Text, literature and "Bildung"

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Languages as a subject in

Languages of Education

Text, literature and " *Bildung* "

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Introduction

Literature plays an important role in most Language as Subject (LS) classrooms in Europe although we see variations in content and teaching approaches as well as in how literature is justified in the curriculum. Some countries emphasise the national canon, others read European or world literature. Some countries read contemporary as well as traditional literature, others mostly traditional. In primary school child literature, narrative as well as children's rhyme and poetry normally has a place and fairytales are often read throughout the classes. Later on, contemporary or traditional canonical texts tend to play a more prominent role. The function of literature in LS is often connected to the notion of *Bildung*, in other words: *literature is thought of as a means to understand and be able to participate in culture according to underlying values in culture*. The reasons and justifications for this are often hidden and taken for granted. In a situation where this indisputable role of literature is being challenged, the need for understanding the function of literature in schools has become more urgent and the need for describing and analysing why literature is important within LS seems to be a new challenge for LS teachers and curriculum makers. The justification for literature may range from utilitarian arguments to great expectations for development of national, cultural or personal identities. In the following we shall present some assumptions of how text and literature functions within the frame of *Bildung* in a comparative perspective. This study will consist of three parts. In the first part we shall examine the concept of *Bildung* and suggest a way of understanding it in an educational context of modern society. In this part we shall also suggest different ways of justifying literature in schools in which *Bildung* plays an important part and briefly discuss how concepts like text and literature are understood in different ways. In the second part of this paper we shall present a comparative curriculum analysis of four countries in Europe: Germany, Great-Britain, Norway and Romania to identify resemblances and differences in the LS ideology and practice. The third section of this paper is a discussion on *Bildung* and assessment on the basis of the German example "*Bildung*standards". This discussion also offers insights into attainment targets at the end of primary and towards the end of compulsory education in Germany. An appendix assembles data from the compared curricula that show curricula expectations in language as a subject at the end of primary and the end of compulsory education.

1.   Aims for learning with text and literature: *Bildung*

1.1   *Bildung*- a concept with multiple meanings

The German concept of *Bildung* has seen a revival within Nordic and Germanistic countries from the 1960s and onwards. This 18th century concept originally constructed for describing a way of combining knowledge and personal growth within a frame of Greek tradition, has been transformed into an aim for schooling not just for the elite, but for all students. From being an aim for a very limited group in society it has become an aim for all students. This ambition has implications for our thinking about what knowledge is, how knowledge can be obtained and who should have access to knowledge and culture.

It is however obvious that *Bildung* has different connotations for many people because its meanings have changed during history and will sometimes be associated with a set of manners or behaviours associated with upper class or elite values. *Bildung* is not to be completely disociated from manners, but in an educational context it must be understood as an outcome of schooling. In other words: *Bildung* is what school can offer, a combination of knowledge, ways of thinking, ways of understanding and relating to other people and ways of understanding oneself. Thus *Bildung* provides the key to master and understand the culture. The cultural codes in society are based upon social values which will be part of context for any situation where language is used. Knowledge and competences are a prerequisite for *Bildung* in an educational context, but they are not identical concepts. *Bildung* is competences plus something more. A student with all the competences described within the curriculum might still not have obtained *Bildung*.

Bildung implies internalised values embedded in the culture and in a European setting; this means both personal as well as cultural values in relation to others.

Whereas competences (when conceptualised as statements of behaviour) can be described in fairly objective terms, *Bildung* is a far more complicated term to handle because it implies values, and in our pluralistic societies we do not agree upon values. Still there are some common values that European tradition seems to treasure: respect for tradition of knowledge, art and scientific thinking, judgement, tolerance and generosity towards others, critical thinking and exploration of own reasoning, flexibility of mind, courage in expressing personal opinions. The strong assumption in most curricula is that these aims can be obtained through content of school subjects and social interactions in communities of classroom practices. Each school subject has a specific role to play for these purposes. Literature is definitely a strong element in this.

1.2 Text or literature?

Literature in some contexts is understood as novels, poems, short stories and drama. In other contexts it is a common name for all kinds of written texts. The notion of *text* is even wider, and includes both oral, written and multi- modal representation of meaning for practical as well as for esthetical purposes (see the notion of text in the CEFR). Traditionally school has had restricted interest in a few of these text forms, but in many curricula we see a turn towards a broader scope of interest. The diversity of media and different ways of communicating meaning counts for the new interest in a wider concept of text in schools. *Bildung* understood as the capacity of navigating in modern society most certainly includes understanding and producing a wide scope of text forms. In this paper we shall however focus on literature, and part of literature associated with art forms (German: *Die schöne Literatur*, Norwegian: *skjønnlitteratur*). The assumption is that literature has thematic and linguistic aspects that may challenge our way of thinking and understanding and therefore offer the possibility to play an important role in the *Bildung* processes. This does not mean that other text forms do not possess similar potential.

1.3 Narrative and identities

It is a commonly accepted idea that narrative has an important role to play in establishing and developing identities. We tend to organise and tell our life stories as narratives, and we find models for telling our stories in hearing and reading other people presenting their stories. The fictional narratives seem to have the same functions. The narrative functions as a mirror for ourselves, we find confirmation and recognition in encountering "the other" in the text. On the other hand we may also meet the unknown and explore new grounds.

Ideas of how literature supports identity building may be based on sociological or cultural models for group-forming and group structures. Often there is however a psychological theoretical basis for the assumption of literature playing an important role for identity development. The narrative provides models for different personalities and ways of communicating with others.

1.4 Literature - experiences of "the other"

Reading literature is a matter of having experiences – seeing the world from new perspectives, meeting familiar and unfamiliar thoughts, milieus and behaviour. These cultural encounters may challenge our understanding of the world. Literature provides experiences beyond the limits of our every day lives, some of which we are happy not to meet in reality. But reading literature does not necessarily give an immediate access to any experience of the text. The communication between text and reader is dependent on a number of factors, properties of the text itself, as well as competences and sensitivity of the reader. LS classrooms offer reading experiences but also opportunities for learning how to have learning experiences: to interpret and understand literature through investigations of text.

An underlying assumption in LS classrooms is that interpretation of literary texts offers more than just being able to read one specific text with better understanding. Interpretations open up perspectives that can be transferred to other texts and other situations. Interpretation is thus a model for understanding other people and the world. Interpretation is based upon an understanding of literary text as being ambiguous, having more than one possibility of meaning, layers of meaning or empty places for the reader to complete. Therefore literature is read and understood differently by different readers and in different contexts. The very fact that students have to deal with possibilities of interpretations without getting certain correct answers is seen as one of the advantageous features of literature in education.

A *Bildung-* perspective means to be able to accept and live with difference and controversy in society and to meet "the other" with respect. Experiences of literature from unfamiliar milieus and cultures provide possibilities for identification and understanding new ways of thinking. There is an assumption that literature thus becomes a strong tool for enhancing tolerance for other people and generosity in meeting differences in behaviour and thinking.

In reading the students might encounter opinions and thoughts different from what they consider normal. In verbal interaction with others in literary dialogues they might find that other students understand the texts differently from themselves. These classrooms interactions seem to be a prerequisite for reading development because they open up new possibilities for understanding.

1.5 Esthetical language – more than decoration

Literature includes a great variety of texts for many purposes, for learning, for entertainment, for experiences of art. The high quality texts that deserve to be called art have specific and important roles to play in LS. One reason is that these texts provide culturally valuable representations of human conditions and thoughts, another reason is connected to the language itself. In reading literature students meet a language different from everyday language. In a *Bildung* perspective this is important. All school subjects offer a language that in different ways has the function of broadening the linguistic scope for the students through subject-related concepts and genres. This is generally a scientifically based language vitally important in a *Bildung* perspective. Literature however provides experiments with language unlike other texts in attempts to grasp something the language hardly can express. In striving to challenge the limits of language the poets provide possibilities of new perceptions of the world.

Esthetical language is an example of what functions language can have in exploration of human conditions and thus in creating culture. Language competence without an understanding of this dimension is indeed a limited competence.

1.6 Literature in tradition - a way of grasping the past?

The assumption that literature is the key to understanding the past is contested. At least we shall have to acknowledge the difficulty of being able to see the past unattached from our own prejudices and our contemporary values. Still literature from the past gives us possibilities for interpretation and understanding both of the past and the present. Our cultural heritage undoubtedly has an impact on our contemporary lives, our identities and our thinking. In this perspective lies the justification for giving the cultural heritage an important room in LS curricula.

In a *Bildung*-perspective the question of how we understand and work with literature from the past is not without interest. There is indeed a difference between 'reading for reading's sake or reading for exploring language and content in a way that has an impact on the students, their feelings and thoughts.

1.7   Socially disadvantaged learners and key notions of *Bildung*

It has been pointed out that the concept of '*Bildung*', nowadays a non-elite concept, implies a process that concerns personality and his/her development in a holistic way. *Bildung* means the shaping of identity within a society - in a reciprocal process which allows for participation as an individual and which is based on communication. *Bildung* thus is a value-driven concept. It means the acquisition of knowledge within a contextualised dynamic of self-development in a rich sense. We have pointed out some ways in which encounters with literature contribute to the process of *Bildung*. It is generally believed that language as a whole is a key-dimension of *Bildung.* The process of socialisation in language – including literature – is considered to be a central aspect of this development. Especially when stressing the notion of integration and social cohesion it is often acknowledged that '*Bildung*' in language and literature should be focussed upon in education. Differences in access to language and literature are crucial factors that easily determine the learning biography including attitudes and motivations. Thus, we know that early encounters with literature do not only offer enjoyable experiences but also contribute to the development of language awareness as children meet forms of written language at an early stage. And thus, programmes which aim at offering equal learning opportunities for all children have started to focus on language-development from a very early age onwards.

We argue that a *Bildung* perspective is especially apt in the case of students who are often left behind within European school systems: socially disadvantaged learners with a migrant/immigrant background. However, a learning culture which allows for participation of all students will have to take into account specific circumstances of the various learner groups. A crucial hindrance for learning has been identified in the mismatch between the interaction and learning patterns students are familiar with from their home contexts and those they are confronted with at school (see previous study by Piet van Avermaet, *Socially Disadvantaged Learners and Languages of Education, 2006 /* www.coe.int/lang). Hence, it is important that teachers are aware "of the fact that the code they tend to use corresponds to that of certain societal groups only." (van Avermaet, 2006) This is even true for rather open forms of communication such as free encounters of readings within a circle. Children are often introduced to these modes of communication in the family, but this is exclusive to those families where comparable literal practices are part of the family life.

Thus, to describe the difficulties of these learners with insufficient language capacities in the oral and written mode covers only part of the problem.

However, in line with an awareness of the differences in codes and familiarity with cultural practices, an awareness is needed for the demands in reading, writing and listening. An adequate learning environment for *Bildung* in the field of text and literature will carefully balance the various explorative and open forms of communicating with text with supportive teaching towards competences in the domains of language as the subject. This might mean – for example in the case of Germany – the development and introduction of a reading curriculum beyond primary education (see previous study by Cornelia Rosebrock, *Socio-economic Background and Reading, 2006 /* www.coe.int/lang). Especially when taking into account that students coming from other language backgrounds enter the school system at different times and with very different levels, it becomes clear that the heterogeneity can only be dealt with when language support is part of the learning scenario throughout the various grades up to the very end (see previous study by Werner Knapp, *Language and learning disadvantages of learners with a migrant background in Germany, 2006 /* www.coe.int/lang).

