

DESCRIBING THE DUTCH LITERATURE
CURRICULUM:
A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL APPROACH

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Abstract. In this paper we present a framework for describing variations of ‘literature’ as part of the language curriculum in secondary education. Point of departure are four general goals of literature teaching; ‘cultural literacy’, ‘aesthetic awareness’, ‘social awareness’ and ‘personal development’. Each goal can be defined both in terms of specific content and in terms of teaching method and learning activities. The framework was developed and tested in an empirical study of the actual literature curriculum, in which various methods of data collection were used (questionnaires, interviews and observations). It proved to be sensitive enough to uncover differences between literature curricula. Although the framework was designed for the Dutch educational context, it may help to create a framework to be applied in other contexts as well.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Dutch context: continuity and change

In the last forty years, from 1965 until 2005, the position of literature education in secondary schools has changed dramatically. At the same time, there are continuities that might indicate particular Dutch preferences. We simply list some of the continuities and major changes as we perceived them.

Continuities

- 1) *No connection.* The language and literature curriculum are unconnected, although they are taught by one and the same teacher. The separation is indicated by separate textbooks and separate schedules². Several attempts have been made to connect the two curricula, for example via integrative students' text books, but to no avail. The two curricula remain largely independent from each other.
- 2) *No canon.* In the literature curriculum, the focus is on reading and interpreting literary texts. The selection of readings is not bound by an explicit canon. Teachers are free to choose the reading material, and they set the parameters for free choice by students. Teachers/school departments may provide lists for students, but these lists are not restrictive; they are meant to help students to choose. From contacts with researchers from other countries, we learnt that texts chosen by the teacher to read in class or recommended to individual students, is considered to be 'dangerous' (see Ten Brinke, 1976). Confronting students with 'dangerous', shocking, radical texts is not common practice, but it happens frequently, and is legitimate.

Changes

- 1) *Aims.* Conceptions changed about how learners should interact with literary texts, what role literary texts play in society, and what learners need to know to become good, independent readers of literature. These conceptions changed over time, related to changes in the academic literary studies. Remarkably, the different conceptions have resulted in an additive curriculum, where various conceptions are included, but mostly...unconnected. We moved from a focus on 'Work, author and literary history' in 1950-60, to 'Work as immanent text' (1970s) to 'Work as reflection of society' (late 1970s) to 'Work as constructed by the reader' (1980s). Nowadays, the four parameters of a literary work (author, reader, text and context) are all represented in the list of national key aims.
- 2) *Texts.* The range of texts has been broadened. In the lower secondary grades, more emphasis is on the promotion of reading fiction, and therefore on youth

² *In fact, the language curriculum itself is a conglomerate of sub curricula. Four sub domains of key aims are formulated (in this order): reading, writing, oral skills and argumentative skills. Until recently, these skills were taught with incidental connections. Now textbook producers try to make connections along various paths, i.e. via language functions.*

literature or adolescent fiction. In upper secondary education, the focus is more than in earlier days on contemporary literature; fewer historical texts are read and/or discussed in class. It is now admissible to read for the list literary works that are translated into Dutch, although the official documents require 'works originally written in Dutch'. At some schools, departments of Dutch promote, sometimes in co-operation with the department in modern languages, European Literature.

At the same time, the number of texts to be read has been reduced over time. Around 1970, students in pre-academic education were required to read 20 or more texts independently (novels, collections of short short stories or poems, et cetera); now, the number is reduced to 12 (minimum, including 3 works from before 1880, a landmark period in the Dutch literary history).

A last phenomenon to include in this panoramic view, is teacher education. Before 1988, Dutch teacher education for upper secondary education consisted of six years academic study, including an optional three months teacher preparation, with some practical work in the classroom, guided by a secondary school teacher. In these six years of academic training, the basics were all kinds of linguistics and literature, with an increasing study load on Speech & Communication, or Argumentation & Rhetoric's. Nowadays, the academic study (Master) consists of four years, and for teachers, an additional year, focused on practical training and pedagogy. As a result of new tracking systems in Academia there are young teachers of Dutch, who have had one or two courses in linguistics, and one or two in literature.

