

LITERARY COMPETENCE AND THE LITERATURE CURRICULUM

Two empirical studies to describe the variation in the literature curriculum and the development of literary competence in upper secondary education in the Netherlands

THEO WITTE*, TANJA JANSSEN** & GERT RIJLAARSDAM**

**University of Groningen, the Netherlands & ** University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

NB This draft is linguistically un-edited version of the paper we prepared for the International Colloquium *Mother Tongue Education in a Multicultural World: Case Studies and Networking for Change* (Sinaia – Romania, June 22 to 25, 2006). Please do not quote. Contact G.C.W.Rijlaarsdam@uva.nl

Abstract. This paper presents two studies from one country. We aim to explore the possibilities to extend this research to a comparative study on the literature curriculum in European countries.

The first study focussed on clarifying the concept Literary Competence, based on the pedagogical content knowledge and the praxis of six expert teachers and their students for three years. Six levels of Literary Competence could be distinguished, defined by what students can do with literary texts of a certain complexity. Two components interact when describing levels of competence: (1) complexity of the literary text and (2) level of understanding and interpretation. After establishing the six levels we tested the system by describing the longitudinal development in literary competence of 30 students (age 16-18) from six different schools over their final years of secondary schooling.

In the second study we present a framework for describing variations of 'literature' as part of the language curriculum in secondary education. Point of departure were 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. It proved to be sensitive enough to uncover differences between literature curricula.

CONTENT

Content	2
1 Some Dutch context: continuity and change	3
2 What students can do with literature: General framework of the study.....	4
2.1 Research	6
2.1.1 Design	6
2.1.2 Procedure.....	6
2.2 Results: Six levels of literary competence.....	7
2.2.1 Number of levels of literary competence in upper secondary education 7	
2.2.2 Six Profiles	8
2.3 Results: Courses of development in upper secondary education.....	13
2.3.1 Development from the start of upper secondary (grade 10) to the end (grade 11 or 12): Analyses of student portfolios	14
2.3.2 Course of development according teacher judgements.....	17
2.3.3 Relation expert judgements and portfolio analyses	18
2.4 Conclusion.....	18
Study 2: Variation in the literature curriculum: with what results?	19
3 Zooming in: the literature debate (1965-2005).....	19
4 Method.....	20
4.1 Participants.....	20
4.2 Descriptive framework.....	20
4.3 Questionnaire	22
4.4 Analysis.....	22
5 Results	24
5.1 Subject matter.....	24
5.2 Literary texts	25
5.3 Learning activities	26
5.4 Textbooks.....	27
5.5 Evaluation and testing	27
5.6 Personal background	28
6 Validity of findings.....	28
7 What do student learn from literature education?.....	29
8 Discussion.....	30
9 General Conclusion	32
References	32
Appendices	34
Appendix A. Indicators of literary complexity (texts).....	34
Appendix B Indicators of literary elaboration / processing (tasks)	36

1 SOME 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 in The Netherlands. At the same time, there are continuities that might reveal Dutch peculiarities.

Continuities

- 1) *No connection.* The language and literature curriculum are largely unconnected, although they are taught by one and the same teacher. The separation is indicated by separate textbooks and separate schedules¹.
- 2) *No canon.* The literature curriculum is focussed 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 students². As a result, students may choose texts that are considered to be ‘dangerous’ (Ten Brinke, 1976). Confronting students with ‘dangerous’, shocking, radical texts is not common practice, but it happens frequently, and is legitimate. From contacts with researchers from other countries, we learnt that choosing such texts is quite rare in other countries.

Changes

- 1) *Aims.* Partly in response to changes in the academic literary studies, 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 independent readers of literature. The focus shifted from ‘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). This resulted in an additive curriculum, that is; national key aims in which all four conceptions are represented, but unconnected.
- 2) *Texts.* The range of texts has been broadened. In the lower secondary grades, the emphasis shifted to the promotion of reading fiction, and therefore on youth literature or adolescent fiction. In upper secondary education, the focus is more than in earlier days on contemporary literature, and less on historical texts. The reading of translations into Dutch is almost generally, although the official documents stipulate that ‘works [must be] originally written in Dutch’. 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 stories or poems, et cetera); now, the number is reduced to 12 (minimum)^{3,4}.

¹ 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.

² Teachers/school departments may provide lists for students, but these lists are not restrictive; they are meant to help students to choose.

³ Including three works from before 1880, a landmark period in the Dutch literary history)

⁴ 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,

This paper presents two studies from one country to explore the possibilities to extend the study to a comparative study on the literature curricula in various European regions.

The first study is set up to clarify the concept Literary Competence, based on the praxis of expert teachers and their students for three years. It yielded a description of six levels of Literary Competence, defined by how deep students *can process texts of a certain complexity*. This system results in assigned levels of books ('this literary text is suitable for students on level A') and assigned levels of tasks ('this reading task is suitable for students on level A'). The system was tested when we tried to describe the course of development of thirty students from six teachers in competence over two and three years of schooling.

The second study is a national assessment of the literature curriculum on several levels: on the level of the perceived curriculum (teachers reporting on their curricular choices and practice in a questionnaire), on the actual, operational level (selected teachers were observed) and on the achieved level (students reported what they had learned in literature lessons).

STUDY 1: LITERARY COMPETENCE: WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO WITH LITERARY TEXTS

Definition of competence and levels based on expert teachers' praxis in upper secondary education in the Netherlands

2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO WITH LITERATURE: GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The definition of LC is based on a study of expert teachers' cognitions. The ultimate aim of the study is to develop an instrument to describe individual students' literary development in upper secondary education.

In the Netherlands, the term has been used in the pedagogical domain since about 1990, in a period where literary education was in danger, when 'no nonsense'

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. Because 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

and ‘back to basics’ were the educational political trend (Coenen, 1992: 61). The term had some advantages:

- 1) The term had a scientific connotation⁵, which provided the literary education lobby some status in the discussion about the position of literature in the curriculum.
- 2) The term was free of political connotations: supporters of different approaches and schools of thought (cultural heritage, aesthetic education, reader’s response, humanistic individual development) did not feel excluded when literature education was said to contribute to the development of LC.

Literary competence became a key term in the discourse of literary education. Nowadays it is the umbrella term for the examination programmes.

Coenen (1992) was the first one who tried to systematically define LC. Via significant analysis (De Groot & Medendorp, 1986) she provide as a definition⁶:

A reader who is literary competent is able to communicate with and about literature. The content of this communication may be varied, but at least shows that the reader is able to construct coherence. This might regard coherence within a text to enhance comprehension and interpretation, describing similarity and variation between texts, relating text and world, relating personal judgement about the literary work to that of other readers.

