

What Are Literary Studies For? A Review of English Teacher Education in Sweden

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The present article addresses the nature and purposes of literary studies in secondary and upper secondary English teacher education programmes in Sweden. It is based on a study of syllabi from all programmes nationally and for the academic year 2017-2018. The article maps the goals formulated for literary studies as well as the literary and disciplinary repertoires foregrounded in these documents, and so provides a snapshot of the kinds of literary studies that student teachers of English had access to. It situates literary studies in the context of steering documents for English teacher education, and it shows that, whilst literary studies were a given part of English teacher education in the studied period, they relied on a narrow conception of the discipline. Literary studies mainly attended to twentieth and twenty-first century prose fiction and regarded literature primarily as a source of worldly knowledge. Indeed, the repertoires mediated seemed based on their potential to cover curricular ground in relation to steering documents for Swedish schools. Given the relative freedom institutions had to define the subject-specific content of teacher education, the results prompt a discussion about the knowledge repertoires that student teachers need as part of their higher education and as preparation for professional practice.

Keywords: curriculum theory, disciplinary repertoires, literature didactics (*litteraturdidaktik*), teachers' knowledge base, value of literary studies.

1. Introduction

What are the purposes of literary studies in English teacher education, and what knowledge, or understanding, of literature and of literary studies should be imparted to student teachers of English in Sweden? The questions are central for English teacher education. They touch upon the larger issues of what English teachers must know, of the task, content and aims of education, and, by extension, of what pupils in Sweden should learn in their English classes. Similarly, the questions draw attention to the value of engaging with literature in English. They require a consideration of the conditions for doing so – in school and in higher education, but also outside formal education – and they involve ways of delimiting what aspects of literature and of literary studies are worth mediating.

In what follows, I address the subject-specific content pertaining to literature and literary studies that is included in English teacher education in Sweden. The endeavour is based on the assumption that teacher education profoundly affects the ways in which English teachers understand their subject: both the academic subject of English and the English school subject. This includes how they understand the value of literature, and the nature and purposes of literary studies, and, further, how they understand the place of literary studies in relation to their professional preparation and the uses of literature in the English classroom (cf. Bogdal 2002:9-29). Moreover, the project is based on the recognition that teacher education is of particular interest for the field of literary studies. Teacher education – alongside the discipline of literary studies and school teaching – is taken to be one of the main arenas in relation to which the value and legitimacy of literature and of literary reading are explored and debated (Persson 2012:17). An examination of English teacher education, then, provides insights into valuations of literary studies.

My main material comprises the steering documents for English teacher education, with particular focus on the academic syllabi included in secondary and upper secondary teacher programmes. I review the English syllabi that included literary studies from all universities and university colleges in Sweden, and for the academic year 2017-18. The material provides a snap-shot of the kinds of literary studies that student teachers of English had access to. My intention is to map the knowledge

that the syllabi nationally expressed a desire to mediate. Specifically, I am interested in the orientation and goals formulated for the study of literature in the English teacher programmes and in the repertoires – literary, disciplinary and conceptual – that were made available to student teachers.

In examining these matters, the review is aligned with similar studies about literature and teacher education. In Sweden, these have primarily focused on the school subject of Swedish, and they have addressed, for instance, subject conceptions and text selections (Ulfgard 2015, Kåreland 2009, Mossberg Schüllerqvist 2008, Persson 2007, Lundström 2007, Bergöö 2005).¹ The few existing publications regarding literature and English teacher education in Sweden include perspectives on didactic practice that focuses on multimodal texts, poetry and creative writing, metacognitive approaches to disciplinary knowledge, and democratic citizenship education via literature (e.g. Lindberg & Svensson 2020, Sundmark & Olsson Jers 2020, Dodou 2018, Cananau & Sims 2017).² To existing debates over literature and teacher education, the present article adds a review of the position and orientation of literary studies in English teacher education nationally. Thereby, it sheds light on current practices that have bearing on one of the core school subjects in Sweden.

In the studied period, the national school curricula stipulated that English teaching should include literature; however, they attached no knowledge requirements to this aspect of teaching. Knowledge requirements about literature, instead, featured in the syllabus for the school subject of Swedish.³ Swedish was also the subject mainly responsible for the teaching of literature in schools,

¹ Swedish academic debates on literature and teaching are extensive and manifold. Those involving literary scholars, however, have mainly concerned the position and uses of reading literature in a school context, and they have primarily considered the question in relation to the school subject of Swedish. Teacher education research has been less common, as have the perspectives of other language subjects. Debates have addressed such questions as the core of the Swedish subject, different ways of understanding the value of literature and the role of literature in primary and secondary education, the complexities of text selections and the relation between literature and forms of narrative in other media, the task and character of the school teacher (including the possibility of modelling reading teachers in teacher education), the relation between the discipline and the school subject, the needs of pupils, and appropriate teaching strategies (e.g. Lindell & Öhman 2019; Martinsson 2018; Ulfgard 2015; Jönsson & Öhman 2015; Degerman 2012; Bergman, Hultin, Lundström & Molloy 2009; Olin-Scheller 2008; Kåreland 2009; Thavenius 1999, Malmgren & Thavenius 1991, Thavenius 1991).

² Swedish school- and higher education oriented research that addresses the teaching of literature in the subjects of English, French, German and Spanish has examined, for instance, subject conceptions, literary mediation and text selections, reader responses and reading motivation, as well as how and why language students should study literature (Aronsson 2020; Marx Åberg 2020 & 2014; Karlsson Hammerfelt 2017; Ullén 2016; Mörte Alling 2016; Cedergren & Lindberg 2015; Cedergren 2015; Thyberg 2012; Tegmark 2011; Alvstad & Castro 2009; Westphal 2009).

³ The Swedish school curricula stipulate that pupils should encounter literature in all language subjects, that is Swedish, Swedish as a Second Language, English and Modern languages. Goals concerning knowledge about literature, however,

and this meant that English and other foreign-language literature was often taught, in translation, in Swedish classes. This division between the domains of the school subjects raises questions about the position and uses of literature in English in secondary and upper secondary education. It also raises questions about how to understand the position and purposes of literary studies within English teacher education, especially given that the academic English subject displays a keen ambition to teach literature for its own sake (Dodou 2020a).

In examining literary studies in English teacher education, the present review documents parts of the contemporary history of the academic English subject and of English teacher education in Sweden. By mapping practices nationally, it invites the consideration of what knowledge should be mediated to future English teachers. The review also provides a basis for continued discussions, for instance, about ways to understand the value of teaching literature – not merely literature written or translated into a native language, but also literature in a non-native one.

2. Reviewing English Teacher Education

The review draws on aspects of curriculum theory, profession theory and subject didactics, especially literature didactics (*litteraturdidaktik*). Curriculum theory is a branch of educational research that regards curricula as products of “political and ideological struggle” and compromise (Englund 2005:11, my translation), and as realisations of “values, beliefs and principles in relation to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, individuality and society” (Barnett & Coate 2005:25). Theories in this field take curricular content to reveal what counts as legitimate knowledge and what kinds of competencies are enabled (or not) via the content and organisation of the education on offer (Forsberg 2011:8). Curriculum theory helps to recognise at least the following. First, the national curricula for secondary and upper secondary education invite certain interpretations of the nature and purposes of the English school subject and, consequently, regarding the place and uses of literature in the classroom. Second, academic curricula – understood here as the sum of syllabi

are only found in the syllabi for the subjects of Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language (*Curriculum for the compulsory school* 2018:34-41, 66-85, 262-273, 274-287; *Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskola* 2011:53-65, 160-181, 182-202; National Agency for Education (2012), “English,” “Modern languages,” “Swedish” and “Swedish as a second language”).

from each English teacher programme and university – even though they are not nationally prescribed, seek to delimit the academic subject and the disciplinary knowledge that is legitimate and worthwhile mediating (Barnett & Coate 2005:27-37). Third, academic syllabi are created in particular social and institutional contexts, and adapt to those in various ways (Barnett & Coate 2005:39-40).⁴

In Sweden, academic syllabi constitute a form of contract between the institution, the teacher, and the students. Each department has relative freedom to formulate subject-specific goals, but syllabi need to be integrated in the teacher education offered at the institution and to follow the logic of how its teacher programmes are organised. Moreover, syllabi are normally the product of collective effort within the collegiate, and they need to be approved by various bodies within the university, often at departmental and faculty level. This means that certain aspects of literary studies may be foregrounded to fulfil requirements from different bodies within the university. Likewise, depending on the position and size of departments and on institutional intentions, English departments may have the opportunity to develop separate curricular strands for student teachers. In cases where such opportunities do not exist, student teachers are often co-taught with general English students. This means that syllabi for student teachers must sometimes harmonise with syllabi for general students, and vice versa.

The review, further, to some extent draws on Lee Shulman's (1987) influential theorisation of teachers' professional knowledge. Shulman sought to classify the components of teachers' knowledge base in the context of discussions about the professional nature of teaching.⁵ For him, a teacher "is a member of a scholarly community" and needs to gain a depth of understanding, via subject-specific studies, of the key ideas, skills, principles and procedures of the discipline underpinning the school subject, as well as an understanding of how to impart subject knowledge in teaching (1987:9). Shulman's theory enables a recognition of this subject-specific knowledge as a central feature of the knowledge base for teaching and a prerequisite for making wise decisions

⁴ For a comparable discussion of national school curricula, see Ulf Lundgren (1979:231-239).

⁵ Teachers' knowledge base is a longstanding concern within scholarship on teacher education. Over recent years, empirical educational research which has assessed teacher knowledge has provided evidence that subject-specific knowledge and skills on the part of teachers are decisive factors for pupil achievement (see König et al 2016:1).

about what to teach and how.⁶ It also offers a lens through which to regard the literature-specific knowledge imparted to English students in relation to professional preparation and practice.

