asked to describe a situation that typifies them as teachers all four relate to student centred approaches. Subject or teacher centred classroom situations are only mentioned by participants with a background in industry. A similar result from the questionnaire is shown in the participants' ideas about the future role of educators in SSVE: the educators with a background in industry present a wide range of views, from coaches and facilitators for blended learning to full time classroom teaching, and from hybrid education to

practical training at school. Educators with a teacher education background, on the other hand, all focus on *Pädagogik*, mentoring, offering support, providing structure and showing perspective, which can be linked to Hogan's relationship to the student in heartwork and also shows these educators see themselves as Ruitenberg's host.

When it comes to motivators for starting a career in education, two participants from a background in industry mentioned economic reasons. Obviously, only participants from a background in industry mentioned poor quality of starting practitioners (i.e. recent SSVE graduates) as a reason for their career switch into education. The decision to do so makes for a clear example of their own subjectification. Idealistic motives, wanting to change the world or doing something more meaningful, which is in line with Tjeenk Willink's ideas about professional agency (2018, p. 70), were found in both categories.

The conversations shed an interesting light on the differences in practices, experiences, and interpretations between educators from different backgrounds. Those with a background in teacher education, Fausto, Rudy, Kathleen, and Judy who holds a master's degree in special educational needs, all comment on the education system limiting their practice (cf. Van Vroonhoven, 2024). On the other hand, Bret, Leo, Jennifer and Laura all mention lesson planning, indicating this is one of the focal points of teacher training for educators with a background in industry. Still, participants from both groups write and talk about the need for flexibility when teaching. Judy's case of the inattentive educator exposes an essential issue in SSVE. On the one hand, to start the career they aspire, students need vocational skills and knowledge that are best conveyed by an experienced practitioner. On the other hand, professional educators who are attentively involved (Bastiaansen, 2021; Ruitenberg, 2016) and who are skilled in *Didaktik* are needed for students to actually acquire these skills and knowledge.

6.1.2 What and/or who have influenced educators in Dutch SSVE?

Answering this question is giving an insight into each educator's subjective educational theory, the personal system of knowledge and beliefs about education that teachers use when performing their job (Kelchtermans, 2023, p. 109). This subjective educational theory is formed both by teaching experience and theoretical knowledge. The differences in subjective educational theories which I showed in the previous chapter can therefore partially be explained by the way educators obtained their theoretical knowledge. This, in turn may be seen as another difference between educators with a background in industry and those with a background in teacher education. It is however not only dependent on their background, but also on the length of their career in education and on the quality of their continuous professional development as an educator. Educators coming directly from

industry who do not yet hold their PDG have least teaching experience and only a small theoretical basis for their teaching. They are commonly influenced by more practical ideas, such as Leary's rose (Bret) and Kaldenbach's *99 tips* series (Cathy). Those with several years of teaching experience and a diploma from teacher education or from education studies can draw on two rich sources for their subjective educational theories. Examples can be found in Laura mentioning Laurillard's conversational framework and Leo making a reference to Dweck's growth mindset theory.

Seeing that most participants draw on the latest course they followed in education when talking about influences on their subjective educational theory, the quality of their continuous professional development seems crucial for the quality of their education. In line with the Dutch collective labour agreement for SSVE²⁹, continuous professional development and the way it is monitored at the college is not standardised.

6.1.3 What does 'good education' mean in the eyes of educators in Dutch SSVE?

Seeing the answers to the previous questions, indicating a wide variety of influences, practices, experiences and interpretations, it comes as no surprise that 'good education' is defined in many different ways as well, '*efficient and effective qualification*', and '*well-structured teaching*' being only two of them. A common idea voiced by all participants in the conversations and reflected in the left panels of the diptychs is that good education starts with good teaching. Other conditions for and instances of good education were only addressed as secondary themes in the conversations. In the following sections, I use Biesta's theory to give an insight into the meanings educators at the college attach to the term 'good education'.

Biesta

Looking through a lens of Biesta's domains of purpose of education, I discern most participants being actively aware of at least two, and some others of all three domains: qualification, socialisation and subjectification.

As far as qualification is concerned, the concept of good education in SSVE is something of a mixed bag. On the one hand, it is very clear that qualification is at the centre of vocational education. Or, as Fausto puts it: '*I would rather not fly a plane that has been 55% repaired*'.

²⁹ Article 4.1.7 of the 2024 collective labour agreement for SSVE stipulates that educators are entitled to 59 hours of individual cpd per year.