The literary competent reader’s attitude to literature is defined by a certain willingness to invest in reading and a certain open mind regarding to deviant perspectives and frames of reference. (Coenen, 1992: 73)

This definition has been widely used (curriculum documents, examination documents, teacher publication).⁷

⁵ *The term literary competence finds its origin in literary studies. Culler (1975) and Schmidt (1982) used it by analogy with Chomsky’s linguistic competence, in order to describe the literary system. Culler (1975) aimed at the system of literary conventions and pleaded for a comprehensive literary theory which can be considered as a grammar of literature. The more empirically oriented Schmidt (1982) aimed at , the sociological system of literary production and reception. The theory of the literary system aims to describe the ideal typical users of that system. With respect to literature education, what in the definition of literature theorists such as Culler and Schmidt is the relevance of the typical educational situation and context. The literature examination at school requires another literary competence, another grammar, than the visit to library or reading the cultural appendix in a daily newspaper. This pragmatic problem was also identified at the operationalisation of the term linguistic competence. Hymes (1972) recognised the restriction of Chomsky’s theory for application in the everyday language use and introduced the term ‘communicative competence’ referring to being able to use linguistic knowledge in communicative settings. Literary competence, therefore, must be considered as a capacity that develops by experiences in an ‘interpretive community’ (Fish, 1980).*

⁶ *This method for analysis is specially developed to clarify concepts in a certain context.*

⁷ *In various publications concerning the new examination program the key aims are associated with Coenen’s definition. (See De Moor, 1996; Dirksen & Prak, 1998; Hamel & Witte, 1998).*

However, what is lacking in this definition are levels of literary competence. The definition aims to describe the last stadium of growth or development. The question is how we can construct different levels of LC.

2.1 Research

In order to trace existing levels of LC in upper secondary education, we tapped expert knowledge – pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) – by asking them to describe examples from their praxis. We aimed at extracting performance indicators (students) and task and text features. As a result, for each level of LC, we listed literary works and tasks students are expected to perform at that level.

Research questions:

- 1) Which levels of Literary Competence do teacher distinguish, related to (a) literary texts and (b) reading/learning tasks?
- 2) How does the literary competence of individual students develop during the final grades of secondary education?

2.1.1 Design

Composition of teachers' panel

We composed a panel of six teachers of Dutch language and literature, who were experts in the field of literature education (as indicated by publications or involvement in innovations) and who were willing to cooperate in the research project for a longer period of time (three years).

Data collection

Each of the teachers was asked to select five students who started the literature curriculum (Grade 10): two weak, two medium and two strong students in literature. We followed the development of these students for two (general higher secondary education) or three years (pre-academic education). All literary works read by these students ($n = 171$) and the associated learning tasks ($n = 61$) were listed and analyzed.

2.1.2 Procedure

To answer the first research question, we implemented a variant of the Delphi method. As a first step, indications of LC-levels of literary works and task were collected via inventories, in independent steps, listing all works and all tasks of the students' sample. Between June 2001 and October 2003 the panel met four times, half of the meeting was dedicated to focus group meetings (aiming at decisions, consensus), the other half to working group meetings (aiming at discussion,

exchanges). Three secretaries took the minutes of each meeting.⁸, supported by audio-recordings.

To answer the second question, about the literary development of these thirty students, we analyzed the student portfolio's which consisted of book reports and reading tasks for 8 to 12 books. Each student was involved in three to four interviews: at the beginning of the process (grade 10), and at the end of grades 10, 11 and 12. The portfolio's were analyzed for motivation and indicators of Literary Competence: (1) the complexity of the literary work the student read, (2) the evaluation categories the students used when writing about the books they read, (3) the motive to read or the function students assign to reading literature. We will come back to these three indicators when presenting the results.

2.2 Results: Six levels of literary competence

2.2.1 Number of levels of literary competence in upper secondary education

Table 1: Common reference scheme for six levels of Literary Competence in upper secondary education

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Complexity	Very limited competence <i>Can not read, understand and value very simple literary works</i>	Limited competence Can read, understand and value <i>very simple</i> literary works	Somewhat limited Competence Can read, understand and value <i>simple</i> literary works	Somewhat extended competence Can read, understand and value literary works of a <i>median</i> level of difficulty	Extended competence Can read, understand and value <i>complex</i> literary works	Very extended competence Can read, understand and value <i>very complex</i> literary works
Start level grade 10	Weak	Reasonable	Good	Very good	n/a	n/a
Final level GHE-track, grade 11	Very insufficient: ≤4	Insufficient	Reasonable: 6	Good: 7 à 8	Very good: 9 à 10	
PUE-track, grade 12		Very insufficient: ≤4	Insufficient: 5	Reasonable: 6	Good: 7 à 8	Very good: 9 à 10

Note. The numbers in the last rows refer to the mark the teachers would have given for the performance during the final examination, in which 5 is 'not passed', and 6 is 'passed'; 7 is

⁸ These secretaries were student teachers, well informed about the discussion on literature education.

'reasonable, 8 is 'good', 9 is 'very good' and 10 is 'excellent'. GHE refers to the General Higher Education track, preparing for higher education (polytechnics) and PUE to the Pre-academic track, preparing for university.

2.2.2 Six Profiles

From the discussions with teachers, literary works were categorized as well as the reading tasks the students got. These two classifications were then used for two functions. With the teachers, we discussed the two lists, tapping the criteria they use when rating literary works and reading task for complexity and difficulty. The analysis of these discussions resulted in two products: (1) detailed lists of criteria (see Appendices A and B), and (2) holistic profiles of students, one for each level of Literary Competence.

Every profile is created from three components; students' temperament, the characteristics of the text commensurate with the pupil's level of ability, and the capability to perform.

Level 1: Extremely limited literary competence

Pupils in this profile have little experience of reading fiction. They encounter difficulties with reading, understanding, interpreting and appreciating very simple literary works and have difficulty in expressing their literary experiences and their taste. Their general development is insufficiently progressed to break through to understand the world of adult literary books. They remain distant from literature because the content is too far removed from them and the writing style is too difficult to understand. Willingness to invest in literature is only slight. Therefore, the size of the book and the type of task assigned to these pupils are significant factors. Their conception of literature and reading attitudes are characterised by a desire for tension (action) and drama (emotion). The manner of reading can be typified as *experiential reading*.

