CHANGING CONCEPTS OF LITERATURE AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS IN TEXTBOOKS FOR LITERATURE TEACHING
One of the worst educational technologies ever invented was the textbook. Evidence is replete that textbooks do not work well. Why? Because they are meant to be one-size-fits-all, all-purpose solutions to learning.

(James Paul Gee 2015: 128)
PREMISES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Very many children have their most important and influential reading experiences in school
- Maybe, textbooks are one of the most important factors in the literature classroom (Gee 2015)
- A textbook indicates certain tendencies and considerations about both literature, teacher and pupil
- Popular textbooks represent dominating views on literature and pedagogy
The purpose of the analysed textbooks is literature teaching in grade 4 in Danish L1-classrooms, the pupils are 10-11 years old

The analysed textbooks are chosen from a much larger material

They are chosen because of their influence, popularity (among teachers) and their connection to shifting policy documents

This study is a part of a larger research project about textbooks and other teaching materials. The project is based on mixed methods (a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies)

The overall research question in the mixed method-project is: How is the L1-subject ‘Danish’ portrayed in popular textbooks and electronic learning platforms?
EMPIRICAL MATERIAL
TEXTBOOKS FOR 4TH GRADE

- *Dig selv og ...* [You and ...] (1977/1983)
- *Digtning og dansk* [Poetry and Danish] (1995)
- *Læs for livet* [Read for life] (1998)
KEY QUESTIONS

- How do the selected textbooks present literature (which discourses are connected to the subject)?
- Which types of literature and genres are included?
- Which types of questions and activities are presented?
- How are the pupils’ potentials for envisionment building and engaging in literature supported by the textbooks?
- Historical development – surprising or?
THE CONCEPT OF ENVISIONMENT BUILDING

Envisionment building [is] an activity in sense making, where meanings change and shift and grow as a mind creates its understanding of a work (..). Even after the last word is read (..), we are left with an envisionment that is also subject to change with additional thought, reading, discussion, writing, and living.

Langer 2011, p. 14-15
LANGER’S MODEL OF ENVISIONMENT BUILDING

1) Being Out and Stepping into an Envisionment – understanding the text
2) Being In and Moving Through an Envisionment – testing ideas, motifs, feelings etc.
3) Stepping Out and Rethinking What One Knows – the envisionment illuminates (and influences) life, and life illuminates (and influences) the envisionment
4) Stepping Our and Objectifying the Experience – the meta reflexive and critical reading
5) Internalizing the Experience
Different types of texts including representations of popular culture in different media, cartoons, translations of children's literature - together with historical children's literature (canonical texts), poetry, novels, short-stories, non-fiction. Focus on the child and his/her interests.
Two examples of children’s literature written by children.

The title is “When play is dangerous”, and the genre is “cautionary - tale”.

Når leg er farlig

Niårig dreng kvalt i køleskab

Virum d. 5. 6.
Torsdag eftermiddag legede 5 drengene gennemleg på en losseplads nære Virum. Da de havde leget en times tid, kunne de pludselig ikke finde den ene af drengene. Efter at have lødt efter ham og råbt på ham i kvartier, opsvog de og gik hjem.

Først senere på aftentiden, da den forsvundne drenge mor ringede rundt og spurgt efter din ni-årige søn, fortalte en af drengene, hvad der var sket. Drengen fortalte, at de troede, han var gået hjem, da de ikke kunne finde ham.

Modernen alarmerede politiet, der straks startede en efterforskning.

Fredag morgen fandt politiet drengen kvalt af ølmængel i et køleskab. Han havde ligget sammenkrunget i køleskabet i 14 timer og havde lavet adskillige buler i lågen under kampen med døden.

Politiet advarte mod, at barn leger på lossepladser eller i nærheden af gamle køleskaber, der kun kan åbnes udefra.

Skrevet af Heidi Flammov skolelever

Syvårig pige hængt under leg

Hjulørup d. 8. 9.
Den syvårig Lea Pedersen legede i går eftermiddag cowboy og indianere med sine nye skolekammerater. Hun startede i skolen før blot en uge siden. I går aftråde hun med kameraterne at de skulle mødes og lege.


De keiser ikke løbben med det samme, og Lea bliver kvit i snoren.

Den største af børnene løber hjem til Leas mor og fortæller, at Lea ikke vil vågne, og at hun måske er død.

