Last week, Valiz and Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) co-published Wicked Arts Education: Designing Creative Programmes *, a "full-blown contemporary arts educational cookbook" designed to assist educators in building arts curricula across a range of disciplines and course levels. Authored by Melissa Bremmer, Emiel Heijnen and Folkert Haanstra, who have all taught in the Arts Education department at AHK, the publication expands the aims of its predecessor,* Wicked Arts Assignments: Practising Creativity in Contemporary Arts Education *, published in 2021.*

Wicked Arts Assignments *compiled nearly 100 prompts and projects for students during and outside of class;* Wicked Arts Education *takes a more wholesale approach, going beyond ideas for single assignments to conceptualize alternative ways of teaching the arts that emphasize collaboration, cultural engagement, and critical inquiry. Crucially, Bremmer, Heijnen, and Folkert frame the arts as not only a subject of study, but as a means of exploring broader social and educational questions. By providing educators with an assortment of strategies to exercise this potential,* Wicked Arts Education *is not only a valuable resource for teachers, but a powerful testament to the importance of fostering fine art, music, theater, design, dance, and other creative practices within schools. The introduction and first chapter of* Wicked Arts Education *are excerpted in full below.*

Melissa Bremmer, Emiel Heijnen, and Folkert Haanstra

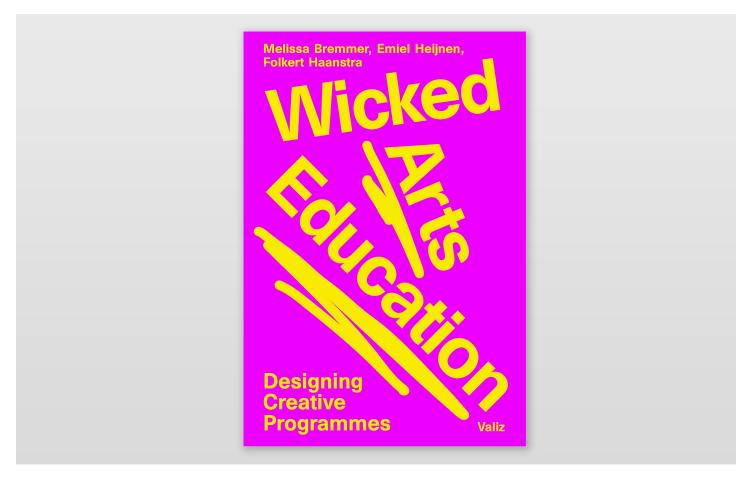# Excerpt: "Wicked Arts Education— Designing Creative Programmes"

Introduction

In 2020 we published *Wicked Arts Assignments*: a book with close to a hundred creative, bold and provocative assignments that were collected from contemporary arts educators. Although the book inspired many students, arts teachers and artists, one question kept coming up: how do you design curricula based on the "Wicked" approach? That fundamental question sparked the idea for this book.

Where the book *Wicked Arts Assignments* presented a loose collection of arts educational recipes, *Wicked Arts Education* is a full-blown contemporary arts educational cookbook. And yes, culinary metaphors do seem to be accurate with regard to arts educational curriculum design.[1] *Wicked Arts Education* helps you to create exciting arts educational eating experiences, consisting of varied dishes in a coherent menu. Rather than settling for cookie cutter art or artistic fast food, this workbook stimulates you to cook curricula that are experienced as fresh, tailor-made and satisfying. And finally, *Wicked Arts Education* supports you to cater to your guests' preferences, acknowledging dietary preferences, restrictions, or allergies.

This workbook will help you to build arts curricula from

Cover of Wicked Arts Education: Designing Creative Programs by Melissa Bremmer, Emiel Heijnen, and Folkert Haanstra (Valiz/Amsterdam University of Arts, 2025). Design: Laura Pappa.

scratch, based on our clear and appealing design model for a Wicked Arts Curriculum. This model is rooted in academic research and further developed during the course "arts educational design" that we have been teaching at the Amsterdam University of the Arts since 2006. We also had the chance to test this model and its related strategies in our curriculum design workshops around the world. Time and time again we found that *Wicked Arts Education* challenges arts educators to explore curriculum ideas collectively, creatively and productively.

But why design *Wicked* Arts Curricula? Loosely based on the ideas of Rittel and Webber[2], we believe that arts education should revolve around wicked problems and challenges: ambitious, confusing, messy, complex, and appealing. Arts educational scholar Olivia Gude already concluded that "a menu of media, or lists of domains, modes, and rationales are neither sufficient nor necessary to inspire a quality art curriculum."[3] In this workbook, arts teachers and artists are addressed as the primary agents in the development of high quality arts curricula. Rather than approaching educational design solely as a technical exercise, we promote it as an artistic practice in which creative and systematic approaches playfully alternate.