The books suitable for these students are written in simple everyday language and closely connect to the experience of adolescents, both in content and characters. The story line is clear and simple and exciting or dramatic events unfold at great speed. Elements of structure, which disturb the flow, such as thoughts or descriptions, are barely present. Books representative for this level are the works of Yvonne Keuls (*Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* en *De moeder van David S.*) and exciting or dramatic youth literature by authors such as Carry Slee and Jan Terlouw

The capabilities of these pupils can be typified as follows. Pupils are able to summarise an important text fragment and recognize certain basic elements of structure necessary for text understanding. Response to the text is subjective and non-reflective (utterances), where attention is mostly focused on sympathy or antipathy for the main character and his experiences. The criteria of appraisal at this level are based, for the most part, upon emotional guidelines (exciting, boring, sad, cool, stupid) and lead to problems for pupils in justifying their experience and

opinions of a text and to actively participate in a discussion about the book, They are neither able to clearly express their preferences, nor select a suitable type of book.

Level 2: Limited literary competence

Pupils with limited literary competence have experience of reading fiction but limited with respect to literary novels for adults. They are capable of reading, understanding and appreciating very simple literary texts and can report on their personal taste in and experience of reading. Their general development is sufficiently progressed to understand adult literature, but not enough to break through to a (novel) reality, which strongly deviates from their own world of experience. Willingness to make an effort for literature is present, but not overwhelming. As a result, the size of the book and the meaningfulness of the task remain a relevant factor in the choice of book and type of task. Attitude toward reading is typified by interest in recognisable situations, events and emotions. Readers are of the opinion that literature has to be realistic. The manner of reading can be typified as *identifying reading*.

The type of books suitable for these pupils are written in everyday language, have a simple structure and are relevant to their world of experience. Though the books are written for an adult readership, the main character is generally an adolescent. The story line is dramatic, where proceedings and events follow on from each other at a reasonably rapid rate. It does not directly cause a problem if the excitement is occasionally juxtaposed with thoughts and descriptions. The end is preferably a closed book. Representative examples are: Moens, *Bor*; Ruyslinck, *Wierook en tranen*; Oberski, *Kinderjaren*.

The capabilities of these students can be typified as follows: Pupils are capable of reconstructing the history of the story, to identify the subject of the text and can describe the characters. They are able to apply elementary literary concepts relevant to the genre, chronology and the characters. They can demonstrate the ability to reflect on the effect the text has had on them as well as the extent to which the characters and events are realistic according to their own criteria. Response to the text is subjective and more focussed on sympathy for characters and the credibility of events. In this case personal perception of reality is the dominant feature. Emotive, referential and realistic criteria are applied (stirring, gripping, boring, 'real') and sometimes refer to the text, but more generally to personal experience and opinions. When discussing the book, pupils exhibit little distancing and are not really prepared to hear other opinions or reading experiences. Personal taste is related to a genre, for example war, crime and love. However their choice is not adequately differentiated to be able to make a suitable book selection for themselves.

Level 3: Slightly limited literary competence

Pupils with a slightly limited literary competency have experience of reading simple literary texts. They are able to understand, interpret and appreciate simple literary texts and on the basis of a book they can discuss social, psychological and moral questions with their classmates. Their general and literary development is sufficiently progressed to break through to a somewhat complex understanding of novel structure and into the adult world. They are prepared to put some effort into literature, but will not easily start to read a thick book or perform a more complex task. Their manner of reading is characterised by an interest in questions of a social, psychological or moral nature. Literature is a means for them to explore the world and to form opinions on various issues. The manner of reading at this level can be typified as *reflective reading*.

The types of books suitable for these pupils are written in simple language and have a complex, yet transparent structure, where there is also the presence of a deeper layer alongside the layer of concrete meaning. Content and characters are not directly associated with the world of adolescents, but the story appeals to questions of interest to them, such as love, death, friendship, justice and responsibility. The text is preferably engaging. As far as complex procedures of storytelling techniques, such as shifts in time, changes in perspective, motives and such are present; they tend to be explicit in nature. The story raises questions for the reader (open spaces) and generally has a cliffhanger ending. Representative examples are: Büch, *De kleine blonde dood*; Krabbé, *Het gouden ei*; Giphart, *Phileine zegt sorry*; Minco, *Het bittere kruid*; Glastra van Loon, *De passievrucht*.

The capabilities of these students can be typified as follows: Through analysis they are able to define causal links on a historic level, as well as through the behaviour and development of the characters. They are able to differentiate between personal opinion and knowledge of reality, as well as the reality of the novel. Thereby, they are able to identify different story lines and can understand the effect of certain storytelling procedures (the tricks). On the basis of the title and concrete motives they are able to reflect upon the themes. Questions of a social, psychological and moral nature are most likely to provoke reflection and can form the basis for animated debate with classmates. Under these circumstances, attention will first be given to the question; thereafter the interpretation of text will be the issue. They adopt a complex scheme for evaluation that can combine emotional, realistic, moral and cognitive criteria. Reflections and judgments by these students are partially based on the text. In terms of taste, they are able to reflect on the difference between a nice and a good book (general reading / literature). Literary preference is closely associated with interest in specific subjects, but literary knowledge is not yet sufficiently differentiated to be able to make an adequate book selection by themselves.

Level 4: Reasonably broad literary competence

Pupils with a reasonably broad literary competence have experience of reading simple literary novels for adults. They are able to read, understand, interpret and appreciate literature that is not too complex and are able to adequately communicate their interpretations and tastes. Their general and literary development is sufficiently progressed for them to break through and understand novels by renowned literary authors that are not too complex. Willingness to put in effort for literature is clearly visible. The number of pages and the size of the task are no longer an issue. These pupils show a budding literary–aesthetic understanding: the discovery that a literary novel is ‘created’ and that writing is not a trick, but an art. The attitude to reading displayed by these pupils is typified by the willingness to research complex experiences and emotions of adults who are far removed from their own world of experience. In addition, they are interested in storytelling techniques and novel structures and sometimes even interested in ‘author intent’. The manner of reading at this level is typified as *interpretive reading*.

The types of books suitable for these pupils are those written in a ‘literary’ style’ and do not directly connect with the world of adolescents, either in content or characters. As a result, both the story line and character development become less predictable. The literary procedures that are followed are more complex: unreliable perspective, implicit time-shifts and changes of perspective, openness, multiple levels of meaning, metaphorical style, etc. In this way, the reader is stimulated to interpret the text. There are many works by renowned authors at this level. Representative works include: Bernlef, *Hersenschimmen*; Dorrestein, *Verborgen gebreken*; Hermans, *De donkere kamer van Damokles*; Palmen, *De vriendschap*.

