

Nature or nurture?

How do we prepare library staff for head, hart and hands tasks?

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Abstract:

Between 1975 and 1987 the Netherlands library system was characterized by a large grow of public libraries and membership. A great number of children became member because of the fact that finally library membership was free of charge. Each municipality was forced by the law to open and support a public library. In those days LIS education was organized by a few Library and Documentation Academies where they taught librarianship for public libraries, school libraries, children libraries and libraries for other kind of institutions.

It was a HBO education (Higher Professional Education), university studies did not exist. At the end of the 90's the LIS education changed as almost all HBO education types needed to change, merge into larger institutes and more general education. The Public library area got lost more and more while the focus was more and more on information technology.

At the same time the library organization in the Netherlands changed. The differentiation in tasks between librarians and administrative employees was formalized in front and back office duties. The administrative employees whom lacked a LIS education were more or less pushed into taking care of readers advisor jobs and similar activities. The back office team took care of developing programs that front office needed to perform.

In this transition time several new forms of training staff were developed.

The ins and outs of those classes, training programs will be presented in this paper.

Keywords:

In the Netherlands several years ago the LIS education was changed, more and more into information searching instead of working for and in public libraries, leave alone, working as a children's librarian. That target group LIS education stopped even longer ago.

The large group of librarians that will retire in a few years, still have that old education and knowledge about children's literature.

The structure of how public libraries were organized was also changed, due to demands of the

national government. Libraries were merged into bigger co-operations and so the tasks of librarians were also changing. It was decided to have two levels, MBO (Middle Professional Education) and HBO (Higher Professional Education). At that time MBO staff members were in fact staff members without LIS education and their tasks were mainly administrative by nature. MBO is now the level of people really working with the children while HBO is the level that's working with the teachers, the parents, policy level, and making the programmes for the MBO workers to perform with the children.

In 2008 the minister of Education, Science and Culture published a pamphlet called: "The art of reading" in which he stated that reading skills were not up to his standard which was confirmed by some international reports like PIRSL and PISA. He assigned the National Reading Foundation and National Sector Institute Public Libraries to work on a model that improve the results regarding reading skills for primary school children. Primary schools in the Netherlands do not have a school library leave alone a professional librarian. It usually is no more than a collection of both fiction and non-fiction literature but out of date and not very attractive.

Four projects were started:

1. Bookstart (including Bookstart in day care centres)
2. Library at school
3. Literary canon
4. Networks

Bookstart and Library at school were developed and tested together with experts from the public library sector. Every province in the Netherlands has a support organization, a so called PSO. Via those PSO's the pilots and try-outs were executed. The results were implemented after 4 years.

Each one was characterized by:

1. Focus on a qualified collection in day-care centre and in school
2. Providing a child proof, attractive reading space in the institution
3. Training of the professionals from the institutions
4. Training of public library staff
5. Participate afterwards in a reading network
6. Increase the commitment from parents and children with the public library

With the help of subsidies the different models, materials and courses were tested and since 2012 the concepts Bookstart and Library at school are implemented via the PSO's in the public library sector, schools and day-care centres for very young children.

By organizing the Train the Trainer classes and work down via a cascade model a large group of MBO staff was trained. Focus on this particular group was necessary because they did not have the specific skills, background and often not the interest in children or children's literature that was needed.

www.boekstart.nl

www.debibliotheekopschool.nl

Both websites show information for professionals (divided in school and library) and municipalities.

Therefore the biggest challenge was on getting the people that had to start as MBO, preparing with skills and knowledge on children's literature, psychology and so on, as a base. A training of several modules was developed for this. But not only focussing on working with children, more general since they were supposed to start as a kind of readers adviser. The majority of them read books for adults but very rare they read children's literature, and how to work with children if you do not read their books and know about their media?