1.2 Zooming in: the literature debate (1965-2005)

In the debate about the position of literature as a school subject in the Netherlands, different goals of literature teaching can be discerned. These goals may be summarized under four headings: 'cultural literacy', 'aesthetic awareness', 'social awareness' and 'personal development'.

Advocates of the first objective consider the promotion of *cultural literacy* as the main goal of literature teaching. According to this view, students should foremost be acquainted with Dutch literary history and the national cultural heritage, represented by a range of important authors and their works ('the classics').

Advocates of the second objective, *aesthetic awareness*, stress the importance of text studies. Knowledge and skills in analyzing and interpreting literary texts are crucial, because they are seen as prerequisites for making well-founded judgments about the aesthetical value of a literary work: "Students cannot make judgments, when they do not know how to analyze a literary text", according to one of the teachers we interviewed in our study.

Those who adhere to the *social awareness* objective take a different scope that goes beyond the literary text itself. Literary texts reflect and comment upon contemporary or historical society. A literary text cannot be understood without some knowledge of the social context in which it has been written. Therefore,

students must get insight into important social issues (e.g., feminism, racism, multicultural issues), and they must learn to approach literary texts critically.

Finally, advocates of *personal development* as the main aim of literature teaching tend to focus on individual student-readers and their personal responses and experiences. Reading and discussing literature are primarily seen as a means to further the personal, emotional growth of the individual student. In particular, students should develop their own literary taste. A precondition is that students experience pleasure in reading.

It has often been said that beliefs about literature teaching have changed considerably over the past few decades (Van de Ven, 1996; Van Schooten, 2005; Verboord, 2005). The development is usually described as a transition from a teacher-centered, 'cultural heritage' approach to more student-centered, social-critical or reader-oriented approaches. Since the 1980s, reader response theories have gained ground, culminating in approaches that are less directed towards teaching the literary canon and more towards stimulating students' personal growth as readers. The transition is not uniquely Dutch or even European, but appears to be an international trend in (the thinking about) literary education (e.g., Applebee, Burroughs & Stevens, 2000; Poyas, 2004).

However, this development has not been as straightforward as often suggested. First, literary history and the literary canon have not disappeared altogether to be replaced by more student-centered approaches. On the contrary, in discussions about the position of literature as a school subject, 'cultural literacy' still plays a prominent role, and the discussion about the canon seems revived.³ In recent proposals for Dutch literature exams three domains for evaluation are proposed; literary development (e.g., being able to report personal reading experiences), literary theory (being able to use literary-theoretical terms for analysing and interpreting literary texts), and literary history (being able to present an overview of Dutch literary history) (SLO, 2006). In this proposal, we recognize the "additive curriculum", in which three different conceptions of literature teaching are placed next to each other. Literary history and text analysis have not been superseded by reader-oriented approaches to literature teaching; instead, reader-oriented approaches have simply been added to the curriculum.

Secondly, the supposed transition from cultural literacy to reader-oriented approaches pertains to the 'perceived' curriculum; that is, to the conceptions, beliefs and belief systems in the (re)thinking of literature teaching. Changes in the perceived curriculum not necessarily imply changes in the 'actual' curriculum, that is; what teachers actually do in the classroom. Several case studies have shown that Dutch teachers do not always act in accordance to their own general aims (De Moor & Thijssen, 1988; Van der Leeuw & Bonset, 1990). For instance, reform-minded teachers may adhere to student-centered aims, but in practice use teaching methods that are incompatible with these aims, such as; lecturing most of the time, asking 'factual' questions instead of eliciting personal responses, focusing on knowledge

³ In 2005, a committee was installed by the Dutch government in order to consult teachers and schools on what could be considered "the canon" for Dutch culture, history and literature.

reproduction instead of knowledge transformation. In other words, there appears to be a tension between general goals and teaching practice. General goals may mask great diversity at the level of classroom practice.

