Article II

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Multiliteracies in local curricula: Conceptual contextualisations of transversal competence in the Finnish curricular framework

The international trend of competency-based curricula is evident in the curricular framework in Finland. In the latest effort of curricular reform, seven transversal competencies were introduced to the Finnish educational system. In this article, we analyse the ways in which multiliteracy as a transversal competency, presented in the Core Curriculum for Basic Education in Finland (2014), has been conceptually contextualised in local curricula. The study revealed that in most local curricula, the definition of multiliteracy was not contextualised within local settings. For the curricula in which contextualisations took place, most conceptual contextualisations focused on the level of practice (85%), level of definition (63%) and level of rationale (21%). Conceptual contextualisations were made through emphases, specifications, descriptions and expansions. The article contributes by highlighting the ways in which broadly defined competencies can be contextualised to local settings, offering new knowledge among growing extant literature on competency-based curricula. In addition to the contextualisation process, the present study offers new insights into the ways in which the concept of multiliteracy can be understood.

Keywords: multiliteracies; transversal competence, curricular contextualisation; conceptual contextualisation; curriculum

Introduction

Current international trends, such as globalisation and digitalisation, are considered when planning educational policies. Many global institutions, such as the European Commission (EC), Organisation

for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), to name a few, have presented their frameworks consisting of different competencies, which arguably are necessary in the 21th century. According to Voogt and Roblin (2012), the presented competency frameworks have many common features. For example, many of the competencies included in the frameworks were characterised as being transversal, multidimensional and associated with the ability to cope with complex situations (2012). These competencies also are introduced at the national policy level and movement from subject-specific content toward a more generic skill and competency-based approach is one of the current trends in national curricula development (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). According to Sinnema and Aitken (2013), one of the common goals in many national curricula is to be relevant for learners facing uncertain futures. For instance, the EC illustrates development by stating:

> 'In particular, it appears no longer sufficient to equip young people with a fixed set of skills or knowledge; they need to develop resilience, a broad set of competences and the ability to adapt to change' (EC, 2018, p. 2).

Finnish policy makers also have noticed this trend toward so-called competency-based curricula (Vitikka & Hurmerinta, 2011; Uljens & Rajakaltio, 2017). The new National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (National Board of Education[1], NBoE, 2014) – effective since August 2016 – introduced the concept of transversal competencies, described as a combination of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. According to the Core Curriculum (NBoE, 2014), the need for transversal competencies stems from global changes. Studying, working and active citizenship – now and in the future – require competencies that go beyond disciplines and fixed skill sets. Transversal competencies are developed in every subject through both content and methods typical of the discipline in question. There are seven areas of competencies: 1) Thinking and learning to learn; 2) Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression; 3) Taking care of oneself and managing daily life; 4) Multiliteracy; 5) Information and communication technology (ICT) competence, 6) Working life competence and entrepreneurship; and 7) Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future (2014). These competencies have many commonalities with those of international educational policies (Uljens & Rajakallio, 2017). According to Voogt and Roblin (2012), many of the competency frameworks presented by various international actors share several similarities. The frameworks usually comprise competencies in the areas of communication,

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[1] The name of National Board of Education was changed to Finnish National Agency for Education in the beginning of 2017.

collaboration, ICT and social and cultural awareness. Other common competencies include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and the ability to develop high-quality products (Voogt & Roblin, 2012, p. 308).

Even though various international organisations have promoted this international trend of competency-based curricula, the ways in which the competencies are implemented in national settings can vary (Halász & Michel, 2011). Nordin and Sundberg (2016) show that core concepts (e.g. key competencies used in international policies) are reconceptualised and given different meanings when recontextualised in national contexts. This notion highlights the importance of deeper examination of the competencies deployed in national curricula. For example, when analysing implementation of key media-literacy competencies in Singapore, Weninger (2017) argues that more research should be conducted into the implementation of global policies within local education settings. However, when considering the diversity of situational settings within one nation, national-level analyses may not provide a sufficiently nuanced understanding of the ways in which the concepts from international educational policies are understood and employed in local settings.

This paper approaches this phenomenon by introducing the concept of *conceptual contextualisation,* which refers to how a certain concept is defined in a way that considers the specific local educational setting. More precisely, in this paper, we study how the concept of multiliteracy, a transversal competence, is contextualised in Finnish local curricula. High degree of autonomy of educational providers in the local level (Lavonen 2017) and multiliteracy as a new concept in the Finnish educational context, with only little research done so far (Kupiainen, 2016), provide an interesting basis for an examination of how novel competency-based additions to the Core Curriculum are contextualised at local level. In the Finnish educational framework, each municipality is required to refine the Core Curriculum to meet the specific needs and affordances of the particular context (NBoE, 2014). The demand for 'local emphases' (NBoE, 2014, p. 25) calls for conceptual refinement and concretisation of the abstract language used in the national curriculum, referring to the view that local curricula can be understood as a pedagogical tools for re-conceptualising the national curriculum (see Mølstad, 2015, p. 455). As well as understanding the process of contextualisation in a more thorough way, this paper´s analysis of local curricula provides interesting and important insights into the concepts presented and defined in the Core Curriculum, as the documents formulated at the local level combine national targets and goals with the local contexts.