A perspective on education that focuses on *Bildung* for all students will still have a broader and thus more inclusive scope. It focuses on a rich learning environment which stresses personal development in interaction including motivation and attitudes that allow for lifelong learning. It acknowledges that the context of learning is one of diversity.

The school is meant to offer meaningful surroundings for dealing with literature. These will have to reflect the plurality which has become an essential feature of our societies. It is thus also considered a place for participation in culture(s) and not only as an institution which prepares for later forms of life within society.

2. Curriculum analysis – a comparative perspective: Approaches to literature in school

The analysis is based on a questionnaire concerning the LS curriculum from four countries: Great Britain, Germany, Norway and Romania. The focus is on literature, bringing into the spotlight different ways of approaching it.

The scope of the analysis is to provide a kaleidoscopic view with regard to possible ways of designing and dealing with literature within an LS curriculum. The comparative perspective is not meant to be evaluative, but to stimulate the reflection of curriculum designers and policy deciders, their critical thinking over the perspectives brought in and over their own LS curriculum.

2.1 Reference points

Three of the countries referred to have a national curriculum for LS: Great Britain, Norway and Romania. In Germany the central *Bildung*sstandards (agreed upon by the ministries of all the Länder) illustrate the general perspectives and form the basis for the development of curriculum in the Länder since their introduction in 2004. The comparative analysis has in view the national curriculum for English, Norwegian and Romanian, and the *Bildung*sstandards for Germany as they were described by the members of the group designed for the task: Laila Aase, Mike Fleming, Irene Pieper, and Florentina **Sâmihăian.**

The group worked out a questionnaire which formed the basis for the comparative analysis. Each member provided answers to the following questions:

- What is the structure of LS and what is the place of literature within it?

- What conception of literature is reflected in the LS curriculum?

- What does the concept of 'text' mean in the curriculum?

- How is text production related to literature?

- What are the specific concepts associated to 'text' or literature?

- What methodology / philosophy of learning are expected to be used in the field of literature?

- What is prescribed in the curriculum about approaching different types of text?

- Is there a canon and how is it conceptualized?

- Is there any emphasis on the chronological history of literature?

- What is the general purpose of teaching literature?

- Are there specific statements of achievement for reading?

- Is '*Bildung*' referred to in the curriculum?

- Are important aspects of learning with literature / text being neglected?

- Is reading across the curriculum addressed?

- How is the competence of reading assessed?

The comparative analysis structures the answers so as to cover the following perspectives:

- the explicit and implicit views on literature

- the explicit and implicit views on learning and teaching literature

- the views on evaluating and assessing students' competences in the field of literature

- weak points in designing, teaching, learning or assessing literature

The set of answers are to be found in Annex for those who are interested in any kind of details.

2.2 Major common and different points in dealing with literature

There are many substantial points of confluence in the four curricula with respect to conceiving the role of literature in school. In many cases the details are triggered by the particular traditions of a certain culture or by the specific correlations with the different curricular visions.

Important common points are to be found in the general perspective on literature, understood as a domain of knowledge enhancing the development of communicative, literary and cultural competences that can contribute to the formation of the student's personality. The competences developed within the field of literature involve values and attitudes as well. This means that the cognitive dimension of learning is completed with the axiological and attitudinal dimension, implying a strong impact on *Bildung*, defined as a development of "mental, cultural and practical capacities as much as the personal and social competences" (Helmut Vollmer, *Towards a Common European Instrument for Language(s) of Education*, Preliminary study, Language Policy Division, October 2006).

Among the communicative competences, reading is prominent, but its development is seen in close connection with other communicative skills such as: writing, speaking and listening, or appropriate use of language.

A tendency to reshape the traditional domain of literature is obvious. There are two axis associated with this tendency. On the one hand, the domain of literature becomes diverse, dynamic and open. Fiction and non-fiction, works of patrimony or recent contemporary texts are as well part of this new enlarged territory. Under the circumstances, the importance of 'canon' understood as the unique unquestionable component of literature seems to be minimized. On the other hand, the approach of literature is focused on the process of reading and on the reader who participates in the construction of meaning. Reading is seen as a dialog with the text and, through it, with the 'other' or with oneself. Plural interpretations are encouraged and the text can be approached from a variety of perspectives.

There is much flexibility in what concerns the methodology of teaching and learning literature. Only general or a few particular suggestions are explicit in the curricular documents. This implies a greater responsibility for the teacher who has to make dialogue possible, imagining active stimulating contexts of reading and reflecting upon texts.

The evaluation of literary competence primarily hints at observable practices and results concerning the knowledge and the skills that students can prove in the process of understanding and interpreting texts. The deep processes of building one's own identity are implicit and can not be easily evaluated or assessed.

A tension between the way literature is conceived in the curriculum and the assessment tasks is a reason for some worries. A more developed system of assessment is present in the English and Norwegian curriculum, as well as in the *Bildung*standards, as compared to the Romanian Curriculum. The assessment is the field where the most diverse approaches are to be found.

2.3 Implicit and explicit views of literature

2.3.1 Domains of competences

In all the four curricular documents the common domains of competences for LS are speaking and listening, reading and writing. The *Bildung*standards have one other domain

called "Sprache und Sprachgebrauch untersuchen" (language and analysing/reflecting upon language). All the domains are connected with each other in practice, they are complementary competences. Literature is primarily associated with the reading competence, but it involves the other competences too.

LS is not a homogenous subject and this means that literature is only a part of the domains of learning. The domains of learning (illustrating types of contents) to be explored are differently structured. In the Norwegian curriculum there are, for example, four domains: Oral texts, Written texts, Multimodal texts, Language and Culture; literature or learning activities based on literary texts can be found in more of these domains. In the Romanian curriculum there are three domains: Literature, Oral and Written Communication, and Language. All three are to be integrated in the process of teaching and learning: starting from a text studied in the literature class, some language categories or communicative practices are also approached. Each domain of learning favours the development of one or more competences (speaking and listening, reading and writing, reflecting upon language).

2.3.2   Conception of literature

- Literature is approached in a double perspective: as part of the large domain of culture and also as an example and as an encouraging medium for the communicative practices. The aesthetic and the communicative perspective are both present in approaching the literary texts. The literary competence is built in relation with the communicative competence and with the cultural competence. The communicative perspective involves literary and non-literary texts and the participation of students in understanding, reflecting and discussing the studied texts or writing about them. The cultural perspective is linked to other arts or epistemological paradigms, different cultures and the national patrimony. In the field of literature, students deal / operate with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The knowledge and skills can cover in various proportions at least four domains: (a) a theoretic set of specific knowledge (notions of literature's theory) and the capacity to apply them in dealing with texts; (b) textual knowledge and skills that help students to understand and interpret texts; (c) contextual knowledge and skills (knowledge of the production and reception contexts of the literary works and the ability to make use of this knowledge in analyzing and interpreting texts); (d) the skill of writing literary texts. The last component is emphasized in the Norwegian curriculum. The attitudes involved with studying literature can be, among others: the pleasure of reading; appreciation of the aesthetic value; respect and interest for the national patrimony and for other cultures.

- Reading different texts for different purposes is a common understanding in all four documents. Developing reading strategies and reading techniques is the aim of this domain of competences. They are expressed both in general terms (understanding texts, reading for information, understanding and appreciating literary texts, reflecting on texts, presenting literature for others, using meta-perspectives on reading preferences) and in a more concrete manner (using inference, making connections between texts; scanning, skimming, reading in detail; recognising choice and use of figurative language; being aware and making use of reading aims and experiences, reconstructing the meaning of words, recognizing schemata of texts – genre and structure etc.). There is a sense of progression in the reading competences along the school years: the progression involves the reading strategies and the complexity of texts. Towards the upper secondary the cultural competence – involving different ways of contextualising the cultural phenomena - has a more important role to play in the teaching and learning of literature.

- A large conception of 'text' is reflected in all four curricular documents. Literary texts from the cultural heritage (national or universal), pragmatic texts, other media or arts are recommended in the different curricula. The aesthetic perspective and the functional communicative perspective are applied to both fiction and non-fiction (multimodal) texts (as in the Norwegian curriculum). A metaconscious perspective on

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students' reading is emphasized as well (in the same curriculum). The notion of 'text' is applied to any kind of written or oral message. A difference is made by the *Bildung*sstandards, where the term 'text' is associated with written texts only and is joined by the term 'media'.

2.3.3 Elements of the 'canon' in the domain of literature

The domain of literature is configured by specific prescriptive elements referring to types of text or elements of the literary history:

	English curriculum	*Bildungsstandards*	Norwegian curriculum	Romanian curriculum
Primary	• Modern and 'long-established' fiction • Modern and classic poetry • Texts from a variety of cultures and traditions • Myths, legends and traditional stories and play scripts	• Folk literature and children's literature, poems	• Fiction • Faction • Songs/verse • Poems • Fairytales • Children's literature • Literature from other countries and cultures, from presentime and from the past	• Children's literature from a variety of cultures and traditions • Comics • Texts written by pupils in children's reviews • Non-fiction
Secondary	• Two plays by Shakespeare • Drama by major playwrights • Works of fiction by two major writers published before 1914 • Two works of fiction by major writers published after 1914 • Poetry by four major poets published before 1914 • Poetry by four major poets published after 1914 • Recent and contemporary drama • Fiction and poetry written for young people and adults, and from different culture and traditions	• *Hauptschulab-schluss* / grade 9: youth literature (classic and modern), short prose, narrative, short story, poems • *Realschulab-schluss* (grade 10): youth literature, short prose, novela, short story, novel, play, poems • Diachronic perspective (exemplary work on text and context) • 'outlook' on other cultures (Upper secondary is not included in the *Bildungsstandards*; see EPA for that)	• Songs • Fairytales • Children literature • Sami Youth literature • Sami literature • Contemporary and classic literature in a comparative perspective (lower secondary) • Diachronic perspectives national and international/ traditional and modernistic (upper secondary)	• Lower secondary: different kinds of epic, lyric, drama • Texts from the 'traditional cultural heritage' (national and universal) and recent, contemporary texts • Non-fiction • Media • Arts • Diachronic perspective in upper secondary (texts published before the end of the second war in grade XI, texts published after the end of the second war in grade XII; case studies and debates concerning important moments of the Romanian culture are also recommended in these two last years of school)

Certain curricula offer a list of suggestions from which texts can be selected (the English and the Romanian curriculum). In the case of the Romanian curriculum the list is open; teachers can also choose other texts that illustrate the genre mentioned as compulsory (short story, ballad, novel etc.). The *Bildung*sstandards give only general recommendations that can guide text selection in the primary and lower secondary: important author, meaningful theme, age-adequate (the specific curricula of the Länder sometimes go further). The Norwegian curriculum does not have guidelines for text selections but demands translations of Sami literature and literature from Sweden and Denmark in original languages.

- The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is explicitly dealt with in the *Bildung*sstandards and in the Romanian curriculum. Other specific concepts: figurative language, vocabulary and patterns of language, character, setting, narrative plot, themes, poetic forms, genre-knowledge, linguistic terminology, humour, irony, contrasts, contexts (time, author), multitude of interpretation. All the concepts are related to know-to-do statements (for example, "distinguish between virtual life and reality", "recognise the choice, use and effect of figurative language, vocabulary and patterns of language", "being able to recognize as well as to use humour, irony, contrasts, comparisons, symbols, metaphors and varieties of text structures", "situating in a context the literary text having in view the author's work, the epoch or the cultural/ literary movements").