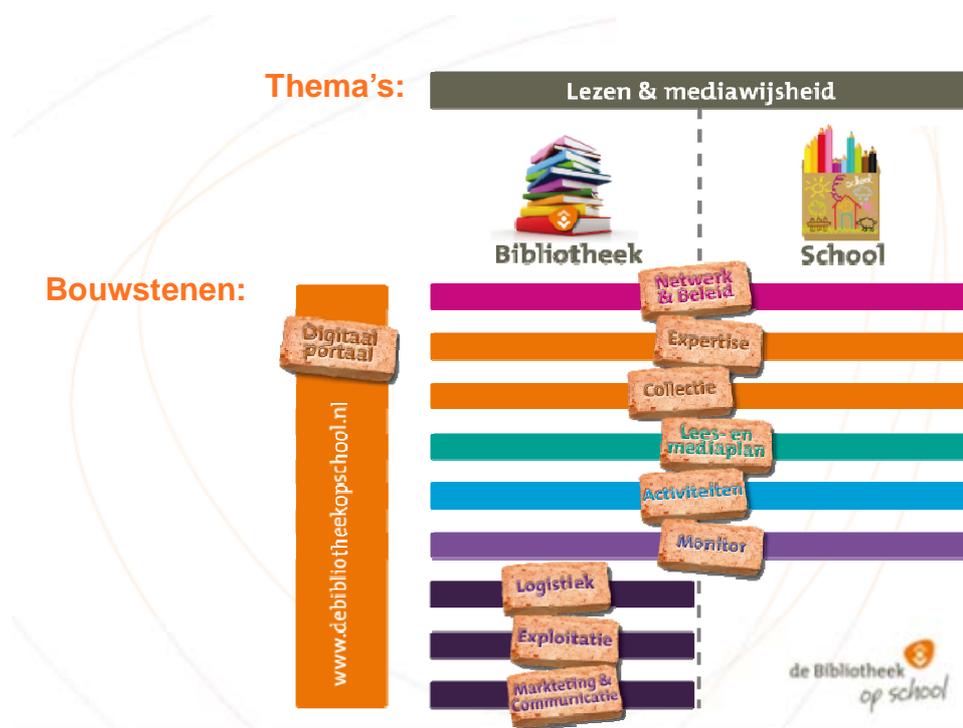
The next change we had to face started when the economy was going down. Since we do not have a library law anymore, municipalities can decide to close the library of they want to. And they did. From 2012 and onwards several branch libraries have been closed. As an answer to that a new kind of module is developed, library at school. Was the focus originally on improving the reading skills and

reading pleasure from children, it was now also used as a new kind of public library services located in a primary school. It is not a school library but a specific kind of public library situated in a school. In this specific model public library and primary school are working together. Both a teacher and an employee of the public library are trained before starting to work in this model. The reading consultant (member of public library staff) is working 4 hours a week at the school in order to support the teachers, see what kind of themes are being presented the following weeks, to have to books needed at school. The reading coordinator is the teacher who coordinates everything regarding reading at school. They work together very closely.

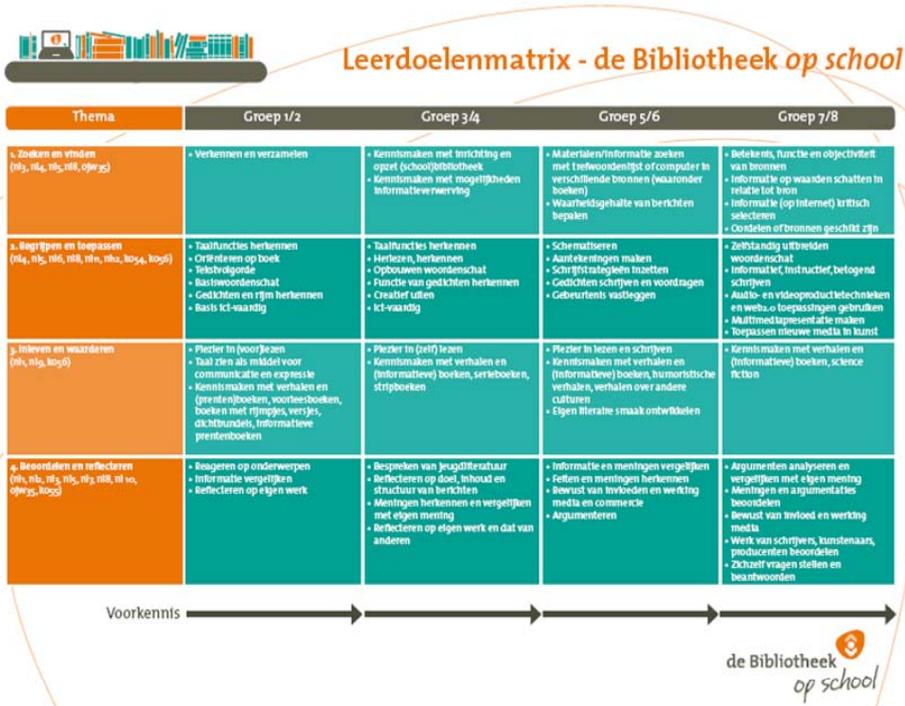
Library and school are connected by the same PAC and children have just one library card they can use at school but also in branches still available.

