

Making Sense of Complexity of the World Today: why Finland is Introducing Multiliteracy in Teaching and Learning

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the Finnish basic education curriculum reform between the years 2012 and 2016 and the role of multiliteracy in it. It helps readers understand the main reasons and aims of the reform as well as the collaborative working approach in the reform process. It describes the endeavour towards a holistic educational approach including an integration of school subjects which is more extensive than before. The aim is to promote pupils' ability to understand the relationships between various phenomena, to connect knowledge and skills gathered from different school subjects and to utilise them in exploring different phenomena and topics. The main tools in this approach are the seven cross-curricular, transversal competences described in the national core curriculum as well as the so-called multidisciplinary learning modules to be formed at the local and school level. The concept of transversal competence refers to an entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. Multiliteracy is one of the seven transversal competences. The article analyses the importance and objectives of multiliteracy in a world of change. The role of literacy has been changing rapidly, parallel to the development of other means of communication. More and more information is mediated in visual, numerical, audio, kinaesthetic and digital form, and through combinations of these. Multiliteracy is needed for interpreting, producing and assessing various kinds and forms of text. At school, multiliteracy is developed through studies in all school subjects and with the help of their specific language. The objectives of multiliteracy at different levels of pre-primary and basic education are examined and examples of multiliteracy in different school subjects are given in the article. The need for multiliteracy is connected to the paradigm shift concerning language teaching and learning as well as the role of languages and language awareness in learning, in school community and in a culturally diverse society.

Keywords: *multiliteracy, phenomena-based learning, curriculum reform, transversal competences*

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Introduction

In December 2014, Finland completed the renewal of the national core curricula for pre-primary education and basic (primary and lower secondary) education. Local education authorities are now busy working with the local curricula based on the national core curricula. Schools will start their work according to the new curricula in autumn 2016. The whole process is called Curriculum reform 2016. In order to meet the challenges of the future, there will be much focus on transversal (cross-curricular) competences and work across school subjects (Halinen, 2015).

One of the seven transversal competences described in the national core curricula is called multiliteracy. The focus of multiliteracy is in promoting students' capacity to read and interpret the multicultural and diverse world around them, and to influence it. (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). It also aims to strengthen the basic literacy, in which Finnish students have gained high level of achievement, by connecting it to other forms of literacy, for instance visual and media literacy. Finnish teachers seem to have adopted the concept of multiliteracy in a positive way, and started to develop their pedagogy according to it.

Curriculum reform 2016

In the Finnish education system, the national core curricula are key steering instruments for pre-primary, basic and for upper secondary education. In this article we will focus on compulsory basic education. Children start basic education in Finland in the year in which they turn seven. Almost all of them will have participated in voluntary, one year long pre-primary education before this. From August 2015 onwards, the pre-primary education has been compulsory, too. Basic education usually lasts nine years. It is most often provided by the municipality. Municipal education authorities have to develop the local curriculum according to the national core curriculum. There are a few private schools, however they also create their own curriculum based on the same national core curriculum, as do the municipalities, too. So, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education steers the provision of education for all children from 7 to 16 years.

In December 2014, the new national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education were passed by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). The renewal of the core curricula was preceded by and based on a government decree concerning the general aims of education and the allocation of lesson hours. This decree was passed in the summer of 2012 and the new curricula must be in place in all basic education schools from the autumn of 2016. To support the local adaptations of the core curricula, a great number of in-service training courses is being organised and new learning materials published.

The FNBE has made a serious effort to organise the reform of the core curricula in the form of a process that as such reflects the qualities Finns value most in good education. This is why the core curricula were drafted in an open and comprehensive dialogue and collaboration with education providers, principals and teachers, researchers, and teacher educators. Civil society organisations played a most active part in the process and their voice was also well heard. In an article on the process of the curriculum reform, Heikkinen,

Huttunen and Kiilakoski (2014) concluded that the process observed to a high degree the principles of democratic will creation as proposed by Jürgen Habermas in his discourse theory (Jääskeläinen, 2015, 12).