- Chronology is neglected in the primary. In the English curriculum there is no specification for the order in which contents should be studied (the recommendations only refers to a number of texts published before or after 1914). In the Norwegian curriculum a thematic comparative perspective is recommended for the lower grades. Aspects of literary history are introduced in the secondary in the *Bildung*sstandards, in the Norwegian and in the Romanian curricula.

- The canon does not consist, as traditionally, of a compulsory list of authors or titles of works. A kind of a discrete 'canon' is shaped instead including specific knowledge and skills related to literature. (For perspectives on canon, see also Mike Fleming's paper).

2.3.4 The relation with '*Bildung*' and LAC (language across the curriculum)

- '*Bildung*' is both implicitly and explicitly addressed in the curricular documents. '*Bildung*' is, within the English curriculum, embedded in the general aims of learning (moral and social development, promoting citizenship). The opening statement of the Norwegian curriculum does refer to '*Bildung*' ("The subject of Norwegian is a central subject for cultural understanding, communication, *Bildung* and development of identity"), but the notion is only implicit in the competences, as '*Bildung*' is not easily assessed. It is quite the same perspective to be found in the Romanian curriculum. The introductory text of the *Bildung*sstandards argues the contribution of LS to *Bildung*, referring to 'participation in society and cultural life' and to 'knowledge and abilities that structure and shape one's own life'. 'Allgemein*Bildung*' includes insights into traditions of culture and language. Variation is stressed and the appreciation of the richness is aimed at. The national identity is associated with a set of values and attitudes of the Romanian curriculum for the upper secondary ('developing cultural representations concerning the evolution and the values of the Romanian literature', 'developing the interest for the intercultural communication'). (See also 1.1).

- Language across the Curriculum (LAC) is addressed in the preliminary statement on *Bildung* in the *Bildung*sstandards and is also strongly emphasized in all subjects in the Norwegian curriculum. In the Romanian curriculum the communicative competences are to be developed in all subjects, and the contribution to LS in this field consists of developing different strategies of reading and understanding a variety of discourses. In the English curriculum LAC is addressed on two levels: 'technical and specialist

vocabulary of each subject', and 'strategies to help students to read with understanding'.

2.4   Explicit and implicit views on learning and teaching literature

Teachers' freedom of choosing their learning and teaching methods is generally encouraged. There are no explicit recommendations on methodology. The English curriculum suggests group discussions and participation in a range of drama activities. The *Bildung*sstandards stress the productive and analytical approaches that aim at learners' activity / participation. The same perspective is clear in the expectations of the Norwegian curriculum (such as explain, present, explore, express, communicate, experiment with language variations) that are beneath the competences. The shift from the informative to the formative paradigm of teaching and learning was not very well sustained by new programmes of teacher training all over the country in Romania. This is the reason why the curriculum for Romanian language and literature for the primary and for the lower secondary offers suggestions of learning activities associated with the skills to be developed with students. In the upper secondary the methodology is addressed only at the level of principles: student oriented activities; functional, pragmatic approaches in teaching and learning; diverse use of methods and instruments for evaluation.

2.5   Views on evaluating and assessing students' competences in the field of literature

2.5.1 Specific statements of achievement

The goals of achievement are generally formulated as can-do-statements. There is a concern about how students' values and attitudes are dealt with in the classroom, because they are not included in the statements of achievement.

All the curricula are competence-based.

The English curriculum provides holistic statements of achievement, applied to a 'range of texts', literary texts included. For each of the three attainment targets comprising speaking and listening, reading and writing, there are eight levels of achievement (plus 'exceptional performance'). The *Bildung*sstandards also offer rather holistic statements to start with. These are joined by standards that imply outcome-expectations. The standards give special attention to the field of reading literature and refer to: making use of reading abilities and skills, distinguishing between different genres, developing readings of a text, and evaluating acts and motives of characters. The Norwegian curriculum focuses on outcome statements. There are three areas of achievement (what students are expected to know, to be able to do and to be able to understand / reflect upon) for all levels of schooling, with increasing emphasis on knowledge. In terms of outcomes (discuss literature using literary concepts, present literature to others, write an interpretation of literary texts), tending, there is an expectation that students "should be able to write literary texts themselves" which is singular in the Norwegian curriculum. The Romanian curriculum has holistic statements of achievement for the primary (understand the global meaning of a text and discriminate between essential information and details, make sense of unknown words by relating them to the context), but gives particular statements of achievement in the field of literature in the lower and especially in the secondary (identify the important elements of a plot in a narrative, use properly the literary terminology in discussing a text or writing about it, identify and analyze elements of composition and language in literary texts, recognise characteristic features of literary genres in a given text).

2.5.2 Assessment

The most diverse domain explored in this comparative analysis is the assessment. Many relevant differences are to be found in the way assessment is approached.

Great Britain has a double perspective on assessment that includes 'teacher assessment' and 'student assessment'. This seems to be a way of enhancing the quality of the educational process.

Central institutions are responsible in all four countries for designing the tests. National tests include literature in different ways. A written test is the common way of assessing the competences associated by different types of texts. Answering questions starting from a text at first sight (fiction or non-fiction) or from an excerpt of the work of a studied author is quite common. The aim of such a task is to evaluate more competences: the competence of reading (comprehension and interpretation of the text), the literary competence (explaining characteristic features of the genre) or the cultural competence (relating the text to a context), and the competence of writing about texts as well. The written test may also include the task of writing an essay about a studied literary text (this is the case in Romania; there is a national controversy about this part of tests because of the focus on memorization that such a task implies).

In Norway the oral exams are not compulsory, but arranged regionally.

In some countries (Norway, Germany, Romania) literature is a compulsory test at different ages or at the end of the schooling, in others (Great Britain) students can choose at age 16 between literature, media or drama as an additional qualification to that of 'English' which also contains these elements.

The number of tests and the age of students participating in the tests are different from one country to another.

Portfolio assessment is also used in Great Britain, together with tests.

The description of how tests are conceived in Norway and in Romania emphasizes different complexity of the tests and a different duration allotted for solving the tasks.

2.6   Weak points in designing, teaching, learning or assessing literature

Considering some weak points of the curricula may help curriculum designers to reflect on their own developments. For the English and for the Romanian curriculum, implementation of the curriculum in the classroom proves a disparity between the ideal (the written curriculum) and the reality. The effect of assessment is a narrowing of the effective curriculum because of the emphasis on a narrow range of skills and texts (drama is often neglected in practice in Great Britain; case studies or debates are sometimes avoided in Romanian classes, because the complex cultural themes are not present within the final exam). There is a similar discontinuity with the *Bildung*standards, because they include rather too much than too little. The risk is of neglecting the part of the curriculum that cannot be assessed via tests (that is, aesthetic practices and *Bildung*). In the Romanian curriculum (both in the written and the effective curriculum) there is a prominent focus on the national values and little space for intercultural approaches (to the universal culture or to the cultures and traditions of ethnic minorities living in Romania). In the Norwegian curriculum, the poetic language as a value in itself is not sufficiently stressed and the effect of this is that many students master a limited everyday language for practical purposes only. Student perspectives and classroom discussion are generally accepted as normal methodology, but differences in practice are still a prominent trait. And giving written answers to questions individually or in groups are common work forms even if classroom discussions seem to enhance better learning and understanding of literary text.

3.   *Bildung* and Assessment

3.1   *Bildung*, process and development

It has just been pointed out that the educational systems approach the issue of assessment in quite different ways. Certainly, process and development are considered as key notions with regard to the learner. There is an agreement, that assessment is necessary in order to offer reliable information on the success of learning for different audiences (see Fleming 2006).

Functions of assessment in the context of *Bildung* are to follow up the outline processes not only in order to diagnose what the outcome of learning is (or seems to be) but also to

be able to supervise the learning process and to offer adequate support. Taking up the distinction of assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning the latter would then have to be stressed quite as much as the former. However, this is a task which is difficult in institutional education because it always implies a need to balance a perspective on the individual with perspectives on the classroom and expectations of society. Besides, in practice, it is often a big challenge for teachers to assess learning individually in order to specify the agenda for different pupils (feasibility/economy of assessment). On the other hand it is the teachers' expertise which is a primary source for an approach that allows for formative and summative assessment of the individual's learning process (for a systematic approach towards different forms of assessment see Fleming 2006; CEFR chapter 9).

3.2 *Bildung*, competences and '*Bildung*sstandards'

3.2.1 The aims of German *Bildung*sstandards

German educational policy has lately developed a strong interest in following up the outcome of learning via national '*Bildung*sstandards' and central assessment of achievements. International comparative studies on students' performances showed that expectations were not matched. Thus, the conference of the ministries of culture (Kultusministerkonferenz / KMK) concluded that the stress on input did not lead to desirable results and should be joined by a definition of expected output and its assessment in order to improve the system. A strong aim is to ensure that chances for *Bildung* would be offered to all students equally. This reflects the fact that especially students from a lower socioeconomic (at the same time often migrant) background often performed unsatisfactorily in PISA.

The move towards *Bildung*sstandards is on the one hand considered to be a paradigm-shift towards outcome and system-monitoring and on the other hand it is considered to be a contribution towards the debate on *Bildung* and aims of education. Thus, the KMK acknowledges that the aims of school go far beyond the demands of *Bildung*standards: "The functional aims of '*Bildung*sstandards' and the aims of a contemporary 'Allgemein*Bildung*' do not contradict each other but add to each other." *Bildung*sstandards are to ensure the comparability of final exams (see KMK 2004).

3.2.2 The development of the *Bildung*sstandards

Researchers point out that *Bildung*sstandards have to be based on competence-models which shape the competences in a specific domain and also show levels of attainment (the following is based on the expertise "Zur Entwicklung nationaler *Bildung*sstandards" by Klieme et. al. 2003). *Bildung*sstandards are to define the performance which is to be expected on the basis of the competences thus set. They can be transferred into tasks and match scales (see Expertise, 25). It is acknowledged that core concepts of the subject should be reflected in the *Bildung*sstandards and that expectations should be reflected in the light of research on learning processes in the field and of empirical data on possible outcome. The models should allow for describing achievements of students with regard to the set criteria and not only with regard to the achievements of other students. They should also allow for differentiated observations of students' learning and thus for differentiated support. The expertise also recommends the formulation of minimum-standards which are to be met by all learners, thus stressing the necessity to focus on students who have till now have been low achievers.

However, the current *Bildung*sstandards for LS do not match the norms the expertise sets out as they could not yet be built on competence models. Instead, they are based on agreements of the KMK about the aims of specific forms of schooling (defining the Abitur and Middle School Exam) and they reflect traditional LS concepts and practices and curriculum design. At the same time they are considered to be open to future development especially in the light of competence-models which are currently developed. The *Bildung*sstandards distinguish between three "Anforderungsbereiche" which formulate what is expected and allow for some grading.

While the expertise recommends a distinction between standards / their assessment and central exams / certification, the current *Bildung*sstandards are set up for the end of primary education, for the end of Hauptschule and of Realschule. Thus, aspects of system-monitoring and individual achievements get linked.

3.2.3 Assessment of the *Bildung*sstandards: National Assessment, "Vergleichsarbeiten" and "Lernstandserhebungen"

National assessment is not yet practised in Germany but is on its way. The national institution IQB (Institut für Qualitätssicherung im *Bildung*swesen an der Humboldt Universität Berlin) is currently preparing tasks based on the *Bildung*sstandards in order to allow for central assessment. This process includes a critical analysis of the formulated standards in the light of psychometric necessities. Tests are to meet the criteria of validity, reliability and feasibility. It is always a specific sample that is going to take the test.

The work which is done in this interdisciplinary context is expected to contribute both to the development of competence-models and to the revision of the standards. Didactics of language and literature (researchers and teachers) are involved in the development of tasks for learning and testing.

