Digital Literacies or Digital Competence: Conceptualizations in Nordic Curricula

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# Abstract

This article examines how the concepts of digital literacies and digital competence are conceptualized in curricula for compulsory education within the Nordic countries. In 2006, the European Union defined digital competence as one of eight key competences for lifelong learning. The terms digital literacies and digital competence have since been used interchangeably, particularly in policy documents concerning education and the digitalization of educational systems and teaching. However, whether these concepts carry similar meanings, and are understood in a similar way, across languages and cultures is not self-evident. By taking the curricula in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway as examples, this article attempts to clarify similarities and differences in how the concepts are interpreted, as well as what implications this has for the digitalization of education. The analyses reveal that different terms are used in the curricula in the different countries, which are connected to themes or interdisciplinary issues to be incorporated into school subjects. The conceptualizations of the terms share a common emphasis on societal issues and a critical approach, highlighting a particular Nordic interpretation of digital literacies and digital competence.

# Outcome

"Different terms are used in the national curricula of the Nordic countries when addressing how compulsory ed- ucation can prepare students for living and working in a digitalized society. In Finland, Digital Competence is used in combination with Multiliteracies, while the Norwegian curriculum uses digital skills (ferdigheter) and IT and Media are used in Denmark. Digital competence is used consistently only in the Swedish curricula. However, apart from in this case, the term competence is not used elsewhere in the Swedish curricula, whereas both the Danish and the Norwegian curricula use competence when describing the goals that students need to achieve in different subjects. In all four countries, the area of knowledge that is described as connecting to these terms is supposed to be integrated into school subjects. Since this analysis has not taken into account the syllabi for different subjects, conclusions cannot be drawn on how, or to which extent, this is done.
In Denmark, IT and Media is regarded as an interdisciplinary theme, and in Finland, Multiliteracies and Digital Competence are regarded as complementary to school subjects. Norway instead sees digital skills as a basic skill on a par with reading and writing. The status of digital competence in the Swedish curricula is not as clearly defined as in the other countries, but recent revisions are supposed to support the development of students’ digital competence.... The Finnish curriculum is the only one that specifically refers to literacy, although to multiliteracies rather than digital literacies." (Author, 32)