Also, seeing some educators, such as Bret and Laura, clearly expressing a preference for placements and off-the-job learning coached by a practitioner and an educator indicates the importance of the domain of qualification in the eyes of my participants.

Considering socialisation, it does not come as a surprise that educators in SSVE focus on socialisation as a future professional. After all, most educators have a background in industry and are as such fully aware of the expectations colleagues, employers and others might have of professionals. Again, Fausto provides an example talking about teaching his ‘boys’ something that is needed in practice but is not part of the curriculum. Secondly, students become socialised as professionals during their placements, which accounts for one third of their studies. This changes the way students see themselves as aspiring professionals and the way they behave at school after their placement period. This in turn enhances educators’ ideas about the importance of students’ socialisation as future professionals. Others, such as Isabel and Antoine, who respectively stress the importance of meeting students informally in the hallways of the college and make a plea for small schools in which teachers know all students, focus on socialisation of the student as an SSVE student rather than as a future professional. It is in this sense that participants concur with Masschelein and Simons claims about the importance of the scholastic (Masschelein & Simons, 2012, p. 17) in the context of SSVE colleges.

Whereas qualification and socialisation are recognised as such by the educators-participants in this study, subjectification is a more complex concept. Most of my partners in conversation indicate that they leave room for students to show initiative and approach assignments the way they want. Most, too, have an eye for the students’ need to be recognised as individuals. Undeniably, these are important concepts in teaching based on principles of *Didaktik* and *Pädagogik*. In the next section, focusing on the elements of language, coming into the world, responsibility, freedom in plurality and democracy, I explain why these principles in itself are insufficient to speak of subjectification.

6.1.4 How do educators in Dutch SSVE create opportunities for their students’ subjectification to appear?

Subjectification is an elusive phenomenon and is less easily recognised as such by the educators-participants in this study when compared to qualification and socialisation. Directly observing subjectification seems impossible. Observing how educators create opportunities for subjectification might be possible using a research method designed to do so. My approach has been to deduce opportunities for subjectification from oral accounts about teaching as educators’ lived experience.

Comparable to the answers to the other research questions a wide range of approaches come to light. Most of my partners in conversation indicate that they leave room for students to show

initiative and approach assignments the way they want. This way, they appear to be the hospitable educator described by Ruitenberg (2016). Jennifer told students to design a crossword, but eventually also accepted a different kind of puzzle. Most too have an eye for the students' need to be recognised as individuals, which Masschelein and Simons term 'a matter of equality' (2013, p. 59). Bret, for example, creates opportunities by investing in attention for students resulting in a trusting relationship. In doing so, both educators create environments in which students might feel sufficiently at ease to show themselves as subjects.

However, when looking at paragraph 2.1.1 Underpinnings of subjectification': the elements of language, coming into the world, responsibility, freedom in plurality and democracy it is harder to deduce how educators create opportunities for their students' subjectification to appear. The language of learning returns in conversations with Fausto, Bret, Jake, Laura, Kathlene, Cathy, and Leo. Even though they also talk about education in a broader sense than just learning linked to qualification, only Rudy, Judy, Antoine, Isabel and Jennifer, less than half of the participants in the conversations, do not speak of education as a phenomenon that is primarily about learning what is in the curriculum. The following quotations showcase this contrast:

...anything that contributes to achieving a consciously chosen learning objective is good education (Leo).

...we have a quite particular population. Some guys have a problem of sorts, and very many have multiple problems. ... Once you start looking into their lives ... you become more understanding (Antoine).

Considering the aspect of coming into the world, the conversations show a similar pattern. With the exception of Rudy, all participants show they feel their job is to prepare students for a particular job, even though students may take a different path after graduation. Especially those educators with a background in industry, such as Jake, Laura and Cathy, are keen to share their experiences in this job, or at least in a related one in the industry. In that respect they take responsibility for the world (cf. Arendt, 2006). Some, such as Rudy, Fausto, Judy, Antoine, Kathlene and Jennifer are also very much aware of their role of introducing their students to the world in a broader, non-vocational, sense. In a reflection on the role of moral values in education, one of the participants says:

I think curiosity is the starting point. All that we learnt in the world may also limit us. If I tell students to develop an innovation, and they come up to me with a hash crumbler that was not invented before, I think that is a cool idea. Yet, how many schools would allow you to present that idea? Since it has to do with illegal substances (Rudy).

