



Book Review

Otso Kortekangas

Tools of teaching and means of managing:

Educational and sociopolitical functions of languages of instruction in elementary schools with Sámi pupils in Sweden, Finland and Norway 1900–1940 in a cross-national perspective.

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The Sámi people, located in the northern territories of Norway, Sweden, Finland and in the contiguous territories of Russia, had to deal with varying school minority policies during the period of analysis. The Sámi Education, as it is commonly termed, was an integral part of the general educational policy of each Nordic country, but it also encompassed elements of a specifically targeted education (p. 49).

In his PhD dissertation, Otso Kortekangas presents a cross-national historical analysis of the various reasons for teaching Sámi people in Norway, Finland and Sweden between 1900 and 1940. He investigates the grounds on which varieties of Sámi languages or national languages were used in specific classroom situations as languages of instructions. In addition, he also aims to explore the individual reasoning of influential Sámi and school administration officials. Hereby, he also analyses their cross-national recontextualizations of Sámi education in Norway, Sweden and Finland, and how the school administration officials

were mutually dependent on each other across national borders.

Structure

Kortekangas' dissertation is structured as follows. The introduction to the historiographical, methodological and theoretical frameworks (chapter 1) is followed by two analytical parts. The first analytical part (chapters 2 and 3) presents the context of the analysis and the research previously done in this field. The second part, forming the main body of the analysis, is divided into three country-specific chapters, and summed up in a general conclusion (chapter 7). Chapters 4 to 6 present three separate chronological analyses, dedicated to each country, beginning around 1900 and concluding just before WWII. Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation by briefly looking at the topic from a cross-national perspective.

The research is predominantly grounded on sources of the school administration and their related milieu. In Finland, Sweden and Norway, the early twentieth century was a period of consolidation, standardization and expansion of the national elementary school systems (p. 31). The materials that Kortekangas analysed are documents from prominent educational authorities and teachers in Sweden, Finland and Norway – documents of nomad school inspectors (Sweden), elementary school inspectors (Finland), directors of schools (Norway), and bishops and clergymen, active in the Sámi populated areas of the Nordic countries (p. 198). As evident from this range of sources, Sámi teachers were anything

but homogenous. In each country, Norway, Sweden and Finland, they represented a heterogeneous group, much like the Sámi in general. The Sámi mother tongues, social and cultural backgrounds differed strongly within the Sámi people (p. 57).

In order to study “what functions of languages of instruction were prioritized in all three countries, and to study them in their institutional and socio-political context” (p. 18) in this Nordic context, the author combines the discourse-historical approach of the critical discourse analysis tradition with a cross-national historical perspective (p. 34). Hereby, Kortekangas opts for a four-level analysis to study language in context, which is inspired by the linguists Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl (pp. 38–46). He therefore analyses the sources at an institutional level (school and educational policies) and the ideological, economic, social and political context on a socio-political level (p. 18). In doing so, he analyses Norway, Sweden and Finland in their three separate socio-political contexts (p. 199). On the institutional and educational level, he interprets languages of instruction as tools, or auxiliaries of teaching, while on the socio-political level, these are described as means of “managing”, describing language both as a part of a top-down management system (controlling) and a bottom-up management (coping, surviving) system (p. 198).

Results

An essential and important result of Kortekangas’ research, is that these three countries had a comparable approach towards language learning: students were expected to learn the respective national language perfectly. Additionally, he concludes, that the language of in-

struction was a tool to fulfil the goals of school education, but with a variety of purposes. Hereby, the author includes numerous diverse and relevant findings on this topic and shows how varied the policies, viewpoints, and activities were at the school administration level. In the nomad schools, founded for Sámi pupils in Sweden (p. 82–88), language was, for example, used to prevent the Sámi population from being completely assimilated (p. 86).

In Sweden, Sámi language was confined to domestic and ecclesial settings (p. 121), while the Swedish language represented the self-evident language of other sectors of life. This was due to a hierarchical categorization of these languages—Swedish was the language of the future, Sámi the language of the past (p. 200). For instance, Nomad school inspector Vitalis Karnell pointed out, that the Swedish language was the guarantee of quality and the pathway to progress (pp. 88–100). This position was not uncommon, which the author demonstrates in detail. School principals in the Norwegian Finnmark, nomad school inspectors of Sweden and Finnish elementary school inspectors in the north viewed the dominant national language as a pathway to help the Sámi develop and modernize their society. Thus, Sámi was tolerated in Norway as a pedagogical auxiliary only if it accelerated the process of language assimilation within the framework of an intended “Norwegianization” (p. 177–79, 195–97).