We locate our study within the field of curricular-contextualisation research, which explores how teaching processes, learning processes and curricular content are related to social and cultural realities in which education takes place (Fernandes, Leite, Mouraz & Figueiredo, 2013). However, whereas most extant research has focused on the context in which actual educational activities take

157

place – namely the classroom (e.g., Paliwal & Subramaniam, 2006; Smith, 2005; Sahasewiyon, 2004) or teachers' experiences (Li, 2006) – in the present study, the contextualisation process is examined within the context of educational policy by using local curricula as research data. We analysed the local curricula of 219 Finnish municipalities/regions to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the conceptual contextualisation of the transversal competence of multiliteracy made in the Finnish local curricula for basic education?
2. How is multiliteracy rationalised in Finnish local curricula for basic education?
3. How is the transversal competence of multiliteracy defined in Finnish local curricula for basic education?
4. How is multiliteracy defined to be developed within Finnish local curricula for basic education?

By answering these questions, the present study contributes to extant literature by highlighting the different ways in which broadly defined competencies can be contextualised in local settings, thus providing new findings concerning competency-based curricula (Voogt & Roblin, 2012; Priestley & Sinnema, 2014; Sinnema & Aitken 2013; Weninger, 2017). In addition to the exploration of the contextualisation process, the present study offers new insights into the content-related discussion of multiliteracy and the ways in which it can be understood.

This study is constructed as follows: First, we provide a contextual background of the Finnish curricular setting and present the ways in which multiliteracy is described in the Core Curriculum. Second, we explain and contextualise the research questions and describe the study's objectives and design. Third, in the results section, we present our analysis of the conceptual contextualisations of multiliteracy from the perspective of definition, practices and rationale. Finally, in the conclusion section, we discuss the results from a deeper theoretical perspective. We conclude by discussing the study's limitations and suggest recommendations for further research.

Background

Finnish curricular framework and curricular contextualisation

Diversity is one of the aspects that characterises the different national educational systems. This diversity serves to highlight the importance of considering national contexts. Although several similarities may exist between national curricular frameworks, on a global scale, educational systems can differ in many aspects. One such aspect relates to the centralisation and decentralisation of instructional system management in the national education system. According to a comparative study

conducted by Creese et al. (2016), levels of government prescription and control in managing school systems vary to an extensive degree. In some countries, such as Australia and Japan, national education is steered in a centralised manner at the national level (e.g. by providing a curriculum that applies to all regions of the country). As well as this centralised approach, educational steering can be conducted in a more decentralised manner by shifting educational steering responsibilities to the local- and regional-level management, as is the case in Germany (to the länder) and Switzerland (to the cantons) (West, Allmendinger, Nikolai & Barham, 2010; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p. 12).

Finland provides an interesting setting for the study of curricular contextualisation[2]. The Finnish educational system combines both centralised and decentralised approaches (Creese et al. 2016, pp. 8–9). The Core Curriculum provides national-level steering in an attempt to increase equality among students, whereas the developed local curricula emphasise the diversity of local contexts. The Core Curriculum's objective is to guarantee educational equality nationwide by providing a common values, content, objectives and evaluation criteria that need to be considered in municipal and school-level curricula (Krokfors, 2017; Vitikka, Krokfors & Rikabi, 2016, p. 84). The Core Curriculum's purpose is to ensure 'equality and high quality of education and to create favourable conditions for the pupils' growth, development and learning' (NBoE, 2014, p. 9). However, this does not mean that municipalities or schools receive only a fixed set of rules and regulations to follow – the situation is contrary to this: When preparing local curricula, actors are instructed to identify 'what the potential local emphases of the transversal-competency areas defined in the Core Curriculum [are], and how are these emphases manifested in practice' (NBoE, 2014, p. 25). Among other instructions, they are also asked to supplement the aims and content defined in the Core Curriculum (NBoE, 2014, p. 9). Even though the Core Curriculum offers guidelines for the preparation of local curriculum to a certain extent, local education providers have extensive autonomy, and the preparation process of the local curriculum can take various forms, depending on the context. For example, the stakeholders taking part in the preparation process can vary, and in addition to educational professionals, parents and local non-profit organisations can also take part (Lavonen, 2017). To paraphrase Mølstad (2015), the Core Curriculum forms a strong foundation on which municipalities and schools can develop their

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[2] In Finland there are altogether 2,339 comprehensive schools, with over 530,000 pupils (Statistics Finland, 2017a). These schools are mainly governed by the municipalities, and less than 2 percent of the pupils study in private schools or in state's schools (NAfE, 2017a). Finnish basic education is steered and regulated by the Basic Education Act and Decree, Government Decrees, the Core Curriculum, the local curriculum and the annual plans of individual schools based on the local curriculum.

work, affording them the flexibility to decide on important common ground that various local curricula can be built on.

The Finnish multi-level curricular framework successfully illustrates curriculum contextualisation, which, along with competency-based approaches, has become a central theme in discussions about teaching and learning (e.g., Fernandes et al., 2013; Garin et al., 2017). Based on a review of 56 extant studies, Fernandes et al. (2013, pp. 419) conclude that 'curricular contextualisation is presented in the literature as a key concept able to promote meaningful learning – and a potential tool for constructing egalitarian educational processes.' The review further suggests that the teacher is responsible for 'establishing equilibrium between the national curriculum and a contextualised curriculum' (2013, p. 420). However, Choppin (2009) and Davies (2006) problematise this notion by asserting that such responsibility is too much for a teacher when new approaches and methods are required. Multiliteracy in the context of Finnish education is a good example of the situation described by Choppin (2009) and Davies (2006): As previously discussed, multiliteracy is a new concept in the Finnish education system (Kupiainen, 2016) and teachers are uncertain about what is expected of them as multiliteracy educators.