The design process of the core curricula was based on a thorough study of both the newest research knowledge and results of various evaluations and development projects as well as every day experiences of municipalities and schools. The process was open and transparent. Municipalities and schools were asked to comment on the drafts of the core curricula, and take pupils' and their parents' opinions into account, too. The drafts were also available on the webpages of the FNBE several times during the process. Anyone interested could read and comment the drafts. The drafts were refined based on the feedback and then published again. During the finalizing period, the core curricula were sent to several key stakeholders for their opinions. As a result of this process, the reform itself and the core curricula have been met with a positive response throughout the field of education and from the Finnish society. The key is trust. Teachers trust that the FNBE really listens to their experiences, needs and ideas, and the FNBE trusts that local authorities and teachers do their best in drawing up the local curricula and working according to the common guidelines. As there is a lot of autonomy for local authorities in providing education, municipalities may develop their own approaches to implementing the curricula, differing from those of other municipalities (Halinen & Holappa, 2013, 39-40, 57-58; Halinen, 2015).

Key principles in the reform are inclusive education, multifaceted and deep learning, enhancement of and high level of transversal and subject competences, and promotion of sustainable ways of living. The Core Curriculum 2014 describes schools as learning communities in terms that echo the spirit and formulations of the chapters on value basis and concept of learning – bearing in mind that also these will be subjects to continuous reflection and dialogue in order to develop both. Important features to develop in school work are meaningfulness and authentic learning environments, joy of learning, participation, dialogue, interaction and trust. If pupils and teachers do not have a chance to participate in and influence the planning and crafting of their own work they would not be able and committed to teach and learn about these qualities. The messages of the processes in schools need to comply with the objectives pursued. Learning is seen as an inseparable dimension of an individual's growth as a human being as well as in the construction of the good life of a community. (FNBE, 2014; Halinen, 2015; Jääskeläinen, 2015, 13).

Transversal competences and multidisciplinary learning modules

The increased need for transversal competences arises from changes in the surrounding world. In order to meet the challenges of the future, there will be much focus on transversal (cross-curricular) competences and work across school subjects. As structures and challenges of doing, knowing and being are changing essentially in our society, it requires us to have comprehensive knowledge and ability. Competences open up a useful way to reflect the objectives of education. They describe what type of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values an individual needs in order to live a good and meaningful life and to be able to function and work as a constructive member of society. At the same time, descriptions of

competences include a vision of the desirable future and the development of both education and society. (Halinen, 2011, 76-79).

According to the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, the concept of transversal competence refers to an entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. Competence also means an ability to apply knowledge and skills in a given situation (FNBE, 2014; OECD, 2015). The manner in which the pupils will use their knowledge and skills is influenced by the values and attitudes they have adopted and their willingness to take action.

The values, the concept of learning and the school culture as described in the Core Curriculum lay the foundation for the development of competence. School subjects still have an important role to play in teaching and learning but there will be less distinct borderlines and more collaboration in practice between them. The subjects common to all students in basic education have been stipulated in the Basic Education Act, and the allocation of lesson hours among school subjects has been prescribed in the Government Decree in 2012. Each subject builds the pupil's competence through the contents and methods typical of its field of knowledge and methods. Competence development is influenced not only by the contents on which the pupils work but also, and especially, by the manner in which they work and in which the interaction between the learner and the environment takes place. Feedback given to the pupils, as well as guidance and support for learning influence attitudes, motivation and willingness to act.

In the Core Curriculum 2014, the objectives for learning are described as seven areas of competence. These areas are

- Thinking skills and learning to learn
- Cultural competence, interaction and expression
- Managing daily life, taking care of oneself and others
- Multiliteracy
- ICT (IT)-competence
- Working life and entrepreneurial competence
- Participation, influence and building a sustainable future.

These areas are frequently interconnected. Their joint objective is, in line with the mission of basic education and taking the pupils' age into account, to support growth as a human being and to impart competences required for membership in a democratic society and for a sustainable way of living. It is particularly vital to encourage pupils to recognise their uniqueness, their personal strengths and development potential, and to appreciate themselves. Every competence area includes knowledge and skills, and ability to use them in various situations in the best possible way. Values and attitudes are also important elements of competences. They have a key role in the formation of motivation and ability to use knowledge and skills in constructive and respectful ways. In the Finnish curriculum process, we have added the fifth element to every transversal competence, and that is will – meaning both willingness and willpower to use knowledge and skills for promoting good. (FNBE, 2014; OECD, 2015; Engeström, 2008).