Responsibility, the next aspect in the underpinning of subjectification, can be seen as the responsibility of the educator to create opportunities for students to ‘begin to find their own, responsive and responsible voice’ (Biesta, 2016a, p. 69). This is an aspect that is alluded to in many conversations. Rudy, Judy, Antoine, Jake, Isabel, Leo, and Jennifer all mention specific situations with students finding their own voice in their classes. And even when others do not, it is clear they still wish their students to develop into independent adults, either in their own interest or in the interest of their employers. Jennifer’s conversation with one of her students provides an example of the concept of slow education (Deumier et al., 2024). In this situation, she decelerates education to allow the student to find this voice:

-So, what kind of things did you do then?

-Well, you know, things. Yeah, theft.

-I thought they found a gun in your boot too. So that is more like armed robbery, right?

-Yes miss

-So what have you learnt from it?

-That I should not do this stuff, miss

-Okay. You know, just make sure you stay in the grey area.

And he was gobsmacked and stared at me.

-So, you aren’t mad at me?

-It’s been two years, and who am I to blame you anyways? I just want you to think about what you did and avoid that mistake in the future.

Freedom in plurality is the aspect that is most complex to discern in education at the college. This emancipatory aspect is described as follows ‘Education should not be the explanation of what is to be learned by a superior intelligence to an inferior one but should be the seduction to use one’s intelligence. In this perspective the task of the teacher is to *interrogate* - What do you see? What do you think about it? What do you make of it? - and to *verify* that the work is done with attention’ (Biesta, 2013a, p. 94, italics in original). In other words, allowing students to find their own voice and use it in preparation for a future outside school is insufficient as educators need to verify students actually do so attentively. Suggestions this might take place are to be found in just a few accounts. For example when Judy has her class set individual goals, stimulates a workable environment by bringing Lindsey and Rebecca into line, and checks each individual student's progress.

The final aspect to be discussed here is democracy. As I described earlier, education for democracy in Biesta's view, is not concerned with producing graduates who meet particular, democratic criteria such as prescribed in, for example, an SSVE citizenship education course. Education for democracy can be described as the moment when everyone has the opportunity to bring beginnings into the world of plurality and difference, followed by students' reflection on their experiences in this process. One participant in particular springs to mind regarding education for democracy: Laura not only mentions the reflection process of her students but also uses the shared outcomes of that process for her own reflection on opportunities for change in what she will bring in future classes, and how she may share these insights with her fellow educators. If this catches on with her fellow educators, this process may develop into an accelerator for education for democracy.

To conclude this paragraph and before moving on to the implications of my research, I present an example of subjectification being made possible in Isabel's class: The students are to show their own responsible voice in presenting a holiday destination of their own choice. In doing so, the students are introduced to the world in a quite direct way, as they need to find out what makes the place of their choice attractive. They are also introduced to the world in the sense that they are practicing speaking in front of an audience, which is a valuable competency in life, irrespective of any profession. Then, when Jacques fails to deliver his presentation, Isabel makes use of the concept of equal intelligences: students need to discuss the quality of their presentations among themselves, without the authority of the educator guiding the process. Yet she verifies whether they do so attentively by asking questions. When concluding the class with a reflection on this process, she eventually also shows the beginning of education for democracy as it is a moment in which students may pause and think on their actively bringing something new to their community (cf. Arendt, 1998).

6.2 Recommendations for good education and further research

In my 'education in a flawed society' paragraph, I showed the need for change from neoliberal education policy towards SSVE as an independent practice (Hogan, 2010). The same chapter also supports the claim that attention for subjectification is indispensable for good education (2013a, 2016b, 2017; Deumier et al., 2024; Ruitenberg, 2009, 2016). At the same time, the experiences that came to light in conversations with educators in SSVE indicate good intentions and presented a number of beautiful examples of educational action based on limited conscious knowledge of education theory. In other words, examples of 'knowing what to do when you don't know what to do' (Pols, 2019, p. 21; van Manen, 2016a). These findings are the basis of the following recommendations for SSVE to develop further from high quality vocational training to proper education including subjectification as a domain of purpose.

6.2.1 Recommendations for education

Intentionally, this research has not gone into curriculum studies, or the ‘what’ of SSVE. Neither have I dealt with teaching methods or classroom management, the ‘how’ of education. However, my conversations with the participants have shown them to be influenced by a myriad of theories and concepts. The fact that the participants mentioned all these as influences on their quality of education implies that teacher agency is strongly developed at the college, which is in line with its ‘small within large’ policy of delegated responsibility (see 1.3.3 ROCs and the college). What is problematic in the first place, is that some of these theories, or their applicability in education, have since been questioned. An examples of this is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (King-Hill, 2015). Secondly, the theories and concepts mentioned are, in some cases, mutually exclusive, such as student-centred and problem-based education.