Literature didactics and theories of subject didactics, especially German and Nordic scholarship in the area, finally, provide an intellectual framework and the impetus for the study. This scholarship attends to subject conceptions and how those influence the aspects of literary scholarship, and of the field of literary studies mediated. I draw on subject didactics theorists Sigmund Ongstad (2006) and Svein Sjøberg (1998), and literature didactics scholars (*litteraturredaktiker*) Klaus-Michael Bogdal (2002), Bengt-Göran Martinsson (2015) and Helene Blomqvist (2016). These all position subject didactics as part of the discipline and of the theory of the subject (Blomqvist 2016:17-22; Martinsson 2015:173-188; Ongstad 2006:35-36; Bogdal 2002:13-16).⁷ They also emphasise the interrelation between the conception of the subject and the mediation of subject knowledge (e.g. Sjøberg 1998:14). This body of work enables a transcendence of narrow definitions of didactics, in academic syllabi, as school-oriented practices, and the recognition that academic study, too, involves decisions about what aspects of the scholarly field to teach and why. Moreover, this scholarship adds to Shulman's concept of teachers' knowledge, the perspective of the subject-specific content mediated in teacher education, and the question of what (teacher) education in the sub-discipline could, or should, be.

2.1 Material and method

The present account is based on the English teacher education syllabi that included the study of literature in the academic year autumn 2017 and spring 2018. In that year, 21 universities and university colleges in the country offered English teacher education.⁸ Of those, 12 institutions offered

⁶ Perhaps because he is not interested in subject didactics, Shulman has little to say here about the implications for subject-specific knowledge in school subjects such as English that are based on more than one disciplines. Similarly, he has little to say about the relation between, on the one hand, stipulations at national level on the school curriculum and, on the other, the shape of teacher education and the kinds of subject-specific knowledge mediated.

⁷ For example, Ongstad (2006:35-36) argues for a definition of subject didactics which relies on a process of problematising the shape and core of a knowledge area and a subject. He does this in a discussion about the nature of subject didactics, in which he rejects its understanding as subject + didactics. For him, this process of *didaktisering* is a phenomenon closely linked to the development of disciplinary knowledge, and it entails the development of a subject's self-perception.

⁸ In Sweden, there were two main pathways to becoming an English teacher in the period in question. One option was to study general academic English courses and then to complete a 90-credit complementary pedagogical education (*kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning*) (*Bäst i klassen – en ny Lärarutbildning*). The other option, which is studied here, was to

secondary teacher programmes (years 7-9) and 20 institutions offered upper secondary teacher programmes (*gymnasium*). Table 1 shows which programme specialisations were offered at each institution nationally in the academic year and the number of syllabi per programme and institution that were studied.⁹ Together, these included 87 English syllabi that addressed literary studies. This takes into account that 15 syllabi – from Dalarna, Karlstad, Malmö, Mälardalen, Uppsala, and West – referred to both the secondary and the upper secondary programmes. These syllabi were identified by the respective institutions, by the directors of study in English or equivalent, based on the above criteria of content, time period and teacher education programme. The syllabi encompass, besides literature modules, modules on culture, theory and didactics that included the study of literature. The table does not, however, include syllabi for thesis courses.

Table 1. Number of English syllabi that included the study of literature.¹⁰

Institution	Secondary teacher programme	Upper secondary teacher programme
Dalarna University	2	5
Halmstad University	1	6
Jönköping University	--	2
Karlstad University	3	4
Kristianstad University	1	--
Linköping University	4	5
Linnaeus University	--	3
Luleå University of Technology	--	5
Lund University	--	3
Lund/Kristianstad (joint programme)	--	2
Mälardalen University	3	3
Malmö University	3	4
Mid Sweden University	--	2
Örebro University	--	3

apply to a teacher programme, based on a concurrent curricular model, where the subject part and the professional part of the teacher curriculum are programmed parallel to each other.

⁹ The syllabi were retrieved mainly during February-May 2018, via the online catalogues at each university website. Whenever they were not available online, literature lists were requested separately from the directors of studies or relevant course coordinators.

¹⁰ The number of syllabi for each programme sometimes reflects decisions regarding whether to have separate syllabi for English as a “first” (main) subject and as a “second” subject. Sometimes it reflects the way in which courses were offered. Most syllabi comprised 30-ECTS credit course packages; less frequently they were 15-credit course packages and as an exception (at Mälardalen and West) syllabi designated 7.5-credit courses.

Södertörn University	--	6
Stockholm University	1	5
Umeå University	--	3
University of Borås	3	--
University of Gävle	--	3
University of Gothenburg	3	4
University West	2	4
Uppsala University	2	3
Total	27	75

The analysis of the material has been descriptive and comparative, in line with curricular studies in the academic subjects of French, Spanish and Swedish (e.g. Johansson 2016; Cedergren 2015; Alvsstad & Castro 2009; Persson 2007). Special attention has been placed on the organisation of literary studies, on formulations in course goals, content descriptions and learning outcomes, and on course literature listed. My aim, to reiterate, has been to identify the position and overarching goals of literary studies in English teacher education, and also the literary and conceptual repertoires made available therein. I have outlined the position of literary studies via the number of relevant credits in each programme specialisation and via the types of modules in which literary studies appeared. I have examined formulations in learning outcomes and in course descriptions to identify the kinds of knowledge, related to literature, that syllabi expressed a desire to mediate. From these, I have extrapolated the main objectives of literary studies and also their thematic and conceptual orientation. I have studied literature lists to get a fuller picture of the orientation of literary studies and to gain an overview of the literary repertoires imparted to student teachers.

The analysis has involved various types of mappings, per module and syllabus, per institution and per programme. These have included thematic categorisations of the subject-specific knowledge stated in syllabi and, similarly, cataloguing of the literary and scholarly works listed in the syllabi. This mapping has served to discover commonalities and differences, regarding, for instance, the repertoires made available for student teachers across the two programme specialisations nationally. The account presents the main results of this analysis with respect to the position, aims and repertoires of literary studies. On the basis thereof, it proceeds to raise some questions concerning the literary education of future English teachers.

A few things should be noted here. First, the present study does not consider English teacher education as a whole: only modules that included literature.¹¹ This means that it does not account for the place of literary studies in relation to other prioritised knowledge areas within the English subject, or in relation to the shape of teacher education at each institution. Second, the studied syllabi did not always correspond to a full English teacher programme. For example, in the studied period, syllabi beyond English I and II had not yet been developed at Jönköping and Mid Sweden. Similarly, the upper secondary teacher programme at Kristianstad was being developed whilst the joint programme offered by Kristianstad and Lund was in the process of being phased out.¹² This means that a complete picture of all curricula was not available. Third, depending on local policies, syllabi were sometimes vague about the specific content studied. When findings were representative only of certain programmes, this is indicated in the account. Fourth, as a rule, the studied syllabi were available only in Swedish. When syllabi are quoted, the English translations are usually mine.

In what follows, I begin by outlining the national stipulations governing English teacher education in the studied period and then proceed to account for the findings from the syllabus review. I contextualise the study of literature in the examined programmes within a policy framework which, as I suggest in the discussion of the findings, has significant bearing on the ways in which subject-specific knowledge can be understood.

¹¹ In Sweden, English teacher education included studies in the subdisciplines of the academic subject (linguistics and literature), language proficiency components, and the study of subject didactics. Teacher programmes also included, besides subject-specific studies in one (or more) additional subject(s), 60 credits of studies in “core education subjects” (*utbildningsvetenskaplig kärna*) and a 30-credit “placement in a relevant subject and organisation” (*Higher Education Ordinance*, Annex 2, Qualifications Ordinance).

¹² E-mail correspondence with Martin Shaw at Mid Sweden (8 May 2018), Anette Svensson at Jönköping (13 August 2019), Lena Ahlin at Kristianstad (4 May 2018), and Fabian Beijer at Lund (13 August 2019).

3. Stipulations governing English Teacher Education

In the studied period, and to this day, teacher education institutions in Sweden have some autonomy when it comes to what subject-specific content teacher education should include.¹³ The Swedish *Higher Education Ordinance* (*Högskoleförordningen*), which delineates national teacher standards, did not prescribe subject-specific aims and content.¹⁴ It was largely up to the institutions of higher education themselves to decide what school teachers of English must know about literature and its study. This is particularly interesting from the perspective of subject didactics, as it implies relative freedom for teacher education institutions to define the position and repertoires of literary studies.

However, English departments were in various ways indirectly steered in this matter.¹⁵ To begin with, teacher education must adhere to the stipulations governing higher education, for instance regarding the “close links between research, and courses and study programmes” prescribed in section 3 of the Swedish *Higher Education Act* (*Högskolelagen*, Ordinance 1992:1434). Over the past several years, increasing demands have been placed on students’ disciplinary competencies, not least via audits. For instance, following the 2012 national quality assessment by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (*Högskoleverket*), students’ scholarly abilities have been further emphasised in some general English courses (Dodou 2020b).¹⁶ This has likely impacted on teacher education, not only as student teachers and general students are taught at the same departments, and are often co-taught, but also as this emphasis resonates with topical discussions about the

¹³ For a discussion of autonomy for teacher education institutes and the shape of teacher education in Europe, see Marco Snoek and Irēna Žogla (2009).

¹⁴ For a Degree of Master of Arts in Secondary Education, the *Higher Education Ordinance* requires that the students shall “demonstrate the subject knowledge” as well as the knowledge of “subject didactics including methodology” necessary for professional practice (Annex 2, Qualifications Ordinance). The most recent government proposition regarding teacher education, *Bäst i klassen – en ny lärarutbildning* (prop. 2009/10:89), and the Official Report of the Swedish Government, *En hållbar lärarutbildning* (SOU 2008:105), on which the proposition was based, similarly, have little to say about subject-specific content and aims, though they specify that Swedish universities and university colleges should offer equivalent (*likvärdig*) teacher education.

¹⁵ The limited autonomy of teacher education reflects the characteristics of the national educational system. The latter is steered by goals and learning outcomes defined at central level and it involves control via periodic evaluations (Eurydice https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/sweden_en, accessed 29 July 2019).