Local authorities and schools are encouraged to promote the development of these competences and to consider their own innovative ways in reaching these goals. In basic education, the subject syllabi have been described so that their objectives include the competence goals which are most important for the said objectives. The competences will

also be assessed as a part of the subject assessment. In this way, every school subject enhances the development of all seven competence areas. This is a new way of combining competence-based and subject-based teaching and learning.

In the reform, the emphasis set on collaborative classroom practices will also be brought about in multi-disciplinary learning modules where several teachers may work with pupils studying the same topic. According to the new Core Curriculum of 2014, all schools have to design and provide at least one such learning module per school year for all pupils, focused on studying phenomena or topics that are of special interest for pupils. The length of the module can be decided locally; the recommended minimum is the amount of lessons in one school week. Pupils are expected to participate in the planning process of these studies. School subjects will provide their specific viewpoints, concepts and methods for the planning and implementation of these modules. Every multidisciplinary learning module involves skills and knowledge related to many subjects, for instance history, arts, math, physics and Finnish language, but from the pupils' viewpoint the boundaries will vanish. Not all subjects can be incorporated meaningfully to every learning module. The lessons of other subjects are then organised normally. Topics, participating subjects and the operational details will be decided at local and school level. Municipalities are allowed to emphasize these multidisciplinary learning modules in the provision of education, and they are also allowed to decide that there will be more than one learning module per year in their schools.

Multidisciplinary learning modules are new and efficient tools in promoting the development of transversal competences. They aim at promoting pupils' ability to understand relationships and interconnectivity between various phenomena. They help pupils to connect knowledge and skills of different subjects, and to organise their knowledge into larger entities. They also guide pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in examining various phenomena and topics, and to produce experiences on how to build knowledge together. And finally, they support pupils to notice connections between issues they study at school and issues of their own life, of their community, and the whole society and humanity.

Reasons behind multiliteracy

Literacy is strongly connected to a person's self-development and involvement in society through the ability to understand, analyse and utilise texts. It is not merely the mechanistic recognition of words and phrases, but the combination of skills and social practices in order to understand the world and other people. Literacy is a basic skill needed throughout one's life. It is not learned only in childhood and especially not only in school. Literacy in today's world is more and more challenging because much information is mediated for instance in visual, numerical, audio and kinaesthetic form.

For long, Finns were considered to be good and eager readers, and reading has been valued in society. Now there are some trends showing that this situation is rapidly changing. Attitudes towards reading are already different among the young, and also older people's reading habits are shifting. We can observe a tendency of choosing shorter and digital texts and not being able to read longer ones (Herkman & Vainikka, 2011, 144). Negative attitudes are growing and the interest in reading is changing, too. Finnish ninth-graders are still among top readers in the world, but the level of literacy is decreasing. The main factors

contributing to a good literacy rate are: engagement in reading, understanding the value of reading skills, and motivation. It has been found out that as early as from the fourth grade, motivation of Finnish pupils to read is quite low, and it gets lower as the pupils get older (Kupari et al., 2012, 46-50). The PISA comparison of 2012 showed that the level of literacy is constantly dropping among ninth-graders in Finland. Although Finns were number one globally in the year 2000, our literacy points have gone down, so that in 2012, Finland was ranked sixth after five Asian countries and regions (Kupari et al., 2013, 22). Finland still is the best European country in reading, but the declining tendency is making teachers and educational authorities worried anyway.

PISA studies also reveal that the gender differences are increasing: girls are more engaged and better readers than boys, who have less interest in reading. In spite of many educational development projects in reading, the gender achievement gap in reading has increased in Finland. (Arffman & Nissinen, 2015, 31; Brozo et al., 2014, 588; Kupari et al., 2013, 38) Especially in the northern and eastern parts of the country, boys have lower results, whereas girls in northern Finland are the best readers in the whole country. Pupils with immigrant background also have lower results (Kupari et al., 2013, 40; Arffman & Nissinen, 2015, 32). According to the PIAAC literacy assessment, which shows literacy rate of adults (16–65 year old), two thirds (63%) of adult Finns are quite decent readers, who manage challenging problems of information processing and interpretation. However, 11% or 370,000 adults are poor readers, struggling when faced with large portions of information. (Malin et al., 2012, 22)

While the top readers are fewer nowadays, the differences between strong and weak readers are also increasing. Especially boys and pupils with immigrant background have difficulties in literacy which is a threat to their full inclusion and participation in studies and in society as a whole. Lower level of literacy may also cause difficulties in their daily life. For the sake of equality, it is important that the general level of literacy be as high as possible. So it is necessary to find new means to teach literacy and emphasise the importance of literacy in school.