The national central assessment is intended to be linked to international assessment studies (TIMSS, PIRLS, IGLU, PISA). In the future the rhythm of the different studies is going to be matched. Also, the researchers at the IQB partly take up competence models and the distinction of levels from these studies – lately of the DESI-study, too. Thus, the international studies influence conceptions of competence levels.

Normed tasks for central assessment in LS are expected for 2008 (primary) and 2009 (secondary) [it is not yet clear if that is the definite year for the first national assessment, too].

The coming central national assessment is joined by the so called "Vergleichsarbeiten" (comparative exams). These tests have been introduced in some Länder before the *Bildung*sstandards. Concepts thus still vary.

"Vergleichsarbeiten" aim at evaluating classrooms and schools in comparison to other classes in the Land - or the participating Länder if the exams are a joint project. All classes take part and the teachers run the exams. The "Vergleichsarbeiten" are now to be based on the *Bildung*sstandards as well and are currently strengthened (see the agreement of the KMK from June 2006). It is recommended to carry out this assessment the year before the crucial year of transition or before the final exam, that is grade 3 in primary (where grade 4 is usually the final year), grade 8 in Hauptschule, grade 9 in Realschule. The intention is that results can then still be brought back in time to improve teaching and learning before the end of the period.

3.2.3.1 VERA ('Vergleichsarbeiten')

An influential model is VERA for primary school, designed at the university of Koblenz-Landau, which was carried out at the beginning of grade 4 since 2003 and which is, since 2007, carried out in grade 3.

In the case of VERA, processes of communicating results back to the schools and teachers have been developed and a central aim is to contribute to the improvement of teaching via supporting competences in the field of diagnostics (see link to 'learn line' in Nordrhein-Westfalen which offers 'modules' for teachers to deal with the results). The annual tests are commented upon and suggestions for further work in class are regularly made.

In 2007, seven out of 16 Länder took part (Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz and Schleswig-Holstein). More Länder are expected to be involved in the future.

VERA only partly follows the structure of LS as set in the *Bildung*sstandards. Though certainly a developed tool which many teachers by now find useful, it still does not cover all areas of LS as they are acknowledged in curricula and the *Bildung*sstandards: reading comprehension, writing, language and language use (grammar), orthography are included. The area of audacity (text comprehension and production) has, till now, been excluded.

In 2006 the test consisted in tasks on reading comprehension, language use and orthography. Writing was for the first time tested in 2007 – together with reading comprehension. For the distinction of levels, VERA takes up interdisciplinary expertise in the field as well as the results of the process of norming tasks. Thus, VERA offers a basis for describing possible competence levels for third and fourth grade students (about 9 to 10 years old) which is theoretically and empirically based. This is, however, only accessible for reading and for language / reflection on language.

3.2.3.2 Competence levels for reading according to VERA (grade 3 and 4)

The field of literature can so far only be addressed via the field of reading. In this domain the competence levels designed for VERA show the link between general reading competences and the specifics of literary reading as practiced in close reading phases. They include the following specifics:

Level I consists in elementary competences, mainly gaining simple information. This level already includes judging texts with regard to personal preferences in a selective manner and the identification of narrative perspectives.

Level II means more elaborated competences: reading as searching for sense via linking several pieces of information. This also has to be done in literary reading. Again, in level II personal judgements are addressed, answering both to content of text and personal preferences. Besides, obvious genres such as poems can be identified.

Level III is the highest niveau and means advanced competences: mainly reflective reading including complex inferences and interpretation. Here, indirect modes of speaking can be identified and used for the development of further questions. Texts can be judged adequately according to content, form and personal preferences. Students can identify genre from selected pieces of text.

3.2.3.3 Lernstandserhebungen: the example of Nordrhein-Westfalen

For secondary education (grade 8 or 9) different Länder have different designs and none is as broadly used as VERA for primary education. More uniformity is currently being developed. An example which can be considered are the "Lernstandserhebungen" of Nordrhein-Westfalen. They link reading and language awareness and distinguish between five levels (grade 9 in 2005; this year it is the first time that grade 8 is tested instead). It should be noted that these "Lernstandserhebungen" also test listening and processing oral information

3.2.3.4 Competence levels grade 8/9 reading

Level I means gaining simple information and identifying a theme on a superficial level.

Level II describes a simple construction of meaning including features of narrative plots. Pieces of information in the text can be compared with each other. Plot and characters are basically understood.

Level III describes a basic construction of meaning which can rely on inferences. Basic genre features are recognised.

Level IV describes a differentiated construction of meaning. Here more subtle features of text are to be realised. Judging characters is mentioned, also indirect modes of speech and interpreting formal features of a text, dealing with alternative meanings and nuances of language, elaborate upon meaning, approaching the text in a critical manner, all these features which suit literary texts especially.

Level V describes a complex construction of meaning. The process of making inferences is more advanced. Multiple meanings are to be recognised and explained. Reflection upon the text and its message as a whole including content, language and structure is required. Interpretations can be judged as to their concordance with the text. Various meanings can be compared.

The use of external knowledge is also part of every level and becomes more and more elaborated.

3.2.3.5 In sum:

The levels are linked to adequate text quality - which is of course hard to define - and the tasks aim at close reading. For primary and secondary education the level-distinctions are quite similar but become more differentiated in secondary. It seems thus that more complexity for the older students is reached via more dominance of indirectness and in general, via increasing complexity of text.

The central *Bildung*sstandards for primary education go beyond what the VERA-levels cover by addressing central aims within the German discourse on literary *Bildung*: imagination and empathy (for comparable aims see 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 in this paper). These aims in class are often addressed via other means, for example via creative writing, drawing or drama methods. The *Bildung*sstandards for 'Hauptschulabschluss' grade 9 also aim at empathy and understanding the other, though they do not transfer these aims into standards. Instead it is stated that via sound reading competences, interest in reading and empathy and understanding the other is developed.

4. Conclusion: Rich learning environments for the domain 'literature'

The concept of *Bildung* in LS and literature as outlined above is a holistic one. A competence-oriented approach asks for specification. One way of specifying learning with literature is to contextualise literature within the subject LS. Literature is often linked to reading, but dealing with literature in class includes the other areas, generally speaking, plus listening and writing. A competence-oriented approach can help to acknowledge the complexity of tasks which can easily be overlooked when the task is to respond to literature in written form (e.g. with an essay) or to discuss different meanings of a text in class etc. An approach which specifies what is to be done when dealing with a task can certainly help to clarify expectations.

A task-design that is more precise on what outcome is expected can also serve as a form of guideline for the students' work. Thus, the development of focussed reading-comprehension-tasks in the field of reading literature can indeed be for the benefit of learning with literature in that it supports the construction of meaning in interaction with the text.

Also, the specific uses of language within literature can contribute to the general reading curriculum in making repeated readings necessary and in asking for language awareness and imaginative responses to the artistic text.

The eight attainment targets which the English National Curriculum sets up reflect the possibility to clarify expectations. The notion of competences then can help to describe and communicate students' learning achievements especially when relying on teachers' long-term observations.

A conflict between literature in the perspective of *Bildung* and literature in a framework of competences and assessment arises especially when assessment is meant to be criterion-oriented and to meet standards of validity and reliability:

a) The choice of literature should allow for meeting students' development and interests as well as the demand of getting to know important texts of a culture, a variety of genres etc. Central assessment can easily lead to a pragmatic canon for the purpose of being able to rely on shared knowledge in a situation of testing.

b) The response to literature is an individual response: the artistic text produces imaginative reactions and manifold interpretations due to symbolic language, the gaps – 'Leerstellen' – reception theory pointed to, diverse perspectives etc. A task that aims at assessing this kind of creative construction of meaning will necessarily create unique responses.

c) There is a danger that expectations towards central assessment have a strong impact on the actual curriculum in school. In this case the orientation towards the outcome (which in itself can serve different purposes) can lead to forms of teaching to the test which contradict the aim of providing a rich environment for *Bildung* in LS.

Thus, we argue that different forms of assessment should be viewed in the context of what they are meant to serve for. Elaborated communication processes between different participants in the educational system are crucial. It has to be acknowledged that broadening the scope from focussing upon input to stress output as well is a challenge that needs to be matched by developments in teacher education and in-service-training for teachers. In order to ensure fruitful learning processes in LS the focus should be to create rich learning environments which are sensitive to the different preconditions of learning in various contexts (one means could be the portfolio as an instrument for learning; see section 3). Assessment for learning is clearly of equal importance to assessment of learning. It is to be ensured that education can offer adequate institutional support.

References:

Germany – Links:

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VERA Vergleichsarbeiten, developed at the university of Koblenz-Landau:

http://www.uni-landau.de/vera/

For implementation in Nordrhein Westfalen:

http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/angebote/vergleichsarbeiten3/index.html

Lernstandserhebungen in grade 8/9 – Nordrhein Westfalen:

http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/angebote/lernstand9/kurzinfo.html

Appendix

Outcome-expectations for language as a subject in the curricula of Norway, Romania and England and in the German *Bildungsstandards* for the end of primary and end of compulsory schooling

1)   Curricular standards in the Romanian curriculum

1.1)   at the end of the primary (4th grade / 10 years old)

Developing capacities of listening

S.1. Understand the global significance and identify details in an oral message

S.2. Make sense of unknown words based on the context in which they appear

Developing capacities of speaking

S.3. Adapt their message to their partners in a dialogue

S.4. Speak with clear diction, appropriate intonation and using correct language structures

S.5. Summarise a narrative on the basis of a simple plan of ideas

Developing capacities of reading

S.6. Read with fluency and accuracy, showing understanding of what they read

S.7. Select the main points in a narrative

S.8. Identify narrative, descriptive or dialogal sequences in a written text

S.9. Describe characters, setting and events in a narrative

Developing capacities of writing

S.10. Assemble and develop ideas for a narrative

S.11. Write a narrative, with support (using a simple plan of ideas)

S.12. Write a note, a congratulation letter, a postal card or an invitation on the basis of some instructions they are given

S.13. Write different types of text in a clear presentation and showing accuracy of their spelling

S.14. Use a clear structure in writing, using correct choice of words and language forms

1.2   at the end of the lower secondary (8th grade / 14 years old)

Developing capacities of listening

S.1. Make sense of the global significance of an oral message and discriminate between essential and nonrelevant pieces of information

S.2. Recognise a new sense of a word they know by understanding the whole communicative context

Developing capacities of speaking

S.3. Build an oral message on a given topic, adapting their speaking to a variety of communicative contexts

S.4. Summarise a narrative they first listen to or read

S.5. Describe a character in a narrative, with reference to his / her important features and to the means used by the author in presenting the character

Developing capacities of reading

S.6. Identify the relevant ideas in a literary or non-literary text

S.7. Recognise different genres in the text they read

S.8. Comment upon the means of expressivity used in a text they read

S.9. Explain how word order affects meaning in a given text

S.10. Recognise the expressive values of some morphological categories or syntactic relations in a given text

Developing capacities of writing

S.11. Summarise a narrative at first reading

S.12. Describe a character in a text at first reading, expressing preferences and commenting upon the means used by the author in presenting the character

S.13. Write about a text they read, emphasizing its genre features and its significances

S.14. Write different types of letters, an invitation, a petition / application, a telegram on the basis of some instructions they are given

S.15. Write different types of text in a clear presentation, showing accuracy of spelling, and using correct choice of words and language forms

2)   Attainment targets in the National Curriculum for England

The National curriculum (see: www.nc.uk.net) comprises three attainment targets "which consist of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for exceptional performance above level 8. Each level description describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate." (National Curriculum, 7) The curriculum also sets out expectations of what level should be attained at what age. Thus, for key stage 2 / age 11 level 4 is expected, for key stage 3 / age 14 level 5/6 is expected.

