



Symposium

What – in the end –
holds everything together?

*To mark the moment that Luc Stevens
steps down as director of NIVOZ*

6 maart 2018, theater Maitland, Driebergen



Introduction



Gabrielle Taus (director of NIVOZ)

For this symposium we have chosen the theme of “*what – in the end – holds everything together?*” It is a theme that is very dear to Luc. The systems view of life.

During his career Luc has developed from a focus on how to save youth at risk towards a more systemic view on how to decrease youth becoming at risk in the first place. From a system with selection mechanisms towards a system where connectedness and responsibility are in the center.

Inspired by the front runners in the (beta) sciences Luc became aware that bigger emphasis had to be placed on complexity, networks, patterns and wholeness. That everything is connected and everything has an impact. Also in the classroom. The implications of a systems view on life for economics, politics, science, health and - education, are paramount.

We have asked professor Tone Sævi, professor Gert Biesta and professor Joseph Kessels to share their perspective on this fundamental question what it is that keeps it all together.

Tone Sævi is professor of Education at NLA University College in Bergen, Norway. She has contributed greatly by her research on hermeneutic phenomenology and her existential perspective on education. She speaks about situations or moments when we experience life.

Gert Biesta *is professor of Education at Brunel University London and NIVOZ Professor for Education, University of Humanistic Studies. His work has led to a new perspective on pedagogy and education in the Netherlands and brings many of us to the fundamental questions that we should ask ourselves as educators.*

Joseph Kessels *is professor emeritus of Human Resource Development of the University of Twente. He is driven by a deep belief in human potential and challenges us to create a learning and development environment where autonomy, self-guidance and emancipation are key.*

We will start with a short speech by each speaker in which they share with the audience what they see as the essence of what holds everything together, what is it that matters most to them, with in the back of their minds the consequences for education.

Each speech will be accompanied by a work of art that represents the thoughts or feelings of the speaker on this fundamental question. Before each speech we will take time to get inspired by the painting or photo.

After the three speeches the speakers (Gert Biesta, Tone Sævi and Joseph Kessels) will ask each other one question to deepen our understanding of what this fundamental question means for education.

Following this dialogue Luc will reflect on the speeches and will share his thoughts on the challenges or responsibilities ahead of us. Luc will also share a work of art to express his story.

At the end Rob Martens will take the lead in the closing of this symposium. At various moments we will be entertained by the music of the Toon Roos Trio. I wish you and especially Luc & Marijke a wonderful afternoon.

Tone Sævi, may I ask you to start this symposium with your work of art and your speech.



Georg Gudni GG #41 Oil on canvas 2002

What - in the end – holds everything
together?

Tone Sævi

6.mars 2018

I cannot now think of anything that is strong enough to hold everything together - without being too strong for education to be pedagogikk. What is everything anyway, and what does it mean to hold «it» together? The theme of this symposium really challenges me to try to think new thoughts. Or, perhaps, to allow the theme of «*holding everything together*» to provoke my own security of who I am and how I think. Georg Gudni – the Icelandic painter, provokes me as well. That is why I decided to show you one of his paintings. While I worked on the theme of the symposium and considered Gudni's paintings, I sent this particular painting - 2002 # 41 - to a friend in Australia. He responded like this:

«We are so often people of the 'here and now', greedily gobbling-up 'what's in our face'. Viewing #41, desperate for defined detail, Gudni leads my eyes upwards, outwards to the horizon and beyond. From search for certainty - to broader imaginings, of what it might be like to be over there; way over there, (beyond our comfort zone)). Following Gudni's lead, I dissolve the false divisions, glide down optic nerve from pupil, retina to mind's eye, and back again, and forward, back, forward, back; rubber-banding at supersonic speed!

Some say we are prisoners of our cognitive style, but Gudni invites me to overcome the close-at-hand, seek the wider scope; acknowledge my dependence on situation, context, life - beyond benign boundaries. Australian Aboriginal Yindjibarndi people have a word *wanna* (middle distance), where one may see a kangaroo on a nearby hillside, but it is far too far away to strike it with a spear or boomerang. A situation where their age-old technology is useless and gives way to wonder, hope or regret. Gudni lifts sight-line to a higher point-of-view, inspiring us to put down our handy tools (of cautious critique), and speculate on far-off glimmerings”.