Based on these findings, I present the following recommendations.

Educators

When it comes to the domains of qualification and socialisation it appears that the educators’ love for their subject matter and their vocational skills make students enthusiastic for their future careers. On the one hand, this shows educators with a background in industry are indispensable for good SSVE. On the other hand, Bret problematises the effectivity of educators whose experiences as practitioners lies in the past and who tell their students stories about *‘practice from an era in which they had not even been born’*. Hybrid educators, who work part-time in industry and part-time in education may offer the best of both worlds for teaching vocational subjects in SSVE.

As this research has shown, educators who have developed a strong subjective educational theory, are those who hold bachelor’s or master’s degrees in teaching or education studies. This finding leads to two recommendations. In the first place, subjects for which teacher education exists ought to be taught in SSVE by graduates from teacher education. Secondly, all educators should be stimulated to continue education studies beyond their latest professional development. In this respect it is relevant to find a way in which continuous professional development of educators and teaching teams can be based on education research without infringing on teacher agency.

The Scholastic

Another element in socialisation can be found in internships, which prepare students for their professional role and their position as a colleague. Also, the prescribed curriculum prepares students for independent life in Dutch society. What is hardly mentioned in the questionnaires and conversations, however, is socialisation in terms of belonging to a school community as a student.

Rudy's students feeling uncomfortable working with unknown others instead of their regular class is a case in point. It is therefore relevant for SSVE colleges to turn effort towards this element of unveiling social solidarities and discovering and recovering the common nature of existence, as Gadamer terms it (Bey, 2024, p. 73).

In the context of the college in which this research was conducted, steps have been taken since the start of my research project: social Innovation is one of the three key strategic transitions of the umbrella institution (ROC), and recently much attention has been given to a project keeping alumni involved with the college. Obviously, in the light of the college's pledge to 'offer education that challenges you to develop into ... a successful student', there is room for further attention for *schol * and its matter of attention and matter of suspension (Deumier et al., 2024; Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 31, 59).

6.2.2 Recommendations for further research

Improvements of the aspects mentioned above in the daily practice of the college can be based on further research. This direction of future research into good education in Dutch SSVE may also be called for based on the developments in society as I described in the section under 2.5, titled 'Education in a flawed society' and based on the developments contributing to the language of learning, such as the individualising impact of neoliberal politics on education (section 2.1.1 Language).

Accepting this direction of research, apart from Biesta's idea of subjectification and Hogan's concept of imagination's heartwork, critical theory and Karim Amghar's recent pamphlet 'I do not expect you to understand anyway: on the underestimated importance of SSVE' (2025, my translation) may provide a starting point for research aimed at improving vocational education and the position of SSVE in Dutch society.

Finally, if we accept that quality is experienced quality (Hogan, 2010, p. 145), and take equality (Masschelein & Simons, 2013; Ruitenberg, 2016) and democracy (Biesta, 2013a, p. 101) seriously, any research into the future development of Dutch SSVE will be enriched by the inclusion of student-participants.

6.3 Contributions to Good Education

So far, I have accepted Biesta's claim that the condition for good education is the presence of the three domains of purpose, qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Taking into account the legal obligation for SSVE colleges to prepare students for entrance to the labour market, the intensifying cooperation between industry and SSVE colleges, and the experiences of educators in

SSVE, who appear to be strong advocates for qualification and socialisation, I claim the appearance of opportunities for subjectification is the *conditio sine qua non* for SSVE to be considered education at all. Without it, SSVE is merely a training scheme. A necessary, productive and effective training scheme no doubt, providing industry with skilled employees, society with active, critical citizens, and the economy with a labour force. In that sense, it has developed very far from the guild system in which we may have recognised qualification and socialisation, but not a glimpse of subjectification.

Concluding, for SSVE to fulfil its truly educational role, I have shown Biesta's theory needs expanding. The domains of purpose can only be at the centre of SSVE if it is provided by educators as the implaced host (Ruitenberg, 2016) in a place that has the characteristics of the scholastic (Masschelein & Simons, 2013).

Good SSVE needs to slow students down (Deumier et al., 2024) in their race towards the job for which their diploma opens the gate. Or, in the words of Rousseau, '...the greatest, the most important, the most useful rule of all education? It is not to gain time, but to lose it.' (Rousseau, 1979, p.93). And it is in this 'lost time' the bonds mature between the student and the subject matter, the student and the teacher, and the student and the other, opening ever more opportunity for subjectification.

