

Finnish primary school pupils' literary landscapes: What do Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils read at school?

Henri Satokangas, Liisa Tainio & Sara Routarinne

University of Helsinki

In the national curriculum for the comprehensive school in Finland, the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, form the most common syllabi of mother tongue in schools. In the curriculum, the goals of the literature education appear very similar for both Finnish and Swedish-speaking pupils. However, the means to reach these goals differs between the syllabi. In Swedish language and literature syllabus the Nordic context is emphasized, whereas in the syllabus of Finnish language and literature it is not mentioned at all. Yet no specific works of literature are mentioned in the syllabi. Which books do pupils actually read in school?

In the on-going research project Lukuklaani ('Reading Clan') we have an opportunity to take a look at the literary landscapes in primary schools in Finland in detail. Lukuklaani is a project that aims to explore literature education in primary schools (grades 1-6) in Finland; the project is funded by Finnish Cultural Foundation and Kopiosto. Our data consists of the answers to an e-questionnaire that was sent to Finnish primary school teachers in November 2017. We received 884 answers, including 68 answers from Swedish-speaking schools. We asked, for example, what books pupils read and what kind of methods teachers use to motivate the children in reading. In this presentation the focus is set on the books viewed by teachers as the most popular among pupils.

Interestingly, the answers revealed big differences between the literary landscapes. In Finnish-speaking schools, Finnish books are prominent but the variety of the countries of origin is relatively wide. In Swedish-speaking schools, books written in Sweden are notably prominent, whereas different countries are scantily represented and books originally written in Finnish are almost absent. The list of popular books bears a resemblance to the most popular children's literature in libraries.