The capabilities of these students can be typified as follows. They are able to differentiate between different levels of understanding, as well as identifying and interpreting motives and other relevant elements. They are more or less able to empathetically identify with the main character, but are equally capable of taking an objective view and being critical of particular behaviour within the context of the story. They are also capable of reflecting upon the significance of the work and can name various themes that are played out. If problems of interpretation occur, these pupils show interest in the intentions of the author. They also pay attention to the action of certain story telling techniques such as creating tension and stylistic devices, such as irony. As a result, they are able to analyse the technical aspect of story telling in a film or book and make comparisons between the two. Response is focussed on the meaning of the work, the storytelling techniques and sometimes on the author’s craftsmanship. They adopt a complex scheme for evaluation and in addition to the criteria mentioned earlier, can also include structural and aesthetic ones. Pupils at this level are perfectly capable of justifying personal choice and appreciation and are open for the opinions and interpretations of others. They are capable of critically assessing summaries and interpretations made by peers. They

are able to express their preferences, thereby giving a direction to choice of books; despite this they have still have too little knowledge of literature to independently select a book that is suitable for their level.

Level 5: Advanced literary competence

Pupils with advanced literary competence have plenty of experience of reading literary novels. They are able to understand, interpret and appreciate complex texts, including old literary work from before 1880 and exchange ideas on reading experience, interpretation and taste with others. Their general, historical and literary knowledge is progressed sufficiently to break through and understand complex modern and old classical texts. They are prepared to read these texts and commit themselves not only to researching themes and structures, but also the literary-historical background and the style. They are aware that text functions within a cultural-historical context and literature provides the means to becoming familiar with the past and the different cultural identities that have existed. The attitudes to reading displayed by these pupils is characterised by interest in the right book, literary conventions, cultural-historical background and certain classical authors. The manner of reading at this level can be typified as *literate reading*.

The types of books that are suitable for these pupils, do not only have characters and a theme which are far removed from their world of experience, but can also deviate from what they are used to, in terms of both language use and literary conventions. This is especially the case with old texts, as there is the question of a historical novel reality with obsolete values and norms, and in Old Dutch, with outdated literary conventions. Modern novels exhibit the increasing use of complex novel structures. These are characterised by multiple referencing and implication and are combined with technical and stylistic refinements. Representative examples are: *Mariken van Nieumeghen*; Van Eeden, *Van de koele meren des doods*, Mulisch, *De ontdekking van de hemel*; Multatuli, *Max Havelaar*

The capabilities of these students can be characterised as follows: They can read an old text in a historical way and place it into a literary-historical context. They are able to analyse and evaluate characters and complex events from different perspectives. By linking various elements and levels of meaning, they are able to define the main theme. During all of these activities, they are interested in background information. Response is coloured by a literary approach, such as the virtuosity or originality of an author, or the cultural historical value of a work. These pupils are very capable of in depth discussion with their teacher on matters of literature and can independently select suitable literary works.

Level 6: Extremely developed literary competency

Pupils with an extremely developed literary competency have a great deal of experience of reading literary texts, including world literature. They are able to place books and literature in a broad context and to exchange information about experiences of reading and interpretations with experts. As a result of being well

read and possessing a high level of general development, along with specific cultural and literary knowledge, they are able to identify links and generate meanings both in and outside the text. Willingness to put in the effort for literature is great, as long as the opportunity for a certain amount of autonomy is offered. They believe that literature offers more depth to their lives and offers the chance to understand reality (existential function). The attitude to reading is literary-critical and is characterised by versatility, passion and interest in scientific literature on the subject. The manner of reading can be typified as *intellectual reading*.

The type of texts suitable for these pupils are written in a literary style, which is difficult to access, and in which there may be experimentation in style and form. The multi-layered and complex structure makes it difficult to come into reading the story and to identify and understand its meaning. The text has symbolic characteristics (abstract motifs) and contains essential references to other texts and knowledge necessary for adequate understanding (intertextuality). Representative examples are: Kellendonk, *Mystiek lichaam*; Nooteboom, *Rituelen*; Mulisch, *Het stenen bruidsbed*; Vondel, *Lucifer*.

The capabilities of these students can be characterised as follows. They are able to offer a coordinated, refined interpretation of the theme and integrate this in their personal vision of reality. From their reading experiences and interpretations, they extrapolate to other area of knowledge, phenomenon and texts. The indefinability and multiple referencing of texts are an exciting challenge for them. Above this, they are interested in comparative analysis of literature and other forms of art, within a particular school of thought, or to place certain events or conventions into a historical context and make a diachronic comparison. They have a personal vision of the function of literature, are critical of literary style and find literature a fascinating subject to discuss. With a desire for expertise and subject knowledge, they make demands on the literary competence of their teacher.

2.3 Results: Courses of development in upper secondary education

To test the instruments developed in this study, students' progress was evaluated over a course of two (GHE) or three (PUE) academic years by analyzing the students' portfolio's and stimulated recall interviews. In this section we present the main results of these analyses on three dimensions: (1) the complexity of the literary work the student read (literary preference), (2) evaluation categories students use when communicating about the literary work, and (3) the function of reading literature students communicate when writing and talking about books they read. A second source of describing the course of development is the evaluation by the teachers: they globally assessed the development of each of the participating students. Table 2 contains the global terms we use for the six levels of each indicator.

Table 2. Three indicators for Literary Competence at six levels

Level of competence	Global indication Reading Motive	Type of arguments in literary evaluation	Experienced function of literature
Level 0		Pages, time	Functional-pragmatic; Compulsory reading
Level 1	Experiential reading	Emotive	Emotional-fantastic
Level 2	Identifying reading	Realistic	Cognitive-
Level 3	Reflective reading	Reflective & Cognitive	informational
Level 4	Interpretive reading	Structural & composition	Cognitive-interpretative
Level 5	Literate reading	Culture, history & poetical	Aesthetic
Level 6	Intellectual reading	Stylistic & multi-interpretability	

2.3.1 Development from the start of upper secondary (grade 10) to the end (grade 11 or 12): Analyses of student portfolios

In this section we report the results of the analyses of students’ portfolios and subsequent interviews on three indicators of literary competence: reading preferences, the type of arguments students used to evaluate the quality of works they read, and the motives to read literature students communicate in their book reports and interpretation tasks.