A national system has been developed to measure also the outcomes of the activities regarding reading promotion so the impact of what school and library are doing together a is shown by numbers.

The majority of Dutch public libraries are working now on getting this model started all over the country. In my province the provincial, government donated a lot of money the organize this change. A large part of that is needed for staff training.



The most important connexion between school and library is on having and recognizing that both are working on the same targets. All school must work and reach the same targets, not only are the described as a result on the end of primary school but also as a result of every year group. When the public library can make the connexion on those targets and how to assist the school on working on those targets an official, contracted working together can be realized.



On a national level several Train the Trainer programs were developed. Those trainers (at least one per province) needed to train library staff in their own province. They trained both librarians as well as primary school teachers and volunteers. The national program on training library staff show the following subjects.

Training	level	Working field
Specialist childrens library	MBO	Front office
Reading advisor	MBO	Primary school
Mediaskills	MBO+HBO	Primary school
Monitor ins and outs	MBO	Primary school
Education specialist	HBO	Back office
Childrens literature + reading promotion	HBO	Front office
TdT Open Book	HBO	Back office
TdT Monitor	HBP	Back office
TdT parents + schoollibrary	HBO	Back office
Open Book	Teachers primary schools	Back office
Parents+schoollibrary	Parents primary school	Reading advisor

Specialist children's library:

In this training (20 days) the focus is on children's literature, experiences in the children's department, programs on reading promotion. It is meant to be as a foundation before the training Reading advisor. When finishing those studies a reading advisors works 4 hours per week in a school.

Reading advisor:

Works closely with the Reading Coordinator from a primary school. Do the planning together, take care of the yearly Monitor, takes care of extra collection for projects.

Media skills:

Media skills is not only on how to use the hardware (how to handle a mouse or how to swipe) but also on how to check the relevance of the information and define your opinion on the information. The majority of Dutch primary school teachers lack skill in information science so they need the assistance and skills of the public library to teach both children as teachers.

Monitor;

On a yearly base schools are asked to fill a digital inquiry. Some (5) questions for the teachers and 30 for the children. The results give inside information on classroom level, reading appreciation, school results, numbers of books read etc.

Every province has 2 trainers in order to train the Reading Advisor and Education Specialist on this topic.

Education Specialist:

Contact on policy level with director of school, board of a school. Discuss and present the results of the yearly Monitor.

Children's literature and Reading Promotion

As most of the general staff in a public library are not familiar with reading children's literature their knowledge on this topic needs to be strengthened.

Open Book;

Training for Reading coordinators. Focus on school library, its collection, program of projects.

Parents + school library;

Training for parents as a volunteer in the school library. Background information on school system, ins and outs of the library system.

In Gelderland, the province where I am working, we were dealing with closing branch libraries as well. Luckily the provincial government donated a large sum of money to speed up the evolution from public library to Library in School.

What still was missing in the training program were trainings on media skills and pedagogic skills. Regarding the other media, the connection between literacy and information literacy or media wisdom is more and more visible, as we call it. Within a reading/media programme, based on the goals of the primary schools the library connects with the goals from the curriculum of the schools. All these are put down in schedules and form the input to start discuss with the schools in order the get the change moving.

The demand on changing the way public libraries work in the Netherlands is on a cross road. Within a few years a large group of old school, elderly librarians will be leaving the libraries and retire or they and up unemployed because of the severe budget cuts and closing of libraries.

The need and urge to change this landscape makes training of staff a first priority.

Telling schools they need public libraries because of staff skills on children's literature, media wisdom and so on, is one thing but actually showing that importance in order to continue the co-operation contract wise is something else. We are happy that we could conclude last march on a symposium that school teachers really value the expertise of library staff so they will continue their contract in this changing landscape.

We all hope that this change can be completed before it is too late.