In a time of individualisation and polarization, we believe in the power of learning collectively about, in, and through the arts.[4] Although *Wicked Arts Education* can be used to create personalized learning trajectories, it advocates building learning communities in which students and teachers share interests, expertise, and opinions. Arts classes and other creative learning communities are encountered as educational microcosms that allow students to experiment, fail and succeed safely and collectively.

Wicked Arts Education can be used in a variety of educational contexts: from primary to higher education, and for arts curricula inside and beyond schools. The use of the term "arts" underlines that this workbook is suitable for crafting curricula for the visual arts, music, dance, theatre, film or design, but also for designing interdisciplinary arts projects and courses. So, whether you are a (preservice) arts teacher, an artist, or a curriculum designer, or if you want to design a single lesson or a complete arts curriculum, this book is for you!

The Wicked Arts Education Manifesto

Wicked Arts Education:

…offers opportunities to learn about ourselves, the arts and the world. We believe that the arts form historically renowned, specific symbol systems to explore and imagine the world, and their reception and production evoke pleasurable or otherwise remarkable experiences. The arts broaden our horizon because they allow us to encounter stories, people, sounds, images, movements, events, and situations that would otherwise not be part of our daily lives. Moreover, the arts can reveal realities or beliefs and help us to envision and enact "ways of being together otherwise."[56]

… appeals to both body and mind. The arts are encountered, made, and understood through complex processes that appeal to our bodies (seeing, feeling, hearing) as well as our minds (interpreting, meaning making, discussing). What we see and experience as "artistic" is intersubjective and dynamic: it is different all over the world and changes over time. How and what we value as art is part of a social process, an ongoing discourse. This play with form, definitions and meaning is inherent to the arts.

… inspires arts educational design. We believe that artworks can trigger the educational designers' creativity. Works of art are never neutral, they can confront, ask challenging questions, tell stories, show new truths, or take you into other realities. As such, works of art can spark ideas for themes, assignments, materials and techniques for your curriculum.

Designing Wicked Arts Curricula is:

… an artistic practice. Arts curricula often leave much freedom for interpretation. This freedom can be exciting as it allows you to approach educational design as an artistic practice: you can use your imagination and experience to creatively transform your educational ideas into a curriculum.[7] Thus, curricula can emerge with strong personal signatures, in which artistic ideas, pedagogical views and arts practices are integrated in a unique way.

… a collaborative practice. Instead of viewing designing and teaching arts as a solitary activity, we advocate it as an off- or online collaborative practice where a dynamic exchange forms the heart of curriculum development. In a collaborative design practice, teachers can critically discuss their lesson ideas, inspire each other, kill their darlings, and build robust curricula.

… both intuitive and systematic. In some views, curriculum development is seen as a linear process, others see it as a purely holistic endeavour. Yet, we take an in-between stance towards curriculum design. We believe that designing arts education calls for a creative approach that starts intuitively and holistically, but gradually becomes more systematic and analytical.

Reading Guide
The first chapter of this book gives a brief history of the curriculum. In chapter 2 we present the heart of our book: the design model for Wicked Arts Curricula. In that chapter we also provide you with the theoretical backgrounds of *Wicked Arts Education*. In chapter 3 you learn how to make that first, quick intuitive sketch of your curriculum. Then you can push on to chapters 4 to 8 for a systematic overview of different components of curriculum design: learning goals, structure, learning activities, assessment and evaluation.

Chapter 1. A brief History of the Curriculum

In the film installation *Manifesto* (2015) of the German multi-media artist Julian Rosefeldt, famous arts manifestos are delivered by Cate Blanchett in thirteen different roles and settings, creating surrealistic scenes. For example, we see Blanchett as a fifth-grade teacher, giving a lecture to her students. Walking around the class, she checks if the children write down the Danish filmmakers Dogme 95 text correctly in their notebooks: "The camera must be hand-held…'

A manifesto is a written statement publicly declaring the position of its issuer. It advances a set of ideas, but it can also lay out a plan of action. In the arts, many manifestos initially provoked confusion, laughter, or anger, but proved to be game-changers. Such as: "We don't wanna assimilate to someone else's (boy) standards" in punk band Bikini Kill's *Riot grrrl manifesto* (1991), "No virtuosity" in choreographer Yvonne Rainer's *No manifesto* (1965), or "We abolish the stage and the auditorium" in Artonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* (1964). Just like arts movements, arts curricula are never ideology-free. They build on underlying concepts and ideas that are sometimes presented with the same panache as our *Wicked Arts Education* manifesto. In this chapter we discuss the different levels of curricula, their underlying visions, and what colour, shape and content they can take on.