Table 3. Development of personal literary preferences (from beginning grade 10 until end of grade 11 (General higher secondary education) and the end of grade 12 (Pre-university education)). On the diagonals: students without progression; above the diagonal the students who progressed at least one level

Development in General Higher Education: Grade 10-11 (n=15)							Development in Pre-university Education: Grade 10-12 (n=15)						
L6		1					L6						
L5		1	2				L5		1				
L4	1	2		1			L4_norm	2	5	2	2	1	
L3_norm	1	3	2				L3	1					
L2		1					L2						
L1							L1						
End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
Start		Norm					Start		Norm				

In GHE, two students started below the L2 level, which was indicated by the teachers as the starting norm; five students started above the final level/norm (on L3 and L4). At the end of schooling, all but one student were reading books indicating the L3 level, being the norm for GHE, according to the teachers. From these fourteen students, ten were reading more complex literary works than at the start of upper secondary education: they moved one level (three students), two levels (five students), three levels (two students) and even four levels (one student).⁹

In PUE, three students started below the L2 level, while six students started their PUE career above the L2 level. At the end of schooling, all but one student reached the norm (L4). Twelve students were reading more complex literary works than at the start of PUE: they moved one level (three students), two levels (six students), and three levels (three students).

Table 4. Development of literary judgement (from beginning grade 10 until end of grade 11 (General higher secondary education) and the end of grade 12 (Pre-university education))

Development in General Higher Education: Grade 10-11 (n=15)							Development in Pre-university Education: Grade 10-12 (n=15)						
L6							L6						
L5	1						L5	2			1	1	
L4		4	1				L4_norm	2	2		1		
L3_norm	2	2					L3	3					
L2	1	3					L2	2	1				
L1	1						L1	2					
End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
Start		Norm					Start		Norm				

The complexity of literary works read by students is one indicator of literary competence. But this indicator is too gross: from our analyses it turned out that many works can be read on three adjacent levels of literary competence. It depends on what a reader can do with a literary work which precise level of competence is involved. Therefore, the portfolios of students were analyzed on the types of argument the students used when responding to the work. From level 1 to 6, subsequently: Emotive, realistic, reflective & cognitive, structural & composition, culture, history & poetical, and stylistic & multi-interpretability. Compared to table 3, we now see in table 4 that a larger number of students did not meet the norm when they started in Grade 10.

⁹ The jump is this student is extra-ordinary and remarkable. A reconstruction of the start level of this student generated indications that the teacher might have underestimated the level at the beginning of grade 10.

In GHE, four students started below the L2 level; just one student started above the norm (on L3). At the end of schooling, ten out of fifteen students responded at least reflectively and cognitively on literary works. Five were responding below level 3: four were responding on level 2 (realistic arguments), one was still on level 1, using emotive arguments. These five students, acting below the norm, didn't seem to have learnt much: four of them didn't move from start to end to a higher level. From the ten students that reached the norm (level 3), three moved one level, six two levels, and one three levels.

In PUE, seven students started below the L2 level, while only three students started their PUE career above the L2 level. At the end of schooling, nine out of fifteen students responded at least on level 4, using structural and compositional argument when responding on literary works; five were on level 4 (structure and composition), and four on level 5, using cultural, historical and poetical arguments.

Twelve students were using more complex arguments when responding to literary works. They moved one level (three students), two levels (five students), or three level (four students). From these twelve students, five did not reach the norm.

Table 5. Development of reading motives (from beginning grade 10 until end of grade 11 (H: General higher secondary education) and the end of grade 12 (V: pre-university education))

General Higher Education: Grade 10-11 (n=15)						Pre-university Education: Grade 10-12 (n=15)							
L5/6		1				L5/6		1			2		
L4			1			L4_Norm		1					
L2/3_Norm	1	5				L2/3	1	3	3				
L1		7				L1	1	3					
L0						L0							
End		L0	L1	L2/3	L4	L5/6	End		L0	L1	L2/3	L4	L5/6
	Start							Start					

For Motives to Read, or functions assigned to reading literature, we distinguished five levels (Gierl, 1977): L0 (functional pragmatic: 'it is compulsory, therefore I read literary works'), L1 (emotional-fantastic), L2/3 (cognitive-informative, L4 (cognitive interpretative), L5/6 (literary aesthetic).

In GHE, at the end of schooling, seven out of fifteen students still read under the norm of L2/3: they read for entertainment. All other students developed and reached the norm (six students: cognitive-informative) or above (one on cognitive-interpretative level, the other one on literary aesthetic level). In total, eight students improved one or more levels (6 improved one level, one two levels, and one three levels).

In PUE, eleven out of fifteen students did not reach the norm (L4). Moreover, seven out of 15 students did not change their opinions about what function literature reading holds for them. From the four students that reached the L4 norm, two were

already functioning on L5/6 in grade 10, and two moved two levels: from L1 to L4 or L2/3 to L5/6.

2.3.2 Course of development according teacher judgements

The three indicators presented in the former section show that for some indicators the progression is larger than for other indicators. We did not report the progression for each student on each indicator, but it might be clear that the coherence in progression will be different for different students: some gain one level on each indicator, some gain a lot on one, but not on another indicator. We now turn towards another indicator of progress, the perception of progress according teachers. Then we will relate the progression according to the three indicators and the teachers' perception.

Table 6. Development of literary competence (from beginning grade 10 until end of grade 11 (General higher secondary education) and the end of grade 12 (Pre-university education)) based on expert judgements

Development in General Higher Education: Grade 10-11 (n=15)							Development in Pre-university Education: Grade 10-12 (n=15)						
L6							L6						
L5	1						L5		1		1		1
L4		2					L4_norm	2			1		1
L3_norm	3	4					L3	2	2				
L2	1	2					L2	3					
L1	1						L1						
End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	End	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
Start		Norm					Start		Norm				

In GHE, six students started below the L2 level; just one student started above the norm (on L4). At the end of schooling, eleven out of fifteen students responded at least reflectively and cognitively on literary works. Four were responding below level 3: three were responding on level 2, one was still on level 1. These five students, acting below the norm, did not seem to have learnt much: three of them did not move from start to end to a higher level. From the eleven students that reached the norm (level 3), six moved one level, five two levels, and one three levels.

In PUE, seven students started below the L2 level, while only three students started their PUE career above the L2 level. At the end of schooling, eight out of fifteen students used responded at least on level 4. Four on level 4, and four on level 5.