¹⁶ In the 2012 evaluation of general English courses, a substantial part of all English departments nationally were criticised for what the evaluation committee perceived as substandard methodological knowledge displayed in several student BA and MA theses (*Högskoleverket* 2012:5(116)). The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education and, subsequently, the Swedish Higher Education Authority have also evaluated teacher education. Neither the 2007 nor the 2018 evaluations, however, focused on the subject of English (*Högskoleverket* 2007:8 R; *Universitetskanslersämbetet* 2018).

academisation of teacher education. Such discussions have been present on the political agenda since teacher education was incorporated in higher education in 1977, and they have been followed by an explicit political ambition to strengthen the research-base of teacher education, for instance in the teacher education reforms of 1987, 2001 and 2008 (SOU 2008:109, p 381-392; Carlgren & Marton 2000:93, in Bergöö 2005:16).

English teacher education, further, was indirectly influenced by the stipulations of school-specific steering documents. These included the Swedish *Education Act* and the curricula of the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*). Core aims, content and knowledge requirements for English were delineated in the subject syllabi of the *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare* (2018)¹⁷, the *Curriculum for the upper secondary school* (2013) and the *Curriculum for adult education* (2017:17).¹⁸ These curricula delimited the main tasks for Swedish education as imparting knowledge and as fostering democratic values (2013:5). The objectives that these outlined for the English school subject largely shaped English teacher education, as the review below indicates.

3.1 School-based syllabi for English

The principal aim of English, as formulated in the English syllabus of the *Curriculum for the compulsory school*, was the development of pupils'

knowledge of the English language and of the areas and contexts where English is used, and also pupils' confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for different purposes. (2018:34)

Special focus was placed on the development of pupils' "all-round communicative skills" of reception, production, and interaction (2018:34). This focus was reiterated in the English syllabus in the

¹⁷ The 2018 translation of the *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare* included revisions regarding equality in parts 1 and 2 of the curriculum, which were implemented on July 1, 2018. The revisions did not affect the English school syllabus, which followed the stipulations in the 2011 curriculum version.

¹⁸ Graduates from upper secondary teacher programmes became qualified to teach at upper secondary (*Gymnasium*) and secondary school (years 7-9 of the compulsory school), as well as the equivalent educational levels within municipal adult education (*kommunal vuxenutbildning*, komvux). Those graduating from secondary teacher programmes became qualified to teach at years 7-9 and at primary school. Additionally, these students were qualified to teach at the equivalent levels of municipal adult education. The English syllabi for adult education corresponded to the content delineated in the English syllabi for secondary and upper secondary school.

Curriculum for the upper secondary school. The National Agency for Education explicitly stated in its auxiliary material for English the ambition to harmonise language teaching in Swedish schools with the recommendations in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, CEFR (2001), formulated by the Council of Europe (*Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen i engelska i gymnasieskolan*, 2011:1). This has meant adopting the functional approach to language learning in CEFR (Erickson & Pakula 2017:3).¹⁹

When it comes to literature, the secondary school syllabus specified that “Literature and other fiction in spoken, dramatised and filmed forms” as well as “Songs and poems” should be included as part of English pupils’ listening and reading repertoires (2018:37). Likewise, for upper secondary school, the syllabus for the English courses 5-7 included, for instance, “Contemporary and older literature, poetry, drama and songs” (2012:7). The English syllabus, however, did not attach to literature specific goals or knowledge requirements. Literature, rather, was listed under “Core content,” specifically under “Content of communication” and “Reception.” As the auxiliary material of the National Agency for Education explained, the “Core content” was intended to give pupils the “opportunity to develop the knowledge described in the goals” (*Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen*, 2011:3, my translation). The latter concerned, besides the main focus on communicative abilities, knowledge about English-speaking societies and cultures. Literature, it is worth noting, was described as one text type among many that pupils should encounter, and literary reading practices were by no means privileged in the syllabi.²⁰ Moreover, none of the vindications of literature teaching present in the school syllabus for the Swedish subject featured in the English syllabus.²¹

¹⁹ Cf. The focus on language competences can also be understood in terms of the overall goals and result orientation of the Swedish curriculum (Sundberg & Wahlström 2012:350). On the implications of orienting curricula towards learning outcomes and output, see for instance Christina Elde Mølsted and Berit Karseth (2016).

²⁰ The text-types to be taught encompassed myths and computer games, and also “job applications, cooking recipes, blogs, interviews in news broadcasts, romantic comedies, scholarly reports and animated series” (*Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen*, 2011:8, my translation).

²¹ In a curricular review of the Swedish school subject, Magnus Persson (2007:123-137) shows that the steering documents for secondary and upper secondary education have provided 11 different reasons why literature should be taught in schools. These include that the teaching of literature provides experiences, offers knowledge, develops language, develops and strengthens personal identity, promotes good reading habits, counteracts undemocratic values, and provides knowledge about literature, literary history and literary terminology, thus making pupils better readers.

This lack of specification as to the value and uses of literature in English means a level of freedom for teachers – both school teachers and academic teacher educators – to define those. Yet, it also implies that the functions of literature were to be understood in relation to the overarching rationales of the school curricula, and to the above-mentioned aims and knowledge requirements in the English syllabi and in the auxiliary material provided. I return to the upshot of these elements of freedom and regulation of teacher education in the discussion of the findings.

4. The position of literary studies in teacher education syllabi

In the academic year 2017-18, and according to the stipulations for teacher education at the time, student teachers aiming toward a degree for upper secondary school studied 90-120 ECTS credits of English (henceforth called credits), depending on whether English was a so-called “first” or “second” subject. Students aiming for secondary education studied 45-90 credits of English, depending on which secondary teacher programme they were enrolled in and on whether English was a “first subject.”²² Literature was studied in both programme specialisations at all institutions in the country and in at least 13 institutions throughout English studies.²³ An initial observation, then, is that literary studies were deemed as a significant part of English teachers’ education. Some 13 syllabi, 4 for secondary and 9 for upper secondary teacher programmes, also included explicit formulations to the effect that literary studies were an important element of teachers’ core professional knowledge.²⁴

The shape of literary studies, however, differed, as did the shape of teacher programmes nationally. For instance, depending on which programme versions were offered and how they were organised, literary studies amounted to 6-28 credits in secondary teacher education and 13-37,5 credits in

²² The studied academic year was marked by a transition in secondary education programmes, from the stipulations in the proposition *Bäst i klassen* (2009) to those of *En flexibel ämneslärutbildning* (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). The latter meant a shortening of secondary teacher education from 4½ years (270 credits) to 4 years (240 credits). Simultaneously, students would take a two-subject, instead of the earlier three-subject, combination and increase the number of credits in their studied subjects from 45 to 60-90. An explicit ambition of the latter proposition was to improve the quality of secondary teacher education by enabling more advanced studies in the respective academic subjects (2016:4).

²³ This was the case at least at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Lund, Mälardalen, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm, Umeå and West.

²⁴ These could be found in the teacher programmes at Gothenburg (both programmes), Halmstad (both programmes), Jönköping (upper secondary), Södertörn (upper secondary) and Stockholm (both programmes).

upper secondary teacher education, that is, excluding thesis modules and electives. Notably, not all syllabi indicated the number of credits in question, and not all programmes were complete. The norm, however, seemed to be 7.5-15 literature-oriented credits for secondary teacher programmes and 20-25 for upper secondary teacher programmes.²⁵ Literature, normally, featured in modules on “Literature,” “English-language literature and culture,” and “Literature and literary history,” or variants thereof.²⁶ This was the case for about 18/27 secondary and 54/75 upper secondary teacher programme syllabi.²⁷ The study of literature, however, also featured in modules like “English-language young adult literature, literary theory and pedagogy” (Gothenburg L9EN12, my translation) and “English literature didactics” (Linnaeus 1ENÄ04, my translation). The latter examples were found in some 13/75 syllabi for upper secondary teacher programmes and 2/27 syllabi for secondary teacher programmes.²⁸ Such modules usually occurred in programmes that also featured separate literature modules. Exceptions were the programmes at Halmstad and Luleå, which explicitly linked literature to school-oriented didactics in almost every literature module title and content. Conversely, at Dalarna and Uppsala, little or no attention was paid in literature modules to the uses of literature in the school classroom.²⁹

At least two observations can be made here. First, literature was regularly studied in its own right – even if most programmes included school-oriented didactic elements in at least one literature module. Second, the types of modules in which literary studies occurred are suggestive of the value imparted of literary studies in relation to professional knowledge and to the broader purposes of higher education in English. I return to this below.

²⁵ At Dalarna, Gävle, Södertörn and Stockholm, student teachers could study more than 30 literature credits.

²⁶ Upper secondary teacher programmes usually also included modules on “Literature and theory.”

²⁷ Some 12 syllabi, 7 for the secondary teacher programmes (at Borås and Linköping) and 5 for the upper secondary teacher programme (at Linköping), did not make known in what kind of module the study of literature was included.

²⁸ Modules that linked literature to classroom practice in their titles features in syllabi for the secondary teacher programmes at Gothenburg and Halmstad, and for the upper secondary teacher programmes at Gothenburg, Halmstad, Linnaeus, Luleå, Örebro and Södertörn.

²⁹ Cf. The 2019 version of the Uppsala English II syllabus replaced the choice between “American literature and culture” and “English literature and culture” (2015:5EN202) with a module on “Studying and teaching literature in English” (2019:5EN202, my translations).

5. The main aims of literary studies

Syllabi formulations, though sometimes vague, normally revealed a great deal about the kinds of knowledge that teacher programmes sought to impart. Thereby, they indicated how the uses of literary studies were defined in teacher education. The review below is based on a thematic categorisation of all learning outcomes in the studied syllabi, as well as of content formulations, according to the knowledge and skills denoted. This categorisation points to five main overarching clusters of objectives formulated for literary studies in English departments, as well as a sixth less frequently occurring goal. These concerned:

- the spectrum and development of English-language literature
- ways of engaging with literature, and occasionally with other cultural expressions, that are typical for literary studies
- events, phenomena, and characteristics of English-speaking societies and cultures
- the application of scholarly principles to problems
- the uses of literature in the language classroom, and
- students' language proficiency.