Multiliteracy in Finnish curricular framework

The concepts of multiliteracy and multiliteracies are discussed in various fields of research, with varying meanings (Palsa & Ruokamo, 2015). The origin of these concepts can be located in New London Group's (NLG) (1996) article 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies – Designing social futures'. In this article, multiliteracies are defined as a pedagogical approach that is required to meet the needs of ever-diversifying textual and cultural landscapes of contemporary societies. In the original definition, both the 'multi-' and 'literacies' concepts should be read as plural, as 'multi-' refers to multimodality and multiculturalism, and 'literacies' refer to text-related and sociocultural literacies (New London Group, 1996). This definition is the most commonly used approach in contemporary research into the pedagogy of multiliteracies (Kulju et al., 2018). However, the Finnish interpretation is slightly different: While cultural diversity is mentioned briefly (NBoE, 2014, p. 22), the emphasis is on understanding multiliteracy as a text-related competency (Mertala, 2018; Palsa & Ruokamo, 2015).

According to Finnish policymakers (Halinen, Harmanen & Mattila, 2016), there are several reasons for the integration of multiliteracy into the Core Curriculum, including the diversified ways in which the information can be mediated, the decreasing tendency to read and the growing disparity between the general public´s literacy levels, leading to exclusion and a lack of participation.

Policymakers conclude that 'it is necessary to find new means to teach literacy and emphasise the importance of literacy in school' (Halinen et al., 2016, p. 142).

However, it is worth noting that multiliteracy is not defined and positioned accordingly in all Finnish national core curricula (Mertala, 2018). For example, in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education (NBoE, 2016), multiliteracy is not a distinguished transversal competence, but is conjoined with ICT competencies. Accordingly, in the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education (NBoE, 2015), multiliteracy is conjoined with media. In addition, the concept of multiliteracy is used in different ways by Finnish literacy scholars: Some of them use multiliteracy as an umbrella concept (Harmanen, 2016), whereas others suggest that different multiliteracies exist, including 'visual multiliteracy' (Räsänen, 2013) and 'digital multiliteracy' (Kauppinen & Kinnunen, 2016). Studies have also evidenced that teachers find it difficult to conceptualise multiliteracy and understand what is expected from them as teachers of multiliteracy (Hankala, Kauppinen, & Kulju, 2018).

Thus, detachment from the 'original' definition, discontinuity between conceptual choices in the national-level Core Curriculum, the variety of contradictory meanings used in scholarly discussions, and teachers' uncertainty underline the need and importance of conceptual clarification in local-level curriculum work.

Multiliteracy in Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education

The National Core Curriculum (NBoE, 2014) approaches multiliteracy through three different perspectives. First, it provides rationale for why a concept such as multiliteracy is needed (i.e. the 'why' of multiliteracy) by stating that multiliteracy provides students with a means for critical thinking and learning, and helps them interpret the world around them. Second, the Core Curriculum defines what is meant by multiliteracy (i.e. the 'what' of multiliteracy), defining it as the skills to interpret, produce and evaluate different kinds of texts in different contexts and situations through the use of various tools. Texts, in turn, are defined as information presented through various symbol systems (linguistic, visual, auditory, numerical or kinaesthetic, or a combination of these), and multiliteracy is conceptualised as an umbrella concept for subsets of literacies. Third, the Core Curriculum provides guidance for multiliteracy practices (i.e. the 'how' of multiliteracy), stating that developing multiliteracy requires a rich text environment and a pedagogy that utilises it. Through transversal competencies, students' multiliteracy is developed in every school subject, and various literacies are developed in all teaching contexts, as well as in coordination with different disciplines and other actors. Texts should be authentic and meaningful for students; thus, students' strengths and interests should be considered in multiliteracy practices, and in learning situations in which students

use, interpret and produce different kinds of text alone and with others (NBoE, 2014, pp. 22–23). The complete definition of multiliteracy is in Appendix 1.

The Core Curriculum does not provide any practical examples of how multiliteracy should be contextualised in local curricula. As the boundaries of the concept are not strictly specified, the broad description leaves many aspects of the concept undefined. For example, open questions relate to the meaning of the concept and how it is developed. These open questions include the following: Which literacies should be included under the umbrella of multiliteracy? In what forms, situations and contexts should information be used? Which tools should be employed?

Research design

The research design comprised three interrelated phases: In the first phase, searches of local curricula were conducted; in the second phase, the data was processed; and in the third phase, qualitative analyses of multiliteracy contextualisations were conducted. These phases are further described below.[3]

Searches of local curricula

The scope of this study focuses on local curricula for basic education that local municipalities organise and manage. Local curricula are adopted separately for education in different languages, for example, in Finnish, Swedish and Sámi (NBoE, 2014, 17). To foster validity and avoid possible translational confusion, this study focuses exclusively on Finnish curricula. The searches of local curricula were conducted in spring 2017. Local curricula were searched using the ePerusteet web portal (hosted by the Finnish National Agency for Education) (NAfE, 2017b), which is aimed for education providers to publish local curricula. Additional search was conducted by reviewing the official websites of the municipalities whose local curricula were not included on the ePerusteet web portal.

According to Statistics Finland (2017b), at the time of data collection, 311 municipalities existed in Finland. In this study, local curricula from 266 municipalities were found. Education providers, such as municipalities, have the option of creating curricula individually or in cooperation with other municipalities (NBoE, 2014, p. 12). According to the curricula search conducted in this study, cooperative efforts were used in 59 municipalities, creating 12 local, areal curricula. The data

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[3] The research responsibilities were divided as follows: Construction of theoretical framework: Author 1 and Author 2; data collection: Author 1; data analysis: Author 1; writing the paper: Author 1 and Author 2.

analysed in this study came from 219 local curricula (207 municipal and 12 areal). However, this division is not delineated in the present study; the data are addressed as a whole. Finnish curricula for basic education were not found in 45 municipalities. This was because the local curricula were not created in the Finnish language (e.g., in municipalities where Finnish basic education is not available), the new curriculum was not made available online or technical problems were in play. Thus, the study focuses on local curricula covering 86 percent of Finnish municipalities.