Thirteen students moved at least one level (seven students), two levels (three students), and three levels (three students). From these eleven students that made progress, seven did not reach the norm.

2.3.3 *Relation expert judgements and portfolio analyses*

The expert judgements proved to be strongly related to the analytic judgements, obtained from the analyses of portfolios and student interviews. Correlations between indicators and the expert judgement for starting and final levels of competence were respectively .85 and .76 for literary preference, .91 and .86 for evaluative judgements, and .86 and .81 for motive to read literature.

Interestingly, the level of competence was *not* related to home environment, nor to the enthusiasm for reading books in primary and lower secondary education. This is especially of interest, because such significant correlations were observed for the level of competence *at the start of grade 10*, the beginning of literature education (home environment with competence $r = .55$). The lack of relationship between background variables and end of school competence indicates that especially lower level students gained from literature education.

2.4 *Conclusion*

In this study, a framework to describe six levels of Literary Competence was constructed, based on expert teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. This framework was tested by describing the development from grade 10 to 11 and 12 of 30 students, based on their portfolio's and stimulated recall interviews. From this study, we learnt that it is possible to trace the development of students based, using three indicators: (1) the complexity of the literary work the student read (literary preference), (2) evaluation categories students use when communicating about the literary work, and (3) the function of reading literature students communicate when writing and talking about books they read. From a correlative analysis it occurred that the end of school level of Literary Competence was not related to home variables, while such a correlation was observed at the beginning of Literature education (grade 10). This implies that development in the last grades is not related to home variables: education made the difference.

STUDY 2: VARIATION IN THE LITERATURE CURRICULUM: WITH WHAT RESULTS?

3 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. It is important to note that 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 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.

4 METHOD

4.1 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 in the final grades of 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.

51% of the teachers returned the questionnaire. 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.

4.2 Descriptive framework

The backbone of our framework (on which the questionnaire was based) was formed by the four main goals of literature teaching:

<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 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 table 7, the descriptive framework is presented.

Table 7. 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-				

4.3 Questionnaire

Each variable was indicated 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. 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.

Some questions were in a multiple choice format. Others 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; 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).

4.4 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).

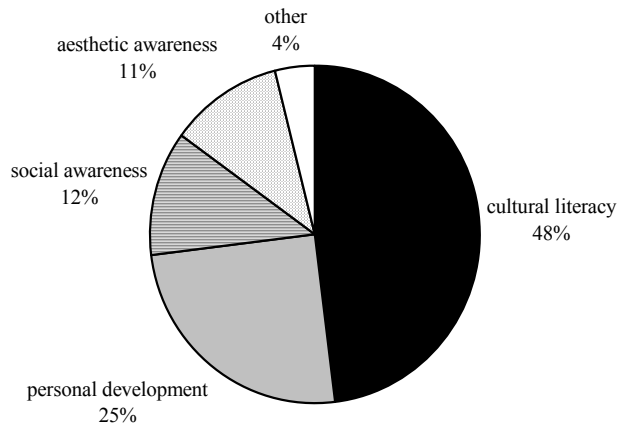


Figure 1 shows that about half of the teachers reported that contributing to students' cultural literacy was the main aim of their literature teaching. About 25 per cent of the teachers said that they primarily intended to stimulate students' personal development as readers. Promoting the aesthetic or social awareness of students were less popular goals among teachers.

Very few teachers could not be labelled as supporters of one of the aims, for instance because they failed to respond to the question or because they found multiple goals equally important. 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 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, the Scheffé-method for post-hoc comparisons was used.

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

5 RESULTS

In this section we present the main differences between the four groups of teachers. Group differences are indicated with a plus (+) or minus sign (-). A plus sign (+) 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.

5.1 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 8, 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, they 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 8. 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 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.

5.2 *Literary texts*

Table 9 shows the differences in the selection of readings, that is, the types of literary texts being read and discussed in the classroom.

Table 9. Differences in literary texts

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

As shown in table 9, supporters of different aims differed in their selection of readings. Cultural literacy teachers discussed more poetry, historical texts, and works belonging to the literary canon than the other groups of teachers. Personal development teachers, on the other hand, tended to discuss more prose, contemporary literature, and adolescent fiction than other teachers. The differences are medium to small.

In discussing literary texts in the classroom, teachers may focus on various textual aspects, 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 10).

Table 10. 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 10 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 11).

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 11. Differences in the ordering or grouping of texts

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

5.3 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. Results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. 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 tended to leave more room for peer discussions. The differences are small in terms of effect-size.

5.4 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 being used. However, aesthetic awareness and personal development teachers more often indicated that they taught literature without any textbook. These teachers more often preferred to compile their own teaching material, compared to cultural literacy and social awareness teachers. These differences are small.

5.5 Evaluation and testing

We asked the teachers how they evaluated students' achievements in literature; what kinds of tests they used (Table 13).

Table 13. Differences in methods of evaluation

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

Many different tests to evaluate students' achievements in literature were used; written knowledge tests, literary texts followed by questions, written book reports, individual oral tests, et cetera. However, only in the use of writing assignments the four groups of teachers differed. 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 14).

Table 14. 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 14, 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. Differences are small or medium-sized.

5.6 Personal background

Finally, we examined whether the four groups 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.

6 VALIDITY OF FINDINGS

In-depth interviews with selected individual representatives of each of the four groups largely confirmed the results of the survey. Supporters of cultural literacy were found to form a rather homogeneous group with respect to the contents and method of their literature teaching. In the classroom these teachers reported to follow a ‘knowledge transmission’ model; transmitting 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 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). Other teaching methods than lecturing were used, 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 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 15). These findings are in line with the results of our survey.

Table 15. Differences in task demands between four teachers

Task demands	Main goal			
	Cultural	Aesthetic	Social	Personal
Reproductive tasks	+	-	-	-
Productive tasks				
convergent	+		+	-
divergent	-	-	+	+
interpretative	-	+	+	+
evaluative	-	-	-	+

7 WHAT DO STUDENT LEARN FROM LITERATURE EDUCATION?

What do students actually learn from literature lessons? Are there any differences in results between the four profiles of literature teaching?

In accordance with De Groot (1974), we assumed that the effects of literature teaching could be described as ‘knowledge and skills’ that students have obtained and are able to use at will. They are part of the ‘mental programme’ of the student. Some of these knowledge and skills can be demonstrated in a test, others can only be reported upon by students. What students have learned about themselves (their likes and dislikes, for example), cannot be objectively measured by a test. Such learning experiences can only be communicated by students, for instance in a ‘learner report’. Van der Kamp (1980) developed such an instrument for the domain of art education.