Moderen løber ud til legestedet, hvor hun forsøger at få liv i sin datter. Hun bærer hende hjem og ringer efter en ambulance, men pigen var ikke til at redde.

Skrevet af Heidi Flammov skolelever
The questions and activities are inspired by New Criticism

Very text/picture oriented and analytical questions

In focus: Content, literary characters, language

Lack of context

Lack of creativity

The questions support the first two phases in Langer’s model

There are potentials in the texts, but the questions are quite stereotypical.
Focus on themes (circus and the local community/identity) and focus on genres (rhymes and chants)

The texts are children’s literature, mostly Danish

Different texts from different historical periods, but many contemporary short-stories and pictures

Focus on context (especially in *We want to live in... the local community*)

Textual analysis and poetic creativity (especially in *Rhymes and chants*)

Focus on children as readers and democratic citizens

Especially phase three in Langer’s model is supported.
Literature is defined as fine art

Texts and illustrations are canonical literature and paintings

Children’s literature is represented with a focus on reading and understanding

Knowledge about literature is prioritized (genres, literature history)

Literature teaching is integrated with language teaching

A lot of writing and focus on grammar and spelling

Lack of interpretation

Only phase one in Langer’s model is supported
All texts are fiction

Variety in genres from ancient myths to modern children’s literature

Focus both on canonical texts and contemporary (and quite experimental) texts for children

The texts are presented in sections with common themes

Very much focus on reception and playfulness

The readers are invited to participate and create their own versions of texts and pictures

Many different activities

No systematic interpretation

Phase three in Langer’s model is supported
Nearly all texts are modern children’s literature

The texts represent variation in themes, composition and language

Many picture books with complexity in the ikonotext (the interplay between text and image, Hallberg 1982)

Children’s literature and especially picture books are looked upon as art

All the texts are analysed with concepts from textual analysis (narratology)

Lack of existential perspectives and interpretations with focus on death, identity, meaning of life etc. - although the texts address these themes
Prøv et loop! – om komposition

Historier består af en indledning, en handling og en slutning, men forfatteren kan vælge at bygge historien op efter forskellige modeller. I dette kapitel skal du lære om to modeller: rammefortællingen og berettermodellen, og se fotos af, hvordan en arkitekt arbejder med komposition i et museum.

Rammefortællingen
I en rammefortælling er én historie bygget ind i en anden, der fungerer som en ramme. Der kan godt være flere historier inden for rammen.

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<th>Rammer</th>
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<td>Historien</td>
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Berettermodellen
Når en forfatter skriver sin historie, bygger han spændingen op til et høje punkt – det mest spændende sted i teksten. Man kan bruge en modell til at vise, hvordan en historie eller en film er bygget op.

På denne tegning kan det se ud, hvordan berettermodellen hænger sammen med indledning, handling og slutning.

Spændingskurve
Den linje, der forbindes de forskellige faser i berettermodellen, kalder man en spændingskurve. Den viser, hvordan spændingen stiger i teksten.

Nu skal du først se og læse om, hvordan en arkitekt har arbejdet med en spændende bygningskomposition.
CONCLUSIONS

- The texts in the 4th grade textbooks are diverse – most diversity in the earliest examples
- The concept of literature is changing – from an inclusive to a more exclusive understanding
- From the inclusion of children’s own texts, different media and popular culture in 1977 to an understanding of children’s literature as art
- Children’s literature is included in all the textbooks, but with different purposes and perspectives
- The examples from 1977 and especially 1986 show literature teaching as a discipline where personal experiences and development of a democratic citizenship are emphasized
- The examples from 1995 and 2008 show literature teaching as art education with a focus on scholarly understanding and concepts (parallels to real life are hardly ever made)
According to the analysed textbooks, the concept of children’s literature has changed to be more connected to an understanding of children’s literature as literature and art. This is, of course, an acknowledgment of children’s literature, but at the same time it is quite a narrow definition.

Literature teaching on 4th grade in Denmark has become theoretical art education based on the training of a specialised language. Text-analytical tools and concepts – intertextuality, meta-fiction, ikonotekst – are applied to the many of the texts in the most recent textbooks.

Children’s literature has been incorporated in a school discourse, where the purpose is academic achievements more than reading for new experiences.

A movement from teaching with literature to teaching in literature.

Maybe, the pupils in grade 4 are the future (children’s) literature researchers....
References


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