5.1 Knowledge about English-language literature

Syllabi regularly foregrounded knowledge about literature as a key goal. This included students' "familiarity with literary epochs, genres and narrative elements" (Linnaeus 1ENÄ04, my translation), and students' abilities to "account for knowledge about and the understanding of individual English-language literary works in their cultural and linguistic contexts" (Mid Sweden EN015G, my translation). About half of the syllabi explicitly stated this kind of goal, 41/75 for upper secondary teacher programmes and 15/27 for secondary teacher programmes.³⁰ Some 15 syllabi, from 7 upper secondary and 3 secondary teacher programmes, specified that a broad textual definition characterised the study of literature.

³⁰ Knowledge about literature was a stated goal in secondary teacher education syllabi at Borås, Dalarna, Gothenburg, Karlstad, Linköping, Mälardalen, Malmö, Uppsala and West, and in upper secondary teacher education syllabi at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Malmö, Mid Sweden, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala and West.

5.2 Disciplinary ways of engaging with texts

Syllabi recurrently emphasised students' abilities to "read and analyse texts from different literary perspectives" (Umeå 6EN036, my translation), and to "use terminology of literary studies to discuss and analyse" various texts (Lund/Kristianstad ÄENB33, my translation). A related goal concerned students' ability to "support their interpretation of a text with references to the text" (Uppsala 5EN201, my translation). Moreover, students, especially in the upper secondary teacher programmes, were expected to account for "critical or equivalent theoretical texts" (Stockholm EN04GY, my translation) and to analyse literary works "with regard to those theories and concepts" (Dalarna EN2048, my translation). A total of 65/75 syllabi for upper secondary teacher programmes across all 20 universities explicitly stated the aim of teaching students scholarly ways of reading and analysing literature. For secondary teacher programmes, this goal was foregrounded in almost all syllabi (24/27) and programmes, with the exception of Halmstad. This means that disciplinary ways of engaging with literature were emphasised more frequently in syllabi than was knowledge about literature.

5.3 Cultural knowledge

Some 31/75 syllabi for upper secondary and 15/27 syllabi for secondary teacher programmes explicitly linked literary studies to knowledge about English-speaking societies and cultures, often as a way of understanding the contexts out of which the studied works arise.³¹ English syllabi stated, for example, that the literary texts studied shed light on "aspects of American social conditions" (Uppsala 5EN202, my translation) and they highlighted students' "knowledge about everyday life and culture in English-speaking countries" (Umeå 6EN019, my translation).³²

³¹ These syllabi could be found at following institutions: for upper secondary teacher programmes, at Dalarna, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Jönköping, Linköping, Linnaeus, Lund, Lund/Kristianstad, Mälardalen, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala and West, and for secondary teacher programmes, at Borås, Dalarna, Gothenburg, Linköping, Mälardalen, Uppsala and West. Syllabi from Karlstad instead foregrounded, for instance, the thematisation of "diversity and gender perspectives" and "strategies for reading and interpretation in cultural contexts" (ENGL01, my translation).

³² Knowledge about culture, it should be noted, was also an object of study in other modules, for instance on "Culture and society in the English-speaking world." Some 5/27 syllabi for the secondary and 16/75 for the upper secondary teacher programmes included such courses. These could be found at Gothenburg (upper secondary), Halmstad (both programmes), Kristianstad (secondary), Lund (upper secondary), Malmö (upper secondary), Mid Sweden (upper secondary), Umeå (upper secondary) and Uppsala (both programmes).

5.4 Scholarly principles and skills

Some 33/75 syllabi for upper secondary and 10/27 syllabi for secondary teacher programmes, at 17 institutions, featured goals regarding students' skills of critical reasoning and argumentation, and their abilities to address and to solve problems based on the principles and procedures of literary scholarship.³³ This included their ability to "identify and formulate central questions in the study of English literature" (Södertörn 1077EN), to "plan, structure and write a literature paper" (Malmö EN424C, my translation), and to "read, understand and evaluate knowledge" (Mid Sweden EN020G, my translation). Usually, these goals featured in English III and IV courses, in conjunction with thesis writing, and occurred less frequently in other types of modules.

5.5 The uses of literature in school

This aim mainly concerned goals regarding students' knowledge about and ability to discuss the uses of literature in the English classroom. Syllabi from 6 secondary and 12 upper secondary teacher programmes included formulations regarding, for instance, students' abilities to discuss "the what, how and why of reading literature in upper secondary school" (Örebro EN016G, my translation), to "critically discuss the role of literature in language teaching" (Malmö EN824C, my translation), and to "show how the literature can be applied in teaching" (Luleå E0005P, my translation).³⁴ In a handful of programmes, mainly at regional university colleges and newer universities, the objectives also included students' awareness of relevant, school-oriented, literature or subject didactics theory, and their abilities to plan and evaluate instructional units.³⁵

³³ Goals concerning scholarly principles, such as information competence and skills of argumentation and reasoning, were foregrounded in secondary teacher programmes at Dalarna, Karlstad, Kristianstad, Mälardalen, Malmö, Stockholm, Uppsala and West, and in the upper secondary teacher programmes at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linnaeus, Linköping, Luleå, Lund, Mälardalen, Malmö, Mid Sweden, Södertörn, Stockholm, Uppsala and West.

³⁴ Goals concerning the uses of literature in the classroom featured in secondary teacher programmes at Borås, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linköping and Mälardalen, and in upper secondary teacher programmes at Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Luleå, Mälardalen, Malmö, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala and West. Whilst syllabi formulations were often vague about the uses referred to, some indicated a focus on how literature "can function as an important resource in [...] English-language cultural encounters in the classroom" (Gothenburg L9EN45, my translation), or on "the importance of reading texts for one's own and others' language development" (Gothenburg LGEN12, my translation).

³⁵ Formulations regarding subject theory in conjunction with literary studies could be found in secondary teacher programmes at Borås, Halmstad, Linköping and Mälardalen, and in upper secondary teacher programmes at Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linnaeus and Mälardalen. Goals on instructional methods were included in secondary teacher

5.6 Language development

Finally, some 10 syllabi, from 6 upper secondary teacher programmes and 2 secondary teacher programmes, stated that modules which included the study of literature involved, for instance, “written proficiency and developing students’ ability to produce text” (Lund ÄEND01, my translation).³⁶ In most syllabi where language proficiency was mentioned, however, language goals referred to students’ demonstrating their language abilities. Such goals were present in about half the syllabi for the secondary and for the upper secondary teacher programmes.³⁷ This suggests that, in English teacher education, language goals indicated the expected proficiency level of students, rather than a language learning approach to the academic study of literature.³⁸

5.7 Literary studies and teachers’ knowledge base

When it comes to the uses of literary studies in teacher education, then, learning outcomes and content formulations indicate the following. Modules including literature consistently aimed at fostering student teachers’ literary competencies and at training them in the field of literary studies. This aim is in keeping with Shulman’s (1987:9) definition of the school teacher as “a member of a scholarly community.” In some cases, the legitimacy of literary studies also depended on the accentuation of what Shulman calls “pedagogical content knowledge.” The latter entails

the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. (Shulman 1987:8)

programmes at Borås, Gävle, Halmstad and Mälardalen, and in upper secondary teacher programmes at Halmstad, Linköping, Mälardalen and Södertörn. These foregrounded students’ abilities, for instance to “design a pedagogical unit where language phenomena and social topics are related to a novel as an object of study” (Halmstad EN3005, my translation), to “plan literature teaching with a focus on sustainable development” (Mälardalen ENA207, my translation), and to “plan, lead, perform, evaluate and document a book talk in a group of pupils” (Borås CENG85, my translation).

³⁶ Goals pertaining to the development of students’ language proficiency featured in upper secondary teacher programme syllabi at Dalarna, Halmstad, Lund, Stockholm, Umeå and Uppsala. Secondary teacher programme syllabi that included such goals were found at Borås and Dalarna.

³⁷ Three institutions – Gothenburg, Mälardalen and Malmö – had no such goals regarding students’ abilities to demonstrate their language proficiency in syllabi for upper secondary teacher programmes. For secondary teacher programmes, only the syllabi from Kristianstad, Mälardalen and Malmö lacked such goals.

³⁸ This is confirmed in literature lists, which normally included works of literature, criticism and theory. In cases where language learning materials were used, these referred to school contexts and subject didactics.

As the overview of aims above indicates, some modules sought to develop students' disciplinary abilities in the area of literary studies and, simultaneously, to familiarise them with aspects of school-oriented didactic research and practice.³⁹

These two approaches to the teaching of literature suggests that the studied institutions harboured varying perceptions of teacher's knowledge base: of what it entails and how it is best developed. Presumably, these perceptions were influenced by a number of factors, ranging from the competencies of the personnel available to local interpretations of national policy. It may be recalled, here, that the necessity of linking subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical practice has featured in steering documents and in national evaluations of teacher education over the last several years. In 2010, for instance, when the National Agency for Higher Education evaluated the teacher degree rights of all Swedish institutions, in light of the new teacher education launched by the government proposition *Bäst i klassen* (2009/10), the presence of subject didactic elements were a basic criterion for renewed degree rights.⁴⁰ This was typically interpreted as requiring the incorporation of discrete subject didactics modules in English studies. In some programmes, however, it involved a reshaping of the literature modules themselves.

Each of these two approaches to the teaching of literature, in its own right and in terms of other areas of teachers' knowledge base, it must be assumed, affected the breadth and depth of the disciplinary – and professional – knowledge and abilities that could reasonably be imparted. The nature and orientation of subject-specific knowledge mediated, further, was doubtlessly affected by government stipulations regarding the number of credits for English in teacher education and, similarly, by the organisation of teacher education at Swedish higher education institutions. I return to this in the discussion of the findings, where I consider briefly the effects that these conditions have on the literary and conceptual repertoires prioritised in teacher education.