Data processing

After the curricula search, qualitative data were created by collecting the definitions of multiliteracy from all local curricula. This was done by locating the definition of multiliteracy in each local curriculum, coding it and copying all the definitions to a separate document for the analysis. Multiliteracy, as part of transversal competencies, is part of the mission and general objectives of basic education described in the Core Curriculum; however, it is also part of subject- and grade-specific goals and descriptions. Because general objectives and content, like all transversal competencies, are mutual for all comprehensive teaching, analysis of this study focused on general definitions only. This demarcation is also relevant to the study's objectives, as the general definitions apply to all school subjects and illustrate one path to shared understanding through transversal competencies.

Data analysis

After the data from local curricula were processed, the qualitative data were explored and scrutinised several times to get a general understanding of the material. In this phase, the definitions in which any changes or addenda to the original definition were made were extracted for further analysis. This was done by comparing the definitions of the local curricula with the original definition presented in the Core Curriculum. By 'addenda,' we refer to contextualisations in which the original definition of multiliteracy presented in the Core Curriculum remained the same but included some additional textual depictions. By 'changes,' we refer to contextualisations in which the definitions presented in the Core Curriculum were changed to a certain extent. With some contextualisations, the changes comprised only a few words, but in other cases, the changes were more thorough.

The contextualisations were analysed from two different qualitative perspectives using conventional (research question 1) and directed content analysis methods (research questions 2–4) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis is a practical method for analysing qualitative data in the form of curricular contextualisations, as it allows for interpretation of 'text data

through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). In practice, the conventional content analysis was conducted by closely reading the multiliteracy definitions in the local curricula several times and highlighting all the parts of the conceptualisations that were different from the original definition presented in the Core Curriculum. Notes were made about the types of contextualisations; thus, the highlighted parts of the definitions were scrutinised. The categories of contextualisations (Table 1) were formed on the basis of comparison of the similarities and differences in different contextualisations. Any type of the presented conceptual contextualisations could be done by making addenda or changes in the definition presented in the core curriculum.

Table 1 Types of conceptual contextualisations

Name	Description	Data example
Emphasis	Highlighting or prioritizing certain aspects of the Core Curriculum.	'Special attention is put on a strengthening the media criticality.' (Curriculum 37).
Specification	Explicating and defining broadly defined aspects of the Core Curriculum in a more concrete manner.	'Multiliteracy is based on a broad understanding of text, that in addition to traditional written text includes sound, speech, facial expressions, gestures, movement, pictures and video material.' (Curriculum 56).
Description	Explaining certain aspects of the concept in a way that is different to the Core Curriculum.	'In multiliteracy, the development of spoken, read and written language and the utilisation of information and communication technology and the development of competence through various learning environments are taken into account in a balanced manner' (Curriculum 19).
Expansion	Broadening the scope of the concept, covering more aspects than in the definition presented in the Core Curriculum.	'Pupils need multiliteracy to interpret the surrounding world and to perceive its cultural diversity *and hidden communication.*' (Curriculum 6, italics added).

The directed content analysis method provides a more structured analysis; in this case, it is based on the definition of multiliteracy in the Core Curriculum. Table 2 summarises the analytical framework of the perspectives of directed content analysis from which these contextualisations were scrutinised qualitatively. In practice, the analysis was conducted by closely scrutinising all local curricula in which contextualisations were made separately from the perspectives of rationale, definition and practices.

Table 2. Framework for the directed content analysis of multiliteracy contextualisations

Analytical perspective	Research questions 2–4	Data example
Rationale of multiliteracy	2) How is multiliteracy rationalised in Finnish local curricula for basic education?	'The development of the pupils' multiliteracy is guided toward skills that help to scrutinise the fragmented world as manageable entities' (Curriculum 57).
Definition of multiliteracy	3) How is the transversal competence of multiliteracy defined in Finnish local curricula for basic education?	'In schools, text is understood in its broad meaning, and different literacies related to text and information are emphasised. These literacies include critical literacy, environmental literacy, media literacy, picture literacy and nonverbal communication literacy' (Curriculum 34).
Multiliteracy practices	4) How is multiliteracy defined to be developed in Finnish local curricula for basic education?	'In addition to global media, local media are also utilised in developing multiliteracy. Cooperation is done with the library and other local actors' (Curriculum 27).

Results

This study's principal objective was to explore how multiliteracy, as a transversal competence, is contextualised conceptually in Finnish local curricula for basic education. The first result of this study revealed that in most local curricula, the definition of multiliteracy was not contextualised in local settings. In 72% (n=157) of local curricula examined, the definition of multiliteracy presented in the Core Curriculum was maintained without contextualisation. Many local curricula explicated that the contextualisation of transversal competencies was postponed during the process of annual curricular planning for individual schools.

In 28% (n=62) of local curricula studied, the transversal competence of multiliteracy was contextualised in some way. In the following sections, these curricula are referred to as contextualised local curricula (CLC). In most CLC, the contextualisations were made as addenda to the definition of multiliteracy presented in the Core Curriculum. In 10 of the local curricula, changes were made to the original definition presented in the National Core Curriculum. The results of the conventional content analysis, which focused on the ways of conceptual contextualisations, are explored more thoroughly in the following section.