What do we mean by multiliteracy?

In basic education, the subject of mother tongue and literature is the most relevant to literacy education. However, teaching literacy cannot and should not rely on mother tongue teachers only. Actually, every teacher is a literacy teacher in content area literacy (CAL) and in disciplinary literacy (DL). This idea has been introduced strongly in the Core Curricula for Pre-primary Education and for Basic Education 2014.

In the Core Curriculum for Basic Education, the concept of multiliteracy is introduced as a transversal, cross-curricular competence which combines all subjects. The role of literacy has been changing rapidly in the last years, parallel to other means of communication. Multiliteracy means interpreting, producing and evaluating various kinds and forms of text, which will help the pupils to understand diverse forms of cultural communication and to build their personal identity. Multiliteracy is based on a broad definition of text. In this context, texts can take various forms, and meanings are expressed with verbal, visual, audio, numeric and kinaesthetic means and their combinations. For example, texts may be interpreted and produced in written, spoken, printed, audio-visual or digital forms.

Pupils need multiliteracy to interpret the world around them and to perceive its cultural diversity. Multiliteracy practices include obtaining, combining, modifying, producing, presenting and evaluating information in different forms, in different environments and situations, and by using various tools. Multiliteracy supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills. While developing it, the pupils also examine and consider ethical and aesthetic questions. Multiliteracy practices are developed in all teaching and learning, and in all school subjects. The pupils must have opportunities to use their practices both in traditional and in digital learning environments that exploit media in various ways. According to the Core Curriculum for Basic Education, pupils' multiliteracy is developed in all school subjects, progressing from everyday language to mastering the language and ways of constructing knowledge in different disciplines. A precondition for this is a rich textual environment, pedagogy that draws upon it, and cooperation between teachers and other stakeholders. Teaching and learning offers opportunities for enjoying different types of text. In learning situations, the pupils use, interpret and produce different text genres both individually and together with others. Texts with diverse modes of expression are used as learning materials, and the pupils are supported in understanding their cultural contexts. The pupils examine authentic texts that are meaningful to them and interpretations of the world that arise from these texts. This allows the pupils to rely on their strengths and utilise contents that engage them in learning, and also draw on them for participation and involvement.

Multiliteracy in pre-primary education

According to the Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014, the task of developing the seven aforementioned competences is taken into account also in all aspects of pre-primary education: in the development of the working culture and learning environments as well as in daily activities with children. The implementation of the task requires systematic work, monitoring of results and cooperation between pre-primary and basic education. Multiliteracy is presented as a new concept. The aim is to inspire children to learn and to strengthen their identity as well as to form a strong basis for their later development.

The development of multiliteracy begins already in early childhood and continues throughout one's life. The task of pre-primary education is to support the development of children's multiliteracy in cooperation with their guardians. Children are encouraged to explore, use and produce different types and forms of texts. These can be used to learn expression and interaction, while also enabling children to learn to deal with the thoughts and emotions that these texts evoke.

The development of children's visual literacy, writing, reading and numeracy, and media literacy shall be supported. In order to develop their multiliteracy, children need an example provided by an adult and a rich textual environment, culture produced by children and cultural services appropriate for children, such as films, nursery rhymes and music. Children's participation is strengthened by the development of multiliteracy. At the same time, the children's world is opened up, becomes more structured and gains new meanings.

Multiliteracy in grades 1-2

In grades 1 and 2, according to the Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, the pupils are guided to develop further multiliteracy practices by giving them opportunities to interpret, produce and evaluate many types of age-appropriate texts. The development of multiliteracy is supported by a multi-sensory, holistic, and phenomenon-based approach in teaching and learning. The pupils are encouraged to use and produce different kinds of texts, to enjoy them and to express themselves through them. Their basic reading and writing skills develop and become more fluent. The pupils also improve their skills in processing everyday numeric information, including differences in quantities. They are guided to develop their visual literacy by using visual modes of expression and examining means of visual involvement in their close environment.