The comment on the word 'wanna' - that which is not near enough to be caught and we therefore have to let be free and untouched - is significant to education. Just letting things be as they are, or be patient and let things change in their own tempo- not change and develop and learn at any

price. (Now everything should be about control and discipline and (self)regulation).

Gudni said about his childhood (and adult life): «My earliest memories are of wasteland and freedom, running around in the middle of nowhere – the quietness. When you are working you have to be out in all kinds of weather. It inspires me as an artist standing in the rain all day when nothing is to be seen» (2005, p. 66).

Something weak might be what is needed to hold things together. Zygmunt Bauman (1993) suggests that NOW in postmodernity, is the possibility of the weak and risky human qualities. Now we could chose to do the good and right IF we like.

We might believe that love holds things together. Love IS strong – experience proves that - but love turns into not-love if it is forced on somebody. And love – like all sovereign life expressions (Løgstrup 1997) turns into its opposite if it becomes a tool. Love – as human quality – tends (over time) to be or become conditional. It needs something in return, does it not? For instance, we usually do accept (problematic) differences in the beginning – also in school - but expect adaption (assimilation) over time (to my / our preferred way of living, thinking, being. Very few, if any, are able and willing to love unconditionally over time (perhaps parents or some parents). And unconditional love is exactly what children and young people need!

However, as a phenomenologist I wonder what love actually looks like in real life? Could love be a practical goodness? If so, what then is the good? And how does goodness look in pedagogical practice? Goodness gives space, hatred withdraws space, Otto. F. Bollnow says (2011). Iris Murdoch (1971/2003) observes that «goodness speaks in small letters» What is it like to act in a way that allows space for the other but does not draw attention to itself? Children experience the good in adult's tone or voice, movements, eyes, gestures, words, ways of being towards others (not necessarily towards themselves).

Every child is his or her own project, Edward Hoem lets one of his characters say, in his novel about those who left Norway around 1900 to lead a new life in North America (Hoem, 2015). This does not mean anything like «the selfmade man», but rather a guest for respect for what is other than me. Nobody else is my project the way I am my own project. How does that look in real life? What am I to others, to a child, or to a young person if their life primarily is their own responsibility? How might I act responsibly (supportive, oriented, open, responsible) but not too responsibly?' What a child does is his or her sake – I should not ask for their (psychological) motivations, Løgstrup (1997) says – if it is not really dangerous or life-threatening. What I do in response to the child's act is my responsibility. In other words: what adults do as responses (or not) to childrens' actions – that in fact is the point! Perhaps should we not try to change children. Perhaps rather try to change ourselves - and our relation to the child might possibly let change happen.

Georg Gudni paints the horizon. A horizon is both a limit and a possibility, Bollnow says (2011) – but a possibility, not a potential or a potentiality. Why is this difference worth attending to? That which is possible is something that MIGHT happen, but it might also not happen. A potential means a force, a power (etymonline.com), something that will come through under the right circumstances. The child's potential is a child's potent ability or capability. The possible on the other hand, might happen but we do not know THAT it will, and can thus not determine or prescribe it. So what is my horizon – where is it? Am I capable of seeing another person's horizon? SHOULD I see it, or is it his or hers? I might as an adult or teacher confuse my horizon for being the child's...

How can I *be* in ways that keep open of possibilities to the other? In Per Petterson's novel: *I curse the river of time* from 2010, the young protagonist Arvid experiences a difficult time in his life. His beloved mother is about to die from cancer – the Berlin Wall is taken down (and Arvid was a communist) - he is alone and poor and a foreigner in a foreign country. He says: «Life lies ahead of me. Nothing is settled» (p. 54). How can children and young people in the nearness of me sense that their life lies open before them, undetermined, not yet made out in ways that cannot be seen differently. New chances, the goodness of education again and again and again and...