The scope of contextualisations varied among local curricula. Local contextualisations mainly focused on the multiliteracy practices (i.e. the 'how' of multiliteracy), as contextualisations in 53

local curricula explicated how multiliteracy can be developed. Secondly, in 37 of the CLC, the contextualisations focused on the definition of the concept, illustrating what is meant by multiliteracy in local settings (i.e. the 'what' of multiliteracy). The least amount of contextualisations focused on multiliteracy rationale (i.e. the 'why' of multiliteracy). In 13 local curricula, contextualisations were conducted to describe why multiliteracy is needed. Figure 1 summarises the distribution of contextualisations in local curricula.
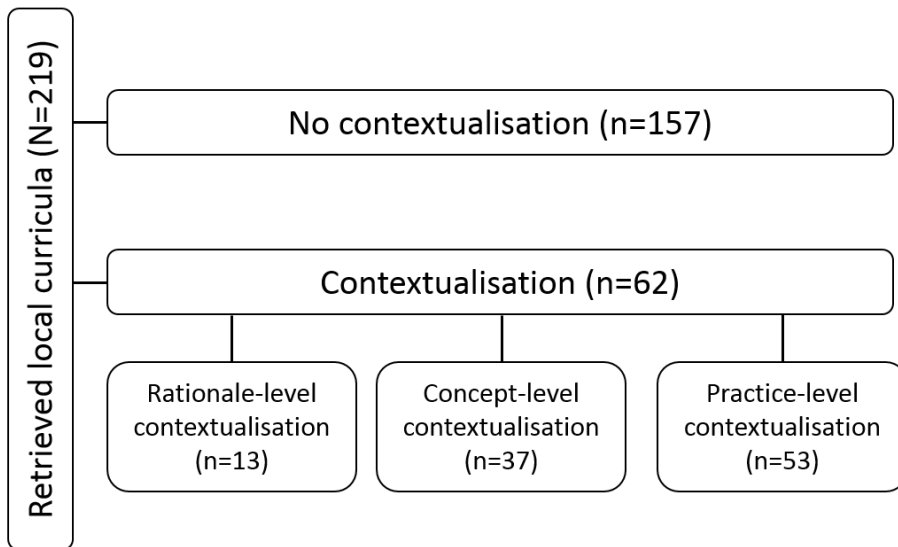

Figure 1. Levels of contextualisation in local curricula

In some CLC, the contextualisations focused only on one level, whereas in other cases, the contextualisations focused on two or more levels. This notion illustrates how conceptual contextualisations can vary from narrow to broad. In 30 CLC, the contextualisations were narrow in nature, focusing only on one level. In 21 CLC, the contextualisations focused on two of the levels. In 11 CLC, the contextualisations were made in a broad sense, focusing on all the perspectives (i.e. definitions, practices and rationale). However, the scope of the contextualisations does not specify the depth or accuracy in which the contextualisations have been made; rather, it illustrates what they address. In the following subsections, the types and levels of contextualisation are discussed in more detail in relation to the aforementioned research questions.

How the conceptual contextualisation of the transversal competence of multiliteracy was made in the Finnish local curricula for basic education?

The conventional content analysis revealed different ways in which the transversal competence of multiliteracy was conceptually contextualised. In this phase, four types of contextualisation were found: emphases, specifications, descriptions and expansions. Even though every type of contextualisation has its own characteristics, they are not mutually exclusive by nature. Rather, many of the features of the categories may overlap. Thus, the types of conceptual contextualisations can be perceived as guiding perspectives that help to understand the different possibilities of contextualisations in a more nuanced manner. These types also illustrate the variance of the contextualisations, rather than distinguished categories.

By 'emphases' we refer to some of the local curricula where certain aspects of multiliteracy were explicitly highlighted or prioritised. This, as shown in the following extract, was often done in a straightforward manner:

'In the schools the skill for information search is highlighted' (Curriculum 4).

The definition of multiliteracy presented in the Core Curriculum leaves room for local contextualisations by not providing certain aspects, such as the literacy subsets or cooperation partners, with accurate definitions. Thus, in some of the local curricula, these aspects of multiliteracy definitions were explicated and defined in a more thorough and nuanced manner. Here, these types of contextualisations are labelled as 'specifications', examples of which are provided below. The first extract illustrates how the literacies included under multiliteracy were defined:

'The achievement and development of multiliteracy is strengthened by taking into account the following matters in the planning of teaching […] The meaning of media and critical literacy' (Curriculum 12).

In the following example libraries and media organizations are specified as possible cooperation partners in the development of pupils' multiliteracy:

'The school does close cooperation with i.e. library and local newspapers and the media' (Curriculum 16).

The contextualisations in the local curricula were also made by describing certain aspects of the transversal competence of multiliteracy in a way that is different to the Core Curriculum. These

types of contextualisations are labelled as 'descriptions'. This category includes all types of conceptual contextualisations in which the aspects of multiliteracy are depicted in an alternative way compared to the Core Curriculum. Next, two data examples are provided. The first example illustrates how to express the broad-based understanding of the text included in the Core Curriculum, whereas the second example depicts the aspects related to multiliteracy by listing the central concepts.

> 'In developing multiliteracy, the matters that can be perceived through all the senses are taken into account. The equal emphasis on the different areas of language (spoken, heard, written, read) is important' (Curriculum 51).

> 'With the help of multiliteracy we interpret the surrounding world. Central concepts in developing multiliteracy are criticality and questioning, ethicality, responsibility, joy of reading, broad-based understanding of text and the production, interpretation and evaluation of text' (Curriculum 58).

In some local curricula, the definitions covered more aspects of multiliteracy than the Core Curriculum, thus broadening the scope of the definition. These contextualisations are referred to as 'expansions'. The following two data extracts are used as examples to show the variations in how the concept was expanded:

> 'The pedagogy of multiliteracy requires asking, why we teach, what we teach and how we teach to ensure the learning of all pupils' (Curriculum 47).
> 'Multiliteracy supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills *in every area of senses*' (Curriculum 59, italics added).