The "programmes of study" cover what should be taught in order to reach the attainment targets.

2.1)   key stage 2: level 4 – expected at age 11

Attainment target 1: speaking and listening

Level 4

"Pupils talk and listen with confidence in an increasing range of contexts. Their talk is adapted to the purpose: developing ideas thoughtfully, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly. In discussion, they listen carefully, making contributions and asking questions that are responsive to others' ideas and views. They use appropriately some of the features of standard English vocabulary and grammar."

Attainment target 2: reading

Level 4

"In responding to a range of texts, pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction. They refer to the text when explaining their views. They locate and use ideas and information."

Attainment target 3: writing

Level 4

"Pupils' writing in a range of forms is lively and thoughtful. Ideas are often sustained and developed in interesting ways and organised appropriately for the purpose of the reader. Vocabulary choices are often adventurous and words are used for effect. Pupils are beginning to use grammatically complex sentences, extending meaning. Spelling, including that of polysyllabic words that conform to regular patterns, is generally accurate. Full

stops, capital letters and question marks are used correctly, and pupils are beginning to use punctuation within the sentence. Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible."

2.2)   key stage 3 – level 5/6 – expected at age 14

Attainment target 1: speaking and listening

Level 5

"Pupils talk and listen confidently in a wide range of contexts, including some that are of a formal nature. Their talk engages the interest of the listener as they begin to vary their expression and vocabulary. In discussion, they pay close attention to what others say, ask questions to develop ideas and make contributions that take account of others' views. They begin to use standard English in formal situations."

Level 6

"Pupils adapt their talk to the demands of different contexts with increasing confidence. Their talk engages the interest of the listener through the variety of its vocabulary and expression. Pupils take an active part in discussion, showing understanding of ideas and sensitivity to others. They are usually fluent in their use of standard English in formal situations."

Attainment target 2: reading

Level 5

"Pupils show understanding of a range of texts, selecting essential points and using inference and deduction where appropriate. In their responses they identify key features, themes and characters and select sentences, phrases and relevant information to support their views. They retrieve and collate information from a range of sources."

Level 6

"In reading and discussing a range of texts, pupils identify different layers of meaning and comment on their significance and effect. They give personal responses to literary texts, referring to aspects of language, structure and themes in justifying their views. They summarise a range of information from different sources."

Attainment target 3: Writing

Level 5

"Pupils' writing is varied and interesting, conveying meaning clearly in a range of forms for different readers, using a more formal style where appropriate. Vocabulary choices are imaginative and words are used precisely. Simple and complex sentences are organised into paragraphs. Words with complex regular patterns are usually spelt correctly. A range of punctuation, including commas, apostrophes and inverted commas, is usually used accurately. Handwriting is joined, clear and fluent and, where appropriate, is adapted to a range of tasks."

Level 6

"Pupils' writing often engages and sustains the reader's interest, showing some adaptation of style and register to different forms, including using an impersonal style where appropriate. Pupils use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create effects. Spelling is generally accurate, including that of irregular words. Handwriting is neat and legible. A range of punctuation is usually used correctly to clarify meaning, and ideas are organised into paragraphs."

3)   Competence aims in the Norwegian subject curriculum

The Norwegian curriculum sets up competence aims after year 2, 4, 7, 10, then after "Vg1- programmes for general studies" and "Vg2 – vocational education programmes", also after "Vg3 – programmes for general studies" and "after the supplementary studies qualifying

for higher education – vocational education programme" (see http://www.udir.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloeftet/englis h/Norwegian_subject_curriculum.rtf).

For our purpose, competence aims after Year 4 and 10 are relevant. They are quoted here:

3.1)   Competence aims after Year 4

Oral texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- interact with others through play, dramatisation, conversation and discussions, and by practising the rules of group conversations

- tell stories, explain, give and receive messages

- explain how a person may offend others through language usage

- express his or her own thoughts and perceptions relating to children's literature, drama, films, computer games and TV shows

- present texts to fellow pupils

Written texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- read literature for children and factual prose for children fluently, with coherent understanding of the content, and describe personal literature choices

- write with a flowing and functional handwriting

- write stories, poems, letters and factual prose

- lay out text with a heading, an introduction and a conclusion

- master a vocabulary that is adequate to express knowledge, experience, perceptions, emotions and personal opinions

- recognise and use linguistic techniques such as repetition, contrast and simple metaphors and images

- assess and compare his or her own texts and those of others

- undertake information searches, create, store and retrieve texts using digital tools

- find source material for his or her own tasks in the library or on the internet

Composite texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- create stories by combining words, sounds and pictures

- discuss and elaborate on some aesthetic techniques in composite texts

Language and culture

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- talk about a selection of songs, nursery rhymes, poems, stories and fairytales from the past and the present, in both the first-choice and second-choice Norwegian languages, in translation from the Sami language and from other cultures

- express thoughts on language, characters and plots in texts from daily life and from fiction from various times and cultures

- describe similarities and differences between a selection of spoken varieties of the Norwegian language

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- understand some spoken Danish and Swedish

- describe language and the use of language, parts of speech and their functions

- vary syntax

3.2)   Competence aims after Year 10

Oral texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- express personal opinions in discussions and assess what is unbiased argumentation

- discuss and elaborate on how language can have discriminatory and injurious effects

- participate in exploratory conversations on literature, drama and film

- understand and reproduce information from Swedish and Danish everyday language

- chair and take minutes from meetings and discussions

- assess his or her own and other people's oral presentations

- give simple lectures, presentations and readings with interpretations, and participate in role play and dramatisation, adapted to different recipients

Written texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- read and write texts in various genres, including fiction and factual texts in the first-choice and second-choice Norwegian languages, such as articles, discussion input, formal letters, short stories, narratives, poems, drama texts and informal talks

- give grounds for personal choices of literature and reading material based on knowledge of reading strategies

- read and reproduce the content of a selection of texts in Swedish and Danish

- present personal response and perceptions in writing based on interpretation and reflection

- recognise literary techniques such as humour, irony, contrasts and comparisons, symbols and metaphors and use these in his or her own texts

- express himself or herself precisely and with a varied vocabulary with nuances in various texts in the first-choice and second-choice Norwegian languages

- show how texts in various genres can be constructed in various ways

- assess his or her own texts and personal writing development using knowledge of language and texts

- use word processing tools for filing his or her own work and systematising it

- use texts taken from libraries, the internet and mass media in a critical manner, discuss and elaborate on the texts and acknowledge the sources used

Composite texts

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- use various media, sources and aesthetic expressions in personal texts relating to the Norwegian subject curriculum and interdisciplinary texts

- assess aesthetic techniques in composite texts taken from information and entertainment media, advertising and art and reflect upon how we are influenced by sounds, language and images
- elaborate on the fundamental principles of protecting personal privacy and copyright in connection with the publication and use of texts of others

Language and culture

The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to

- present important themes and expressions in significant contemporary texts and compare them with presentations in classical works from the Norwegian literary heritage, such as love and gender roles, hero and anti-hero, reality and fantasy, power and counter power, lies and truth, break-up and responsibility

- elaborate on how social conditions, values and ways of thinking are presented in texts translated from Sami and other languages

- present results of in-depth studies on three selected topics: an author, a literary theme and a language topic

- elaborate on some characteristics of main groups of Norwegian dialects

- explain the background for the two Norwegian written languages with equal status and elaborate on language debates and linguistic variation in Norway today

- explain the rights relating to the Sami language and on the extent to which the Sami languages are used in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia

explain how meaning and expression are rendered and changed when simple stories, cartoons and pop lyrics are translated into Norwegian.

4)   The central German *Bildung*sstandards

The *Bildung*sstandards are set up for the end of primary / grade 4 (age 10), the end of Hauptschule / grade 9 (age 15) and the end of Realschule (middle-school) / grade 10 (age 16).

The expected outcome is formulated via specifications of competence domains. These are joined by a list of standards. The following offers a translation of the specified domains for grade 4 and grade 10.

4.1)   end of primary / grade 4

Speaking and listening

Oral language is a central medium of all communication – within and outside school. Speaking is always social acting.

The children develop a democratic culture of communication and extend their oral competence of acting with language. They engage in conversations, tell stories, give and process information, consciously shape their speaking and contribute orally to the lessons.

They explain their thoughts and emotions and address their utterances adequately with regard to listeners and situation, they listen attentively and precisely, they deal with utterances of others in a constructive manner.

Writing

In contrast to speaking, the text is processed more slowly and thoughtfully via writing, one can think about what is written with others and the writing can be revised.

Students make use of writing for communicative purposes, for storing information, for critical thinking and for creative use of language. They shape the writing process independently and consciously set up their texts with regard to aim, content and use.

Within this procedure the different parts of the writing process are linked: planning, writing and revising.

The children make use of basic strategies of orthography. They can write according to the sounds and they take into account orthographical and morphematical rules and knowledge of grammar. They have achieved first insights into the principles of orthography. They try and compare ways of spelling and think about them. Via comparison, use of dictionaries and use of rules they achieve correct spelling. They develop a sense for orthography and responsibility towards their texts.

The students make use of a variety of aesthetic expression according to the starting point and aim of their writing and work with different media. They write legibly and fluently.

Reading – dealing with text and media

Reading is an active process of the construction of meaning. Primary school leads to enjoyed, informative, selective, interpretative and critical reading and thus provides a sound basis for future learning, for future self determined reading and for a conscious choice of media.

The children experience that reading allows for critical engagement with the world and joyful experiences. Thus, via reading a variety of texts, interest, readiness and abilities to read are developed. Via listening and reading literary texts children engage in questions which are important to them, they identify with literary figures or limit themselves from them. Students deal with a variety of genres in a variety of media and can find their way through the world of media – print media, electronic media, mass media - according to their age.

Language and analysing language

Beginning with their language experiences the children develop their intuition of language further and consciously make use of language. In adequate situations of language use and communication they experience and explore language in context of use and elaborate upon content and the contribution of words, sentences and texts. They also speak about their experiences with other languages. They can make use of basic knowledge about grammar including terms and procedures to analyse language.

4.2)   end of Hauptschule / grade 9 and end of Realschule / grade 10

The attainment targets are identical. However, the standards are not.

Speaking and listening

The students manage communicative situations in personal, professional and public contexts adequately with regard to situation and addressee.

They make use of the standard language. They are aware of possibilities to communicate successfully and thus of what linguistic action leads to. They can engage in a culture of conversation, which is determined by attentive listeners and respectful manners of speaking.

Writing

The students know the various possibilities of writing as a medium of communication, description and reflection and write texts which are adequate towards their addressee.

They write independently, follow the aim, take into account the situation and addressee and shape their texts adequately via making conscious use of the different means of language. They know and make use of central forms of writing and shape their texts linguistically and stylistically correctly, they make use of strategies to avoid mistakes including the dictionary and write mostly correctly, they critically reflect their texts and revise if necessary. Within the productive (creative) use of language they develop individual ideas and express them.

Reading – dealing with texts and media

The students can make use of basic procedures for text comprehension, which supports interest in reading and experiences of pleasure with reading and which contributes to the development of empathy and understanding of others.