There is hope for this development in present day Dutch SSVE, as my research has shown. In the first place because of the SVVE system, which offers room for agentic educators to develop education focusing on Biesta's domain of subjectification. Secondly there is hope because the participants in this study have shown consideration of education as Hogan's imagination's heartwork. Thirdly, hope comes from the fact that many participants recognise and appreciate the beautiful risk of education (Biesta, 2013a). It all shows in the example of Isabel, presented at the end of 6.1.4, who does not just allow subjectification but challenges all students to become subjects. If anything, my research has shown proper education in SSVE should force students to give up their position as consumer of education, as education is not a product, but a recursive process requiring input from both educator and student.

As my research has further shown, hermeneutic phenomenology is an advisable and good methodology for further research if the ethical concept of good education is the basis for the further development of SSVE. Through fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1990, p. 311) and going through hermeneutic circles (Debesay et al., 2008, p. 58), it uncovers essences about education that cannot be brought to light when more commonly applied quantitative methodological choices are made.

My research combines an empirical study into educators' experiences with good education with a theoretical background to the ethical concept of good education. As a result, it does not only show a

necessary way towards good education in SSVE, but it also shows a path for research into SSVE that goes beyond prevalent research into curriculum studies, or the 'what' of SSVE, teaching methods or classroom management, i.e. the 'how' of education. Combining *Pädagogik* with philosophy of education I have presented an artful and qualitative way to give meaning to what happens in education. In doing so, I have shown good SSVE can only be achieved if educators' voices are heard in the development towards hospitable, decelerated vocational education institutes aimed at qualification, socialisation and subjectification.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Participant classification data

Participant	Age	Sex	Team	SSVE level	Courses taught	Years of work experience in the vocational field you teach	Experience at the college
01 Jennifer	30 - 39	F	1	2	career guidance & citizenship; vocational	10+	10+
02	50 - 59	F	2	4	vocational	10+	1-4
03	60+	F	3	3	Dutch; maths	none	5-9
04 Judy	60+	F	4	4	career guidance & citizenship	none	1-4
05 Cathy	30 - 39	F	1	2	career guidance & citizenship; vocational	none	<1
06	60+	M	5	3	vocational	10+	<1
07 Fausto	50 - 59	M	6	4	many	10+	5-9
08 Jake	50 - 59	M	6	4	vocational	10+	10+
09	50 - 59	F	6	4	vocational	10+	1-4
10	40 - 49	F	2	4	German	1-4	1-4
11	40 - 49	M	1	4	English	none	<1
12	30 - 39	M	6	4	everything vocational, no generic courses	5-9	5-9
13	50 - 59	M	7	3	vocational	10+	5-9
14	50 - 59	M	4	4	vocational	10+	1-4
15 Isabel	40 - 49	F	7	4	career guidance; vocational	5-9	5-9
16 Rudy	30 - 39	M	7	4	English	5-9	5-9
17 Bret	50 - 59	M	7	4	vocational	5-9	5-9
18	50 - 59	M	8	2	vocational	10+	1-4
19 Kathlene	60+	F	7	4	Dutch	none	1-4
20	50 - 59	M	1	4	vocational	10+	5-9
21 Laura	40 - 49	F	2	4	career guidance; vocational	10+	5-9
22	40 - 49	M	1	1	vocational	10+	5-9
23 Leo	30 - 39	M	7	4	vocational	none	<1
24	40 - 49	F	1	1	Dutch	1-4	<1
25	50 - 59	M	8	2	vocational	10+	1-4
26	50 - 59	F	2	4	career guidance; vocational	10+	5-9
27	50 - 59	F	7	3	I do not teach any courses, yet am involved in all	none	10+
28 Antoine	50 - 59	M	5	2	career guidance; English	1-4	10+
29	50 - 59	M			I do not teach at the college	10+	
30	60+	M	6	3	vocational	10+	1-4