In the debate, little attention has been given to the level of classroom practice as yet. Empirical studies of literature practices in Dutch secondary schools are scarce. Therefore, we decided to conduct an empirical study among teachers of Dutch language and literature in the final grades of secondary education (Janssen & Rijlaarsdam, 1996; Janssen, 1998). The main aim of the study was to clarify the relationship between teachers' general aims on the one hand, and the form and contents of their literature teaching on the other hand. Our main research question was: Do different aims go together with different forms of literature teaching? In order to be able to answer this question, we needed to develop a descriptive framework that might capture variations in the literature curriculum.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

A survey was held among 1165 teachers of Dutch language and literature of about 300 secondary schools. The sample encompassed 60% of the total population of teachers of Dutch in the final grades of two types of secondary education: higher general secondary education (havo) or pre-academic education (vwo). The teachers were sent a questionnaire, asking about their general goals and about the contents and form of their literature teaching.

The response rate was acceptable; 51% of the teachers returned the questionnaire (593 teachers of 279 schools). A nonresponse-study showed that the non-responding teachers did not differ significantly from the responding group with respect to various background and teaching variables. We may therefore assume that the respondents are fairly representative of all teachers of Dutch language and literature.

2.2 Descriptive framework

In order to develop a questionnaire, we devised a framework for describing possible variations within the literature curriculum. The backbone was formed by the four main goals of literature teaching; 'cultural literacy', 'aesthetic awareness', 'social awareness' and 'personal development'. These goals were briefly explained as follows;

<i>Cultural literacy:</i>	to acquaint students with the cultural heritage, with valuable products of Dutch literary culture;
<i>Aesthetic awareness:</i>	to give insight into (the structure or composition of) literary texts;
<i>Social awareness:</i>	to give insight into social reality and to learn to approach this reality critically;
<i>Personal development:</i>	to help students to get to know themselves better and to attain emotional growth.

Next, we drew up a list of variables or dimensions on which we expected variations between teachers adhering to different general aims. The dimensions pertained to the contents as well as to the form or methods of literature teaching. We also added personal background variables of the teachers themselves (e.g., age, gender, experience) to the framework. In scheme 1, the descriptive framework is presented.

Scheme 1. Framework for describing differences between literature curricula

Variables	Main goal of literature teaching			
	Cultural literacy	Aesthetic awareness	Social awareness	Personal development
CONTENT				
Subject matter				
Literary history				
Literary theory				
Literary texts				
Age of texts				
Genre of texts				
Literary canon				
Ordering				
Text approach				
METHOD				
Learning activities				
Use of textbook(s)				
Evaluation				
Method of evaluation				
Criteria of evaluation				
PERSONAL				
Age				
Gender				
Experience				
Knowledgeable-ness				

2.3 Questionnaire

Each variable in the framework was incicated by one or more questions in the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, we first presented the four general aims, asking the teachers to rank order these four aims from most relevant to least relevant to their own daily practice. Next, some 60 questions followed with regards to the content and method of literature teaching (subject matter, literary texts, learning activities, use of textbooks, et cetera). Finally, questions about the personal background of the teacher were asked.

Most questions were in a multiple choice format (e.g., using a five-point scale; 1 = no attention at all, to 5 = very much attention). Other questions could be answered by giving an estimate (e.g., of the percentage of time spend on a particular topic).

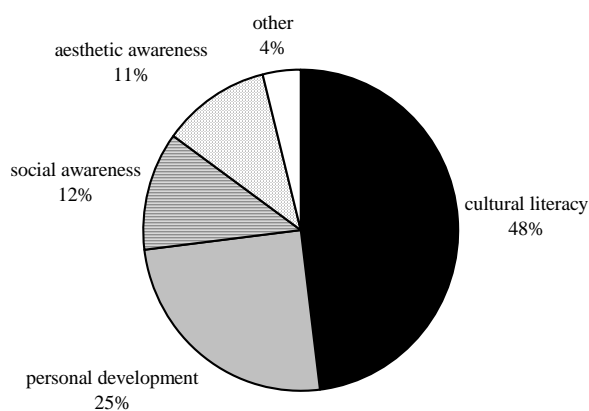
The questions were retrospective in nature, that is; the teachers were asked to report on their literature teaching during the previous school-year, in one of the final grades of secondary education (grades 10 to 12, student ages between 15 and 19). In the Appendix some examples of questions are given.