They gain information from text independently, make inferences and link them to prior knowledge. For this, they develop various reading techniques and make purposeful use of reading strategies. They can make use of basic knowledge about text, content, structure and the historical dimension, they reflect upon texts, judge and reflect their aesthetical demands on the basis of criteria. They can make use of a basic knowledge in language and literature and make use of a variety of media in order to gain information and critically reflect upon the information.

2. The Literary Canon: implications for the teaching of language as subject

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Introduction

The concept of a 'literary canon' is one that frequently arises, particularly in the context of discussions about the place of literature in national or federal curriculum programmes or syllabuses. Decisions made by educators, curriculum developers and policy makers about the content of the literature curriculum have underlying theoretical and political implications. For example, the canon is often accused by its critics of representing ethnocentric values which are antagonistic to diversity or of embodying absolute and ahistorical judgements which cannot be sustained. The aim of this paper is to examine and clarify some of the key background issues. The main focus here will be on the compulsory school curriculum but it should be noted that much of the debate about the canon has centred on higher education or wider societal contexts. Section One in this paper will examine ways of interpreting the concept of a 'canon' and will distinguish, in the context of compulsory schooling, between the official curriculum or syllabus and what might be described as the *de facto* canon – what happens in practice through tacit consensus rather than prescription. This discussion will also address wider societal notions of the canon associated with national identity because these have a direct bearing on the educational issues. Section Two will consider issues of justification: why is a canon thought to be desirable? why do some writers reject the idea of a canon? do the different ways of conceptualising the canon identified in section one help inform questions about justification? Section Three will examine the implicit theories that underlie positions on the canon. These relate to questions about how literature is defined and theories of reading. Section Four will summarise some of the debates and tensions and suggest possible ways forward.

The concept of a canon

The word 'canon' in English is derived from the Greek 'kanon' meaning a measuring rod and then a rule in law. The term came to have a religious meaning in the notion of canon law and subsequently became a term which referred to an authoritative list of approved books. In an educational context the concept usually refers to the specification of the literature texts that should be included in a syllabus in school or university. It may be helpful to distinguish between the official canon which is prescribed by national or local curriculum documents and the *de facto* canon that emerges from actual practice and may not have any official status. It may be thought that introducing the notion of a *de facto* canon is to stretch the concept too far; it may after all be argued that if there is no official prescription of any kind then the term 'canon' is inappropriate. However the value of including the wider *de facto* concept is that it may throw some light on the reasons for the emergence of a canon. The existence of a *de facto* canon may indicate that there is natural tendency amongst teachers to develop a set of recognised texts irrespective of whether these are dictated externally. If that is the case then this fact may have some bearing on arguments related to whether or not prescription of a canon is thought to be desirable; if a *de facto* canon always tends to emerge irrespective of official policy, this may strengthen the argument that canon formation should happen in a more systematic way. The *de facto* canon in an educational context has parallels with the wider use of the term 'canon' which can refer to the key accepted titles thought worthy of reading in a society, irrespective of whether these have been explicitly written down.

The two categories of the official and *de facto* canon are not as distinct as may appear on the surface. The official canon in an educational context can be conceptualised in terms of texts which are prescribed, recommended or simply suggested. Again this usage strays from the original meaning of 'canon' which had to do with 'laying down the law' in strict

terms. However it is important to recognise the alternative uses of the term because some curriculum guidelines or syllabuses stop short of prescribing texts but do offer instead strong recommendations or suggestions. Whether it is appropriate to continue to use the term 'canon' for the practice of simply recommending texts or to use it to describe the natural emergence of a set of agreed texts (the *de facto* version) is less important than the insight these uses provide into the related arguments. Terms do not have static meaning and it is worth recognising that the different uses of 'canon' have at least a family resemblance which highlights some of the complexities of the issues. Arguments for or against the canon sometimes focus on a narrow, oversimplified definition or misunderstandings of how the term is being used by the antagonists.

A further complication is that the official canon itself may be conceived in different ways – in terms of specification of titles of texts, authors, historical period or genres. Specification of specific titles or 'canonical texts' is the narrowest form of prescription. On the other hand, specifying authors rather than texts is also a form of prescription which leaves some latitude for local choices. The fact that not all the works written by an author are necessarily of the same quality highlights a weakness in this particular approach to the canon, particularly if the canon has been conceived as a specification of what is considered the best. Specifying titles and/or authors is the more typical way the canon is conceived in the wider society. Alternatively, a syllabus may specify the requirement to read texts within a specific historical period (the UK National Curriculum for example, as one of its requirements, requires the reading of texts published both before and after 1914). Some syllabuses use the notion of genre to determine types of texts which must be studied, prescribing for example the need to read poetry, prose and drama to ensure balance in pupils' reading. It could be argued that the concept of canon is here once again being extended too far. However these are all ways in which syllabuses can set some sort of parameters for the study of literary texts rather than just leaving a completely free choice; for that reason they are worthy of consideration.

When texts, authors or genres are specified for study this does not of course mean that the entire syllabus for an age group is necessarily pre-determined. It may be a case of specifying a minimum number of texts or authors while allowing the teacher or school latitude to choose other additional texts to foster wider reading. It is also important to acknowledge that these different approaches may be combined. For example a syllabus or national curriculum may require the reading of some specific texts as well a range of authors from a given list. It may also combine some specification of minimum requirements with latitude for local choices to acknowledge teacher and pupil interests and preferences.

The concept of a canon in an educational context needs to pay attention to two axes or dimensions: one is information or content based (the specified authors, texts, genres, historical periods) and the other is process oriented (the way teachers approach the specified content). It is the dynamic or interplay between these two dimensions which is crucial in determining the educational experience of the pupils. Too often the canon debate is conceived only with regard to content. The literary curriculum is not just a matter of specification of texts but also needs to embody theoretical perspectives on reading and teaching.

The *de facto* canon may also include literature written specifically for children which is sometimes excluded from the traditional canon because it has tended to focus more on established texts that have stood the test of time. Children's literature or youth literature is an established genre and a field of academic study in its own right and the notion of children's classic literature is recognised. Even so, it is easy to see how the idea of including certain types of literature written specifically for young people might be contested on the grounds that contemporary texts of this kind do not have the desirable aesthetic qualities and depth that might be expected of canonical texts. Underlying this

view are of course implicit theoretical views about the nature of reading and about judging quality.

As indicated, a *de facto* canon can arise for a number of reasons, irrespective of whether or not there is a nationally prescribed set of texts or authors. There may be practical reasons for this. Classic texts may continue to be read because these are the ones that are readily available to schools operating with limited budgets. Teachers sometimes hear about texts that genuinely engage pupils through their formal and informal networks, and these become the accepted texts for study. Publishers may have an influence on the *de facto* canon not just in their choice of core texts and how they market them but also in relation to the availability of auxiliary texts of criticism.

The writers of text books which are either officially approved or popular in schools may also have an impact on the canon. These may not necessarily reinforce tradition but may seek to challenge it by including a wider range of authors and genres (for example in Norway there has not been a strong official canon tradition but there has been a strong *de facto* curriculum in text books and classroom practices).

There may however be less pragmatic reasons for the emergence of a canon. It may be that the emergence of a set of key agreed texts, irrespective of whether these are prescribed or not, is genuinely related to notions of quality and 'high' culture. According to Kennedy (2001:105) canon formation is a 'natural human instinct' which is an attempt 'to impose order on variety by choosing what is best for preservation over time'. These issues of principle are of course related to justification arguments for and against the adoption of a canon to which this discussion will now turn.

Justification

Just as the concept of a canon is more complex than at first seems, so also are the arguments for and against its adoption in relation to the study of literature. The traditional criteria for forming the canon have primarily been associated with notions of quality, selection of those texts or authors which are considered 'the best'. However other related criteria were to do with selecting texts thought to be representative of a particular period, style or genre or those which have had an impact on culture historically and those which are thought to have a particular national significance. It is easy therefore to see why the canon has been criticised for preserving nationalist and ethnocentric values. The debate about the canon has often been fierce, particularly in the United States where in the 1980s and 1990s there was first an attack on the traditional canon and then a 'conservative backlash' against attempts to broaden it to make it more representative of society (Altieri, 1990: Guillory, 1993). Benton (2000:169) has referred to the 'canon wars' which raged in higher education between 'those who supported a unitary canon and their challengers advocating pluralism'. Underlying arguments about justification then are ideological positions related to issues such as power, representation and academic freedom. It is tempting to see the canon debate in terms of stark polarisations between, for example, liberal and conservative views, high culture and relativism, separatist and inclusive accounts of art. However arguments about the canon do not necessarily fall neatly into established polar positions.

Traditional arguments in favour of a canon focused on the need to preserve the best of a nation's cultural heritage. More recently, arguments have centred on the need to have a wide variety of social groups represented in reading lists and that these need to be prescribed. The traditional elitist argument for a canon has thus been reversed to suggest that unless there is a representative canon, literary study in universities and schools will not be properly balanced. Arguments have centred not just on preserving or abolishing the canon but on how it should be revised. Different views of whether or not a canon is desirable therefore need to be considered in relation to the content of particular canons and how these operate. The importance of context becomes particularly important when considering issues of national identity and language. For newly independent, emerging

nations the canon may be symbolic of freedom, independence and the preservation of indigenous language and culture rather than representative of repression and power.

Altieri (1990) has suggested that canons are almost always based on 'normative claims'; a motivation to recognise, preserve and pass on to the next generation the literature that is considered the best. Kennedy (2001) has demonstrated the focus on normative judgements in the historical development of notions of the canon as an instinct 'to preserve traditional knowledge and values against the erosion of time'. The importance of selecting a small number of works for posterity made particular sense in oral cultures where it was simply not possible to preserve every oral text. It was also a consideration in societies prior to the advent of mass print production which relied on some element of selection because of the effort needed in copying out texts. Issues of quality were central in the canon formation in various contexts. In classical times Alexandria librarians had begun to make lists of the poets they judged most deserving to be studied and kept. Almost all the works of Greek classical writers were lost: just seven plays each out of over a hundred written by Aeschylus and Sophocles were thought sufficient for teaching (ibid 109). This instinct to preserve what is thought of as the best survives from classical times to the present but judgments of quality have become problematic in contemporary debates.

Few writers now would see the determination of a canon on the basis of simply choosing 'the best' as being an innocent matter; the implied absolutism has been questioned on theoretical, historical and cultural grounds. Eagleton (1983:11) emphasised the importance of seeing the canon, the unquestioned 'great tradition' as a 'construct': 'there is no such thing as a literary value or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it.' Historical perspectives on literature which had been dormant for so long when new criticism was in the ascendancy, draw attention to the contextual nature of judgements; if a text has a different meaning to different generations, the idea of a static list of texts claiming universal quality must be open to question. It is also argued that the traditional idea of a canon does not acknowledge the significance of cultural differences sufficiently. This is hardly surprising because the canon has been associated with preserving national characteristics and values.

According to Benton (2000) the challenge to the traditional canon has come from two main directions: from post-colonial, feminist and other theorists who, as part of an agenda for social and cultural change, have questioned the dominance of white, male, bourgeois canonical texts. Arguments for widening the canon have been part of an agenda for social reform. The other main challenge has come from curriculum modernisers with writers focusing more on making the curriculum relevant to young people in the modern age. The advent of film and other forms of media has questioned the exclusive focus on the written text which has tended to define the traditional canon. Modern technology has brought new access to resources and to different forms of texts. In addition, teachers who are faced with the reality of trying to interest young people in reading will often take a more pragmatic approach to choice of texts and argue that a genuine, engaged response to a more contemporary work is more worthwhile than incomprehension or indifference to an established canonical text. It could be argued that the traditional concept of the canon was based on unquestioning reverence and acceptance rather than a critical and questioning approach that is more likely to be found in contemporary pedagogy. It could also be argued that the traditional canon diminishes teacher autonomy and underestimates teachers' abilities to choose appropriate texts for pupils; the implicit view here it that it is not possible to legislate for good teaching which develops only when there is an active, involved, independent, thinking profession.