The pupils are supported in finding information from different sources and communicating it to others. They are also guided to consider the relationship between the imaginary and the real world and the fact that each text has its author and its purpose. Teaching and learning thus supports the development of critical thinking. In order to develop multiliteracy, the pupils need both a rich textual environment and protective support in media use. Texts suitable for the needs of the pupils' age are used in teaching and learning, including newspapers and magazines, books, games, films, and music, as well as contents produced and selected by the pupils. Pupils' observations of their diverse surroundings are also important. Text production skills are developed in parallel with interpretation and evaluation skills. The pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to ask questions and to express wonder, tell stories, state their views and share their experiences using many types of tools and means of expression.

Multiliteracy in grades 3-6

In grades 3-6 of basic education, the pupils are guided to develop their multiliteracy competence by interpreting, producing, and evaluating an increasingly wide variety of texts in different contexts and environments. They are supported to make progress in their command of the relevant basic reading and writing skills and techniques. The pupils practice analysing fiction, non-fiction, and argumentation and recognising the difference between them. They are guided in observing and interpreting their textual environment and realising that texts have different purposes and audiences which influence the choice of expressions and other devices used in the texts. For example, texts may aim to inform, entertain or persuade the reader to make purchases.

Multiliteracy is advanced by analysing different texts from the perspectives of the author and the audience as well as by taking the context and situation into account. The pupils are encouraged to use various information sources, including oral, audiovisual, printed, and digital sources as well as search engines and library services. At the same time, the pupils are supported in comparing and evaluating the appropriateness of the information they find. The pupils are guided in working with various media which aims at making visible the meanings and realities conveyed by the media. Critical literacy is developed in cultural contexts that are meaningful for the pupils. Narration, description, comparison, and

commentary as well as various media presentations are modes of presenting information typical of this age. Active reading and producing different texts as part of school work and free time as well as enjoying texts – both in the role of an interpreter and the producer – promote the development of multiliteracy.

Multiliteracy in grades 7-9

According to the Core Curriculum 2014, in grades 7-9, the pupils are guided in deepening their multiliteracy by expanding the range of texts used in teaching and learning of all school subjects. The emphasis is on practising the pupils' analytical, critical, and cultural literacy. The pupils practise using all of their sensory faculties and utilising different ways of knowing diversely in their learning. Producing, interpreting, and communicating information are practised in ways characteristic of different school subjects and in cooperation between subjects. The pupils are also encouraged to use their multiliteracy when participating and being involved in their own surroundings, media and society. School work offers plenty of opportunities for practising these skills in a cooperative setting.

The emphasis in multiliteracy development increasingly shifts to context and situation-specific texts. Pupils' multiliteracy is advanced by introducing them to narrative, descriptive, instructive, argumentative and reflective text genres. Cultural, ethical and environmental literacy are supported in teaching and learning. Environmental literacy means knowledge and understanding of the environment as well as the conditions and circumstances affecting it. Texts related to working life are also analysed and interpreted. The pupils develop their consumer and personal finance skills by familiarising themselves with texts that treat these topics in a versatile manner and by learning about the contexts in which they are used. Numeracy is advanced for example when assessing the reliability of opinion poll results or the cost-effectiveness of a commercial offer. The pupils are guided in developing their visual literacy by using different modes of image interpretation and presentation. Media literacy is developed by being involved in and working with various media. The pupils are encouraged to express their views using different means of communication and involvement.

Multiliteracy in various subjects of basic education

Teaching and learning in every school subject is connected to the promotion of multiliteracy. Each subject has its specific viewpoints to the issue, and the objectives of teaching and learning will get more demanding from grade to grade. In the subject *mother tongue and literature*, most of the objectives have a connection to multiliteracy. Good examples of these goals at grade 9 are for instance:

- to guide and support the pupil to develop strategies and metacognitive practice needed in understanding, interpreting and analysing texts as well as the capacity to assess where he or she needs to develop
- to guide the pupil to advance his or her language awareness and become interested in language phenomena as well as to help the pupil to recognise linguistic structures,

different registers, nuances and stylistic characteristics, and to understand the significance and consequences of linguistic choices

Connections to multiliteracy are numerous in most of the subjects. The following are a few examples of the learning objectives in grade 9 that have a link to multiliteracy. It is worth noticing that the objectives may have connections to other competence areas, too.