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The pack by Joseph Beuys

‘And who holds everything together?’
On existential sovereignty in a culture of fear

Gert Biesta

6 March 2018

‘The pack’ is an installation by Joseph Beuys. It is somewhere listed as conceptual art, which is art that expresses a concept or idea, and where it is up to spectators or onlookers to decipher this idea – we might also say: to second guess what the artist intended to express. This, however, is a mistake because – and I seem to remember that Beuys actually made this point himself, but I’m not sure – if the artist were able to say what he or she wanted to express, the piece of art would be an unnecessary detour. Rather than to try to find out what a piece of art means, there is, in my view, a more ‘grown-up’ question, which is *‘What is this asking from me?,’ ‘What is this trying to say to me?,’ or ‘What is this trying to teach me?’*

The question as to what holds everything together is a challenging question, particularly because it is both a simple question and a very fundamental question. Those with a more pessimistic inclination may be tempted to focus on problems, on what is not going well, on what is at the brink of falling apart, or is actually already falling apart. It is important, however, not to forget that every day many things also go really well, in life and in education.

That so much goes well is actually what is remarkable and deserves attention, if only to counter the voices that want us to believe that everything is going downwards, and that radical change is needed in order to save education and society from total decline. There are of course problems, and it is important to identify them as accurately as possible, but there is also prosperity and happiness – although not at all equally distributed – and shy children and hesitant young people still turn into beautiful human beings and caring parents who are ready to lead the next generation into the world.

Much of what happens here is supported by cultures, traditions and practices which human beings have developed throughout human history. Such cultures, traditions and practices seem to do their work relatively invisibly. But we shouldn’t forget that much of the work in education is precisely aimed at the introduction of the next generation into existing cultures, traditions and practices, in such a way that they also become the new carriers of the cultures, traditions and practices.

The ways in which cultures, traditions and practices work often only becomes visible when there are problems or disruptions or when the next generation no longer wants to carry existing cultures, traditions and practices, sometimes just for being obstinate, but sometimes also for really good reasons. This shows

that education is also an important ‘forum’ where the validity of what exists, the value of tradition, to examine and explore. This means that education is located in this special moment ‘between past and future,’ to quote Hannah Arendt.

Next to cultures, traditions and practices which, in a sense, are rather ‘soft,’ there are also rules and institutions, which are less pliable. Rules and institutions are needed to maintain, protect and secure what human beings have brought about throughout the course of history. Here we can think of the institution of democracy or the rule of law, but also about education itself. Rules and institutions are important, but we also know that, particularly when they develop into bureaucracy, they can begin to work against themselves, for example when ‘following the rule’ is seen as more important than what the rule was intended for.

In contemporary education we can see this particularly in the ‘culture of measurement,’ a culture that quite often no longer is about measuring what we value, but has turned into a situation where people seem to value what is being measured. The fact that teachers are often only judged on such measurements – on measurable ‘outcomes’ – feels like a grave injustice. That is why it remains important to keep a distance between rules and laws on the one hand, and the idea of justice on the other, so that rules and laws can provide protection against injustice, but there is always an opportunity to criticise existing rules and laws if they no longer appear on the side of justice.

And this brings me to the point I wish to highlight today, which is that we can have as many cultures, traditions, practices, rules and laws as we want, but if no one cares about them, if there is no one willing to stand up and speak out for them and for the good that these cultures, traditions, practices, rules and laws seek to secure and safeguard, they very quickly lose any power they may have.

Without human beings acting as safeguards and guarantors, existing cultures, traditions, practices, rules and laws – to name in full one more time – are nothing more than abstract ideas that have no power and no force of themselves. That is why the question as to what holds everything together potentially interesting, but the only response to this question, so I wish to suggest, has to be the counter-question as to who actually holds everything together – and this question refers to the work of individuals, sometimes as a group (or a ‘pack’), but, if it really matters, it may all hang on even just one individual human being.

This is not the whole point I wish to present, because there are two very different ways in which people can try to hold things together. One way is informed by the principle of fear; the other way is informed by the principle of freedom or, with a slightly more appropriate word: sovereignty. We all know that fear is a bad counsellor, and yet fear emerges often in situations where people try to organise their living together. Contemporary education suffers from this, as does contemporary academic research and scholarship.