1.1 What Is a Curriculum?
When you think up an arts assignment, activity, or course, you are, willingly or not, designing a chunk of *curriculum*. The word curriculum has historically yielded many meanings and associations. In Arabic, it is associated with listing and ordering.[8] In Latin, however, the verb *currere* means to run, and *curriculum* refers both to a "course" and a "vehicle." Today, curriculum is mostly associated with schools and other educational institutes (formal learning). But the many online DIY video manuals that people use at home to learn how to play guitar or to make a stunning Cosplay outfit are just as well pieces of

curriculum (informal learning). Curricula are also found in the hybrid space between informal and formal learning. So-called non-formal learning situations[9] are situated outside schools, usually guided by experts, and materialized in the form of courses, apprenticeships or educational programmes of cultural institutes.

Wicked Arts Education is, in the first place, aimed at formal learning contexts, from primary to higher education. It can also be applied in the context of non-formal learning situations, like music/dance/theatre schools or museum education. We therefore define curriculum as a *plan for learning*, based on the Estonian-American curriculum theorist Taba.[10] A plan for learning resonates with the German *Lehrplan*, the Swedish *läroplan* and the Dutch term *leerplan*.[11]

A plan for learning in the arts can be applied to different curricular levels. From a personalized plan for learning to play Spanish guitar at the nano level, to the Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy[12] at the supra level. This book focuses on curriculum design at both the micro and meso level. At the micro level, it offers guidance for the design of an arts educational course or project for a particular student group or class. It can also be used for the design of arts curricula at the meso level, consisting of multiple courses/projects over a longer period (e.g. a semester, a year).

1.2 Curriculum Manifestations

Curricula can not only be found in different contexts or at different levels, the same curriculum manifests itself also in various forms—on different moments and for different stakeholders. A teacher may find the theatre course challenging on paper, but students may find its implementation boring and too simple. Van den Akker[13] describes a threefold common typology for these different curriculum manifestations: the *intended*, the *implemented*, and the *attained* curriculum.

The intended curriculum specifies the intention of the learning plan before it is implemented: what *should* the student do and learn? It manifests itself in the form of a rationale or basic learning philosophy: the *ideal curriculum*, and in the form of written curriculum documents or materials: the *formal curriculum*.

The way a learning plan is interpreted and performed is called the *implemented curriculum*: what are the teachers and students *doing*? This phase deals with how the intended curriculum is interpreted and performed by its users, especially teachers. This manifestation presents itself in the form of the *curriculum-in-action*, the observable process of teaching and learning, and all the activities that happen around it.

The attained curriculum concerns the (learning) experiences that an implemented learning plan generates: what does the programme *bring about*? From this

perspective, the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that students actually develop through teaching and learning (both intended and unintended) are identified. The attained curriculum can be determined in different ways: by tests, student evaluations or demonstrations in practice.

Theoretically, the intended, implemented, and attained curriculum are identical. The teacher or educational designer's holy grail is that the intention of a plan for learning is implemented accordingly and results in the desired learning results. Of course, this is seldom the case—and it is one of the aspects that makes education and its design so vibrant and interesting…. and sometimes frustrating.

Apart from these common forms in which curricula present themselves, we want to include a curricular manifestation that is more controversial because it resides in the shadows of official curricula. The *hidden curriculum* was first described by Jackson[14] in 1968, who recognized that educational settings also produce informal, implicit, and sometimes undesired forms of knowledge, behaviours and values.[15] Hidden curricula manifest themselves in various ways, such as through teaching and learning styles, emphasis on learning contents, dominant narratives, and the architecture of the learning environment.

An example of a hidden curriculum in dance education is described by Stinson.[16] She found that in some dance courses students are expected to "obediently follow directions, to stay "on task," to avoid chatting with other students or attending to any personal needs except those that are most pressing." While this is a renowned teaching method of professional choreographers, it does not provide space for the individuality and creativity of (mainly female) amateur students. The fact that boys are nearly absent in the classes reinforce the idea that obedience is a feature that girls in particular need to learn.