2.4 Analysis

In our analysis, the reported features of the curriculum were the independent variables, and the main aim of the teacher was the dependent variable.

As a first step in the analysis, the responding teachers were divided into four groups, depending on their main aim of teaching literature; supporters of 'cultural literacy', 'aesthetic awareness', 'social awareness' and 'personal development'. Being a supporter meant that the teacher considered the particular aim the most relevant to his/her own practice. Figure 1 shows the division of all teachers over the four general aims.

Figure 1. Distribution of aims of literature teaching, in percentages of teachers prioritizing the aim (n = 593).



About half of the teachers (48%) reported that contributing to students' cultural literacy was the main aim of their literature teaching. About 25 per cent of the teachers said that they primarily intended to stimulate students' personal development as readers. Promoting the aesthetic or social awareness of students were less popular goals; 11 and 12% respectively reported to primarily support these goals in their literature lessons.

Very few teachers (4%) could not be labelled as supporters of one of the four aims, for instance because they failed to respond to the question or because they

found multiple goals equally important. In the further analysis this group has been left out of consideration.

As a second step in the analysis, we examined whether the four groups of teachers differed in self reported characteristics of their literature curriculum. To evaluate the differences between the groups, various statistical tests were used. Pearson chi-squares were used for all variables that were measured on a nominal level; analyses of variances for all variables measured on at least interval level. The significance level was set at .05. To decide *which* of the groups significantly differed when tested via analyses of variance, we used the Scheffé-method for post-hoc comparisons.

Finally, we calculated the effect-size (ES; Cohen, 1988). Effect-size was used as a means to evaluate the practical meaning of the differences between groups. An effect-size of at least .80 standard deviation is considered to be a large effect; effect-sizes between .50 and .80 are considered to be medium effects, whereas an effect-size equal to or below .50 is considered to be a small effect (Cohen, 1988).

3 RESULTS

In this section we present the main differences we found between the literature programs of the four groups of teachers; supporters of ‘cultural literacy’, ‘aesthetic awareness’, ‘social awareness’ and ‘personal development’.

Group differences are indicated with a plus sign (+) or minus sign (-). A plus sign (+) means means that the particular group was found to devote significantly *more* time or attention to the topic or activity than any of the other groups of teachers. A minus sign (-) means that the group devoted significantly *less* time or attention to the topic or activity than any of the other groups. A blank cell indicates that no significant difference was observed.

3.1 Subject matter

In the questionnaire we asked the teachers how much time they devoted to literary history and theory (in terms of the proportion of time spent on literature as a whole), and how much attention they paid to various historical and theoretical topics. In Table 1, differences in subject matter between the four groups of teachers are presented.

The table shows that supporters of cultural literacy spent significantly more time on literary history than any of the other groups of teachers. Compared to supporters of personal development, cultural literacy teachers also paid significantly more attention to historical literary movements (e.g., romanticism, realism, naturalism). Other forms of art than literature, such as visual arts and music, received significantly less attention from supporters of social awareness, compared to other teachers.

Table 1. Differences in subject matter between the four groups of literature teachers

Subject matter	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
literary history	+	-	-	-
literary movements	+			-
other arts	+	+	-	+
student perceptions	-	-	+	+
literary theory	-	+	-	-
poetics / stylistics	+			-
narrative structure	-	+	-	-
reader response	-	-	+	+

Students' own perceptions and experiences more often played a role in the literary history lessons of supporters of social awareness and personal development than in the lessons of other teachers. In terms of effect-size, these differences are medium sized (ES .50 - .80).

In the estimated time spent on literary theory, the supporters of aesthetic awareness stand out as a group. On average, these teachers spent significantly more time on literary theory in the literature classroom than any other group. The difference is large (ES > .80).

We found clear differences in theoretical 'stance' between the various groups of teachers. Cultural literacy teachers tended to focus more on poetics or stylistics; aesthetic awareness teachers more on narrative structure and analysis, whereas supporters of social awareness and personal development tended to focus more on reader-oriented concepts and theories. These differences are small or medium sized.

