

National Curriculum Change: Why (not) Linguistics?

The story of including linguistics in the upper level of secondary education

Maria van der Aalsvoort

Radboud University Nijmegen



Definition Linguistics (in this study)

Teaching and learning about general language and cultural subjects such as language variation, language acquisition, language change, language history etc.

Analysis Framework

- Academic discourse: literature, language skills and linguistics.
- School subject: literature and language skills.
- History of linguistics as a school subject:
Generally in the form of grammar + meta-perspective on language (and literature) in the secondary school lost ground to language skills.

Periods

- 1991 CVEN (*) Commission positive, minister decided: no.
- 1995 VOG-N (**) Commission positive, minister decided: no.
- 2005 Recent. No commission, minister decided: yes.
Linguistics allowed in the school exam (optional) for the first time.



Research Question

- Who decided (at what moment, with which arguments, against which educational political background) about including linguistics (not grammar) in the secondary school curriculum?

Sub Questions

- Why is it possible to teach linguistics now in schools whereas this has never been possible before?
- Why does some specific scientific knowledge get the status of a school subject, whereas other knowledge does not get this recognition?
- What are the criteria for the selection and inclusion of linguistics knowledge?
- What subject selection in linguistics do we see in school methods (after 2005) and which ideas about content and didactics did method makers have and why?

Historical Curriculum Study (Reconstructive ethnography)



Oral History

- Interviews with about ten key players in the three periods between 1988 and 2008.
- Interviews with method makers (2005-08).

Research of Documents

- Research of official documents.
- Research of specialist journals, archives and school methods.

Research Value

- There's not much scientific knowledge about the process of curriculum change.
- There's not much scientific knowledge about the process of including new content into a school subject.
- My research can contribute to the development of knowledge about curriculum change in the school subject Dutch but also about the process of curriculum change in general.

(*) Advisory commission installed by the minister of education in 1988 to modernise the exams of the school subject Dutch. The first occasion where linguistics in upper secondary education was discussed.

(**) Advisory Commission installed by the minister of education in 1995 to modernise the exams of the school subject Dutch. In this period all school subjects had to be discussed in similar commissions in order to create a more learner and skills orientated education.