In order to find out if the learner report could be a valid instrument in the domain of literature teaching, a pilot study was held. In this study a ‘known-groups validity method’ (Kerlinger 1973) was applied. Students of teachers who were known to teach literature in a certain way, were asked to write a learner report. The reported learning experiences were analysed and differences between teachers were evaluated. Teacher effects were found on the learning experiences of students, effects that were to be expected on the basis of what was known of the literature curricula of the teachers. All in all, the pilot study gave some empirical evidence of the validity of the learner report in the domain of literature teaching.

The main study involved about 200 16-year old students. These were students of teachers who were clear representatives of the four groups or profiles: students of a Cultural Literacy teacher, an Aesthetic Awareness teacher, a Social Awareness teacher and a Personal Development teacher. The students were asked to write a learner report about their learning experiences in literature lessons. All in all, about 1400 learning experiences were reported. These were analysed, using a classification scheme. In this scheme two dimensions were distinguished: Content and Behaviour.

Each learning experience could be placed into one of the twelve Content categories and one of the six Behaviour categories (see Janssen & Rijlaarsdam, 1996).

The starting point of the analysis was the proportion of students that reported one or more learning experiences in each of the various categories. A top ten of students' learning experiences was constructed per teacher. To compare the learning experiences of the four groups of students chi-square tests were used.

Some large differences in the nature of students' learning experiences were found between the four groups. In general, as appeared from the students' learning experiences, their teachers achieved their primary goals. Significantly more students of the Cultural Literacy teacher, for instance, reported to have gained declarative, literary-historical knowledge than did students within the other groups. In addition, it appeared that the Cultural literacy teacher's emphasis on older literature and literary history did not lead to an aversion of students against literature or literature teaching. On the contrary: the Cultural Literacy group responded more positively to literature and literature lessons than did the other groups.

To examine the long term effects of different forms of literature teaching, we carried out a second study in which former students of the four teachers participated. Our questions were; What do former students report to have learned from the literature lessons of the four teachers in this study? Are there any differences in long-term effects between the four profiles of literature teaching?

About 100 learner reports of former students were collected by way of a postal questionnaire, about 25 reports per teacher. These students had left school about six years before. Their reports contained 580 learning experiences of literature lessons by their teacher. The experiences were analysed and differences between the four groups were evaluated in the same way as in the study of students' experiences. The results showed that former students' learning experienced varied greatly within each of the four groups. There was very little agreement among former students about the effects of literature teaching. Hardly any significant differences in learning experiences between the four groups of former students were found. The conclusion seems justified that the four different approaches to literature teaching (cultural literacy, aesthetic awareness, social awareness and personal development) do not lead to major differences in long term effects.

8 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.

Interviews with teachers, observation of teachers, and an analysis of students' learning experiences largely confirmed the validity of these four profiles.

All in all, the study as a whole leads to the conclusion that there are large differences between teachers of Dutch in the content, form and immediate effects of their literature curricula. Negative effects that are sometimes assumed by critics of the 'cultural literacy approach' were not confirmed in our study. Stressing literary history and poetry, while taking a 'knowledge transmission' stance towards teaching and learning does not necessarily lead to students disliking literature (lessons). In general, experienced teachers of Dutch are able to achieve their main goals, at least judging from an analysis of students' learner reports. However, the learner

reports of *former* students did not reflect the differences in goals and teaching approaches between teachers.. It can be concluded that, in the long run, it does not make a significant difference how literature or fiction is taught, provided the literature teacher is an experienced, ‘good’ teacher.

9 GENERAL CONCLUSION

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, overall resulting in consistent patterns.

Literature curricula are often defined only 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 versus all kinds of fiction). 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?

Such an international study could be expanded to the level of Literary Competence attained in different European regions, and the relation between variation in the literature curricula and the attained level of competence. Some prerequisites for such studies are now available and can be tested in other regions.

REFERENCES

- Applebee, A.N., Burroughs, R. & Stevens, A.S. (2000). Creating continuity and coherence in high school literature curricula. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 34, 396-429.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- De Moor, W. & Thijssen, M. (1988). Nijmeegs onderzoek naar problemen van docenten in ‘leerlinggericht’ literatuuronderwijs’. *Spiegel*, 6(1), 47-78 and 6(2), 49-86.
- Janssen, T., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (1990). What pupils learn from literature teaching in the Netherlands. In: M. Hayhoe, & S.Parker, *Reading and Response*, p. 94-106. Open University Press., Milton-Keynes-Philadelphia.
- Janssen, T. & Rijlaarsdam, G. (1996). Students as self-assessors: learning experiences of literature teaching in secondary schools. E. Marum (ed.). *Children and Books in the modern world: contemporary Perspectives on Literacy*, 98-115. London: The Falmer Press.
- Janssen, T. (1996). Asking for trouble. Teacher questions and assignments in the literature classroom. *SPIEL: Siegener Periodicum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft*, 15 (1), 8-23.

- Janssen, T., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (1996). Approaches to the teaching of literature: a national survey of literary education in Dutch secondary schools. In Roger J. Kreuz & Mary Sue MacNealy (editors), *Empirical Approaches to Literature and Aesthetics*. Volume 52 in the Series Advances in Discourse Processes (pp. 513-536). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Janssen, T.M. (1998). *Literatuuronderwijs bij benadering. Een empirisch onderzoek naar de vormgeving en opbrengsten van het literatuuronderwijs Nederlands in de bovenbouw van het havo en vwo*. [Approaches to literature teaching: An empirical study of the forms and results of Dutch literary education in secondary schools.] Academic thesis. Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers.
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1973). *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. 2nd edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Poyas, Y. (2004). Exploring the horizons of the literature classroom; Reader response, reception theories and classroom discourse. *L1 – Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 4(1), 63-84.
- Rijlaarsdam, G. & Janssen, T. (1996). How do we evaluate the Literature Curriculum? About a Social Frame of Reference. E. Marum (ed.). *Children and Books in the modern world: contemporary Perspectives on Literacy*. P 75-98. London: The Falmer Press.
- Shulman, L.S. (1987) Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 14 (5), p.1-22.)
- Ten Brinke, S. (1976). *The complete mother-tongue curriculum. A tentative survey of all relevant ways of teaching the mother-tongue in secondary education*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff-Longman.
- Van der Kamp, M. (1980). Wat neemt de leerling mee van kunstzinnige vorming? SVO-reeks 29. Academic thesis. 's-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij.
- Van der Leeuw, B. & Bonset, H. (1990). *Vernieuwing in het moedertaalonderwijs. Een vergelijking van zeven case-studies in het perspectief van leerplanontwikkeling*. [Innovation in mother tongue education; A comparison of seven case-studies from the perspective of curriculum development.] Enschede: Stichting voor de Leerplanontwikkeling (SLO).
- Van de Ven, P.H. (1996). *Moedertaalonderwijs. Interpretaties in retoriek en praktijk, heden en verleden, binnen- en buitenland*. [Mother tongue education; Interpretations in theory and practice, past and present, at home and abroad.] Academic thesis. Nijmegen: University of Nijmegen.
- Van Schooten, E.J. (2005). *Literary response and attitude toward reading fiction*. Academic thesis. Groningen: University of Groningen. Retrieved L1 Research Archives Online <http://l1.publication-archive.com/start> at April 4th, 2006.
- Verboord, M. (2005). Long-term effects of literary education on book-reading frequency; An analysis of Dutch student cohorts 1975-1998. *Poetics*, 33, 320-342.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. INDICATORS OF LITERARY COMPLEXITY (TEXTS)