Participant	Previous teaching experience	Type & years of teaching credentials held	Primary education	y education	SSVE	HE (vocational)	Post HE (vocational)	HE (university)
01 Jennifer		pdg; 5-9	1980s	1990s	2000s	2000s	2000s	n/a
02	trainer 25 yrs; university 17 yrs; SSVE 3 yrs	1st; 10+	1970s	1970s	n/a	n/a	n/a	1980s
03	primary 5 yrs; 19 yrs NT2; 7 yrs junior vocational	other; 10+	1960s	1970s	n/a	1970s	1980s	2000s
04 Judy	SSVE 10 yrs	pdg; 10+	1960s	1970s	n/a	1970s	2010s	n/a
05 Cathy		none	1990s	2000s	n/a	2000s	n/a	n/a
06		none	1970s	1970s	2020s	n/a	n/a	1980s
07 Fausto	primary and secondary 4 yrs; 6 yrs SSVE	2nd; 10+	1960s	1970s	1980s	2000s	n/a	n/a
08 Jake	14 yrs	pdg; 5-9	1970s	1980s	1980s	N.v.t.	n/a	n/a
09	Founded an academy in the Antilles	pdg; 1-4	1970s	1980s	1980s	1990s	2000s	n/a
10		2nd; 5-9	1980s	1990s	n/a	n/a	n/a	2000s
11	SSVE 7 yrs	pdg; 10+	1970s	1980s	n/a	n/a	n/a	1980s
12		pdg; 5-9	1990s	1990s	2000s	n/a	2020s	n/a
13	HE in English	none	1970s	1980s	n/a	n/a	n/a	1990s
14		none	1970s	1980s	1980s	1990s	n/a	n/a
15 Isabel		pdg; 1-4	1980s	1990s	n/a	1990s	2000s	n/a
16 Rudy		2nd; 1-4	1990s	2000s	2000s	2010s	n/a	2010s
17 Bret	HE 4 yrs; SSVE 3 yrs	pdg; 1-4	1970s	1980s	n/a	1990s	n/a	n/a
18	0	None	1970s	1980s	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
19 Kathlene	SSVE 1 yr + internships in secondary	2nd; 1-4	1960s	1970s	n/a	1980s	n/a	n/a
20		pdg; 5-9	1970s	1980s	1980s	1980s	n/a	n/a
21 Laura	SSVE lvl 4 2 yrs	pdg; 5-9	1980s	1990s	1990s	2000s	2010s	n/a
22		pdg; 1-4	1970s	1980s	n/a	1990s	n/a	n/a
23 Leo	SSVE 6 yrs	pdg; 5-9	1980s	1990s	n/a	2000s	2010s	2000s
24	upper secondary 1 yr	none	1980s	1980s	n/a	1990s	2020s	1990s
25	none	none	1960s	1970s	1980s	n/a	n/a	n/a
26		pdg; 1-4	1970s	1980s	1980s	2020s	2020s	n/a
27	pre-university track 6 yrs	2nd; 10+	1970s	1980s	n/a	n/a	2000s	1990s
28 Antoine	secondary special needs 9 yrs / uni 9 yrs	pdg; 10+	1970s	1980s	n/a	1990s	2010s	n/a
29		pdg; 10+	1960s	1970s	n/a	1980s	n/a	n/a
30	type training 2 yrs, private vocational 6 yrs	other; 10+	1960s	1970s	1970s	n/a	n/a	n/a

Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Educators' experiences with subjectification and heartwork

Dear colleague,

Thank you for reading this invitation to take part in my doctoral research. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. For further questions, please contact me at Jorgen.vanWaes@brunel.ac.uk

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to give meaning to what good education is in SSVE, and how this is experienced by educators from different backgrounds at MBO College Airport. In other words, I want to hear about your experiences and thoughts about what makes our education good.

I will relate your ideas to Biesta's theory about the domains of purpose in education, which says education is not only about skills, knowledge and attitudes, but also about choosing who you are in the world. The second theory I build on is developed by Hogan, who posits that education is a practice in its own right based on relationships and conversation.

The outcomes of my study may inform future team developments.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been asked to take part in the research because you teach at MBO College Airport. This means that all of your colleagues who teach have also been invited to participate.

Do I have to take part?

As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you may be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time up until the start of the summer holidays (for stage 1) and without having to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part in either of the two stages of my research, please fill in the consent form using the link at the end of this e-mail.

Stage 1:

Attached to this message, you will find a link to a Google forms questionnaire with a series of questions about your experiences of education and a series of prompts for reflection. This will take about 25 minutes of your time. I kindly request you to fill in this form between May 16th and June 30th 2021, and you may withdraw your contribution until July 9th 2021.

Stage 2:

In the stage 1 questionnaire you can indicate whether you want to take part in stage 2. If so, I will invite you to have a conversation about what you think good education entails. This conversation will take place between September 2021 and the start of the Christmas holidays in December 2021.

I will make an audio recording of our conversation. After transcription of the conversation, I will ask you for permission to use it, which is the moment you can withdraw parts or all of what you have said.