³⁹ On occasion, literary studies were specifically linked to such knowledge areas as “communicative competence” (Linköping 92EN17, my translation), or to school-oriented didactics knowledge, for instance, in “Literature and Text Books in the Classroom” (Halmstad EN5010). In other instances, disciplinary questions were given a didactic slant, as suggested by the following syllabus formulation: “the concept of canon is discussed and related to the role of school as cultural mediator” (Malmö EN424C, my translation).

⁴⁰ On the place of didactics and its relation to subject knowledge (about literature) in debates about teacher education in recent policy and audits, see Bergöö (2005) and Ulfgard (2015).

6. Repertoires of literary knowledge imparted

The following maps the literary, theoretical and scholarly repertoires that syllabi expressed an intention to mediate.

6.1 *Literary works, literary periods*

When it comes to the literary works taught, the review can only account for the works listed in the literature lists attached to the studied syllabi. Many of these lists included anthologies and/or references to course compendia – some 24 syllabi for secondary and some 45 syllabi for upper secondary teacher programmes. This meant that many courses also encompassed unspecified further reading, usually in the form of “selections of short stories and poems.”⁴¹ This is important to bear in mind when reading the account below.

An initial observation is that there did not seem to be a canon of literary works that were taught nationally. The bulk of the approximately 348 titles listed for the two programme specialisations – some 337 for upper secondary teacher programmes and some 94 for secondary teacher programmes – only appeared in a couple of syllabi each, and at one or two institutions. However, a few titles recurred across the different syllabi. These could usually be found in surveys of literary history, and included Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606), Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925).⁴² Other frequently recurring works included John M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999), Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961).⁴³

⁴¹ In this respect, the studied literature lists functioned more as lists of the works students should acquire than a complete list of works taught. Whilst most reading lists feature works taught, some reading lists, e.g. at Gävle (ENG309), stated that a selection of the works listed would be taught. In such cases, all works listed are included in the review.

⁴² These works appeared, respectively, in 18, 13, 12, and 10 syllabi, across both secondary and upper secondary teacher programmes. For the upper secondary teacher programmes, *Jane Eyre*, *Macbeth*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Great Gatsby* appeared most frequently (with 12, 10, 9, and 8 occurrences respectively). For the secondary teacher programmes, the most regularly recurring work was *Jane Eyre*, with 6 occurrences, followed by *Death of a Salesman*, *Frankenstein*, *Macbeth*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Graveyard Book*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Wide Saragasso Sea*, each of which featured in 3 syllabi.

⁴³ Coetzee’s and Haddon’s novels could each be found in 8 syllabi; Miller’s play and Spark’s novel in 6.

The following table lists the 15 most frequently recurring authors, alongside the number of syllabi and institutions in which they were found.⁴⁴

Table 2. Writers most frequently listed in syllabi literature lists.

Author	Number of syllabi			Number of institutions
	Secondary	Upper secondary	Total	
1. William Shakespeare	4	22	24	15
2. Charlotte Brontë	6	13	19	11
3. Jane Austen	5	12	14	10
4. John M. Coetzee	3	11	12	9
5. Virginia Woolf	2	11	11	8
6. Joseph Conrad	2	9	10	9
7. Scott Fitzgerald	2	8	9	9
8. Charles Dickens	0	8	8	7
9. Toni Morrison	4	6	8	7
10. Sandra Cisneros	2	7	7	5
11. Arthur Miller	4	5	7	7
12. Mary Shelley	3	6	7	7
13. Margaret Atwood	2	7	7	7
14. Mark Haddon	3	5	6	5
15. Neil Gaiman	3	5	5	4

Whilst reading lists featured multiple works by some writers – notably Atwood, Coetzee, Morrison, Shakespeare and Woolf – by others – like Haddon and Shelley – only a single work was taught.

Table 2 is in many ways representative of the body of titles listed in the syllabi. For one thing, most titles (about 62%) were written by men. For another, most titles listed were written by UK and North American authors.⁴⁵ Classifications of this kind are difficult, but a conservative estimate is

⁴⁴ Discrepancies in the table between the total number of syllabi and the number of syllabi listed for each programme result from syllabi that refer to both programme specialisations. As an exception, syllabi listed more than one work by a writer. The account is based on the total number of syllabi featuring the specific writers' works, rather than on the number of syllabi in which *each work* was listed.

⁴⁵ On occasion, syllabi included titles by non-English-language writers, such as Dante (Lund/Kristianstad ÄENC51) and Thomas Mann (Stockholm EN03GY).

that this body of works comprised about 70% of all titles.⁴⁶ These were relatively evenly distributed across the programmes and institutions, as were works by writers who originated from or have been largely active in countries outside the UK and North America.⁴⁷ Among the programmes that listed a relatively large number of non-Anglo-American writers, the ones at Dalarna and Jönköping can be mentioned. Conversely, at Malmö, Örebro and Umeå reading lists indicated fewer such works.

Moreover, most authors listed were writers of prose fiction, and most titles included were novels. The literature lists across both programme specialisations included only about 17 references to plays in all, 6 of which were Shakespeare plays.⁴⁸ The syllabi listed some 42 titles of short stories or short story collections and some 30 titles of specific poems or collections of poems. A handful of syllabi, listed graphic novels and/or comic books.⁴⁹ By contrast, 74% of all the titles listed for both programme specialisations were novels. About 12% were short stories, just over 8% was poetry, 4% drama and 2% graphic fiction. Even if not all works taught featured in the syllabi, those listed suggest that literary prose fiction was the main focus of study. This tendency was more pronounced in secondary teacher education, in which 85% of the titles listed were novels, about 7% were plays, 4% short stories, and 2% poetry.

The majority of the works listed in the syllabi from both programme specialisations were published in the 20th and 21st centuries. In total, some 73% were published after 1900, with 57% of all titles listed published after 1950. Roughly 16% of all listed titles were published in the 19th century,

⁴⁶ This does not include such writers as Dominican-American Julia Álvarez, Japanese-Canadian Hiromi Goto and British Pakistani Kamila Shamsie.

⁴⁷ These included Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), Aravind Adiga and Arundhati Roy (India), and Mohsin Hamid (Pakistan). About three fourths (16/20) of the upper secondary and two thirds (8/12) of the secondary teacher programmes listed one or more writers from outside the UK and North America in at least one syllabus.

⁴⁸ Plays were listed in the upper secondary teacher programmes at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Lund/Kristianstad, Mälardalen, Mid Sweden, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm and West, and in the secondary teacher programmes at Borås, Dalarna, Gothenburg, Karlstad, Kristianstad, Linköping, Mälardalen and West.

⁴⁹ Graphic novels and comic books featured in syllabi at Karlstad (both programmes), Södertörn (upper secondary), Stockholm (upper secondary) and West (upper secondary).

compared to the 19% that were published after 2000. About 10% of the works listed were published before the 19th century.⁵⁰ Figure 1 shows the chronological distribution of the listed titles per programme specialisation.

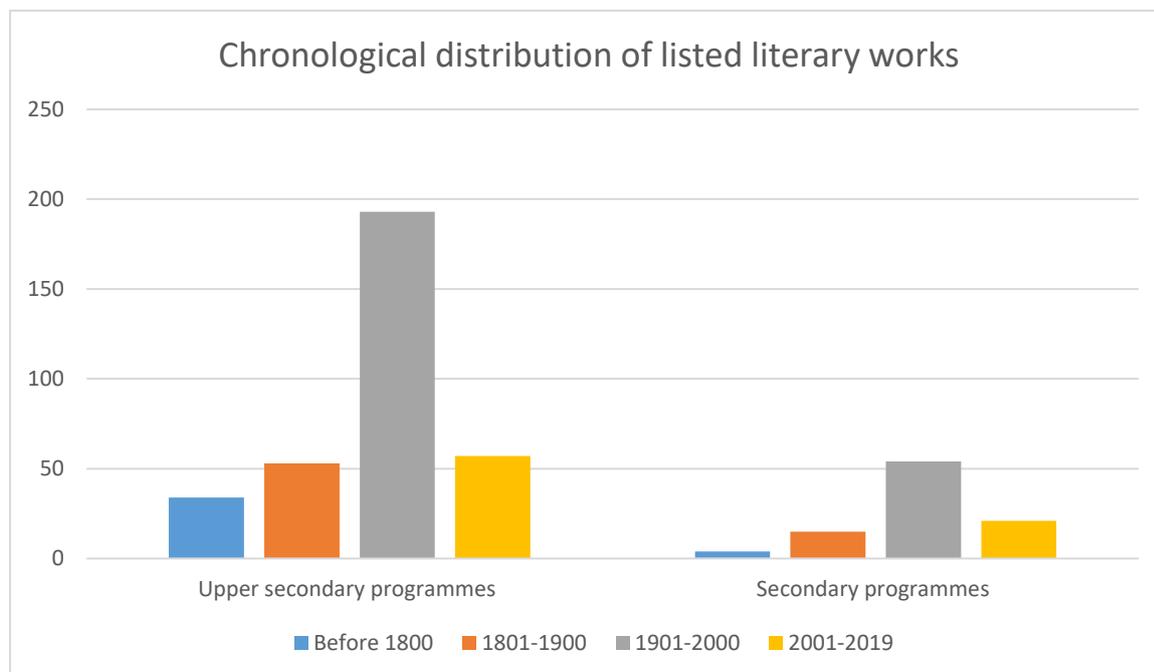


Figure 1. Distribution per publication date of the literary works listed in syllabi for each programme nationally.

There was some variation between institutions; for instance, the programmes at Dalarna and Malmö had a distinctly contemporary profile, whereas the electives at Lund/Kristianstad suggested an emphasis on older literature, including early modern and Victorian. Most programmes offered a mix of newer and older literature, even if the main focus was on twentieth and twenty-first century fiction.

