

## 7. PROMOTING MULTILITERACY IN THE FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

### INTRODUCTION

In Finland, the national core curriculum plays an important developmental role in the school system. The curriculum serves as an administrative steering document, but it also sets out objectives and core teaching content for all subjects. The core curriculum for the basic education level was renewed in 2014 and for the upper secondary school level in 2015. The principal goal was to strongly influence change in school culture and learning environment, and to provide teachers with a tool for developing their pedagogical praxis (Vitikka, Krokfors, & Rikabi, 2016).

One key development in the new curricula is the declared goal linking learners' transversal competences to subject-specific objectives (Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), 2016a, 2016b). For example, when the teacher defines subject-related learning goals, competence development objectives should also be defined. As a multi-layered concept, competence comprises cognitive, skill-based and affective components that include knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethics (Binkley et al., 2012; FNBE, 2016a, 2016b). To meet future challenges, much of the focus is on cross-curricular competences and work across school subjects (Halinen, Harmaja, & Mattila, 2015). The renewed curricula identify seven cross-curricular competence areas for basic education and six for upper secondary education (Table 7.1). In both cases, multiliteracy is included as one of the transversal cross-curricular competences.

Both curricula highlight the interconnections between competence areas (Halinen, Harmaja, & Mattila, 2015). With regard to multiliteracy, the links between "ICT competence" and "Technology and society" are obvious in light of the ongoing digitalization of society, as competence in information and communication technology (ICT) is a crucial civic skill, both in itself and as an element of multiliteracy (FNBE, 2016a). In all grades, ICT is both an object and a tool for learning across subjects and multidisciplinary learning modules. In the core curriculum for basic education, ICT includes four content areas: (1) practical ICT competence and principles of using ICT; (2) responsible, safe, and ergonomic use of ICT; (3) use of ICT in information management and in exploratory and creative work; and (4) use of ICT in interaction and networking (FNBE, 2016a; Ruokamo, Kotilainen, Kupiainen, & Maasilta, 2016). From the perspective of media education, it seems especially important that students develop a critical understanding of the role of media and digital tools for communication in daily life, and that they can work creatively and exploratively

Table 7.1. Cross-curricular competences in the Finnish national core curricula

<i>Cross-curricular competences in the national core curriculum for basic education (FNBE, 2016a)</i>	<i>Cross-curricular competences in the national core curriculum for upper secondary education (FNBE, 2016b)</i>
Thinking and learning to learn (T1)	Active citizenship, entrepreneurship, and the world of work
Cultural competence, interaction, and self-expression (T2)	Well-being and safety
Self-care and managing everyday life (T3)	Sustainable way of life and global responsibility
<i>Multiliteracy</i> (T4)	Knowledge of cultures and internationality
<i>ICT competence</i> (T5)	<i>Multiliteracy and the media</i>
Working life skills and entrepreneurship (T6)	<i>Technology and society</i>
Participating, influencing and building a sustainable future (T7)	

with ICT affordances. ICT provides students with tools for visualizing their own thoughts and ideas in multiple ways, developing thinking and learning-to-learn skills as well as multiliteracy competence.

In this chapter, we will define and explore the concept of multiliteracy both theoretically and practically by addressing the following questions. How is multiliteracy defined in the Finnish national core curricula for basic and upper secondary education? How is multiliteracy defined in the research literature? Based on these definitions, how can teachers promote their students' multiliteracy through their teaching practices?

#### MULTILITERACY IN THE CORE CURRICULA AND IN THE LITERATURE

In the Finnish national core curricula, multiliteracy is defined as the competence to interpret, produce, and make a value judgement across a range of different texts, helping students to understand different modes of cultural communication and to build their personal identity. The concept of multiliteracy is based on a broad understanding of "texts" as entities expressed through verbal, visual, auditory, numeric, and kinaesthetic symbol systems and their combinations. Multiliteracy does not refer to content and separate goals but is a goal in itself: a unit comprising information, competences, values, attitudes, and motives that the modern citizen should possess (FNBE, 2016a).

The concept of multiliteracies dates back to 1996, when the New London Group published an article dealing with the pedagogy of multiliteracies. While some researchers view multiliteracy as a set of communication abilities, it is also conceptualized and analyzed as a pedagogical approach, which differs from the definition in the Finnish core curriculum. Multiliteracies are most often examined in the context of teaching practices and pedagogical questions and content. The concept of multiliteracy is problematic; the Anglo-American tradition refers to *multiliteracies*, and in particular to the *pedagogy of multiliteracies*. In the literature, multiliteracies