In the first extract, the perspective of multiliteracy as an outcome is expanded to also include the specific pedagogical thinking. In the second extract, the idea of texts as information expressed through different symbol systems (see NBoE, 2014, p. 22) is expanded to cover all senses.

How is multiliteracy rationalised in Finnish local curricula for basic education?

In 21% of CLC, the contextualisations focused on the rationale behind multiliteracy. They also focused on the aspects presented in the Core Curriculum and the additional contextual reasons for developing multiliteracy.

The contextualisations mainly considered support for identity construction, understanding cultural communication and developing critical thinking and learning skills. Other reasons were also presented. According to local curricula, through multiliteracy, students have the opportunity to better

understand the fragmented world around them and its phenomena. The next extract illustrates how the multiliteracy is rationalised by focusing on the meaning of multiliteracy when trying to understand the world:

> 'By supporting the development of the pupils' multiliteracy, they are given an opportunity to understand the surrounding world and its phenomena more diversely' (Curriculum 62).

Multiliteracy was also reasoned through the children's and young people's daily environments, in which ICT and the media play important roles. Thus, schools should consider this and teach the skills needed in these new environments. It was also argued that multiliteracy is important because of the influence literacy exerts over students' futures. The importance of multiliteracy for all was also highlighted.

> 'Multiliteracy is a civic skill for the future. Everyone should be able to interpret and produce text in different modes in their lives' (Curriculum 55).

How is the transversal competence of multiliteracy defined in Finnish local curricula for basic education?

The definition of multiliteracy was contextualised in 63% of CLC in various ways. The contextualisations focused on emphasising the different aspects of the concept, making changes or addenda to the definitions and specifying broad terms for the definition presented in the Core Curriculum. The diversity of contextualisations illustrates the multifaceted nature of the concept and the differences in local contexts. Many contextualisations had similar aspects highlighted, as well as differences.

In many contextualisations, different aspects of the Core Curriculum definition were emphasised, including certain abilities included in the multiliteracy competence, such as critical thinking and the skills needed to obtain, combine, modify, produce, interpret and evaluate information in different contexts and situations. The broad understanding of the text was also emphasised in many of the contextualisations.

In the definitions in which addenda were made, multiliteracy was described in a broad sense, referred to in the same way that 'general sophistication has been used previously' (Curriculum 57) and defined 'as the basis for all other broad-based competencies' (Curriculum 40). It was also viewed as the 'final aim in developing general literacy' (Curriculum 52). In many CLC, it was stated that understanding the diversity of information and perspectives as well as the skills needed to curate

relevance from the 'information flood', is part of multiliteracy. According to definitions presented in the CLC, multiliteracy abilities include creative content production, versatile interpretation and the skills needed to use ICT and to learn how to learn. From a cultural perspective, it was highlighted in the CLC that multiliteracy also includes being able to understand different worldviews as well as multiculturalism. Multiliteracy was also viewed as including the ability to master various concepts and understand and appoint different phenomena.

Some aspects of the definition presented in the Core Curriculum leave room for interpretation, including the different symbols related to the broad understanding of text and the literacies included under multiliteracy as an umbrella concept. Based on multiliteracy contextualisations, these symbols included pictures, numbers, letters, maps, clocks and supportive sign-language signs. Different types of pictures included artwork, pictures in textbooks, illustrations, comics, ads and animation. In the CLC, several literacies were mentioned as sub-sets of multiliteracy. Literacies listed under multiliteracy include the following: Media literacy (n=6), basic reading and writing literacies (n=5), visual and pictorial literacy (n=5), critical literacy (n=4), numerical literacy (n=3), digital literacy (n=3), information literacy (n=3), environmental literacy (n=2), cultural literacy (n=2), web literacy (n=1), analytical literacy (n=1), health literacy (n=1), technical literacy (n=1), technological literacy (n=1), literacy of gestures and expressions (n=1), social-situations literacy (n=1) and literacy in nonverbal communication (n=1). These explications make the abstract definition more concrete, thus illustrating what the concept of multiliteracy can mean at local level.

How is multiliteracy defined to be developed in Finnish local curricula for basic education?

Most of the conceptual contextualisations (85%) focused on how multiliteracy can be developed in a local setting. Contextualisations focused on pedagogical steering, specifying activities that help develop multiliteracy, describing the resources needed to foster the development of multiliteracy and mapping educational stakeholders and possible local collaboration partners.

It is stated in the Core Curriculum that multiliteracy is developed in all school subjects and that a precondition for developing the competence is a rich textual environment and a pedagogy that draws on it (NBoE, 2014, p. 22). According to the analysed data, multiliteracy can be developed using various pedagogical approaches. Many of the contextualisations highlighted the different aspects of multiliteracy in relation to its broad and multifaceted nature. For example, multiliteracy was viewed as being at the centre of all learning processes.

Multiliteracy should be developed using various senses, synchronising different school subjects and using comprehensive and phenomenon-based pedagogies. Multi-professional media education was also viewed as a possible way of developing multiliteracy. In teaching, different areas of language are highlighted in a balanced manner, and different ICT equipment is used diversely. Methods of research-based teaching and learning were also mentioned, as well as the consideration of local culture. In one local curriculum, it was explained that students' aesthetics are developed using a pedagogy that supports imagination and inventiveness. In another local curriculum, the importance of a teacher's own reflections was highlighted:

'To support multiliteracy, teachers should reflect what is taught, why and how' (Curriculum 47).