Are there any lifestyle restrictions,

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part, and

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There aren't any lifestyle restrictions on taking part in this research. The only requirement is that you teach. The disadvantages and benefits involved are the same disadvantages and benefits you experience from everyday teaching and reflecting on your experiences. Should reflecting on your personal experiences in the past lead to distress, you can confidentially contact your staff counsellor, Rob Bajema: r.bajema@rocva.nl, 020-7280133.

What if something goes wrong?

As participation in this research takes place during working hours and at school, standard school regulations apply in case something goes wrong.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The data I collect in this research will be coded so that your name will not appear in any publication or data set. However, I cannot guarantee that you will not be recognized by quotations you allow me to use.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

In stage 2 of the research I will make an audio recording of our conversation. This recording will be uploaded to my personal Brunel University's disk through a safe VPN connection and saved for further study by other scholars.

The audio recording will be transcribed and serve as data for analysis after you have been given the opportunity to withdraw (parts of) it.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be included in my doctoral thesis, which will be publicly available online and will be actively shared with Brunel academic staff and MBO College Airport management and administrators. You will not be identified as a participant in my thesis. As a participant in the study I will also contact you asking if you want to receive a digital copy.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised and funded by myself, Jørgen van Waes, in conjunction with Brunel University London and Practoraat Airport & Aviation at MBO College Airport. MBO College Airport's funding consists in 1 day per week paid study leave.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

Brunel University London provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Who has reviewed the study?

Brunel University London

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Research Integrity

Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK [Research Integrity Concordat](#). You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research

Contact for further information and complaints

Researcher name and details: Jørgen van Waes

(Jorgen.vanWaes@brunel.ac.uk)

Supervisor name and details: Doctor Giuliana Ferri

(Giuliana.Ferri@brunel.ac.uk)

For complaints, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee: Professor David Gallear

(David.Gallear@brunel.ac.uk)

Appendix 3. Questionnaire

My questionnaire was presented to the participants as a Google Form in Dutch. This document is its translation into English. The attachments referred to in the first question are the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form.

Section 1 of 4

GOOD SENIOR SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION [SSVE]

I am glad you decided to participate in my research on how we deliver good education at MBO College Airport.

This questionnaire has four sections

In the first section I will ask you to formally agree to your participation. Also you fill in your school e-mail address through which you will receive a copy of your answers. If you indicate you want to take part in the second part of my research, I will invite you for a conversation using this e-mail address.

In the second section you will be presented twelve short questions about who you are and what your role at MBO College Airport is.

The third section is the most important section in this questionnaire and consists in six questions about your experiences in and ideas about education.

The fourth section concludes the questionnaire. In it, you will be able to post any comments or additional remarks. Also you will be asked to yes/no questions about your further participation in my research.

This questionnaire will take you about 25 minutes to complete.

E-mail address:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet included with this questionnaire;

I am over the age of 18;

I understand that I can withdraw my answers to the questionnaire at any time up to 09/07/2021;

I agree that my data can be anonymised, stored and used in future research in line with Brunel University's data retention policies;

I agree to take part in this study.

- Yes

Section 2 of 4

Personal Data

The following twelve questions are about you and your role at MBO College Airport

First & last name

Age

- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60+

Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary

In which team do you teach? (multiple answers possible)

[the following list is in alphabetical order in Dutch and contains all teams at the college]

- ☐ Aviation Operations
- ☐ Airport entrance level
- ☐ Airport facility services
- ☐ Logistic services
- ☐ Airport security
- ☐ Steward/stewardess
- ☐ Travel & Hospitality
- ☐ Aircraft maintenance

At which level do you teach most of your classes?

- ☐ Entrance level
- ☐ Level 2
- ☐ Level 3
- ☐ Level 4

Which courses do you teach?

Do you have any work experience in the industry your students are being educated for?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, 1-4 years
- ☐ Yes, 5-9 years
- ☐ Yes, 10 years or more

How many years have you taught at MBO College Airport?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10 years or more

If you worked in education before, please indicate the level and number of years.

I will work in education for the rest of my career.

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

No, certainly not

Yes, certainly

Do you hold any teacher qualifications?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, a pedagogy & didactics certificate
- ☐ Yes, a primary education qualification
- ☐ Yes, a 2nd degree qualification for the subject I teach
- ☐ Yes, a 2nd degree qualification for another subject than the one I teach
- ☐ Yes, a 1st degree qualification for the subject I teach
- ☐ Yes, a 1st degree qualification for another subject than the one I teach
- ☐ Yes, other

For how many years have you held your qualification?