3.2 *Literary texts*

Table 2 shows the differences in the selection of readings, that is, the types of literary texts being read and discussed in the classroom.

Table 2. Differences in literary texts

Text genres	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
poetry	+	-	-	-
prose	-	+	+	+
historical texts	+	-		-
contemporary texts	-	+		+
literary canon	+			-
adolescent fiction	-		+	+

As shown table 2, supporters of different aims also differed in their selection of readings. Cultural literacy teachers discussed significantly more poetry, more historical texts, and more works belonging to the literary canon than the other groups of teachers. Personal development teachers, on the other hand, tended to discuss more prose, more contemporary literature, and more adolescent fiction in the classroom than other teachers. The differences are medium to small.

In discussing literary texts in the classroom, teachers may focus on various aspects of the texts, such as the literary context, formal aspects of the text (style, composition) or reader responses. We asked the teachers how much attention they paid to various aspects when discussing narrative texts (Table 3).

Table 3. Differences in approaches to narrative texts

Approach focused on	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
literary context	+	-	-	-
formal aspects of text	-	+	-	-
non-literary context	-	-	+	-
reader responses	-	-	+	+

Table 3 shows that cultural literary teachers paid more attention to the literary context of a text, aesthetic awareness teachers focused more often on the formal aspects of a text, social awareness teachers paid more attention to the social, non-literary context, and personal development teachers (together with the social awareness group) more often focused on reader responses to the texts being read in the classroom. These differences are medium to large.

Furthermore, we asked teachers how they generally ordered or grouped the literary texts that were discussed in the classroom (Table 4).

Cultural literacy and social awareness teachers more often used a chronological ordering (e.g., starting in the Middle Ages and working from there to the present day), whereas aesthetic awareness and personal development teachers more often preferred a grouping according to theme (e.g., ‘Love’, ‘War’). These differences are small or medium-sized.

Table 4. Differences in the ordering or grouping of texts

Text order	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
chronological	+	-	+	-
according to theme	-	+	-	+

3.3 Learning activities

We asked the teachers for an estimate of the lesson time spent by students on various learning activities, such as listening to lectures and peer discussion. Differences in student activities between the four groups of teachers are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Differences in students' learning activities

Learning activities	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
listening (to lecture)	+	-	-	-
whole-class discussion	-	+		-
peer discussion	-		+	+

In the literature lessons of cultural literacy teachers, students spent significantly more time listening to the teachers' lectures, than in the lessons of other teachers. The differences are medium to small. Social awareness and personal development teachers, on the other hand, tended to leave more room for peer discussions than cultural literacy teachers. The differences are small in terms of effect-size.

3.4 Textbooks

In answer to our question which textbook(s) were used in the classroom, over a 100 different titles of textbooks and other materials were mentioned. We did not find any significant differences between the four groups of teachers with regards to particular textbooks that were used. However, aesthetic awareness and personal development teachers more often indicated that they did teach without any textbook. These teachers often preferred to compile their own teaching material, compared to cultural literacy and social awareness teachers. These differences are small.

3.5 Evaluation and testing

We asked the teachers how they evaluated students' achievements in literature; what kinds of tests they used (Table 6).

Table 6. Differences in methods of evaluation

Methods of evaluation	Main goal			
	cultural	Aesthetic	social	personal
written book report	-	+	-	-
paper	-	+	-	+
creative writing	-	+	-	+

Many different tests were used to evaluate students' achievements in literature, such as written knowledge tests, literary texts followed by questions, written book reports, and individual oral tests. However, only in the use of writing assignments significant differences were found between the four groups of teachers. Aesthetic awareness and personal development teachers more often used writing assignments as a means to evaluate the results of their literature lessons than other teachers. Aesthetic awareness teachers more often used book reports than any other group. The effect-sizes are small.

In addition, we asked the teachers how important they considered various criteria in evaluating students' achievements in literature (see Table 7).