Complete reading lists, which include the works taught from anthologies and compendia, would provide a more accurate picture of the chronological distribution of the literature taught. However, even granting that other titles were included, there would seem to be a modern and contemporary profile nationally to the modules that student teachers encountered. It is worth noting here that in

⁵⁰ This includes Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*.

the year in question modules on literary history were included only in the secondary teacher programmes at Karlstad, Linköping, Mälardalen and Uppsala.⁵¹ This means that many of the student teachers aiming towards secondary education did not study English literary history in a survey course format – unlike students on the upper secondary teacher programmes in the country. Indeed, given that 80% of all works listed in secondary teacher programmes and 74% of all works listed in upper secondary teacher programmes were published after 1900, it would seem that school teachers’ knowledge of (older) English literary history was not necessarily prioritised.

Finally, the review indicates that students were taught a mixture of canonised high-brow writers and popular and genre fiction writers. The latter included adventure fiction, mystery, detection and crime fiction, horror fiction, science fiction and fantasy.⁵² On the whole, the programmes at Dalarna, Lund and Uppsala included little popular and genre fiction, whereas the ones at Halmstad, Luleå and Malmö included a relatively large number of such works.⁵³ The works listed, further, whilst usually fictional, occasionally included autobiographies, memoirs and essays. As regards literature in different media and related cultural expressions, some 34 titles can be added to the 348 mentioned above, of which most were films, and less than a handful were TV series.⁵⁴ These could be found in programmes at 8 institutions.⁵⁵ A few of the films listed were adaptations of literary works, like Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men* (2006), Ang Lee’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), and Alan Parker’s *The Commitments* (1991). A couple of examples were theatre performances, for instance via Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre on Screen. Other films listed included James Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009), David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia* (2008) and Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1994).

⁵¹ West included older literary works in a module on “Literature and Intertextuality” (ELI201, my translation).

⁵² A third of the upper secondary teacher programmes and 2/12 of the secondary teacher programmes included modules on children’s and young adult literature. These were the upper secondary teacher programmes at Gothenburg, Jönköping, Linköping, Luleå, Södertörn, Stockholm and Umeå and the secondary teacher programmes at Gothenburg and Linköping.

⁵³ For Dalarna, this is mainly representative of the upper secondary teacher programme, as the secondary teacher programme included a module on popular fiction (EN1127). As this module was taught every other term, however, not all students had access to it.

⁵⁴ At Halmstad (EN8003), literature was also taught in audio book format.

⁵⁵ These works appeared in the reading lists at Dalarna (secondary), Jönköping (upper secondary), Halmstad (upper secondary), Mälardalen (both programmes), Malmö (both programmes), Södertörn (upper secondary), Stockholm (upper secondary) and West (both programmes). At Luleå (upper secondary), a handful of films were included in a Culture module that also featured literature in the form of a crime novel.

Student teachers' literary repertoires, then, were shaped by a focus on literary prose, in the print medium, written by Anglo-American writers – though works by writers outside the UK and North America were also normally included in literature modules. Poetry and, especially, drama seemed to be taught less frequently. Student teachers of English, moreover, mostly encountered modern and contemporary literature; pre-twentieth century works taught mainly centred on literature published in the nineteenth century. Finally, it would seem that many institutions, whether consciously or not, chose to emphasise the breadth of literary expression in terms of either geography or narrative sub-genres.

6.2 Perspectives on literature

The thematic and theoretical repertoires covered were made known in syllabi, partly via course goal and learning outcome formulations, partly via reading lists. Syllabi usually included explicit statements regarding subject matters thematised and sometimes also regarding theoretical schools taught. The attached reading lists, further, often included materials on literary criticism and theory. Those materials, in turn, indicated a preoccupation with certain types of disciplinary questions and theories.

To begin with subject matters thematised, Table 3 presents an overview of the matters most frequently stated in syllabi. The table is based on explicit pronouncements of topics thematised and includes recurrent keywords used to indicate the features explored or the questions asked in relation to literary studies.⁵⁶ Each subject matter listed was found in at least 6 syllabi. The list does not account for keywords pertaining to literature didactics, or keywords that indicate literary periods, media formats, theoretical schools and reading modes (e.g. “close reading” or “critical reading abilities”). The table relates the vocabulary used in the syllabi. This means that frequency counts, for

⁵⁶ The studied syllabi included some 260 keywords. Related keywords were considered in clusters, so that, for instance, keywords on “women’s movement,” “women’s rights,” “women’s position in society,” “questions concerning gender,” “stereotyped and confining gender roles,” “construction of gender,” and “gender perspective” were clustered together. Keywords referring to compositional elements were relatively scarce, and they are here clustered together despite the fact that they cover such broad areas and perspectives as “focalization,” “form,” “imagery,” “literary aspects in texts,” “narrative elements,” “narrative technique,” “plot,” “rhythm,” “style” and “the structure of texts.” About 30 keywords and/or clusters of keywords appeared in more than two syllabi. Normally, syllabi included 2-5 keywords. A handful of syllabi, at Dalarna, Lund/Kristianstad and Stockholm, which comprised several modules (usually electives) with relatively long content descriptions, included 12-30 keywords each.

instance, do not involve my interpretation of what constitutes a “socio-cultural question” or a “literary element.”

Table 3. List of the most frequently recurring subject matters thematised.⁵⁷

Keyword areas	Number of syllabi			Number of institutions
	Secondary	Upper secondary	Total	
1. Genre ⁵⁸	9	26	35	15
2. Socio-cultural questions & socio-historical phenomena/conditions in literature	8	19	27	12
3. Literary history/epochs	6	20	26	15
4. Women & gender	4	19	23	12
5. Ethnicity	2	9	11	7
6. Literary elements and devices, forms, structures, and techniques	1	10	11	8
7. Class	1	6	7	5
8. Cultural diversity/ multiculturalism	2	4	6	3
9. Empire, colonialism & postcolonialism	0	6	6	3

Keyword areas that featured in three-five syllabi included, in alphabetical order, “aesthetic questions/viewpoints,” “canon,” “cultural encounters/human interrelationships,” “cultural/national identity,” “equality,” “globalisation,” “interculturality/transculturality,” “literary development/renewal,” “migration/immigration,” “popular culture,” “race,” “readers/reading (habits),” “sustainable development,” and “values.”

Table 3 indicates that the thematic repertoires made available to student teachers regularly revolved around (inter)cultural understanding, identity, and social justice.⁵⁹ Only as an exception, in elective

⁵⁷ Discrepancies in the table between the total number of syllabi and the number of syllabi listed for each programme result from syllabi that refer to both programmes. In some cases syllabi referred to electives that were also freestanding modules and/or modules included in general English programmes. At Dalarna and Stockholm, for example, the English IV electives were part of the MA programmes offered (HENEA and HPLVO, respectively). In such cases, the table refers to the number of teacher education syllabi, and not the number of relevant syllabi for the elective modules.

⁵⁸ Some 27 out of those 35 syllabi refer to “literary texts in different genres” or to the study of “literary genres, such as prose, drama and poetry.”

⁵⁹ These topics seemed particularly pronounced in programmes at the following institutions: Borås, Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Malmö, Södertörn, Umeå, Uppsala and West.

modules at English III and IV, did syllabi specify that other types of topics were addressed. These included “the problem of evil in English literature” (Lund/Kristianstad ÄENC51, my translation) and the question of mimesis (Stockholm *Optional Modules*). It is unclear whether elective modules were designed for teacher education; regardless, they were available to general English students and to upper secondary programme students. Some syllabi emphasised symptomatic approaches to literature, whereby, for instance, literature was regarded “as a bearer of values and ideas in the present and historically” (West ELI201, my translation). Others foregrounded the knowledge that literature can offer. This included, for example, a consideration of how “social and historical dilemmas, problems, and changes are represented in literary works” (Uppsala 5EN204, my translation), and the insights that can be offered by “texts that express social critique” (Örebro EN2010, my translation).⁶⁰

The syllabus review, further, reveals an emphasis on contextualising approaches to literature. Notably, some 31 syllabi were explicit about attending to cultural, socio-historical and, on occasion, aesthetic, global, ideological and political backgrounds and contexts. Another 12 stated that the study of literature involved cultural, social or historical perspectives, or that it attended to the relation between text and culture.⁶¹ Many of these formulations were found in syllabi that also made explicit the thematisation of socio-cultural questions, socio-historical phenomena, and such topics as gender, class and ethnicity, mentioned in Table 3. Some 25 syllabi did not overlap with the ones accounted for in that table. This means that the majority of the syllabi foregrounded the engagement, in some way or other, with literature and society. These amounted to at least 18/27 syllabi for secondary and 54/75 for upper secondary teacher programmes.⁶² Even if not all teacher programmes foregrounded it to the same extent, this concern was present in all of them: secondary and upper secondary.

⁶⁰ At Uppsala, the English IV syllabus, which addressed the teaching of literature, made an explicit link between, on the one hand, the kinds of social questions – “concerning factors such as class, gender and ethnicity” – that literature illuminates and, on the other, “critical reflection on the pedagogy of teaching literature” (5EN204, my translation).

⁶¹ Such formulations regarding backgrounds, contexts, and perspectives could be found in 10 syllabi for secondary teacher programmes and 39 for upper secondary teacher programmes: at Borås, Dalarna, Gävle, Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Mälardalen, Malmö, Mid Sweden, Örebro, Stockholm and Uppsala.

⁶² The figures include the syllabi that explicitly mention one (or more) of the following: that attention is paid to cultural questions and socio-historical phenomena; that the study of literature focuses on the thematisation of gender, class, ethnicity and diversity (all of which are subject matters listed in Table 3); and that it attends to various contexts, and involves cultural, social or historical perspectives on literature.