Arguments about the canon in relation to the school curriculum cannot be entirely disassociated from questions about pedagogy and means, nor from consideration of the aims and purposes of literature teaching. If literature teaching is associated with identity formation, language learning, understanding culture, developing values and even coming

to terms with the past, then choice of texts will be a relevant, if not the only factor determining the nature of the learning involved. (For a more detailed discussion of the aims of literature teaching see the paper *Text, literature and "Bildung" – comparative perspectives: Section I*) In the contemporary school curriculum, literature is more likely to be seen as an integrated component of 'language as subject' with the literary texts serving as a focus for the development of communicative competence and knowledge about language, as well as for the development of what have traditionally been seen as more purely 'literary' competencies (ability to analyse formal elements of texts, discussion of themes and characters etc.). These perspectives all have a bearing on choice of texts for study.

Many of the arguments in favour of the canon have emerged largely in response to the challenges which have been advanced in the last forty or so years; before that, the existence of the canon tended to be taken for granted. Many of these arguments then are not just a reassertion of naïve, fundamentalist views but are advanced with a more sophisticated understanding of the literary theoretical ideas which have informed the criticisms. Bloom (1995) for example has re-asserted the significance of the aesthetic in response to literature and criticised the different politicised approaches to literary theory, calling them 'The School of Resentment'. The traditional idea of the canon was based on authority as evidenced by the historical origins of the term. However an alternative view, based on some form of consensus, suggests that the canon is not necessarily static and immune from criticism and change, but may be a valuable focus for sharing perceptions and values within a community of practice. This type of argument is different from the traditional authoritarian notion of the static canon because it recognises its contextual and therefore dynamic nature. The canon may be associated with ideas related to preserving 'cultural memory'; it provides a focus for collective identity and shared values.

It should also be recognised that it may be the *de facto* rather than the official canon which is more a force for preserving traditional choices and approaches. This is for example the case in Romania as well as other countries where the official curriculum has sought to promote a more flexible approach to choice of texts and a more active approach in the classroom. The aim of incorporating contemporary ideas on teaching literature drawn from reception theory has not always been followed by actual practice in some classrooms which has tended to cling to established practices.

In the context of formal schooling it may be argued that the choice of appropriate reading for young people should not be left entirely to the whim of the individual teacher but should be subject to some form of influence. The formation of the curriculum may be guided more by ideas of 'entitlement', the idea that pupils should have rights to particular content or experiences, rather than the imposition of arbitrary rules, places a different complexion on the specification of a canon. There are of course practical difficulties in determining how a national syllabus can be said to reflect consensus but this does not necessarily affect the principle that the canon may be associated with democratic rather than authoritarian ideas.

The notion of entitlement can be linked with ideas related to 'cultural capital', the idea that all pupils have the right to be exposed to 'key texts' in society as part of an agenda for social inclusion. The canon tended to very traditional by nature. However, the notion of 'quality' is not just associated with texts from the past nor is the notion of 'culture awareness' associated only with historical ideas of cultural heritage. Understanding contemporary ideas happens partly through reading contemporary authors and texts; wider cultural awareness and understanding can be promoted by reading and comparing texts from different cultures. Guillory (1993) has drawn on the concept of 'cultural capital' to introduce a different dimension into the canon debate, arguing that it has been misconceived. In the United States in particular in the 1990s the debate was dominated by arguments that a variety of social groups should be represented; it was more a question of

reform than abolition of the canon. Guillory argues that canon formation should be understood as a question of the distribution of cultural capital in schools. In a culture of 'universal access' canonical texts would not be experienced as 'lifeless monuments' or as 'proofs of class distinction' (340), his argument is one in favour of universal access.

The influence of theory

Some of the underlying theoretical considerations related to debates about the canon have already been alluded to in this paper. These derive from literary and wider cultural and aesthetic theory and relate to such issues as the definitions of literature, different conceptions of what reading involves and the formation of judgements about literature.

One of the challenges to the traditional notion of the canon has derived from contested ideas about the nature of literature itself, questioning whether it is possible to define it as a discrete, stable category. Theories which grew from the 1960s onwards started to question long-held assumptions about literature including 'the idea of the author as the origin of a text's meaning, the possibility of objective interpretation, the validity of the empirical historical scholarship and the authority of the literary canon' (Lodge, 1988: xi). The first chapter of Eagleton's (1983) seminal *Literary Theory and Introduction* was devoted to the problem of defining literature. The boundaries of what counts as literature are not always clear: some philosophical texts, letters, essays, sermons are often counted as literature. The concept of 'fiction' is not equivalent to literature (not all poetry is fiction) because it embraces other forms of narrative including film. According to some writers (Aston and Savona, 1991), drama may be studied as literature or as theatrical process or performance with the suggestion that these approaches are not identical. All sorts of texts can be written in a literary style without necessarily defining these as literature *per se.*

Some contemporary theorists have defined literature not in terms of intrinsic, essentialist criteria but in relation to how a particular text is read – whether it is read purely for functional purposes, for the information it supplies, or whether there is an aesthetic dimension to the response to the text. The converse position is that a recognised literary text may be read in a purely functional way. Given the fluidity of the boundaries, there may be an argument to suggest that the key curriculum decision is not so much about specifying texts or authors in relation to a literary canon but rather should focus on whether a range of different *types of reading* should be prescribed including fiction and non-fiction texts.

It has been suggested that the traditional canon centred largely on issues of quality and was associated with preserving what was thought to be 'the best'. Much contemporary thinking has challenged the making of absolute judgements in such a simple way but, on the other hand a relativist position which sees judgments about quality as a purely personal, individual matter is hardly helpful in the context of designing a curriculum. It could be argued that schools have a responsibility to introduce young people to some of the writing which is considered particularly worthy of study. The resolution of this tension lies within the notion of consensus which is contrary to the traditional authoritarian notion of the canon but embraces what might be termed a 'democratic canon'.

Implicit in the traditional idea of the canon was the tendency to consider individual texts either in isolation or within a particular author's oeuvre or historical context but less in relation to each other. The notion of 'intertextuality' which is another component of the literary theory which emerged in the 1960s, emphasises the various relations a text may have with other texts. These operate in relation to the more commonly accepted notions such as parody and allusion but also at a deeper level which acknowledges that a literary text is not simply the product of a single author, but derives its meaning from its relationship to other texts; reading in turn is informed both by other texts which the reader has read, and by the reader's own cultural background. The challenge to seeing

texts in isolation again has implications for how the canon should be conceived: modern texts be chosen in part because they provide a suitable way into more classical literature.

Underlying the traditional concept of a canon are elements of a 'new critical' approach to literature which places emphasis on the way meaning inheres in the formal features of the text and deliberately excludes authorial intentions and the historical or cultural context. Reader-response theories which have been more influential on pedagogic practice in recent years, place more emphasis on the reader's role in creating meaning. This approach is more aware of the potential for a variety of interpretations of a text and in the classroom the focus is on a more dynamic conception of literary understanding. The ability of pupils to respond imaginatively to texts and to engage with characters is valued more strongly than passive knowledge of revered texts. This perspective reinforces the view that the discussion of curriculum content cannot be divorced entirely from consideration of process.

Summary and conclusions

The traditional canon was conceived as something authoritarian, static, elite and ahistorical. On the basis of that definition, the arguments against it are strong, specifically that it:

- is insensitive to the diverse nature of contemporary societies;

- underestimates the significance of pedagogy in the classroom;

- ignores the challenge of engaging the interest of young people;

- embodies an essentialist conception of literature that ignores the importance of context;

- assumes that judgements of quality are straightforward and uncontested;

- undervalues the professional judgements of teachers.

The alternative however is not necessarily to abandon the notion of a canon completely. Consideration of the variety of approaches to defining the canon is enough to suggest that at least caution needs to be exercised before rejecting the idea of a canon too prematurely. A rather different conception of the official canon emerges when the arguments in favour are considered, that it:

- prevents the *de facto* canon from being left to chance;

- protects the interests of pupils for whom choice of reading content should not be arbitrary;

- ensures some element of curriculum entitlement for all pupils;

- allows consideration of the balance of the prescribed curriculum between national and multicultural texts, classic and modern etc.

Whether the term 'canon' is still employed or whether the concept of 'reading requirement' is preferred, there are arguments in favour of having some specified parameters for determining the type of reading thought to be desirable in the compulsory curriculum. One advantage of retaining the term canon is that it links educational decisions with wider debates about the canon in society and in higher education. However if the term canon is retained it needs to be dissociated from notions of authority and law that are associated with its etymology. The idea of a 'democratic canon' is easier to assert in theory than to realise in practice, but this concept embodies the ideas of consensus and negotiation which are related to a more dynamic idea of what is involved. With this in mind curriculum developers who subscribe to the idea of a canon might like to consider questions of the following type:

- does the specified canon leave sufficient flexibility for teachers and pupils to exercise some choice?

- are there mechanisms for regularly reviewing the literary curriculum?

- are teachers involved in discussions about the appropriate choices of text and authors?

- is there a sufficient balance between national texts and texts from other cultures?

- does the specified curriculum pay sufficient attention to process as well as content?

- does the curriculum take account of the need to engage pupils' interests in wider reading?

- is the definition of 'text' sufficiently broad to represent contemporary culture?

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3. Portfolio in LS teaching and learning?

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Introduction

The general challenges and tensions associated with assessment were outlined in a previous publication for the conference in 2006 (Mike Fleming, *Evaluation and Assessment, 2006/*www.coe.int/lang). These are in part associated with the different functions which assessment is expected to serve which were described in broad terms as the familiar distinction between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning. Assessment is important because it provides information about a learner's progress but its effects can also be negative if it is conceived and implemented in ways which are too narrow and restrictive. The challenges associated with language as subject are particularly demanding because of the complexity of its aims which incorporate different types of knowledge, skills and understanding in the context of different language domains such as speaking and listening, reading and writing (see *Aims in the Teaching/learning of Language(s) of Education*). The traditional standardised test has the advantage that it may be easy to administer and may offer reasonable levels of reliability when objective mark schemes are adhered to but many important aims associated with language as subject are not easily assessed in this way. It is difficult for example to assess speaking and listening in a timed test. Similarly it is difficult to assess range and depth of reading through examinations alone. It is important also to consider whether short tests as the only form of assessment are the best means of motivating the learner. The use of course work or portfolio assessment can be a way of engaging and motivating learners and of providing a broader approach to assessment. It is the purpose of this paper therefore to consider the appropriateness of portfolio assessment as a viable addition or alternative to end of course examinations or tests, particularly in relation to literature. Portfolio may have a function as a new assessment culture (Birenbaum & Dochy 1996, Birenbaum 2003) and it may add new dimensions to assessment by showing growth over time and engage students more in their learning processes and reveal their learning strategies (Davies & Mahieu 2003). Roger Ellmin states that portfolio is an "empowerment strategy"(Ellmin 2005).

Portfolio – a tool for learning and assessment

The benefits of portfolio may be described in the following points:

- Working with portfolio may link learning processes and assessment

- Portfolio may provide better understanding of learning processes and enhance better learning strategies

- Portfolio methodology demands process oriented approaches and teacher-learner and learner-learner communication through mediation

- Portfolio may enhance motivation through social interaction between learners and between teacher and learners

- Portfolio may allow for focussing upon and encouraging individual developments of the learners and thus for meeting demands of heterogeneous groups

- Portfolio methodology may include the learner in deciding and selecting what documentation and material assessment should be based upon.