History:

- to help the pupil to understand that historical information can be interpreted in different ways
- to support the development of the pupil's competence in using a variety of sources, comparing them, and forming his or her own justified opinion based on those sources

Social studies:

- to guide the pupil to practise ethical evaluation skills related to different human, societal and economic questions
- to encourage the pupil to examine societal activity as well as different communities and minority groups from a variety of viewpoints and with open mind

Geography:

- to support the development of the pupil's structured understanding of the world map
- to guide the pupil to develop his or her sense of space as well as to understand symbols, proportions, directions and distances
- to develop the pupil's skills in making observations on the environment and changes within it and to encourage the pupil to be active in following current events in the surroundings, in Finland and the world

Physics:

- to guide the pupil to use and evaluate different sources of information critically and to express and justify varying views in a manner characteristic of physics
- to guide the pupil to perceive the nature and development of scientific information and scientific approaches to producing information

Religion:

- to guide the pupil to identify and evaluate different methods of argumentation as well as differences between religious and scientific language
- to encourage and guide the pupil to gain awareness of the customs and symbols of different religions and worldviews and to recognise religious topics in the media, world politics, art, and popular music

Health education:

- to guide and support the pupil to gain understanding of physical, mental and social health and the factors and mechanisms that support and pose a threat to them, as well as to support the pupil's ability to use the related concepts in an appropriate manner

Music:

- to encourage and guide the pupil to discuss music, and to use the concepts and terminology of music
- to guide the pupil to examine music as an art form and to understand how music is used for conveying messages and making an impact in different cultures

Visual arts:

- to encourage the pupil to perceive art, the environment and other forms of visual culture in a multi-sensory manner and to use approaches of visual production diversely
- to inspire the pupil to express his or her observations and thoughts in a visual manner and in different environments by using diverse tools and approaches in producing information
- to guide the pupil to make judgements on the values manifested in art, the environment and other visual culture

Foreign languages:

- English, so-called A or long syllabus:
 - ▶ to guide the pupil to observe the regularities in the English language, to consider how the same ideas are expressed in other languages, and to use linguistic concepts as a support for learning
- Foreign languages, B2 or short syllabus:
 - ▶ to help the pupil perceive the relationship between the new language he or she studies and the languages he or she has previously learned and familiarise himself and herself with some key features of the linguistic region of the language in question and its way of living as well as to support the linguistic reasoning, curiosity and plurilingualism of the pupil
- Second national language/Swedish, B1 or medium length syllabus:
 - ▶ to encourage the pupil to notice opportunities in his or her life for using the Swedish language and to guide the pupil to use Swedish confidently in different situations at school and outside it.

Languages in the Core Curriculum: A paradigm shift

The new Core Curriculum deals with languages in a variety of ways setting unforeseen emphasis on their role in not only teaching and learning, but also the ways in which the value basis of education is conceived and school culture construed and reinforced. Some aspects of what can be labelled a linguistic paradigm shift will be examined briefly in the next sections. This paradigm shift made also visible the importance of multiliteracy.

Languages as a cross-cutting element in the Core Curriculum

One of the expert groups set to draw up the Core Curriculum was assigned to define transversal literacy skills as well as linguistic and cultural awareness as cross-cutting elements in the curriculum. This was done in response to the changes in schools' operational environment: children and youngsters live in a world that is linguistically and culturally diverse and in constant change. Information and interaction take on new forms that need to be interpreted and generated in sustainable ways. Key insights from research, development schemes and practice were analysed and filtered into the Core Curriculum where language and cultural awareness can now be encountered as parts of the task of basic education, the value base, school culture, transversal competences and more. Together with cultural diversity, language awareness is seen to constitute one of the seven pillars or core aspects of school culture.

Teaching intercultural competence has long been seen as part of foreign language teaching. In the new Core Curriculum, schools are seen as integral parts of culturally evolving and transforming societies where the global and the local are constantly intertwining. This entails that all teachers are to instruct pupils to build on an identity that is dynamic as it draws strength from the diversity and plurilingualism of both individuals and communities. Pupils should also be encouraged to see things and situations through others' eyes.