One particularly strong manifestation of fear is the fear of being left behind: the fear of being left behind in national or international league tables, the fear of being left behind in the ongoing pressure to perform and produce, including the unhealthy academic culture of 'publish or perish.' The culture of measurement that permeates contemporary education also contributes to all this, not least because although it presents itself as objective and transparent it actually promotes very narrow definitions of what counts as what can be counted, where it is very easy to read 'higher' and 'lower' as 'better' and 'worse,' which easily turns accountability into condemnation: a culture of 'naming and shaming.'

Those who ask critical questions – including the question whether the emperor is actually wearing any clothes or not, but also whether the top of the league table is actually a position one should aspire to, or whether the values expressed in the league table are the values that should be guiding our efforts – are often depicted as weak or, more strongly, as losers. This happened, for example, when Liverpool Hope University in England refused to take part in university league tables, which many people thought was easy for them to do as they would have ended up at the bottom any way. This is also what happens in bullying where the bullies depict those who don't want play along as losers. To be able, in such situations, not to go with the flow, to keep a degree of sovereignty, is of course not easy. It probably requires a certain combination of courage and stubbornness. But it is precisely in shows stubborn courage or courageous stubbornness that we find the difference between acting out of fear and acting out freedom.

And this is where Luc comes into the picture. I met Luc for the first time in the early 1990s at the University of Utrecht, where he was professor and I had a position in 'pedagogiek.' It was during a time where the culture of publish-or-perish was very rapidly gaining ground, not just as simply publish-or-perish, but the more silly game of publish-in-those-journals-that-according-to-some-

system-are-considered-to-matter, or otherwise things will look really bad for you.

Whether what was being published in all those journals was making any difference for the humanisation of upbringing and education – to name but one worthy ambition – was no longer the real question, just as there was apparently little discussion about the narrow view of what would count as research that was promoted – or perhaps we should say ‘pushed’ – as a result of the focus on this small and ‘select’ group of journals.

Luc was someone who didn’t go with this ‘flow,’ but always went back to the question about what matters. This made him into an ‘outlier,’ as the English word goes, and I have already indicated what can happen with such ‘outliers’ in a situation where fear is the guiding principle. What I observed with Luc was a rather remarkable and exceptional sovereignty, that is, an ability to act freely. And this was not because Luc just wanted to be stubborn or because of his own interests or his own ego – a risk that is always present when we try to act freely – but because he continued to try to focus on what matters, what is at stake, and also for whom things matter and for whom things are at stake.

The impulse I saw with Luc as an individual, is an impulse that I also recognise in the work of the NIVOZ, that also tries to go against the mainstream, in order to create and sustain a sovereign space and a sovereign discourse in which it remains possible to focus on what really matters in education and on who really matter in education, out of the conviction that education is not about the production of pre-specified outcomes, but is a thoroughly human, humane and ideally humanising enterprise, both for those who are supposed to benefit from education – children and young people – and for those who ‘do’ the work of education, that is, teachers.

It is quite remarkable that the quality I encountered in Luc as an individual can be encountered ‘writ large’ in the work of the NIVOZ. We could say that this personally quality has slowly transformed into culture, tradition and practice. Luc’s impulse has, in other words, become ‘worldly,’ has gained a ‘wordly’ quality, has ‘arrived’ in the world, in the very same way in which our children have to leave home and enter the world in order to lead their own, independent lives.

We know as educators and parents that it is of the utmost importance that we give our children the freedom to go their own way. That is where we

encounter the meaning of 'letting go,' because if we do not let go, if we do not let our children go, they will never arrive in the world, they will never be able to find their own destiny. It is exactly here that we find the educational meaning of letting go – in Dutch: de pedagogisch zin *van* afscheid – whether we like it or not or, once more in Dutch – of we daar nu zelf zin *in* hebben of niet.

Thanks for your attention.

Gert Biesta is professor of Education at Brunel University London and NIVOZ Professor for Education, University of Humanistic Studies. His work has led to a new perspective on pedagogy and education in the Netherlands and brings many of us to the fundamental questions that we should ask ourselves as educators.