In the contextualisations, many different educational activities were specified as illustrating how multiliteracy is intended to be developed in local contexts. According to the data, multiliteracy is meant to be developed, for example, by assigning students presentations, plays and other group projects; organising events and celebrations with related learning objectives; organising field trips; offering students the opportunity to participate in school communications; collect yearbooks or use reading diplomas or specific multiliteracy diplomas; and encouraging students to participate in other student union activities and in different educational theme weeks and campaigns. Students were also encouraged to improve their own multiliteracy in an independent way.

An important aspect relating to the development of multiliteracy is the different resources necessary for the competency that are used in teaching. In the Core Curriculum, it is stated that 'the pupils must have opportunities to practise their skills both in traditional learning environments and in digital environments that exploit technology and media in different ways' (NBoE, 2014, p. 22). Based on the data, resources can be understood as learning materials, learning environments and equipment used as part of teaching and learning. In local curricula, the development of multiliteracy was described in terms of using multimedia and hypermedia materials, local and global media and materials that are meaningful to students as part of the teaching process. In one local curriculum, emphasis was placed on teachers' know-how and skills, as it was explained that multiliterate teachers use metacognition to develop their students' multiliteracy competence. CLC also highlighted the possibilities of information and communication technology, such as tablets and web-based learning environments. In one CLC, up-to-date equipment was required to develop multiliteracy. Besides digital environments, the importance of 'traditional' learning environments was also highlighted.

In the Core Curriculum, a precondition for developing multiliteracy is cooperation in teaching and with other actors (NBoE, 2014, p. 22). However, who these other actors are is not specified. In

local curricula, where contextualisations in multiliteracy definitions were made, libraries were vied as being particularly important actors for cooperation. Even though the forms of cooperation were not specified in most cases, some examples were highlighted as ways in which to support the development of students' multiliteracy. These examples include media education carried out at libraries, reading suggestions that professional librarians make, library orientation where the information search, the use of diverse sources of information, and the educational use of the materials produced by libraries. Besides libraries, other possible actors for cooperation that were mentioned include cultural and youth services (e.g. youth work centres), music institutes, local media organisations, schools for visual arts, local art communities, museums, theatres and cinemas.

Discussion

The shift from content- and subject-based curricula to competency-based curricula is a trend that has been noted in international curriculum studies in increasing manner (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014; Sinnema & Aitken 2013). This trend is also evident in Finland's curricular framework. In this study, we analysed the ways in which multiliteracy as a transversal competence presented in the Core Curriculum for Basic Education in Finland (2014) has been conceptually contextualised in local curricula. Contextualisations were analysed based on their type (emphases, specifications, descriptions, expansions) as well as via three perspectives – namely, rationale (i.e. the why), definition (i.e. the what) and practice (i.e. how) –identified from the description of multiliteracy in the Finnish Core Curriculum.

The results of the analysis show that the scope of conceptual contextualisations can vary. The thoroughness of the contextualisations can also vary in local curricula, and in some cases, only certain words were changed or added, whereas in other curricula, the contextualisations were more extensive. Perhaps the most significant result of this study concerned the lack of conceptual contextualisations: In 72% of the analysed curricula, no contextualisations were made. The findings raised two important questions: (1) Why were so few local curricula were contextualised? (2) Why were the contextualised curricula contextualised in the way that they were? Even though the data fail to provide any clear explanations for either of these questions, we will briefly discuss some of the possible reasons for our findings, beginning with question 2.

One rather evident explanation, for the different contextualisations lies in the fact that different conceptual contextualisations serve different purposes. The emphases can be understood as ways for makers of local curricula to steer the educational practices or to prioritise certain aspects of transversal competence. By specifying broadly defined concepts and terms, it the it is possible to

reduce the ambiguity of each competence and support the formation of mutual understandings in local settings. Differing descriptions of the definition provided by the national-level curriculum can make the concept more relevant in the local setting. Expansions also allow the municipalities to make addendums that –from their viewpoint– have either local or global importance but are not included in the Core Curriculum.

In terms of the lack of contextualisations, three different but not mutually exclusive explanations can be provided. The first and most straightforward interpretation is that the definition of multiliteracy in the Core Curriculum was deemed sufficient. The second interpretation, however, challenges this view. As discussed earlier, multiliteracy is a new concept in Finnish educational context (Kupiainen, 2016). It is also used in an inconsistent manner in different core curricula (Mertala, 2018) and by different scholars (see Harmanen, 2016; Kauppinen & Kinnunen, 2016; Räsänen, 2013). It is weakly conceptualised by (some) Finnish teachers (Hankala et al., 2018). Thus, it is possible that this lack of contextualisation reflects the uncertainty surrounding the concept of multiliteracy in Finland. How can one refine and contextualise a concept of which one does not understand? Uncertainty about the meaning of multiliteracy can be viewed as a reason for the high number of practice-oriented contextualisations that were identified from 85% of the contextualised curricula. It is easier to make changes and addenda to practice-oriented matter than to more abstract and fundamental questions and definitions related to a key concept of the Core Curriculum. Additionally, it was also stated in many of the analysed local curricula that the process of contextualisation was passed from the municipal level to individual schools.