At the same time, the keywords review points to a distinct, if not always as accentuated, desire to further student teachers' understanding of the methods by which literary works convey their subject matters. Usually, this meant that syllabi specified a concern with, for instance, generic conventions and compositional strategies. Keywords on these aspects were included in (mainly upper secondary) teacher programmes at 17 universities.⁶³ In a handful of programmes, it can be noted, literary studies included creative writing approaches. A couple of the syllabi in question linked creative writing elements to student teachers' literary competencies, for instance "their understanding of different generic features and of the structure of texts" (Örebro EN016G, my translation).⁶⁴ When it comes to knowledge about genre and compositional strategies, similar patterns seemed in place for secondary and upper secondary teacher programmes, with almost a third of the syllabi foregrounding these aspects of literary studies.

As regards the theoretical repertoires made accessible to student teachers, few syllabi stated the specific theoretical schools addressed. Some 19 syllabi from 8 institutions specified those in course descriptions or in learning outcomes.⁶⁵ Another 25 syllabi included materials on theory in literature lists.⁶⁶ If both these are taken into account, it would appear that programmes at most institutions focused on modern literary and cultural theories, primarily those formulated since the 1960s: at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Lund/Kristianstad, Mälardalen, Södertörn, Stockholm and West.⁶⁷

Table 4 presents the materials on theory and criticism most frequently listed in the studied syllabi:

⁶³ These were Borås, Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Mälardalen, Malmö, Örebro, Södertörn, Stockholm, Umeå and Uppsala.

⁶⁴ Creative writing elements were included in the programmes at Borås (secondary), Malmö (both programmes), Södertörn (upper secondary) and Örebro (upper secondary). In some cases, creative writing was associated with the student teachers' repertoire of instructional methods. For example, a syllabus from Borås stated that students' creative writing assignments involved their ability "to reflect on how [a piece of writing inspired by fanfiction] can help all pupils develop their reading and writing in English" (CENG80, my translation).

⁶⁵ These were Dalarna, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linnaeus, Mälardalen, Södertörn and Stockholm.

⁶⁶ Theory materials featured in the literature lists at Dalarna, Gävle, Gothenburg, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Luleå, Lund, Lund/Kristianstad, Mälardalen, Södertörn, Stockholm and West.

⁶⁷ Cf. The English III syllabus at Jönköping (LECP18), which was not in place until the autumn 2018, also listed Barry's *Beginning Theory*. Gothenburg focused on Cultural Studies and Mälardalen on ecocriticism.

Table 4. Materials on theory most commonly listed in syllabi.⁶⁸

Materials	Number of syllabi		Number of institutions
	Secondary	Upper secondary	
1. Lois Tyson's <i>Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide</i>	1	6	5
2. Jonathan Culler's <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i>	--	6	4
3. Peter Barry's <i>Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory</i>	--	4	3
4. Andrew Bennet & Nicholas Royle's <i>Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory</i>	--	3	2

Materials that featured in (one-two) syllabi in only one institution included Paul Fry's *Theory of Literature*, Robert Dale Parker's *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*, and Louise Hutchings Westling's *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*.

Even as these materials address theory in different ways, most, and on occasion all, theories that they included offer what Jonathan Culler (2007:4) has called, "persuasive characterizations of problems or phenomena of general interest."⁶⁹ These concern language, narrative, consciousness, meaning, nature and culture, and the relations of individual experience to larger structures. Materials can be used in many ways and for many purposes, and a syllabus review cannot account for what aspects of these materials were addressed in teaching, or how they were discussed (Englund 1999). Nonetheless, based on the perspectives included in the materials, it may be surmised what kinds of theoretical repertoires were emphasised in English teacher education. I do not go into this in any depth, as I mainly wish, here, to draw to attention the kinds of theoretical questions that were likely thematised. The materials listed would seem to confirm the orientation of literary studies in teacher education toward the social functions of reading literature. In part, this entails addressing social, ethical and political fields of interest, and the critique of such matters as class, ethnicity and gender. In part, it means an emphasis on the potential of literature to help understand the world and to

⁶⁸ In addition to theory materials, syllabi especially at advanced level, sometimes included comprehensive lists of theoretical and critical works.

⁶⁹ Culler's *Literary Theory* for instance considers shared questions and claims across theoretical approaches, whereas Tyson's *Critical Theory Today*, Barry's *Beginning Theory*, and Parker's *How to Interpret Literature* focus on schools of criticism.

sharpen students' cognitive capacities in the process. In other words, English literary studies, implicitly or explicitly, imparted conceptions of literature that mainly relied on its affordances vis-à-vis worldly fathoming and the development of students' critical reading abilities.

When it comes to student teachers' theoretical repertoires, it is worth noting that theory was an object of study mainly in upper secondary teacher programmes. Normally, materials on theory featured in second year courses, at English III and, where applicable, at English IV.⁷⁰ This means that theory materials were included in few secondary teacher programmes, as these usually comprised English I and II.⁷¹ It should be observed, however, that some programme syllabi also listed other materials that introduced theory. For example, a couple of English I and II syllabi included John Peck and Martin Coyle's *Literary Terms and Criticism* (2002).⁷² This primer presents a brief overview of modern theories of criticism, with special focus on critical theories since the 1960s. A handful of secondary teacher programme syllabi, similarly, listed language and literature didactics materials that in various ways address modern literary theories.⁷³ These include Richard Beach, Deborah Appleman, Susan Hynds, and Jeffrey Wilhelm's *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* (2006) and Bo Lundahl's *Engelsk språkdidaktik* (2009). In these materials, the focus is often on narrative, reader response and reception theories, and on their uses for classroom teaching. Whilst the materials may have been used in a variety of ways, it is worth observing that the absence of theory readers does not mean that theoretical approaches to literature were missing from secondary teacher programmes.

Ultimately, the review points to a relative consensus about the orientation of literary studies, regarding the prioritised areas of thematic interest, conceptions of literature, and theoretical tools for literary analysis. The thematic and theoretical repertoires made available to student teachers nationally seem shaped by the understanding of literature as a vehicle for worldly knowledge and by a focus on the development of students' reading abilities, normally by way of modern critical theory. In the few instances when modules featured alternative thematic and theoretical perspectives, these

⁷⁰ This explains why certain institutions, which did not offer English III in the studied period, are not included in the list of upper secondary teacher programmes that include theory materials or learning outcomes regarding theory.

⁷¹ Theory materials were listed in syllabi for the secondary teacher programmes at Dalarna, Gothenburg, Mälardalen and Karlstad.

⁷² Peck and Coyle featured in literature lists at Kristianstad and Karlstad.

⁷³ Didactics materials that addressed modern literary theories were included in the secondary teacher programmes for instance at Halmstad, Malmö and Mälardalen.

were typically found in upper secondary teacher programmes, in second-year courses, in which student teachers were co-taught with general English students.

7. What literary studies are for

To conclude, in the studied period there were variations in the organisation and content of literary studies in English teacher education programmes nationally. However, the review shows that there was also considerable national agreement about the goals of literary studies and about the literary and conceptual repertoires that should be made available to student teachers. These were delimited by a focus on literary criticism and the related questions of literary reading and sense-making. They relied heavily on conceptions of literature that emphasise its potential to provide – and develop – social fathoming and cultural critique. Moreover, the goals and repertoires centred on the cognitive dimensions of literary reading, and they stressed the analytic and critical abilities involved in disciplinary modes of reading literary, and other, texts. Student teachers were primarily acquainted with modern and contemporary print literature, and with longer works of narrative prose, especially in the novel form. Whilst literary studies mainly addressed Anglo-American writers, there was an (often explicit) ambition, nationally, to mediate works from other parts of the English-speaking world. Furthermore, there was a distinct orientation in most programmes toward contextualising approaches to literature, toward social, ethical and political fields of thematic interest, and toward the conceptual tools of modern critical and cultural theories.

I noted earlier that the goal-oriented educational system in Sweden entails a level of freedom for academic teachers and for school teachers to define the place and uses of literature in English. In light of the present review, I wish to raise a few matters about the subject knowledge mediated in English teacher education. These concern the conception of literary studies in the context of the English subject and the focus in English teacher education on certain types of literary and disciplinary repertoires.

Let me begin with the position of literary studies in English teacher education and with subject conceptions. Unlike the school subject of Swedish, the core of the English subject and the function of literature therein has not been a topic of debate in the academic English community. Yet, the studied syllabi suggested a consensus nationally about the centrality of literary studies for English

teacher education. This was the case despite the relatively backgrounded position of literature in the steering documents for the school subject. Indeed, whilst these documents opened for different definitions of the English subject, key formulations in them pointed to English as a school subject mainly concerned with, and legitimised by its focus on, functional language use. It is, to use Lars-Göran Malmgren's (1996:86) term, a "*färdighetsämne*."⁷⁴ This definition can be inferred via the references, in the school curriculum and its auxiliary material, to the action-oriented logic of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, and it is cemented by the knowledge requirements for English, which pertained mainly to language competencies (*English* 2012, *Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen* 2011).

The teacher education review, on the other hand, indicates an understanding of English that transcended narrow definitions of the school subject, by paying heed to school curriculum requirements about cultural knowledge and about the role of education as a mediator and critic of values. In teacher programmes across the country, literary studies seemed to present student teachers with a conception of the English subject as one in which questions, not only of (inter)cultural awareness, but of humanistic value can, and should be, foregrounded. The position and content of literary studies, in this view, seemed to invite student teachers to regard the English school subject as an occasion to address questions about human experience and the human condition. Moreover, they invited student teachers to regard literary works – and to a limited extent also films and TV-series – as illuminating cultural artefacts. Thereby, teacher education syllabi pointed to the ambition to align the understanding of the school subject with that of the academic subject. English, in this definition, is fundamentally concerned with humanistic questions and it privileges literary works, not merely as occasions to address these questions, but also for the knowledge that literature offers about them.

At the same time, the thematic and conceptual focus of literary studies suggested that the conceptions of *literary studies* conveyed to student teachers were remarkably narrow. To be sure, both the spectrum of literary writers and sub-genres addressed, and the close links established between literature and society, imply that student teachers were normally invited to engage with a broad range

⁷⁴ In relation to the school subject of Swedish, Malmgren (1988/1996) has observed that various conceptions of the subject can be at play at once.

of social, ethical and other matters. The theoretical perspectives included in the materials, similarly, point to a desire to open up a variety of issues pertaining to, for instance, human communication, experience, and meaning-making. The repertoires imparted, however, tended to focus on those disciplinary aspects that could cover curricular ground in schools. Only as an exception did syllabi indicate that other perspectives on literature were addressed.