'The three graces' by Peter Paul Rubens

'Do not let it fall apart!'

Joseph Kessels

6 March 2018

When Luc Stevens posed this question to us, I started wondering why is he interested in the answer?

And of course, gradually the question also started triggering me.

In a meeting like this afternoon, paying tribute to Luc for the important work has achieved, we could think of what does bring us together here? What did Luc do to us, so that we all wanted to come, join and reflect on what we owe to him?

His question invites us to think about the importance of education, in the sense of helping others to develop and grow. Not only as individuals, but also as relatives in our families, our professional circles as well as citizens. What creates our sense of meaning and belonging?

The painting of Peter Paul Rubens shows the three graces holding each other. The graces of beauty, joy and blossoming, share this strong sense of belonging, whatever their reason and meaning is. Peter Paul Rubens depicted his own wife – Hélène Forment as one of the graces (the one to the left) short after their wedding. It is a rather complicated, but not uncommon way of artists to express relatedness. Rubens never sold this painting and always kept it in his studio.

Influenced by centuries of art history, we feel very familiar with the theme of the three graces. It goes back to the Greek mythology, where the graces were considered as the radiant daughters of Zeus. Many artists presented the three ladies. And each period showed them according to what the fashion considered as beautiful, feminine, desirable, sensual and perfect. The three women hold each other in a tender way, expressing that they feel why they are together. And we like that a lot.

Education, upbringing, coaching, mentoring, guidance and leadership, all these activities and efforts try to exert influence on others to finally create that sense of shared meaning and belonging. And we all appreciate that, as long as it feels common and trusted.



And then appears this painting by Herman Gordijn. We observe exactly the same theme, the same poses, the same gestures of holding each other in a tender and caring way. But an image of three naked men in a field of poppies is far from common and trusted. Despite the familiar theme of a sense of belonging, it is difficult to perceive conventional beauty, joy and blossoming.

Does it mean that an education of traditions, conventions and common experiences is holding us together, attached as we are to what we already know and what makes us feel comfortable? Is the common school curriculum - with its fixed content, examinations, standardized test and selection and exclusion - leading to a meaningful sense of belonging, based on deep rooted values that act as the tone in music?

When Luc poses the question “*What in the end keeps everything together*”, I wonder whether he is interested in the social glue that makes us stick. Does he want to learn more about the power of social capital that acts as invisible threads that create a web and cocoon, where we feel comfortable and secure? A web with strong ties and knots that offers structure and stability?

Strong ties that keep you inside where you belong?

However, these strong ties may also act as the barriers that do not let you escape? Of course, they do hold a lot together, but at what price? Is this education for autonomy and freedom?

Where in our living systems will the rules and regulations, quality measurements, facts and figures, and accountability instructions, take over the pedagogical wisdom that is so deeply rooted in the encounter of human beings?

Today, we pay tribute to Luc and we show our appreciation for what he has achieved for our professions and for how he has influenced the sensitivity of our antennas for what is meaningful and not. We do so because Luc steps back from NIVOZ, the center of pedagogy that he has created; a center that could act as a free haven for exploring the values and principles that guide us in our approach of children, youngsters and of those who are professionally engaged in this process.

Luc is preparing for leaving. And then it is not too difficult to interpret his question “*What in the end keeps everything together?*” as: “*What will happen when I am not there anymore?*” He may feel worried about what is coming. How do we prevent that falls apart what is dear to us?

Is it the strong inspirational and charismatic leader who weaves the web of shared interests and values? The ties that make us feel secure, attached to each other, and that offer a sense of belonging?

Let us explore this a bit further.

Maybe, holding together means creating a safe and secure environment, where you can freely move and still feel protected.

The earliest embracement of the newborn child by its mother is the basis for lifetime attachment, stability and ultimately the stepping stone for self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is probably the most important predictor for successful development, learning and professional career. Self-efficacy is the basis for independent thinking, emancipation, autonomy and happiness. Self-efficacy is this deeply engrained sense of “*Yes, I probably can do this!*”. Maybe, this is one of the reasons why, according to the UNICEF research (2013), the Dutch children are among the happiest in the world.