- ☐ I do not hold any teacher qualifications
- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10 years or more

Section 3 of 4

Personal experience and ideas

Conceptions about good education are often influenced by our prior experience in education. In this section I will ask you a number of questions about your conceptions and experiences. I will gladly invite you for a good conversation about these topics in the second stage of my research after the summer holidays.

When were you in which type of education? Please indicate the year you started in each type (or its predecessor or foreign equivalent).

	n/a	1950s	1960s	etc	2020s
Primary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Secondary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SSVE	etc				
Higher					
Vocational					
Post-Higher					
Vocational					
University	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Can you describe a defining moment in your school life as a pupil/student (primary, secondary, Higher&Further education)?

Please do not use more than 300 words.

Describe the moment you decided to become an educator. Why did you take that decision, and why did you take it at that moment?

Please do not use more than 300 words.

Can you describe an experience from one of your classes at MBO College Airport which characterizes you as an educator?

Please do not use real names of students, colleagues or others involved.

How much do you enjoy teaching?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Not much			much	

What does the role of the educator look like in future education at MBO College Airport?

Please describe your ideal situation, even if you do not see a future for yourself at Airport

Section 4 of 4

Conclusion

Thank you for answering my questions. In this final section you get the opportunity to indicate whether or not you want to participate in the second stage of my research and whether you want to receive a copy of my thesis. Also, to start this section, you can provide any additional remarks or comments.

Please add any remarks and or comments on my research, or additions to answers you gave before.

Do you want to participate in the second stage of my research into Good SSVE?

- ☐ Yes, invite me for a conversation after the summer holidays
- ☐ No

Would you like to be informed about the results of this research?

- ☐ Yes, send me a copy of your thesis
- ☐ No

Appendix 4. Peer debriefing

An experienced educator with previous teaching experience at multiple ROCs read the Dutch version of the left panels of the diptychs. His comments confirmed ‘empathic resonance’ (Sardello in Legg, 2013, p. 169, quotation marks in original) and the intersubjective perspective (Friesen, 2012, p. 42) I aimed to achieve. I translated his Dutch comments as follows:

Fausto: A familiar story, especially the beginning is quite typical of an SSVE teacher who has been retrained. There is also investment here in the relationship, and genuine (sincere) attention always works well. The difference between the classical teacher and the subject-specialist teacher is a topic that can be represented, in Fausto’s words, as “it either works or it doesn’t.”

Rudy: This is a good example of how SSVE deals with the four different levels. It is good to see a teacher at work who’s starting point is the need for students to figure things out independently.

Judy: This is the “mother-teacher,” someone who can fully empathize with what is going on among the students. Much gets adjusted when this colleague stands up for the students, but these are also the teachers who can sometimes be too flexible for the school.

Bret: This is a typical SSVE lesson and teacher. Well thought out in advance, yet flexible as the lesson unfolds. It is important to recognize the atmosphere and the underlying expectations of the group and to act accordingly.

Antoine: Once again, a typical SSVE teacher. Rapport comes first and once that is in place, work can begin. The strength of this teacher lies in empathy and non-judgmental listening. Many SSVE teachers are good at this.

Jake: Practice-oriented education — that is what SSVE stands for. Jake’s assignment is a good example of that. The teacher pays attention to the individual students. The teacher also ensures that appropriate pressure is placed on the work the students have to do.

Laura: Once again, a good example of practice-oriented education. This teacher also thinks about what is needed outside the classroom in order to be successful.

Kathlene: Here the dilemmas of working with students are described. At times it is difficult to anticipate how the lessons will unfold. Moreover, the environment can also influence how lessons proceed and how both students and teachers feel.

Cathy: A great deal is sometimes asked of a teacher’s improvisational ability. However, that is generally a strong quality of teachers in SSVE. They can switch easily. Moreover, in many situations

you can also draw on your own experiences, because that is the strength of SSVE and its teachers. It is also nice to read how, in this way, she can get students into the right flow.

Isabel: The standard elaboration of a tourism lesson about a particular destination. The moment when you can see who is motivated and able to express themselves in a presentation. The teacher also makes use of learning by doing and helps those who did not succeed. This approach is very typical of SSVE. Students are given many opportunities to progress further.

Leo: Making a difficult subject easy for students is the art of a good teacher. You do this by connecting with your target group and taking them seriously. In the end, this also works both ways, as can be read in Leo's story. Moreover, there is also a strong element of cooperative learning here, as mentioned. It has been proven effective and is essential for a successful group assignment.

Jennifer: This is an example of what is typical for level 2 students. The personal bond you need in order to connect with them. Once you have reached that point, you can go in any direction with this group. So being flexible and moving along with the students is important in this.

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