In other words, the language of instruction was used there to assimilate the Sámi population in Norway into mainstream Norwegian culture and likewise in Finland into Finnish culture. However, in the Finnish ecclesial elementary schools, the function of Sámi language had a specific national role to

play. Among the specific categorisation of the Finno-Ugric languages, Sámi was officially recognized as a “sister language” (pp. 131–32).

Kortekangas does, however, show that there existed resistance to these social pressures to assimilate into mainstream culture. Characters such as Petr Fokstadt (pp. 190–91), Josef Guttorm (pp. 141–43) and Sara Nutti (pp. 119–21) considered the use of the Sámi languages as essential tools for the self-development of the Sámi people. They claimed that the progress of the Sámi culture could only be sustainably supported within the Sámi language (p. 200). These exciting insights could form the basis for further interesting research. In particular, it would be interesting to explore the long-term consequences of these attitudes for the Sámi minority in the Nordic countries.

A further ambition of Kortekangas’ study is to investigate the Sámi history on a cross-national level, beyond the mono-national historical perspective of the Nordic countries (p. 204). The author’s desire to take a broader, cross-national approach is driven by his observation that previous studies looked at this subject from a national perspective. He frames a new approach because the “cross-national analysis is a certain kind of active, rather than reactive, identification as Sámi that did not primarily relate to the nation states or national educational policies of Sweden, Finland and Norway.” (p. 206).

Despite these ambitions, it is striking that most of this study employs a national perspective. With this approach, that is grounded in a country by country analytic structure, the reader is guided carefully through the different policies in Norway, Sweden and Finland, including the Sámi activities and prominent people of the Sámi in each of these three countries.

Nevertheless, the supranational transfer of educational approaches to the Sámi and administrative functionalities across the borders and how they relate to one another within these countries are actually investigated in the study (to give a few examples about cross-national recontextualizations in the book: the chapter about contexts p. 47–81, the passage about borders, pp. 63–65; the conclusion pp. 198–206). While, supranational references are covered by the study, they are not part of the main focus of the analysis.

Nonetheless, the findings of Kortekangas study are vital and informative, in particular the sources on the Norwegian Sámi teacher Isak Saba, who analysed the language policies of the former Russian-Finland empire in the context of his Norwegian Sámi policies (pp. 168–70). Similarly, the analysis of Petr Fokstad’s newspaper article, who declared in 1940 the Sámi language was fundamental to the revitalization of the whole of Sámi culture (pp. 190–91), is also valuable. In the meantime, on the other side of the border, Swedish school inspector Erik Bergström used a different approach. He “decontextualized the original function of Sámi in the Norwegian school system, and underscored the fact that Sámi was used as an auxiliary language in Kautokeino, and applied it in the Swedish context of the nomad schools with a new function: the intelligibility function.” (p. 104) In his view, it was “an auxiliary of facilitating the communication between the teacher and the pupils, in order to reach better teaching outcomes.” (p. 104) Thus, Bergström completely ignored the actual Norwegian context, as Sámi was used in the school of Kautokeino in the Finnmark as a language of instruction in order to speed up the process of language assimilation (p. 103–4).

Kortekangas study would, however,

have credited from a wider international contextualization, which now is missing from the study. The chosen subjects of the author's study are highly diverse fields of research—the justification of using a language for assimilation or separation by authorities, the self-empowerment and the construction of collective identity in the field of a minority policy, and in a cross-national perspective, identity building in the context of teaching languages in schools. To connect this study to the international contemporary research context would underline the importance of this study beyond Scandinavia. Besides being of great interest to this specific research community, this area of study could be pertinent to a wide range of studies worldwide (see the examples, which are listed as references at the end of this text).

Concluding remarks

In sum, this study offers new insights into a truly intriguing topic—the Sámi education in Sweden, Finland and Norway, which investigates the reasons and methods for various teaching languages in schools. As the Sami represent a very specific and small ethnic minority of the northern territories of Scandinavia, the inclusion of more information about their living conditions and broader society would have allowed the reader to better understand the context within which this research takes place and have some conception of important factors that have influenced it.

Notwithstanding the above, it was a good decision of the author, to maintain a strong focus on the reasons behind the language policies in Sámi schools. The amount of referenced sources details the variety of different approaches taken in these countries, both by authorities and teachers. The different aims

of the authorities and teachers fostered the polyphonic and multilingual nature of the Sámi language policies—across national boundaries. Thus, Kortekangas study adds a worthwhile cross-national perspective to the field of research into Sámi education. This study contributes to an increased awareness of the variety of education approaches taken to the Sámi and broadens the perceptual horizon of this complex issue. Further investigation into this research topic would be very valuable, as this study shows this is a subject worthy of more attention.

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