Such basic foundation is probably more important in someone’s future life than IQ and formal grades, diploma’s and degrees. It can develop and be nurtured by creating a safe environment, offering abundant freedom for exploring autonomy and experimenting with new and uncommon experiences. It is the basis for becoming competent, capable, diligent and proficient. It will happen, not on the basis of obedience and power, but out of sheer joy.

And then comes the difficult part. We promote freedom, autonomy and independence; and we accept the creative turmoil that will inevitably be a result of these qualities. Let’s say we accept these acts of freedom as long as they are not too unconventional. And at the same time, we hope for strong connections of relatedness, shared values and the well-tuned tone of the music that creates this fulfilling sense of togetherness and belonging.

Nevertheless, this potential danger of bumping principles - granting autonomy at the one side and hoping for relatedness at the other - is a never-ending fear for parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, managers, leaders, as well as for dear friends and beloved partners. It is the attractive, but also chilling risk of letting go.

On the very day that Luc Stevens steps back from NIVOZ - NIVOZ that is so dear to him and to all of us - he confronts us with the question “*What in the end keeps everything together?*”.

As an academic he probably invites us to continue his pedagogical quest for joy in learning, school and research. From that perspective we could translate his question into: *What in the end keeps autonomy and relatedness together?*

However, as the founding father of NIVOZ, he might also be confronted with the challenging but chilling risk of letting go. Today, his intriguing invitation to reflect on “*What in the end keeps everything together?*” could also be interpreted as:

“Listen, what we have achieved over the last 15 years: *Do not let it fall apart! Because you are so beautiful*”.

Joseph Kessels is professor emeritus of Human Resource Development of the University of Twente.





The Painter by Marlene Dumas

‘The longing for, the desire for connectedness, for unity and harmony or love and compassion’

Luc Stevens

6 March 2018

As a piece of art that has a particular meaning for me I have chosen Marlene Dumas' *The Painter*. Marlene Dumas is a South African born Dutch painter who is well known for her psychological portraits. Here she paints her daughter, Helena.

The painter shows a child in its very subject-ness, vulnerable and open, integer and confident. Her facial expression seems difficult to read, but she has a lot to tell probably. She represents a strong pedagogical appeal anyhow.

At the same time *the painter* brings us to the complexity of the pedagogical task. Not only because of the question how to respond open and sensitive to the appearance of the child but also because of the fact that it is the mother who has painted her and has painted her this way.

In the psychological portraits of Marlene Dumas the distinction between *representation* and *interpretation* is removed, in this case the distinction between the artist and the model, the mother and her child. This painting is generally considered as autobiographic, the child mirrors the mother.

This is for sure one of the complexities of bringing up or educating children: they mirror you, they mirror how you are, you find yourself again (you are subjected to their appreciation).

Here we meet one of the key challenges of the teaching profession: engagement that offers a child the experience of being safe and confident, but together with the experience of freedom, a personal space that is respected. The children are not your children (Kahlil Gibran).

What keeps all things together at the end?

I would suggest: The longing for, the desire for connectedness, for unity and harmony or love and compassion.

Summarizing my arguments.

One of my main arguments is derived from the New or Quantum Physics. One of its respected representatives, Hans-Peter Dürr, student of Werner

Heisenberg, is still active. I quote from one of his beautiful essay's:

Jedes Atom ist mit jedem Atom in diesem Universum verbunden. Alles kann mit allem kommunizieren. Das hat weitreichende, geradezu phantastische Konsequenzen. Das heisst für uns Menschen, die wir in diesem ganzen aufgehoben sind, dass wir zwar unterschiedlich und unterscheidbar, nicht aber getrennt sind. Wir befinden uns alle sozusagen in dieser Gemeinsamkeit, die wesentliche Voraussetzung dafür ist, dass wir überhaupt mit einander kommunizieren können. Es gibt nur wenige Wörter in unserer Sprache, die diese Verbundenheit zum Ausdruck bringen können. Für mich sind diese Liebe, Geist, Leben. Die Verben sind hierfür noch weit besser geeignet: leben, lieben, fühlen, wirken, sein. Was wir in jedem Falle sagen können ist, dass hinter allem eine Verbundenheit steht, die eine Offenheit aufweist und damit ungeahnte Möglichkeiten der Entwicklung bietet.

Dürr (2012). Teilhaben an einer unteilbaren Welt. In G. Hüther & C. Spannbauer (Hrsg.) Connectedness. Bern: Hans Huber.

Ecological thinking, so we could say, led by the criterion of responsiveness, because reality is not a set of 'elements', but the interaction between the 'elements'. The quality of the interactions or the quality of responsiveness of the 'elements' among each other determines if an organism is healthy or not. Randomness and uncertainty have a place here.

In this model knowledge is not 'the objective truth' or 'best way', nor a construct, but refers to effective action in response to the environment (Wielinga (2001). *Netwerken als levend weefsel*. 's Hertogenbosch: Uilenreef).

In terms of the neurobiologist Francesco Varela: *cognition as embodied understanding or cognition as enaction* (Varela, F., Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. *The Embodied Mind*. Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press). From Varela I got the notion of the primacy of acting instead of the Cartesian notion of the primacy of knowledge. And acting is always situated, so value laden.

In this context the first challenge of a teacher will be to connect herself with her students, to keep this connection intact by avoiding prejudices, cynicism

and fear (Otto Scharmer), to accept her children as they are, so with compassion, to stay open to them and try to understand them. This asks for a high quality of consciousness, not distracted by the randomness and uncertainties of daily school life. Stable orientations of certainties are offered to the teacher by her moral or pedagogical compass and the openness of her students (the effect of a high quality interaction), feeding her with what she needs to know to attune her teaching to the cognitive-motivational status of her students and their educational needs.

While teachers receive their student at the first school day the only thing they can say to them is: *I don't know what we will achieve in what time along what way, but we will do it together and work hard.*

Luc Stevens is founding father of stichting NIVOZ and emeritus professor at Utrecht University.





Stokje overgedragen

Het NIVOZ-stokje als wetenschappelijk directeur droeg Luc Stevens aan het einde van het symposium symbolisch over aan Rob Martens. Martens (53) is tevens hoogleraar bij het Welten-instituut van de Open Universiteit. Zijn specialismen zijn onderwijsvernieuwing, motivatieprocessen en docentprofessionalisering. Martens is ooit begonnen als onderwijspsycholoog aan de Radboud Universiteit en is ook werkzaam geweest bij de Universiteit Leiden.

De vorm van een wilgentak was niet toevallig gekozen. ‘Het heeft krommingen, is niet-lineair maar is in een weerbarstige omgeving ontwikkeld, zoals je ziet. Het is ook niet de bedoeling dat je erop leunt, maar dat je het goed verzorgt.’

Foto's Ted van Aanholt

OVER NIVOZ

In de praktijk van onderwijs en opvoeding is er een groeiende behoefte aan pedagogisch denken, pedagogische reflectie en betekenisvolle pedagogische theorie. Stichting NIVOZ – dat een ANBI-status (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling) bezit en dus zonder winstoogmerk opereert – is op dit moment een van de belangrijke plaatsen waar in deze behoefte wordt voorzien.

NIVOZ sterkt leraren en schoolleiders in de uitvoering van hun pedagogische opdracht. Ze opereert vanuit vier pijlers:

- **NIVOZ-denktank:** wetenschappelijke bronnen worden verzameld en onderzocht op hun bruikbaarheid voor het onderbouwen van de pedagogische praktijk van leraren
- **NIVOZ-opleidingen:** persoonlijke ontwikkelingstrajecten (individueel of schoolbreed) waarin we leraren en schoolleiders (PO, VO, MBO, HBO) sterken in relatie tot hun pedagogische handelen.
- **NIVOZ-podium:** publieke bijeenkomsten (in en buiten Driebergen) waarin sprekers inspiratie, kennis en onderbouwing bieden op het gebied van goed onderwijs.
- **NIVOZ-platform hetkind:** digitale plek waar verhalen en artikelen worden gepubliceerd, theorie en praktijk van handelen komen hier samen.



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