Limitations of the study

While this study has provided novel and valuable information, it is not without limitations; the first being that only Finnish curricula were analysed. From the perspective of cultures and linguistic equality, it would also be relevant to examine how multiliteracy is contextualised in basic education in Swedish, Sámi or other languages, as local curricula are adopted separately and based on the different official languages of Finland (NBoE, 2014, p. 17). The second limitation is that the study's scope included only the general definition of multiliteracy – which is generalised to all subjects and grades – leaving out grade- and subject-specific descriptions that might offer a more detailed analysis of how multiliteracy can be understood or how it is implemented in more specific contexts. In line with this, a further analysis of the annual plans of individual schools would offer more detailed insights into how multiliteracy is intended to be put into practice. A third limitation relates to the time period of data collection. It is possible that if the data were collected a year or two later, more municipalities would have updated their local curricula. However, this lack of contextualisations is

an important result in a sense that it highlights the importance of timely support for the local curricula work when new concepts are introduced to the educational systems. A fourth limitation of this study was the loss of data. Finnish local curriculum were not found for 45 municipalities (14% of Finnish municipalities). A closer examination based on the demographic data of the municipalities does not give a clear explanation for this data loss.[4]

Implications for curriculum development and future research

Concerns that the adoption of the competency-based curriculum often remain ceremonial or apparent in nature, with no major changes occurring in educational practice have been expressed (Gonzalez, Montaño & Hassall, 2012, pp. 112-113). As stated by Choppin (2009) and Davies (2006), establishing equilibrium between the national curriculum and a contextualised curriculum is too much to ask of individual teachers. We argue, that local (municipal-level) curricula play a crucial role in establishing this desired equilibrium. As multiliteracy is meant to be supported in every subject, teachers should have a shared understanding of what multiliteracy is, as well as why and how it should be taught, beyond their own teaching subjects. In other words, they should have a shared understanding of the common goal they are trying to achieve from as otherwise, no 'real' transversality can be expected. For example, Yates (2016) refers to challenges in Australia, where the implementation of some new curriculum subjects and frameworks has failed, at least partially, because educators have different perspectives about what matters. According to Yates (2016, p. 368), when teachers are educated under disciplinary identities and expertise, introducing new competencies also introduces new forms of enactment that differ from what they were educated on.

Moreover, the differences in levels and processes of contextualisation bring into question students' rights to equivalent competencies in comprehensive education: Multiliteracy is not only a new concept in Finnish basic education, and the way the concept is defined in national-level core curricula also renders it an ambiguous and abstract concept. Thus, there is a risk that if the transversal competence of multiliteracy is not contextualised in local curricula, the variance among individual schools within the same municipality can be relatively broad. In addition, the explicated

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[4] The municipalities from which the local curricula were not found were diverse in nature representing different geographical areas of Finland and municipalities of different sizes. However, according to the data provided by the Statistics of Finland (2019) the average population in the municipalities from which the local curricula were not found was smaller (11,731) than the average population in all the Finnish municipalities (17,727). The rate of employment was higher (76,4% compared to 70,6% in all of Finland). The average budget spent on education and culture per inhabitant was also higher (€2,110) compared to the average spent in all Finnish municipalities (€1,894).

contextualisations would help to understand the variance of the implementation of the transversal competences in the municipalities.

The findings of this article support the implementation of national-level curriculum by providing an overview of the ways in which the transversal competence of multiliteracy is conceptually contextualised (i.e. by specifying, emphasising, describing and expanding) and by providing a framework that can be reflected upon when considering the perspectives of transversal competence (i.e. rationale, definition, practices) that can considered when planning the implementation of nation-level curriculum.

Considering that 72% of the analysed local curricula had not contextualised the concept of multiliteracy, an in-depth examination of the actual contextualisation process would be relevant. This could be done by analysing different preparation documents, mapping the ways in which the contextualisation process has been done and/or interviewing key stakeholders (e.g., Tronsmo & Nerland, 2018). The relationship between policy level and level of practice should also be considered when examining the role of multiliteracy in the context of institutional education. Even the most encompassing curriculum does not guarantee or equate educational practice. However, by analysing curriculum documents, it is possible to analyse intended outcomes, even though the implementation and practice of education requires extensive research. For example, in interviews with different actors, such as teachers, headmasters and other professional educators in different fields, students and parents could discuss their perceptions of how multiliteracy can be understood and the meanings associated with the concept in practice.

On the other hand, the broad, new and multifaceted nature of the concept calls for a wide and innovative research perspective, as well as methodological considerations. By analysing the ways in which broadly defined competencies, such as multiliteracy, are contextualised, it is possible to find ways and develop models that can aid the implementation process in local settings. This could be useful, especially if the trend for competency-based national curricula continues. The meaning and importance of theoretical and definitive discussions should not be forgotten since theoretical concepts help guide educational practice. The better the concepts are defined, the lower the odds of interpretative variance or confusion as to their practical implementation.

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Appendix 1

Definition of multiliteracy in National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014).

Multiliteracy

Multiliteracy is the competence to intepret, produce and make a value judgement across a variety of different texts, which will help the pupils to understand diverse modes of cultural communication and to build their personal identity. Multiliteracy is based on a broad definition of text. In this context, text refers to knowledge presented by systems of verbal, visual, auditive, numeric and kinaesthetic symbols and their combinations. For example, text may be interpreted and produced in a written, spoken, printed, audiovisual or digital form.

The pupils need multiliteracy in order to interpret the world around them and to perceive its cultural diversity. Multiliteracy means abilities to obtain, combine, modify, produce, present and evaluate information in different modes, in different contexts and situations, and by using various tools.

Multiliteracy supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills. While developing it, the pupils also discuss and reflect ethical and aesthetic questions. Multiliteracy involves many different literacies that are developed in all teaching and learning. The pupils must have opportunities to practise their skills both in traditional learning environments and in digital environments that exploit technology and media in different ways.

The pupils' multiliteracy is developed in all school subjects, progressing from everyday language to mastering the language and presentational modes of different ways of knowing. A precondition for developing this competence is a rich textual environment, pedagogy that draws upon it, and cooperation in teaching and with other actors. The instruction offers opportunities for enjoying different types of text. In learning situations, the pupils use, interpret and produce different types of texts both alone and together. Texts with diverse modes of presentation 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.