- Portfolio may create more predictability for the learner and better understanding of the criteria for evaluation.

The function of portfolio is however dependent on the underlying purpose, the way it is constructed and the way it is used (Ansey & Weiser 1997). These three aspects may vary in different school cultures. The emphasis may be on assessment in the narrow sense of deciding a competence level for the purpose of giving an appropriate mark, or the emphasis may be on assessment for progress and development. In most cases portfolio is expected to have both these functions: a tool for documentation of competences and a tool for learning to learn. In principle portfolio opens up for diversity of purposes for assessment. In reality this diversity may be restricted by the way it is constructed and used.

One might find it useful to have two different kinds of portfolios: one *working* portfolio, and one *presentation* portfolio. The first one will mainly have the function of being a learning medium and a medium for assessing progression, and mediating work in progress. This portfolio will contain various drafts of work in progress, responses from peers and teacher and self assessment and reflection upon own work. The second portfolio will consist of a selection of final products and may serve as material for final evaluation. In this model the idea is to distinguish between process and product and thus between formative and summative assessment. The presentation portfolio will reflect the aims of competences in the curriculum: examples of genres, tasks, work forms and proficiency on a specific level in school. Normally the student will be the one to select his/her products for this second portfolio. This is how a student may have more control of the basis for evaluation.

The most widely use of portfolio in LS classroom seems to be a portfolio for *writing*, often in an ICT setting where students easily can keep track of their texts, revise them and collect different drafts. In this portfolio they may also collect responses from teacher and peers and of their own reflections and self assessment throughout the proocesses. There is however no restraints for constructing portfolios for oral competences, for reading and for producing and understanding of multi-modal text forms. Reading competences may be documented through reading logs, reflection upon aspects of a book etc. Documentation of pictures and sound can be presented electronically as well as in forms of audio or video DVDs. Still writing will play an important part in portfolio methodology for better or worse. Writing has a special impact on learning through the possibilities of expressing understanding explicitly through language, through the development of understanding through writing (epistemic writing) and by being able to reflect on it in reading later on. On the other hand we may favour learners who already are strong writers in putting more emphasis on writing. It would thus be desirable to offer opportunities for developing writing competences within portfolio-work.

Self assessment and meta-cognition have been assumed to be the most important learning benefits of portfolios. By looking upon their own work produced in a process over a period of time, the learners are being helped to see and to express changes. By looking upon work from other learners they develop a broader scope of dealing with tasks. By having to give response to other students they are forced to have assumptions on how progress may be obtained and what criteria are important for success. To develop more than one writing- and reading strategy the learners need to meet more than one example or model. The social interaction developed in connection with portfolio methodology seems to have had an impact on learning in many classrooms.

It is not evident that learners are able to assess themselves and give response to peers in meaningful ways. These are competences they need to learn and develop. And in many reports from implementation of portfolios this seems to be the crucial point. Teachers point out that without systematic work with examples and criteria for assessment and response, the students were not able to point out qualities and weak points in their own works. And if they have not developed an understanding of why a text is better than another, the selection in to a presentation portfolio becomes arbitrary and looses its

function. Self assessment is in other words a competence that must be acquired in the portfolio methodology.

A special portfolio methodology?

Working with portfolio most certainly does not imply *one* specific methodology. Still it requires an underlying thinking of aims and objectives in LS of learning processes and learning strategies. It also demands strong consideration of how learning communities can be developed in a classroom and which interactions between learners and between learners and teacher are necessary for growth and understanding. In other words, there is a need for an awareness of portfolio methodology in connections with the tool itself. Emphasis may be on sociocultural perspectives on learning or on individual cognitive learning processes.

Introduction of portfolio without a teacher having a deep understanding of possibilities and restraints of portfolio may reduce the effect of this tool to another classroom procedure. The role of the teacher is crucial. Portfolio requires communication between learners and teacher based upon mediation. Mediation requires understanding of learners work from a number of perspectives: intentions, competences and strategies apparent in students' work, hypotheses of directions for development, and abilities to obtain trust. A portfolio without the aspects of mediation and steered processes can hardly fulfil the intentions of being a learning medium.

Teachers who choose to work within the frames of a portfolio will find that it gives an opportunity to follow students more easily in their development. He may also be able to see and reflect upon his own strategies for helping the students to learn. Ellen Krogh points out that portfolio assessment practice to a high degree shaped the didactic culture in the experiment class of her research by turning the student into co-owners and co-producers of criteria and tools for subject knowledge (Krogh 2005). This way the portfolio methodology enhanced not only learning aims of the subject, but a deeper understanding of what the subject really was about.

ELP – an example for an LS portfolio?

The development of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) must be considered a great success in teaching and learning of foreign languages in Europe. It is widely spread and used. In considering a portfolio for language of education (LE) especially in the school subject (LS) we may look to the ELP for clarifying possibilities and limits for enhancing competences within this particular field. Foreign language (FL) and LS acquisition have many features in common but also differences which is important to bear in mind. The advanced competences enhanced in LS calls for new ways of understanding the function as well as construction of portfolio.

The three main purposes for portfolios listed above: portfolios mainly for learning processes, mainly for assessment or for both these functions may be applied also for portfolios for foreign languages.The ELP seems to be in the latter category. It consists of three parts: The *language passport*, the *language biography*, and the *dossier.* The passport defines competences in a grid of levels and descriptors to define skills of understanding, speaking and writing. The biography is a documentation of learning experiences and goals and it helps the learners to fix learning objectives. The dossier contains examples of student work. One of the main benefits of ELP is the strong focus on self-assessment and meta-cognition. In this respect it meets the need for including the learner in the learning processes as an agent. It helps the learner to understand expectations of goals and progress and criteria for success. Any portfolio for LS most certainly must enhance these perspectives.

The ELP is adapted from *The Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning teaching, assessment* (CEFR) and the very fact that it has met the need for practical tools dealing with complicated questions explains its success. The ELP is mainly a

tool for assessment and self assessment of language *use* and *communication.* The can-do statements account for that. Knowledge and skills and existential knowledge are thus seen as mere prerequisite for being able to use language effectively, not as aims in themselves. In LS language use and communication certainly are important issues, learners need to develop their abilities to speak, read, write and understand throughout the years of schooling. On the other hand, this is not the complete scope of the aims in LS. A detailed presentation on this is outlined in a previous publication [Laila Aase, *Aims in the Teaching/ Learning of Language(s) of Education(LE), 2006/*www.coe.int/lang] and shall not be repeated here. The main point here is to underline how *knowledge* and *existential competences* (*Bildung*) are part of cultural aims in LS and therefore will have a different role to play than the way it has been dealt with in ELP.

Constructing descriptors of competences in a portfolio is a challenge in itself, but more problematic in an LS portfolio because of national differences in aims for competences in the various curricula. One problem is national variations in defining purposes of LS and thus content, another is variation in emphasis on canon and genre. If writing skills are mostly developed in one genre, descriptors of competences will be defined very differently than in situations where a broad scope of genre is the aim. Writing a short story surely takes other skills and competences than writing an article or a literary essay, so just the range of competences will be more complicated than in ELP where these distinctions are not very prominent. In ELP writing well structured texts in different genres belongs to the C2 level without any distinctions between genres or structures. An LS portfolio would need to develop criteria for *quality* in different genres for various age groups, which is not a simple task to do.

It might also lead to the reconsideration of genres specific to LS (e.g. the German "Aufsatzarten"), because within a learning portfolio processes of writing and revision should be functional within classroom interaction and not only within the framework of assessment.

In developing a LS portfolio the age of learners surely will be an issue. Most learners enter school with a functional oral language in their mother tongue. And if language of school education is their mother tongue they can take part in anything that goes on in the classroom without much problems of understanding. This means that they are fairly advanced language users in some domains (talking and listening) and beginners in some domains. Often their language competences are narrowed to every day language use which means that they also need to develop their oral language towards precise concepts for learning school subjects and towards esthetical ways of using language to appreciate literature. This process goes on through all years of schooling and includes language development and cultural development at the same time. Learners are however not equal from the beginning, and even if school has aims for equality of learning opportunities, levelling seems to be difficult. In spite of this problem, most curricula have descriptors for competences for particular age groups on certain levels. The problem appears in deciding a particular competence normatively and scaling this competence. We do not have enough research based knowledge to make reliable decisions on these matters.

An outline for a LS portfolio

In constructing a LS portfolio one might consider to use either the ELP model: covering all the different areas of language competences, or: restricting the scope to one or two different areas of aims for the subject. Aims and objectives of national curricula will probably give answers to which model to prefer. Documentation of language proficiency for use outside school is hardly an issue for native speakers or young children. Portfolios for summative assessment for all age groups is not relevant in some countries were exams are restricted to older students. In short, portfolios for learning processes seem to be a tool relevant for all users.

An analysis of ELP seems to identify some problems if we want to transfer the model to a LS portfolio. On the other hand the principles of self assessment and meta-cognition are valuable in any learning tool. One might find the levels of progression and the can-do statements inadequate and feel the need for wider scopes on explaining, describing, telling how and why students choose to do things the way they do it. More interesting than deciding if a child reaches A,B, or C level in reading or writing is his/her strategies and understanding of the options for text interpretation and production. The teacher needs to involve the students in learning processes and often marking and summative evaluation comes in the way. The principle of separating mentoring from marking seems to enhance learning.

A way of adapting the ELP to LS classrooms could be to develop a portfolio based on a combination of the biography and the dossier. The biography has the function of enhancing awareness of learning to learn and document the experiences the learner has with language use and language learning. In ELP the learner may present the languages he or she masters, which may be of importance for motivation and self esteem, but also for making clear possibilities of dealing with languages in the context of plurilingualism. When used adequately the biography offers a number of ways to enhance reflections on language functions and learning processes.

The dossier in ELP could very well be the core of a new way of constructing a portfolio for LS (for a comparable approach that enhances the role of the dossier within the ELP see the study: *Enhancing the pedagogical aspects of the European Language Portfolio (ELP)* by Viljo Kohonen and Gerard Westhoff (2000):www.coe.int/Portfolio:section/Documentation. One might wish to develop and expand the dossier and put less emphasis on the passport (or have it restructured to a different system of describing competences). Instead of a passport which by definition has the function of deciding a level of skills, one might propose another tool which will contain certain criteria for text competences in different genres for different age groups. These criteria will then be the point of reference for self assessment and give the students information of the criteria for success. The teacher will have to decide what kind of student work should be included in the dossier and use it currently for mentoring and interaction, teacher-student and student-student.

Self-assessment parts of the portfolio could include reflections on the use of media including literature in everyday life, on attitudes towards reading and experiences with different genres and modes (media diary). Thus, the portfolio could address practice which is influential in the learning process within LS, but which surpasses the institutional context. However, portfolio work then surpasses the boarder between the private and the public sphere of the individual. Thus, it has to be noted that creating a context of trust where the use of the portfolio is clearly defined is crucial.

In constructing a LS portfolio one might wish to consider the following:

- The possibilities of constructing a portfolio with descriptors for competences on various age levels but without scaling on levels (A,B,C) for domains

- Constructing portfolios nationally in accordance with content and aims in national curricula based on common European principles for learner participation, communication and learning processes

- The possibilities of constructing a portfolio more for learning purposes than for evaluation

Moreover, one might wish to consider moving towards the broader scope of LS and make use of the portfolio for language learning across the curriculum.

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