Dimension	Indicator	Description (complicating factors)
<i>Personal characteristics</i>	Time	The extent to which the length of the text (number of pages) requires a certain investment of time.
	General knowledge	The extent to which the text calls for general knowledge, which is world knowledge (societal, historical) and anthropological knowledge (intercultural, social, psychological)
	Domain specific knowledge	The extent to which the text calls for domain specific knowledge, such as the history of literature, narratology, stylistics.
<i>Familiarity with literary style</i>	Vocabulary	The extent to which the text calls for a certain familiarity with certain registers of language use, like the level of abstractness, the nearness of the represented world, and the diversity of vocabulary.
	Sentence construction	The extent to which the text calls for a certain level of familiarity with more or less complicated sentence constructions (length, embedding, sequence of meaning elements).
	Stylistics	The extent to which the text calls for knowledge of literary language use, that is, the extent to which language is multi-interpretable, and refers to conventions and stylistics.
	Act	The extent to which the text holds the reader's attention (suspense). This regards the pace of actions and the sequence and intensity of dramatical events. Story elements that interrupt the course of actions, complicate the reading (internal monologues, reflections, descriptions, elaborations and expositions) are also included.
<i>Familiarity with literary procedures</i>	Chronology	The extent to which the text demands flexibility with respect to the chronology and continuity of the activity. Shifts in time, references to the past (flashbacks) and references to the future all complicate the reading process.
	Narrative development	The extent to which the text calls on the ability to simultaneously follow different story lines and link them to each other. The number of strands and the links between them (primary, secondary, embedded) influence the level of complexity.
	Perspective	The extent to which the text calls on the ability to distinguish between different perspectives. Thereby, the level of reliability of a perspective and how that can be played out (manipulation) forms an additional complicating factor. In general, changes of perspective are a complicating factor (multiple perspectives). The level to which the reader is compelled to enter the world created in the story and identify with a character, creates a further complicating factor (I-narrator). Generally the author as narrator is considered less complex because of the intermediary status of the author between the reader and the story itself.
	Meaning	The level to which a text demands the ability to recognise and connect various levels and elements of meaning. Complexity increases with the number of levels (reality, psychological, political, philosophical, literary, etc.) and elements (motifs, themes, ideas) that are included

<i>Familiarity with literary personages</i>	Character	The extent to which a text calls for the ability to fathom out both character and character development. It refers to the level of characterisation as well as character development (type and character). The level of (un) predictability is also a complicating factor as well as the distance (of the reader) to the morals and behaviour of the characters, their historical status (old texts) or level of abstraction (literary persona)
	Number	The extent to which a text calls for the ability to differentiate between main and subsidiary characters. The number of characters involved is a complicating factor.
	Relations	The extent to which a text calls for the ability to fathom out the relationships between characters. The nature of the relationships (psychological, sociological, intercultural) and any related changes in those, are complicating factors.

APPENDIX B INDICATORS OF LITERARY ELABORATION / PROCESSING
(TASKS)

	Dimension	Indicator	Explanation/Description
Communicating with literary works	<i>Comprehension and interpretation</i>	Content	The extent to which the student comprehends the text (for instance by retelling the story, distinguishing the story lines, relating various story elements, recognising elements of structure (like perspective, chronology).
		Meaning	The extent to which the student can interpret the text and its parts meaningfully (theme, motive, idea) and recognize the various layers of meaning.
	<i>Recognizing text internal features</i>	Genre	The extent to which the student is able to recognize the genre (thriller, psychological novel) and the qualities of fiction/non-fiction, and lecture /literature).
		Literary style	The extent to which the student recognizes figures of speech and literary conventions, and the extent to which he is able to reflect on the aesthetic qualities of the style.
		Literary procédés	The extent to which the student is able to recognize literary procedures, analyse and evaluate how they work, and to reflect on the aesthetic qualities of the composition
		Literary personages	The extent to which the student is able to describe, analyse and explain – within the context of the story – the characters, their behaviour and development and to reflect on the relations between the personages.
	<i>Text external relations</i>	Inner world (personal)	The extent to which the student is able to confront the text to personal experiences and thoughts, and to personally identify with characters and events.
		Outer world (general)	The extent to which the student is able to relate the text to historical, societal, intercultural, psychological and philosophical knowledge.
		Outer world (Specific)	The extent to which the student is able to relate the text to other texts (intertextuality) and other forms of art, and with culture historical knowledge.
	<i>Individual</i>	Effort	The extent to which the student is willing and able to invest time in fulfilling the task.
Evaluation		The extent to which the student can provide a personal judgment about text, can support his judgment, and can use various criteria.	
Taste and book choice		The extent to which the student can describe his taste (book choice), argue and support, and predict/plan his future development and book choice.	
Vision on literature		The extent to which the student can reflect about the function literature fulfils for him..	
<i>With others</i>		Readers	The extent to which the student is able to discuss the meaning, interpretation and value of a text with readers who are relatively close (peers) and far (teachers, literary reviewer)
	Resources	The extent to which the student is able to use various resources (internet, reviews, interviews, encyclopaedia, studies, articles, et cetera), to estimate the reliability of the information, and to process the information.	