Table 7. Differences in criteria of evaluation

Criteria of evaluation	Main goal			
	cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
Knowledge of				
historical movements	+	-	-	-
poetics / stylistics	+		-	-
analytical terms	-	+	-	-
social context			+	-
Skills in				
literary analysis	-	+	-	-
formulating response	-		+	+
evaluating texts	-			+

As shown in Table 7, cultural literacy teachers considered 'knowledge of literary-historical movements' and 'knowledge of concepts and terms from poetics and stylistics' to be more important than other groups of teachers. Aesthetic awareness teachers considered 'knowledge and skills in structural analysis' more important than any other group of teachers. These differences are large. Social awareness teachers found 'knowledge of the social context of literature' more important than personal development teachers. The latter group focused more on the acquisition of skills, such as 'the ability to formulate ones own personal response to literature' and 'the ability to evaluate literary texts', than cultural literacy teachers. These differences are small or medium-sized.

3.6 Personal background

Finally, we examined whether the four groups of teachers differed in personal background variables, such as age, gender, years of experience as a teacher and the extent to which they were 'knowledgeable' or well-informed about recent trends in (teaching) literature. No significant differences in background variables were found between supporters of different aims of literature teaching.

4 VALIDITY OF FINDINGS

In addition to the survey, we conducted interviews with three representatives of each of the four groups about their aims, the contents and methods of their literature teaching practices (Janssen, 1998). These twelve interviews largely confirmed the differences between the four groups of teachers. Supporters of cultural literacy formed a homogeneous group with regards to the self reported contents and method of their literature teaching. In the classroom these teachers largely followed a ‘knowledge transmission’ model, that is; the teacher transmits his or her knowledge of literary history and ‘the classics’, by lecturing and teaching in front of the class.

Supporters of other aims of literature teaching deviated from this traditional model in several ways; by putting emphasis on the literary text itself and on ways in which students may analyse texts (aesthetic awareness), by emphasizing the social-political backgrounds in discussing literature (social awareness), or by focusing on subjective and affective aspects of the literary reading process (personal development). These teachers also used other teaching methods than lecturing in the literature classroom, such as individual independent seat-work, collaborative work and peer discussions.

From observing literature lessons of four representative teachers (one for each group), we learned that teachers strongly differed in the task demands they posed for students (Janssen, 1996). The cultural literacy teacher, for instance, asked significantly more questions that required students to reproduce knowledge, compared to the other teachers who set more productive, interpretative tasks. The personal development teacher asked significantly more evaluative questions of students compared to the other teachers (Table 8). These findings are in line with the results of our survey.

Table 8. Differences in task demands between four teachers

Task demands	Main goal			
	Cultural	aesthetic	social	personal
Reproductive tasks	+	-	-	-
Productive tasks				
convergent	+	-	+	-
divergent	-	-	+	+
interpretative	-	+	+	+
evaluative	-	-	-	+

5 DISCUSSION

This paper reports a study to describe the variation in the literature curriculum in The Netherlands on several dimensions. It shows that this variation in text choice, theoretical focus, teaching format, student tasks co-varies with the aim teachers support most. The dimensions in the descriptive framework, in other words, are sensitive to reveal relevant distinctive features of practice.

For the Dutch situation, four ‘profiles’ emerged from the empirical data;

Cultural literacy

Teachers within this profile spend more time on teaching literary history than other teachers. Their selection of readings reflects an emphasis on poetry and on historical, canonical texts, which are taught in chronological order. Their teaching methods more often reflect a traditional model of knowledge transmission by lecturing. In evaluating students’ achievements they focus more on the reproduction of knowledge, and less on the demonstration of skills.

Aesthetic awareness

Teachers within this profile spend more time on teaching literary theory, especially narrative theory, than other teachers. Compared to cultural literacy teachers, they more often prefer to discuss contemporary prose, instead of poetry, and to group literary texts according to theme, instead of chronologically. Compared to cultural literacy and social awareness teachers, they provide more writing assignments to students, such as writing book reports. In testing, they focus more often on students’ knowledge and skills in structural analysis, than other teachers.

Social awareness

Supporters of social awareness more often use reader-oriented approaches, adolescent fiction, peer discussion, and productive-divergent tasks than cultural literacy or aesthetic awareness teachers. In discussions of literary texts in the classroom, they tend to emphasize the non-literary, social backgrounds of texts more than other teachers. ‘Knowledge of the social context of literature’ plays a larger role in evaluating students’ achievements within this profile.