The thematic and theoretical repertoires student teachers normally encountered seemed largely aligned to school curriculum stipulations about cultural knowledge. Core subject matters thematised harmonised with school syllabi prescriptions regarding how teaching should:

provide pupils with opportunities to develop knowledge about and an understanding of different living conditions, as well as social and cultural phenomena in the areas and contexts where English is used. (English syllabus in the *Curriculum for compulsory school* 2018:34)

Similarly, the prioritisation in most institutions of theories concerning ideology, equity and sustainability were consistent with school curriculum stipulations that “Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based” (2018:5; 2017:7).⁷⁵ Indeed, the thematic and theoretical content of literary studies was in keeping with an emphasis in the auxiliary curricular material on attitudes and values, and on “critical language awareness” (*Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen*, 2011:5-7, my translation). Generic and historical repertoires to some extent also seemed adapted to what could be considered appropriate text selections for the school classroom. Children’s and young adult literature modules, for example, featured more frequently in teacher education courses, compared with general English courses (Dodou 2020a).

The syllabus review, moreover, indicates that literature modules implicitly defined the nature of literary studies as synonymous with literary interpretation. The main task of literary studies, in turn,

⁷⁵ This content was also consistent with stipulations in Section 5 of the *Higher Education Act* that higher education institutions “shall promote sustainable development ... [e]quality between women and men ... [and] understanding of other countries and of international circumstances” (Ordinance 2005:1208).

was delimited as developing critical reading abilities, which, presumably, were regarded as transferable.⁷⁶ Other valuations, questions and practices of the discipline were largely absent from the syllabi.

The disciplinary aspects conveyed, in part, would seem chosen in recognition of the position in the Swedish educational system of literature in English. In Swedish schools, to reiterate, Swedish is the subject tasked with teaching pupils about literature, and how to engage with the literariness of literature, about literary terminology and literary history (including, in translation, works of English literature). Swedish teachers usually receive their literary training in departments of literary studies (*litteraturvetenskap*), which encompass Western literature and which have traditionally focused on literary history and poetics.⁷⁷ By contrast, English departments, which train English teachers, have tended to focus their general and teacher education courses on nineteenth to twenty-first century literature and to attend especially to literature as a source of worldly knowledge and understanding (Dodou 2020a).⁷⁸ The principal preoccupation of literary studies in English teacher education with contemporary literature and with matters of social concern, rather than, say, also with the long history of English literature, with literary taste, or with the literary market, in this respect, can be understood as follows: the focus of English literary studies would seem adapted to the framework provided by the school curricula and by the subject traditions that follow the organisation of disciplines in Swedish academia.

In part, the literary and conceptual repertoires made available in English teacher programmes nationally seemed to reflect academic priorities in response to national policy. For instance, the (oftentimes very limited) length of sub-discipline specific studies within teacher education shaped the opportunities afforded to impart to student teachers of English a deep understanding of literary studies. The almost exclusive focus on reading could be regarded, in this respect, as a pragmatic

⁷⁶ It is unclear from goal and content formulations in syllabi how and to what extent the relevance of these reading practices outside the academy were addressed.

⁷⁷ As Persson (2007) has shown, in general courses and in teacher education courses, *litteraturvetenskap* has shied away from cultural approaches to literature, attending, instead, to literary history and poetics. On the delimitations of the academic subject of *litteraturvetenskap* in relation to literary studies in academic language subjects in Sweden, see, for example, Esbjörn Nyström (2010) and Ken Benson (2009).

⁷⁸ With the exception of Malmö, in which the academic subject of English and the teacher education subject of English were organizationally separated, in the studied period and at Swedish universities English departments were responsible for teaching the subject to student teachers.

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choice based on the understanding of literary reading skills as the basis for literary scholarship. The policy framework within which the academic English subject operated, then, can partly account for the focus of literary studies in English teacher education on a limited part of the discipline.

The content of literary studies, in this respect, emerges as a compromise between traditions, policy stipulations and academic assumptions about the core and purposes of literary studies (cf. Barnett & Coate 2005:27-40). The legitimacy of literary studies, in turn, seemed to rely – besides numerous implicit links to policy documents – on various understandings of teachers' knowledge. Usually, those seemed based on definitions of teaching as “a learned profession” (Shulman 1987:9). Most syllabi imply that English teachers needed to grasp the principles and procedures of literary reading, as well as to become aware of various literary works and disciplinary concerns. Often, the knowledge imparted implies specific perceptions of what constituted school-oriented repertoires about literature, and it was combined with the ambition to address the potential uses of literature in the school classroom.

Let me turn to the sub-discipline specific knowledge imparted and to the intersection between, on the one hand, policy and institutional constraints and, on the other, the relative freedom granted to English departments to define what knowledge is necessary and valid. I would like to suggest that the current review provides a basis and an occasion to consider the goals for literary studies and the kinds of repertoires within the sub-discipline that English teachers need. Here, I do not primarily refer to ways in which the review could facilitate local comparisons between practices, or stimulate the development of specific teacher programmes – although the account does harbour the potential to contribute to such work. Rather, I propose that the review provides an opportunity for the scholarly and teaching community of English to address, nationally and at the level of principle, the shape of the teacher education subject and the question of what subject-specific knowledge should be mediated. In other words, I suggest that the review offers a basis for problematising practices and for stimulating meta-reflection about literary studies in English (cf. Ongstad 2006:35-36).

I would like to return here to didactic scholarship, which emphasises that the conception of the subject determines both what is deemed as relevant to teach and the way it is taught (Blomqvist

2016, Sjøberg 1998). The present account calls for a self-reflexive consideration of the disciplinary and vocational assumptions that underlie the knowledge within literary studies currently prioritised. What subject conceptions underpin the orientation of literary studies in English teacher education? How do these affect the vindication of literary studies? What are the consequences of current ways of legitimising literary studies – for instance, in relation to school curriculum stipulations – for how student teachers and their future pupils understand the value of reading, and studying, literature in a language that is not their mother tongue?

Simultaneously, the account raises questions of principle concerning what should constitute the foundations of English teachers' literary education.⁷⁹ To what extent do English school teachers need to study the long history of English literature? Should poetry and drama be given more space in teacher education courses? How should English teacher programme courses respond to changed media habits and to curricular stipulations regarding the inclusion in school teaching of films, TV series, and games?⁸⁰ Textual repertoires aside, what do English school teachers need to understand about the discipline of literary studies – its domains and questions, its development over time, its assumptions and research methods?⁸¹ Indeed, should the focus of literary studies in English teacher education primarily be on knowledge about literature and its value, or should it be on the development of student teachers' competencies with respect to disciplinary principles and methods? Ought English teacher education also to address, besides critical reading practices, other ways of engaging with literature, as, put forth, in relation to Swedish teacher education, by Jenny Bergenmar (2010) and Magnus Persson (2015)?⁸²

⁷⁹ Given that the secondary teacher education reform stipulated an increase in the space for subject-specific content and that secondary and upper secondary teacher education has just been evaluated by the Swedish Higher Education Authority, this seems an opportune time to discuss these matters.

⁸⁰ For discussions on this topic within Swedish teacher education, see for instance, Olin-Scheller (2008) and Lundström & Olin-Scheller (2010).

⁸¹ For a discussion of how this might be understood, see Dodou (2018).

⁸² In relation to the teacher education subject of Swedish, literary scholars have questioned the primacy of critical reading practices. Bergenmar (2010:23), for instance, advocates teaching student teachers a history of reading over teaching them literary history. This means teaching students how a particular work has been used and ascribed significance in different periods and cultural contexts (private readings, public readings, institutional uses of literature) so as to impart knowledge about the view of literature in different periods. Persson (2015:22), instead, argues for a consideration of the diversity of reading practices “in arenas both inside and outside the educational system” – with special focus on the activity of reading, on the places of reading, on the text as a physical object, as well as on other people, activities or artefacts that become important in these practices.

In relation to Swedish teacher education, literary scholars have an ongoing discussion about the aspects of disciplinary knowledge that student teachers need as part of their higher education and of their preparation for school teaching. A principal question concerns how to understand the value of literature and of literary studies in a school context.⁸³ At issue is student teachers' understanding of the field of literary studies and of its uses in relation to education. Teacher education studies have shown that many student teachers of Swedish, both at the beginning and at the end of their education, lack a clear picture of the role of literature in school (Petersson 2009:34; Thorson 2009:109-110). This is despite the fact that a core purpose of the Swedish school subject is to teach literature. It is worth contemplating whether English teacher education would fare better in a comparable study. Do existing programmes provide clarity as to the uses of literature in English in school, and, indeed, as to the purposes and value of literary studies for the professional training and practice of English school teachers? At issue in the debates over literary studies in Swedish teacher education are also perceptions within the academic community regarding what aspects of literary scholarship could be valuable for student teachers to become aware of, or familiar with. Key, here, are conceptions of literary studies as a subject. For the academic English community, these conceptions extend to literary studies in relation to the academic English subject, the English school subject, and the English teacher education subject.

These discussions of principle – which focus on the nature, value and purposes of literary studies – are vital, not merely for positive curricular development within teacher education, and, by extension, for modelling English teachers and classroom practices. They are also central for the discipline and for teaching in non-vocational courses of study because they negotiate and shape the perception of what literary studies are for. It is time the English scholarly community in Sweden properly joined in these discussions.

⁸³ Several literary scholars share the desire to defend the potential of literature against what is regarded as its reduction – in steering documents, and sometimes in language didactics – to a means of language development, reading comprehension, and democratic fostering. A recurring question, accordingly, regards ways of defining the relevance of literature in terms of disciplinary values (e.g. Degerman 2015:16).

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