In the new Core Curriculum, every school community and its members are assumed as plurilingual. Different languages are valued and used side by side as natural elements of school culture. The role of teachers is now stipulated as follows: Every adult in the linguistically conscious school is a linguistic model and the teacher of the language of his or her subject.

Teachers need to collaborate in order to help create an atmosphere where languages flourish. To achieve this, it is crucial to understand that the languages that pertain to academic discourse can be very different from the languages that students know well and are at ease with. Students, in order to succeed academically as well as to flourish as human beings, may need support in working with the academic language but they also need a sense of appreciation regarding their own language repertoires. Students who come from immigrant backgrounds or from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or with learning disabilities may be particularly challenged, if the school is not a linguistically conscious one. Internationally, the issues of the languages of schooling have been strongly advocated by the Council of Europe through recommendations that emphasise the role of language awareness in the quality and equity of education (CoE, 2012 and 2014).

Some of the paradigmatic changes that have now been taken on board in the new Core Curriculum are highlighted in the chapter on Special Aspects of Language and Culture. If we compare this chapter with the previous core curriculum, we can see that the 2004 text opens with a subchapter on students with Sámi language background, followed by texts on Romani, signed language and immigrant background students. In the new curriculum this chapter comes with an introduction explaining what language awareness is, pointing out that the goal of basic education is to instruct students in valuing different languages and cultures, to promote bi- and plurilingualism and thus to reinforce students' linguistic awareness and metalinguistic skills. Further on, where the old text refers to immigrant students, the new

text addresses the needs of plurilingual students. What has been considered a marginal part of regular Finnish basic education has now been integrated into a whole-school approach to plurilingual and culturally diverse upbringing of the new generations.

Language subjects working together to reinforce language education

Based on what was established on the key role of languages in education by the teams drawing up the generic parts of the Core Curriculum, the mother tongues and foreign languages groups of subjects worked together in order to formulate a shared approach specifically targeted to language learning. A number of Finland's top language researchers, teacher trainers, administrators and practitioners worked together on defining the common element in all languages which already much earlier had been labelled as language education, but which was now deliberately written as the common introduction to all language syllabi as they are prescribed in the new Core Curriculum.

Hence, all language curricula now open with a text titled language education, stipulating that pupils are to receive support in appreciating their own plurilingualism and ability to exploit all the linguistic capacity they have, including the languages they use in their free-time. Even when pupils' linguistic skills are limited, they should be encouraged to use them – without fear of being deprecated. The significance of minority languages and vulnerable languages is to be brought up. The language curricula repeat what has been underlined already in the chapter on School Culture: in basic education, all teachers should be conscious about their language use and pay special attention to the academic language of the subject they teach. This means that the teacher becomes a mediator who is in continuous dialogue with the learners, listening carefully and always modifying his or her discourse depending on the situation.

The key aspects of language education are reiterated in all language syllabi. The 2004 language syllabi had brief mentions concerning intercultural competence and the idea of learning to learn (more) languages. The new syllabi describe language learning as having aims and contents that help students grow in intercultural understanding and competence, be curious and courageous users of their linguistic skills, be willing to increase their language repertoires and learn to use the languages they know to become active and participatory members of their communities and even citizens of the world.

The school must be instrumental in providing students opportunities to build networks and to communicate with real people for authentic communicative purposes, even internationally. For the first time, the Core Curriculum introduces schools' international activities in basic education as a natural resource for bringing up inter-culturally savvy global citizens. The linguistic and cultural diversity near and far should be made accessible for every student with the help of *internationalisation at home*. This means that for example ICT is used in a variety of ways networking, information sourcing and creation, and of course, interaction in connections that promote the learning of the languages (or any subject) in question.

Discussion

The key conditions for the development of multiliteracy and other transversal competences are:

Looking at literacy from new angles

Over the past few years, new meanings and new scope have been attributed to the concept of literacy. Traditional reading and writings skills are being superseded by new ones. Texts with new diverse forms should be interpreted not only by examining the words, but images and sound as well. Textual entities can be constructed in a vast number of new ways in different media. One should learn to decipher not only texts as such but, to a growing degree, the different texts genres. While doing so, it is crucial to understand how the traditional concepts of cultivation and being cultivated, well read, are emphasised when focus is set on critical cultural literacy. As an extension of what has been before, one has to be informed of the significance of literary culture and tradition with the new reading and writing skills. New ways of delivering information and texts have changed reading and writing into something much more interactive than what we have been used to. Reading can give rise to a discourse on the texts both orally and in writing. The new reading skills – reading on the net, writing on the net – must be studied as a conscious effort as they cannot be learnt inadvertently.