Personal development

Supporters of personal development and social awareness share an emphasis on reader response and student-centered approaches to literature instruction. However, personal development teachers are less interested in non-literary, socio-political issues surrounding literature. Also, they are more outspoken in their preference to discuss contemporary, non-canonical literature in the classroom. Compared to other teachers, supporters of personal development attach more importance to students’ ability to evaluate and express their judgments about literary texts.

Remarkably, we found no differences in the choice of textbooks between profiles. Apparently, textbooks do not accurately reflect the literature curriculum.

Nor did we find differences in the teachers’ personal characteristics, such as age, experience and ‘informed-ness’. The often expressed assumption that reform-minded teachers are, for example, younger and less experienced than other teachers, was not confirmed.

We have not been able to capture the Dutch literature curriculum in all its complexity (if this is possible at all). Our framework is almost certainly susceptible to improvements, by refining or adding dimensions. However, the framework in its

present form satisfied the requirement of bringing differences in approaches to literature instruction to light. Some of the observed differences were quite large in terms of Cohen's effect-size. The observed variations are meaningful, on the whole resulting in consistent patterns.

Literature curricula are often defined in terms of 'content' or academic domain (e.g., literary theory, 'new criticism', 'reader response'), or in terms of parameters for the selection of readings (e.g., literary canon). Our framework includes these content dimensions, but also instructional dimensions and learner activities. These dimensions proved to be relevant to detect distinctive features. We think that this set of descriptive dimensions could be useful as a start for describing literature curricula in other European regions; such a study might reveal to what extent variation within regions, such as the four profiles in the Netherlands, are historical-culturally bound. Is the curriculum of the 'personal development' teacher in the Netherlands the same as in other regions? To what extent are features of the Dutch profile typical Dutch interpretations of world wide theoretical movements, such as the reader response movement? To what extent are profiles (or coherent choices) in the literature curriculum national or European?

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APPENDIX EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Aims

What were your main aims in teaching literature during the previous school-year? Please, answer this question by rank ordering the goal statements below, according to their relevance for your literature lessons.

Content

What proportion of the available time for literature did you spend on teaching literary theory (e.g., poetics, stylistics, narrative structure, genre theory) during the previous schoolyear?

Please, answer the question by giving an estimate (in a percentage of the time).

In discussing narrative prose (stories, novels, fragments), how much attention did you generally pay to the following topics?

(0 = no narrative prose was discussed; 1 = no attention at all; 2 = little attention, 3 = neutral, 4 = much attention; 5 = very much attention)

- The contents of the text, or the author's intentions.
- Formal aspects of the text or genre (e.g., style, language, composition).
- Literary context (e.g., author, literary movement, critical reception).
- Non-literary context of the text (e.g., socio-political backgrounds).
- Students' experiences in relation to the text.

How were most of the literary texts discussed in the classroom ordered?

- 1 Most of the texts were ordered chronologically, according to movement and/or author.
- 2 Most of the texts were ordered according to theme.
- 3 Most of the texts were ordered in some other way, namely.....
- 4 Most of the texts were not ordered or grouped in any specific way.

Method

How often did the following student activities occur in your literature lessons?

(1 = never, 3 = incidentally, 5 = regularly)

- answering teachers questions
- peer discussion about a literary text
- independent, individual work
- collaborative work in pairs or small groups

Did you use one or more textbooks for literature during the previous school-year?

- 1 yes
- 2 no (you may skip the following questions)

Which textbook(s) did you use?

Please, state the title(s) as fully as possible.

Which of the following methods of evaluation or testing did you use in your literature curriculum during the previous school-year? (yes/no)

- oral test or individual conversation about the students' reading list
- oral presentation by the student about a literary topic
- written test about subject matter (e.g., literary history)
- literary text(s) followed by questions
- paper
- bookreport
- reading portfolio
- creative writing assignment
- other method(s), namely

Personal background

How long have you worked as a teacher of Dutch language and literature in general or pre-university secondary education? (number of years).

Which of the following journals on literature or literature teaching do you read (regularly, incidentally, never)?