An intriguing example of a hidden curriculum that students themselves create and maintain, is studied by artist Annette Krauss. Her project *Hidden Curriculum* (2007–ongoing) documents the practices and coping strategies that teen students use and share in their everyday school life. For example, students have documented in videos how stairs, handrails, lockers, and school furniture can be used in non-standard ways. Krauss also collects and documents the various tricks and excuses that high school students in different countries mutually share to cheat at tests or to skip school.[17]

As no course or curriculum has an infinite amount of time and space, every curriculum is always based on the question of what *is* included and what is *not*. The *null curriculum*[18] is everything that is absent or not taught in a programme, signifying all that is deemed as unessential, unimportant, or invisible. Apt examples of typical null

curricula in the arts are traditional art history narratives that present a "canon" in which non-western art, bipoc (black, indigenous and people of colour) and female artists are nearly absent.

Before you engage in the process of constructing a new piece of curriculum, a valuable exercise may be to ask yourself and your colleagues what kind of hidden or null curricula there exist in your school/institute. Exploring the knowledge, behaviours and values that are *implicit* or *missing*, can help you to shed light on your intended curriculum.

1.3 Curriculum Visions

Either implicit or explicit, each curriculum has an underlying rationale of *what* has to be learned and *how* learning goals can be achieved.[19] There are many educational concepts or learning philosophies that are used to underpin an ideal curriculum, such as Montessori or Dalton, personalized learning, or problem-based learning. These different curriculum rationales can roughly be divided into three global visions on learning: *disciplined-centred, learner-centred* and *society-centred*.[20]

The Discipline-Centred Curriculum

The main goal of this vision is to increase the learner's knowledge based on academic disciplines such as mathematics, philosophy, or science. Curricula are subject-based and aim to teach students discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Teachers are seen as highly skilled experts in their discipline and formal examinations can play a big role in the assessment of learning.

Example in the arts: *Discipline-Based Art Education*[21] was developed by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts as a critique of secondary art education that overemphasizes aspects like expression and studio production. DBAE promotes a sequential art curriculum based on four disciplines: art production, art history, art criticism and aesthetics.

The Learner-Centred Curriculum

In this vision, the interests and needs of the learner are the cornerstone. Learning is geared towards the student's personal growth and development. The teacher is mainly considered a coach or facilitator who is able to flexibly tailor the curriculum to the student's learning needs. As (self)discovery plays an important role, assessment often has a formative character.

Example in the arts: In *Reggio Emilia pedagogy*[22] the expressive arts and the guidance by specialist arts teachers (*atelieristas*) play a central role in learning. Reggio preschool educators believe that every child has a fundamental right to realize and expand their potential. Much attention is given to detailed observation and documentation of the students" learning process, rather than on learning outcomes.

The Society-Centred Curriculum

Social relevancy is a central concern in these curricula, which can be interpreted in two directions: the *social adaptation and the social reconstruction* vision. From the viewpoint of social adaptation, curricula should help students acquire the skills needed to fit in society. For instance, creativity is an important skill for complex and increasingly digitized societies and arts education is mentioned as a subject area that can foster this skill.[23]

The *social reconstruction* vision is aimed at raising critical citizens. Societal challenges and real-world problems should be discovered and resolved throughout the curriculum, educating students to think and act as (critical) citizens. Students are approached as community members who collectively study interdisciplinary content matter. Teachers have to be skilled in facilitating teamwork and collaborative learning. Assessment is often aimed at the application of knowledge and skills in lifelike contexts.

Example in the arts: the *Theatre of the Oppressed*[24] is a form of community-based education that uses theatre as a tool for social and political transformation. By overthrowing the opposition between actors and spectators, "spect-actors" get the opportunity to both act and observe, fostering processes of dialogue and critical thinking.

1.4 Integrating Curriculum Visions

Tyler[25] integrates a discipline-, learner-, and society-centred curriculum vision in the same model. This model extends Dewey's 1897[26] assertion that academic knowledge lacks significance if it does not connect with the learner's experiences and the world beyond school.[27] The idea that a school curriculum should respond to all three dimensions is the foundation of Tyler's curriculum rationale. Hence, a balanced curriculum should be informed by three types of sources: the knowledge and skills derived from *professional disciplines*, the values, aims and attitudes of a democratic *society* and the *learner's* competencies, interests, and needs.

Tyler's threefold integration of curriculum visions resonates with Biesta's[28] contemporary interpretation of the key functions of education: *qualification, socialization,* and *subjectification*. Qualification provides children and young people with the knowledge and skills they will need as future citizens and employees. Socialization prepares students for their lives as members of a community and how to become part of existing traditions and social, cultural, and political orders. Subjectification, finally, is aimed at the development of the student as individuals, discovering aspects such as passions and beliefs, autonomy and responsibilities. Like Tyler, Biesta presents the design and implementation of a curriculum as a balancing act in which discipline-, society- and learner-centred approaches are seen as intertwined dimensions that are in continuous dialogue with each

other.

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