With the amount of information which is growing exponentially, the new literacies should be taught with a focus on the selection of knowledge and information as well as on finding proper references. How to distinguish relevant information from what is irrelevant is an increasingly important objective in teaching and learning literacies. This is also a way to learn about the languages, texts and discourses that are typical of different fields of knowledge and disciplines. In teaching and learning, multiliteracy comes with an emphasis on the role and significance of the specific languages of different subjects.

Connections between transversal competences and school subjects

Competence-based approach is popular in several countries. Competences have been defined in many different ways, for example as C21st skills or as key competences. The challenge seems to be how teaching and learning of both wider competences and subject knowledge is possible simultaneously. Teachers seem to think that if they focus on the wider competences they have to neglect the subjects, or if they focus on subject studies there will be no time for the enhancement of competences.

The way the transversal competences have been described in the new Finnish Core Curriculum is not unlike what can be found in the curricula of several other countries. In practice, it has been difficult to decide how to combine subject teaching and the development of transversal competences and how to find the necessary teaching time. In Finland, the solution is fairly simple: the objectives of each subject include, not only elements necessary in the promotion of the competence in the discipline of the school subject, but also elements needed in the development of transversal competences such as multiliteracy. This solution ensures that the transversal competences are also being taught, studied and assessed. Multiliteracy is present in the teaching and learning of all subjects as an element of their key

objectives, not only as a curricular ornament. This way, it has been possible also to draw up a detailed description of what multiliteracy means in the Finnish basic education. It is not possible to study multiliteracy without the contents that the different subjects provide. To give a simple example, it is not possible to learn writing and word processing unless one has something to write about.

Importance of language awareness

Multiliteracy can best develop in a school whose working culture is permeated by linguistic awareness. A school with linguistic awareness sets emphasis on the multiple roles of language(s) in studies and sees linguistic diversity as a richness that can promote pupils' learning and versatile development as persons and as members of society. It guides the pupils to pay attention to the diversity of the surrounding world and to realise that all subjects have languages of their own. Pupils are instructed to develop their understanding and usage of, not only the overall language of schooling, but the languages of different disciplines.

Importance of the learning concept and the emphasis of pupil participation

The National Core Curriculum is based on a concept of learning that sees the pupils as active agents. This learning concept forms also a solid basis for the development of both subject and transversal competences. According to the Curriculum, the pupils learn to set goals and to solve problems both independently and in collaboration. While acquiring new knowledge and skills, the pupils learn to reflect on their learning, experiences and emotions. Positive emotional experiences, the joy of learning and creative activities promote learning and inspire the pupils to develop their competences.

Learning takes place in interaction with other pupils, the teachers and other adults, and various communities and learning environments. Learning in collaboration promotes the pupils' skills in creative and critical thinking and problem-solving and their ability to understand different viewpoints. It also supports the pupils in expanding their objects of interests. Learning is diverse and connected to the content to be learnt, time and place. Developing the learning-to-learn skills lays the foundation for goal-oriented and lifelong learning. The pupils are thus guided in becoming aware of their personal ways of learning and using this knowledge to promote and regulate their own learning. In order for them to learn new concepts and to deepen their understanding of the topics to be learnt, the pupils are guided in connecting the learning topics and new concepts with what they have learnt before. Learning knowledge and skills is cumulative and often requires long-term and persistent practice.

Need for supporting teacher in their language awareness and importance of in-service education of teachers

In their very demanding work, teachers need to be supported. They are expected to develop their own language-awareness and understanding of the importance and nature of multiliteracy. Much in-service education is needed in order to encourage teachers to familiarize themselves with the importance of language, texts and different genres in

various subjects. These viewpoints should be included already in teachers' initial education, and then confirmed by in-service training and supporting material.

In Finland we are at the beginning of this road, but we already know which way to go. The drawing-up process of the national core curricula has provided us with a shared understanding of the needs of both learners and the society as well as of the future direction of education.

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