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To Follow, Take or Get? A Comparative Study of Metaphors for Education in Danish, Finnish and Swedish

Abstract:

In a number of ways, the educational systems in Scandinavia are similar. They are e.g. publicly funded and equal access to education is essential. However, Finland has for a number of years performed much better in the PISA-tests and in Denmark students receive a monthly allowance to stay in school. How are these differences and similarities reflected in conceptual differences? That is the question of this paper.

Previous metaphor research in the fields of learning and education includes for example functions of metaphor in teaching and teacher education (e.g. Goldstein 2005, Low 2008, Saban 2006, Bager-Elsborg and Greve 2017), and metaphors used to describe learning (e.g. Säljö 2015, Wegner and Nückles 2015). Ikonen (1999) focuses on the concept of education itself.

This paper focuses on differences and similarities in the way the basic educational concepts education and learning are conceptualized through figurative language in Danish, Finnish and Swedish. By comparing metaphors relating to education and learning in written news media, on websites of relevant ministries, in dictionaries across the three languages, we present a matrix of differences in conceptualization. For example, the Swedish phrase gå en utbildning (‘follow an education’), corresponds to tage en uddannelse (‘take an education’) in Danish, and to hankkia koulutus (‘acquire an education’) in Finnish, which demonstrates three potentially different conceptual perspectives on education in the three countries. Such differences may both reflect and influence the views on the educational system in the media debate and in public discourse, which makes it important to identify and analyze.

References:


