



9. ‘Not good enough for anyone?’ Managing Sámi education in the cultural interface

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Abstract This chapter is about the situation of educators working within Sámi education. It can be challenging to merge the demands of the national curricula with those of the local authorities and the Sámi parliament as well as the local situation of kindergartens and schools. The empirical basis of the chapter is a set of research conversations held with those in charge in municipalities and educational institutions. I argue that a Sámi diversity perspective is needed in the enactment of Sámi education.

Keywords Sámi education | early childhood education | Indigenisation | diversity competence

INTRODUCTION

Education does not only belong in classrooms. When Sámi education is undertaken in the classroom, it has gone a long way from international treaties, national law, regional and local government, kindergarten or school leadership to the teacher and the children and students. This entire system, which enables and consists of a series of encounters between macro and micro levels, can be talked of as a nexus (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Those in charge on different levels answer to demands coming from different parts of the nexus. The nexus of Sámi education reaches from international treaties, through national law and regulations, Sámi political claims and regulations, local regulations and demands, to what happens in kindergartens and schools. The subject of this chapter is the encounter between the latter and the former: I am interested in how local leaders and educational leaders answer to demands and regulations from above, and how they deal with them in their respective local settings. At all levels, there is a constant concern about resources – financial, human, and educational. At all levels, the ones in charge work with what they consider to be important.

In this chapter, I take as a starting point the encounters between the demands of the national curricula, the demands from the local authorities and the Sámi parliament, and the local situation of kindergartens and schools. The empirical basis of the chapter is a set of research conversations held with those in charge in municipalities and educational institutions. The conversations have in common an explicit responsibility for Sámi education as they all have institutional and legally based connections to Sámi communities in different areas. The research participants come from municipalities in different parts of Sápmi/Sábme/Saepmie, from Sea Sámi/North Sámi areas, from a Lule Sámi area and from a South Sámi area. I look primarily into the overarching aspects of both kindergartens and schools, not particular subjects or themes, and into how these are implemented and faced on the local level amongst leaders. Further, I rely on previous analyses of Sámi issues in curricula (e.g., Folkenborg, 2008; Gjerpe, 2017, 2018; Olsen, 2020; Olsen & Andreassen, 2018; Sollid & Olsen, 2019).

Early childhood education (ECE) and primary education belong to different fields and have distinct purposes. They refer to different institutions that oversee discrete levels and age groups. In Norway, ECE means preschool age 0–6, while primary education means year one to seven in school, age 6–13. This is shown in their respective curricula. In kindergarten, teachers shall ‘meet the children’s need for care and play, and they shall promote learning and formative development as a basis for all-round development’, and further aim to prepare children for school through providing experiences, knowledge, and skills (Directorate of Education, 2017 p. 8). Primary education aims to provide knowledge and competence, and to ‘open doors to the world and give the pupils and apprentices historical and cultural insight and anchorage’ (Directorate of Education, 2020 p. 2). Differences aside, both ECE and primary education are explicitly mentioned as part of the educational system in Norway. There has been – to some extent – an alignment of the respective curricula. They do share some of the same purposes and ambitions, especially when looking at the overarching and ideological parts of the curricula. The Sámi content is an example of this, with a strong emphasis on Sámi rights and on the implications for the respective institutions.

Both the current curricula recognise the Sámi as an Indigenous people and acknowledge that this implies a set of internationally and nationally recognised rights. All the research participants acknowledge this and take it as a point of reference. As they all come from areas in Sápmi/Sábme/Saepmie where the Sámi are in a minority situation, they share some experiences of how to articulate the local situation and of how to put Sámi education into practice.

The chapter is primarily an empirically driven text. The research conversations have been instrumental in defining and deciding the direction and main topics

for the discussion. At the same time, the basic theoretical principles and considerations are in line with what is presented in the introduction of this book (Olsen & Sollid, this volume). I look to Martin Nakata's (2007) perspectives on the cultural interface to understand and shed light on the experiences of the research participants, especially when it comes to the often-mentioned challenges related to being in-between. All participants express a similar kind of experience related to being in-between the Norwegian and the Sámi communities – either for themselves or for their respective kindergarten/school and local community. In Norwegianised Sámi communities, some experience the cultural interface through the paradox of being neither Sámi (enough) nor Norwegian (enough) and both Sámi and Norwegian. In the discussion, I also look to Åse Røthing's (2016, 2020) concepts concerning diversity, diversity competence, and norm-critical pedagogy for the analysis of Sámi diversity and hierarchies. As defining statements concerning Sámi identity and language involve normative ideas, there is a need for norm-critical perspectives (Røthing, 2016). For the final discussion – adding a broader perspective and frame of understanding – I find inspiration in literature from Māori education (Bishop, 2008; Smith, 2017) especially related to hybridisation and culturally responsive/transformational pedagogy. This provides a new way of understanding the role and situation of Sámi education today.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In Norway, a lot has changed since the beginning of the public school system in the early 18th century, which coincided with the intensified colonisation towards the Sámi. From the middle of the 19th century, the Sámi were one of several minorities who were hindered from speaking their native tongue or learning about their own culture and history in school. After about a hundred years of assimilation, the Sámi communities changed. Some Sámi languages had become extinct, while others were close to extinction. Only in the inland of the North Sámi region did the Sámi language remain a majority language. On an individual level, many Sámi (numbers are hard to find and verify) 'became Norwegian' (Zachariassen & Ryymin, 2021). This is a way of saying that some (quite a lot) stopped speaking Sámi, registered as Norwegian, and started self-identifying as Norwegian (Dankertsen, 2017). At the end of the assimilation period, in national public contexts in Norway, the Sámi had become marginalised. Within the public school, the Sámi seem to have had little or no place in the post-Second World War and post-Norwegiansiation era (Andresen, 2021a; Folkenborg, 2008; Olsen & Andreassen, 2018; see also Broderstad, this volume).

Assimilation and Norwegianisation did not happen without resistance, though. The first wave of Sámi politics, with activists and politicians working for the rights of the Sámi, occurred in the beginning of the 20th century and crossed the borders of the states of Sweden, Finland, and Norway (Zachariassen, 2012). The same happened with the second wave of Sámi politics, with the establishment of the Nordic Sámi Council in 1956. Sámi activists also took part in the beginning of international Indigenism from the 1970s onwards (Crossen, 2017). Following the conflict around the building of the Alta hydro dam around 1980, Norway changed its policy towards the Sámi. A policy of recognition was introduced in place of silencing and continued oppression. The work of Sámi activists and politicians had a truly important impact on the changing of Norwegian policy (Broderstad, this volume; Somby, 2021).

The first Sámi national curricula for primary and secondary education were launched in 1997. This was an important step in the official recognition of the Sámi (see Olsen & Andreassen, 2018). In 2006, the ECE curriculum explicitly recognised the Sámi as an Indigenous people (Directorate of Education, 2006). It was not until 2017 that this was made explicit in the primary and secondary education core curriculum (Directorate of Education, 2020). Still, the development and growth of the curricular recognition has led to a stronger emphasis of the Sámi rights to education and of Sámi matters in both kindergartens and schools.

When the Sámi are explicitly recognised as an Indigenous people in the current ECE and school curricula, it is with reference to ILO-169 and to national law. This is key to the obligation of the state to provide education, both for Sámi students and children, and about the Sámi for all students. The current curricula are published in Norwegian and in the three official Sámi languages – North Sámi, Lule Sámi, and South Sámi – reflecting the official status of these languages in Norway. For ECE, there is one joint curriculum with separate sections on Sámi ECE. For primary and secondary education, there are two parallel curricula. The main parts of the Sámi curriculum, including most subjects, are the same as in the majority curriculum. Some additions and special mentions are found. A representative example is how the Sámi social studies curriculum states that ‘the curriculum is grounded in Sámi values and Sámi language, culture and community’ (Directorate of Education, 2020, p. 1).

Kajsa Kemi Gjerpe (2017), in her analysis of the making of the first Sámi curriculum in 1997, argues that it has been of huge importance, but that the main importance may have been a symbolic one rather than one with actual impact. Not all Sámi students follow the Sámi curriculum, while the main effort towards Sámi education is put in the Sámi schools following the Sámi curriculum. In addition, as I also show in this chapter, the Sámi curriculum has not necessarily been

easy to fully implement for schools and kindergartens. Still, I would argue that the importance of the first national Sámi curriculum lies in the fact that it is the actual expression of Norway's move from assimilation and marginalisation to an explicit recognition of the needs of Sámi students and the Sámi community.

In addition to the responsibility for Sámi children and students, the kindergartens and schools also have as a purpose to provide knowledge about and perspectives from the Sámi for all students and children. All kindergartens, no matter their location, should 'highlight Sámi culture and help to ensure that the children develop respect for and solidarity with the diversity of Sámi culture' (Directorate of Education, 2017, p. 9). This is an ambitious statement making it the responsibility of the whole ECE sector to provide knowledge about the Sámi to children regardless of where they live or go to kindergarten. Similar statements are found in the school curricula: 'Through the teaching and training the pupils shall gain insight into the Indigenous Sami people's history, culture, societal life and rights. The pupils shall learn about diversity and variation in Sami culture and societal life' (Directorate of Education, 2020).¹

A general challenge when it comes to the rights of Sámi students, as expressed in the curricula, is that the meaning of the term 'Sámi' is ambiguous and not explained. The national school curriculum has, since 1997, used the concepts of 'the Sámi school' and 'the Sámi student' (Gjerpe, 2017). The ECE curriculum uses the terms 'Sámi kindergarten' and 'Sámi children' and adds other somewhat ambiguous terms like 'Sámi values' and 'a Sámi understanding of nature'. On a formal and legal level, the closest that can be found to a definition of a Sámi and a Sámi child is given in the Education Act, which formally governs schools (and not ECE). Here, a Sámi child is defined as the child of one or two parents who are eligible to register for the Sámi electorate (Education Act, § 6-1). This is accessible but opens in practice for the ambiguity and diversity of real life. At the same time, the concepts used in the curricula are useful and necessary signifiers of distinction. They are not necessarily easily defined though. Or – at least – formal and legal categories may need more nuanced didactical and pedagogical practices related to them to avoid over-simplified claims and interpretations.

ON DATA, METHOD, AND METHODOLOGY

Kindergartens and schools are different institutions with different aims and purposes, but there are some similarities that allow for a more joint analysis. For

1 In the ECE curriculum, the teachers are the ones actively doing something. In the school curriculum, it is the pupils.

this paper, I have had research conversations with municipality leaders who deal both with kindergartens and schools, and with kindergarten and school leaders. Both kindergartens and schools are defined as belonging to the educational system, which means that they share the state's goal on an overarching level. When it comes to Sámi and Indigenous issues, both kindergartens and schools are stated as key areas for the recognition of rights. Perhaps most important for this chapter – as well as for the implementation – is that both kindergartens and schools are the responsibility of municipalities, and that they belong to the same sections of local authorities. In my chapter, I follow the overarching perspective, looking at neither specific school subjects nor specific practices in kindergartens or schools. Rather, I am interested in the encounter between the national demands and the leadership level. Here, the leaders seem to share most of the experiences across different levels when it comes to the place and situation for Sámi rights and knowledge about the Sámi.

The municipalities represented all have formal connections to the Sámi parliament, either as members of the Sámi administrative area or through formalised agreements. In none of the municipalities are Sámi in majority. Still, to join the Sámi administrative area is an act of citizenship, an act to actively contribute to the revitalisation and reclamation of the language, culture, and society of the Sámi (Evju, this volume; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012). The main tools were the right to use the Sámi language in communication with local authorities and societal institutions (like health services and church services) and the right to learn Sámi and to have Sámi-medium education. The establishment of the Sámi administrative area is thus part of a chain of acts of citizenship, through making it an active choice for municipalities to become members, and thus to become Sámi municipalities (Sollid, this volume). This seems to have led to a renegotiation of position more than as a binary system restricted to Sámi and Norwegian but offering more dynamic and relational positions (Dankertsen, 2017). According to the model referred to in the introduction of the book (Olsen & Sollid, this volume), joining the Sámi administrative area in many ways implies a shift from being mainstream Norwegian to becoming Indigenous Sámi. For education purposes, it means that the municipalities at hand follow the Sámi curriculum or the demands for Sámi kindergartens and schools.

The municipality, school, and kindergarten leaders I have talked to come from four different municipalities. I have met five of the research participants online and had three real life meetings. For ethical reasons, I do not give the names of the municipalities or of the research participants.

'NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR ANYONE': THE FEELING OF BEING IN-BETWEEN

'It feels a bit like we are not good enough for anyone.' This was said by one of my research participants when we were talking about their municipality's endeavour to make a proper Sámi education through its schools and kindergartens. They worked in the municipality administration and said this as part of an answer to the question of how to adhere to the Sámi curriculum (this was in 2019, between the launch of the new ECE curriculum [2017] and the launch of the new school curriculum [2020]). For the Norwegianised Sea Sámi community that this municipality is located in, the demands of the Sámi curriculum and the Sámi parliament were experienced as not being met. They felt that they were not Sámi enough for the Sámi curriculum and not Norwegian enough for the Norwegian curriculum. Talking to other research participants both with similar roles and working in schools or kindergartens in Sámi communities, I found that similar experiences were expressed also there.

In the aforementioned conversation, we discussed the fact that there are different Sámi communities. As a Sea Sámi community, where the Sámi language was and is under pressure, they differ from the areas where the Sámi language has prevailed and is even in the majority (Hansen, 2007; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012). The municipality representative talked about the struggles to fit in and respond to the demands from the curricula and from the Sámi parliament: 'We are a bit on the side, I guess. Language is an important part of this. Only a few use the Sámi language in daily life. But we try to remember' (research conversation). This connected well to the experience of otherness that we returned to later in the conversation:

Leader: About not being good enough, not finding your place. The Sámi parliament is now in the process of redefining the Sámi municipalities. This means that it is important to find your place and to think that this is where we belong. How much Sámi should we have? What kind of content should we have about Sámi matters and culture? As it is now, we sort of have the feeling of not being good enough.

Me: What is the bar? Who measures? The Sámi parliament?

Leader: Yes, it is – sort of – for us having a Sámi unit in the kindergarten. We cannot have a Sámi kindergarten, because we do not have enough people who speak Sámi well enough. We are not qualified. (Research conversation)

This refers to the curricular demand that the staff in Sámi kindergartens are supposed to know the Sámi language: ‘Staff are required to master the Sami language and possess knowledge of Sami culture’ (Directorate of Education, 2017, p. 24). Such a demand is complicated in Norwegianised Sámi communities. In the comment made by the research participant, there is clearly a critique directed towards the curriculum and its rather narrowly defined understanding of the diverse Sámi situations. The dilemma concerning Indigenous languages is recognisable in many minority language situations (Harvey, this volume; Sollid, this volume). An important principle states that it is necessary to emphasise, naturalise, and reward the use of Sámi languages. At the same time, such actions come with the risk of alienating and creating a distance to assimilated communities where the language is in a more pressured situation (see also Fogarty & Sollid, this volume; Sollid, this volume). There are language minorities within language minorities.

Within discourses on Sámi education, there has been a tendency to let one kind of Sámi experience, or one articulation of Sámi culture, define Sámi experiences and culture in its entirety (Gjerpe, 2017, 2021; Sollid & Olsen, 2019). This goes particularly for the school curricula of 1987 and 1997. They were based on a particular part of the Sámi communities and left less space for diversity (Gjerpe, 2017). This tendency is seen in the emerging literature on Sámi pedagogy and Sámi upbringing. In Asta Balto’s important book about Sámi child-rearing (1997), stories and experiences from one community in Sápmi were used to form the basis of a more generalised Sámi pedagogy. Balto’s work was crucial to create the field and to articulate the first systematic Sámi pedagogy, and clearly a parallel to initiatives in other parts of the Indigenous world. At the same time, seen with a contemporary perspective, Balto’s book lacks an opening for diversity and does not present other parts of Sápmi.

On a more practical level, a Sámi town, school, kindergarten, child, or student is not necessarily easily defined. The pedagogical leader of a kindergarten with Sámi units in an urban and rather Norwegianised area talked about the challenges of defining what it is to be Sámi. More parents seek to have their children in a Sámi kindergarten, and the town is in a period of transition. The tendency is the increased interest in Sámi history and identity:

Leader: What does it mean to be Sámi? When are you Sámi? Our town is Sea Sámi. And Sea Sámi communities were subject to quite harsh Norwegianisation. Both amongst the staff and the parents there is someone who does not speak Sámi. But it is important to recognise their being Sámi despite them not speaking Sámi. At the same time, language is really important. We have employees who come and say

that their Sámi is not very good, but that they have learnt it from scratch, struggling with grammar. And we have employees who speak Sámi as their mother tongue. We aim to be able to mentor each other in the Sámi language, and not take it as criticism.

Me: This can be quite difficult as language is also quite personal?

Leader: It is. Language in a Sámi setting has a lot to do with identity. (Research conversation)

Language clearly matters in this kindergarten – as does identity. At the same time, being in a town that gathers many Sámi from all over Sápmi alongside Norwegianised Sea Sámi creates some challenges that go beyond language.

In the more outspoken Sea Sámi village, this finds resonance when we talked about the challenges related to Sámi language education and education about Sámi issues in general:

In our municipality, there has been a feeling of not being good enough. We have been Norwegianised to such an extent that the Sámi language has vanished. There have been some discussions about Sámi language, and there has been resistance. Often, we hear that we do not have good enough Sámi competence. Now, there is talk about us lacking Sámi language competence. Because the Sámi competence must be recognised. This means those who live here and what they are doing. This means the culture. If you hear that your *culture* is not good enough, then it is ... (Research conversation, italics used to show the participant's emphasis)

They left it hanging and shook their head. The two participants who speak in the quotations above point to an important aspect of contemporary Sámi education: Sámi education today exists and is practised in a post-assimilation or postcolonial era. Even though the national educational system, through the move from a politics of assimilation to a politics of recognition and inclusion (Olsen & Andreassen, 2018), has gone through a major change, the hundred years of assimilation have created a complex and troublesome situation (Broderstad, this volume). Through Nakata's (2007) concept: the cultural interface between who is Sámi and who is not Sámi holds quite a few people, and the boundaries are quite blurry in some places.

Thus, Indigenising education in this situation is a similarly complex enterprise. Making your educational practice Sámi requires that you define what that means. What does Sámi mean – and what does it mean in your area? What kind of Sáminess do you refer to? This requires a set of active choices and the recognition of

the need for more knowledge, especially in the Norwegianised areas. If you define your kindergarten as a Sea Sámi kindergarten and the area where it is located as a Sea Sámi area, it sets in motion several necessary choices. These choices concern the articulation of Sea Sámi culture, tradition, and practices, in opposition to but also connected to other articulations of Sámi cultures, traditions, and practices. These choices also concern language. As Sámi language is considered, both by national curricula (Directorate of Education, 2020) and through the measures taken by the Sámi parliament (Sámediggi, 2018), to be immensely important in the Indigenisation process (see also Sollid, this volume), it can be complicated in an area where Norwegianisation removed or severely impacted the local Sámi dialects. This is connected to multilingual communities, to loss and to feelings of shame (Andresen, 2021b; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012).

Shame and hurtful emotions were common through the transition from Norwegianisation to revitalisation. This relates to Sara Ahmed's thoughts on shame as not only an individual emotion, but a collective one that is deeply rooted in politics (Ahmed, 2004). The Sea Sámi, in the decades following Norwegianisation, have been described as living with a 'neither-nor' identity suggesting that they were neither Norwegian nor Sámi. Through the emergence of new generations and of revitalisation, new thoughts and practices occurred. The children of the 'neither-nor' generation became more of a 'both-and' generation. They can – within certain boundaries – be Norwegian, Sámi, and Kven at the same time (Hansen, 2007; Høgmo, 1986; Olsen, 2017). This can, however, create a feeling of being in-between and of not being good enough. Articulating Sámi education in such a situation has its challenges, to say the least.

Within the international field of Indigenous education, there are approaches that resonate. Russell Bishop (2008) argued for a culturally responsive education articulated in Indigenous contexts. The change of starting point is key here, with the emphasis on education on their terms as Māori. Graham Smith's (2017) discussion of culturally transformative pedagogy goes along the same lines, with the kaupapa guiding Māori theory and/or education. Smith takes as a starting point that Māori are not homogenous in their educational aspirations. The transformative dimension of education requires making space for Indigenous and minority cultures, protecting languages at risk, struggling for the minds to be educated out of false consciousness and hegemony and recognising the small victories along the way to transformation (Smith, 2017). Smith's and Bishop's perspectives also find resonance in United States Indigenous contexts. Red pedagogy, as described by Grande (2008), is an Indigenous pedagogy combining critical pedagogy and Indigenous knowledge. Amongst the main principles are the emphasis on 'red pedagogy' as rooted in Native American Indigenous knowledge, the connection

to mainstream critical theories and the desire to relate to democracy and self-determination (Grande, 2008).

'MISSION IMPOSSIBLE'?

Alongside the pedagogical challenges come the practical ones: 'To staff a Sámi unit of the kindergarten with qualified teachers who also speak the Sámi language is mission impossible.' This was said – accompanied by a sad smile – by a research participant in charge of kindergartens in their municipality. In their municipality, which is in the South Sámi area, the South Sámi language is under severe pressure and is, alongside Lule Sámi, considered to be in a severely endangered situation (NOU 2016: 18). Although the language situation here is critical, there are similar challenges also faced in other parts of Sápmi.

To find and recruit competent teachers is a shared and now well-known challenge related to making and running Sámi kindergartens and schools. This has been repeated in several reports and surveys over the last decades (Hirvonen, 2004; Hirvonen, 2004; Homme, Danielsen, & Ludvigsen, 2021; NOU, 2016: 18; Solstad, Nygaard, & Solstad, 2012). The growing demands from the first Sámi national school curriculum in 1997 and the consecutive curricula both for kindergartens and schools led to an increased demand for teachers with a particular set of competences. A competent teacher within Sámi education needs to be a qualified teacher and to have Sámi language competence. This has proven to be quite complicated, probably mainly due to small numbers of Sámi candidates (Homme et al., 2021; NOU 2016: 18, p. 200).

This has of course historical dimensions. Hence, there is the state-born dilemma or paradox: State policy drove away Sámi languages through the hundred years of assimilation. Today, the same state has a different policy and a different set of regulations including language demands that have changed direction. In the Sea Sámi community, the municipality representative talked of not being qualified to make and run a full-scale Sámi kindergarten (see above). This is an example of a system where the different actors (state and Indigenous) together provide two-edged communication and make a proper paradox or even loop: Following Norwegianisation, the Sea Sámi communities lost the Sámi language, and both the South Sámi language and the Lule Sámi language have become severely endangered. Following Indigenisation and the increased recognition of Sámi rights to education in the Sámi language, the state – and the Sámi parliament – demand Sámi language proficiency to be recognised as giving a proper Sámi education.

In the conversation with the municipality leader from the South Sámi area, recruitment for kindergarten teachers showed to be a main point also in other Sámi contexts:

When we now are having a Sámi unit with Sámi as the main language, we are trying to make a full Sámi design. And we realise something that is more difficult than we had imagined. This is when we understand that the people who speak South Sámi in the world are not many. This is when we understand and see the connections between the low number of South Sámi speakers and the oppression of the language. People stop speaking – the few who actually speak South Sámi – when non-Sámi-speaking persons enter the room. We discover something we had not realised. We have also found out that manning a Sámi kindergarten unit with someone who has both ECE competence and speaks the Sámi language is mission impossible! No ... Now it sounds like I have given up. I have not! We put a lot of effort into building competence in the kindergarten and educating people with and without a connection to the Sámi community. (Research conversation)

Similar statements and experiences are repeated by several research participants. The situation seems to be recognisable across different levels. The struggle to find kindergarten teachers with Sámi language competence is similar to the struggle to find schoolteachers with Sámi language competence. The higher education sector finds it challenging to educate Sámi language teachers and also to find teachers for university courses (Olsen, Nutti, & Hov, 2021). As such, this is not limited to local communities and their kindergartens and schools, it is a challenge across all levels of education, from ECE to tertiary education, and across the state borders in Sápmi (Keskitalo, this volume).

There are at least two ways of understanding this in addition to the more quantitative aspect of the low numbers of potential Sámi speakers. First, it is the result of state assimilation as well as an expression of a post-Norwegianisation ignorance from the state side regarding Sámi education for a long period of time. On the other hand, though, it can be seen as a system that struggles to keep up with itself. Following assimilation and marginalisation, wherein the educational system played a major part, a period of growing recognition has taken place, leading up to today's situation (Gjerpe, 2017; Olsen & Andreassen, 2018). Now, the state, through policy and curricula, funds kindergartens and schools and sets forth a set of curricula with quite high demands when it comes to competence in Sámi language and culture. These demands are – following such a position – reflexive of an ambition for the Norwegian educational system to be culturally responsive to the situation of the Sámi and to answer to the rights of Sámi students and children. Regardless of how you see it, the Sámi communities struggle to have enough candidates for the many positions. This is clearly another paradox and dilemma.

HIERARCHY, DEMANDS AND DIVERSITY

An important part of understanding any community is a concept of diversity. The national curricula in Norway have embraced the term. Diversity has, to a great extent, replaced concepts like 'multicultural' (Olsen & Andreassen, 2018). There are tensions when using the diversity term (Røthing, 2020). It can be used both as a descriptive, a normative and potentially an analytical term. I use this here mainly as a descriptive term and as a term used by the participants, and follow Åse Røthing (2020) in the call for a critical perspective. Røthing claims that there is a need for a norm-critical perspective to be an integral part of diversity competence, questioning processes and categories of normality, normativity, inclusion, and exclusion.

Sámi communities are diverse. Applying a critical perspective to diversity, also within Sámi communities, reveals a complex issue: hierarchies, power structures, and the experience of being left outside. These are complex topics and parts of communities. They are difficult to address as they dwell and work in the spaces between system and individuals, and between politics and emotions.

Diversity is also a quite practical matter in this cultural interface. The majority of the Sámi in Norway speak Norwegian. At the same time, the North Sámi, the Lule Sámi, and the South Sámi languages are in different situations and under pressure in different ways. This goes for culture, ways of living, gender, sexualities, and geography. There are Sámi living in different parts of Norway and in Sápmi. Some live in rural, others in urban areas. Some live in areas where Sámi languages are spoken; others do not. For Sámi education, this means that pedagogy and institutions need to find ways to reflect, understand, and handle diversity also within Sámi communities. As such, this is the same as diversity in a more general sense. In a Sámi context, an outspoken diversity perspective means that it is impossible to claim and articulate a Sámi pedagogy, education, knowledge, or perspective as if it is one univocal whole. Instead, there is a need to open for the plurality of Sámi voices (Gjerpe, 2021; Olsen & Sollid, this volume). This is also in line with the culturally transformative pedagogy from the Māori context.

Another dimension of diversity is more complex and deals with emotions, belonging, and citizenship. It touches upon or has grown out of the complex matter of assimilation. There is diversity when it comes to how gravely Norwegianisation affected Sámi communities. Several Sámi communities were affected to such an extent that the use of Sámi language was weakened and almost disappeared. Some Sámi even chose (or were pushed to) to become Norwegian. Sámi names vanished, and there were fewer Sámi registrations in the censuses, while Sámi languages became endangered (Andresen, 2021a; Dankertsen, 2017).

Nonetheless, identity is not static. In Sápmi – as in many other parts of the Indigenous world – the second part of the 20th and going well into the 21st century is a period of vitalisation, revitalisation, and reclamation. Following decades of revitalisation, Sámi identities are re-emerging, and Sámi languages are again spoken in some places where they were silenced. Hence, there are many ways of being Sámi (Dankertsen, 2017), or many subject positions available (Nakata, 2007; Olsen & Sollid, this volume). The relationship between the different ways of being Sámi in the post-Norwegianisation era is complicated. This, of course, also has elements of hierarchy to which my participants refer.

The dominant discourses have set their mark both in the making of the Sámi curriculum and in the representations of Sámi people and communities within educational contexts. The feeling of not being good enough to provide Sámi education as laid out by the Sámi parliament does indicate the presence of a hierarchy, albeit an informal and unspoken one.

The existence of hegemonic discourses and internal hierarchies represents a challenge for dealing with diversity. The leader in the kindergarten with both Sámi and Norwegian units explained that this is a sensitive topic, and one that evokes both personal, emotional, and power-related matters. We talked more generally about how diversity situations tend to include hierarchies that can be both outspoken and silent. There are hierarchies of both kinds in Sámi contexts. The kindergarten leader talked about hierarchies both in the group of parents and in the group of teachers. They stated that this was more complicated on the Sámi side of the kindergarten than on the Norwegian side, and sensed the complicated matters as well as the emotional aspects:

Leader: To separate between case and person in these matters is difficult and can be tense. Not many wish to speak about this. What is diversity? And what about hierarchy? Will the one that shouts the loudest be seen the most? Then there is also conflict. Instead of dealing with it and getting it over with, they would slide away and talk about family and relatives. Again – about upbringing – the whole family is part of the upbringing but will also say a lot about who you are, I have understood.

Me: Do you mean that you carry with you the family as ‘baggage’?

Leader: Yes, for better or worse. (Research conversation)

The hierarchies at play in the kindergarten are complicated and demand the ability to see invisible lines. Who you are, where you are from, your Sámi language competence; these issues matter and carry meaning even though they are not necessarily talked about openly. For Sámi education and those working within

Sámi education, this is a topic rarely addressed, and a topic that requires ethical reflection.

In writings on Sámi pedagogy and education, the hegemonic discourse is one where the Sámi community is a community of Inner Finnmark, the 'heartland' of the North Sámi language. This can be seen both in Sámi textbook representations in the previous curricula and in the educational resources made related to the curricula. Gjerpe (2021) refers to the Sápmi found in these representations as 'Textbook Sápmi', arguing that there is a particular kind of Sáminess, a particular Sápmi, that is portrayed (see also Johansen & Markussen, this volume). What is missing are the other parts of Sápmi: cultural, geographical, and linguistic.

In a recent textbook (Balto et al, 2020) published through the Sámi parliament's kindergarten project *Sámi mánát ođđa searvelanjain* ('Sámi children in new pedagogical spaces'), a similar picture is painted. The book is given to all interested kindergartens and is written in four languages – the three Sámi languages and Norwegian. It is mainly written by and based on Asta Balto's work and presents thoughts on Sámi childhood and pedagogy. The book is central to the project's outspoken ambition to 'Sámify' (Indigenise) kindergartens and formalise a particular Sámi pedagogy. Through the book, the reader can receive suggestions to practices and ways of thinking in ECE settings. Even though the book mentions diversity, the portrayal of the Sámi way of life is not very diverse. As the book aims to be a constructive contribution to the field of Sámi pedagogy, rather than an analysis, the approach is rather harmonising. Still, it means that there are areas and topics that are typically not addressed and presented. Dynamics of power, diversity, and hierarchy are clearly also part of pedagogical practice in Sámi kindergartens and schools – but not so much in literature and discourse.

Similar experiences are also given and told of in research related to urban Sámi communities in general. Sámi living in urban areas may experience a kind of 'negotiation' related to where you are from and to your language proficiency (Berg-Nordlie, 2021; Gjerpe, 2013; Vuolab, 2016). It is also possible to draw lines from this to the debate and discourse on the Finnish side of Sápmi. In recent years, there has been a complex debate about how to define and recognise who is Sámi and who is not (Valkonen, 2019). Without going into the finer points of this debate, I recognise the existence of hierarchies in the understanding and articulation of Sámi identity in the debate.

DISCUSSION: FROM PRACTICE AND PEDAGOGY TO POWER AND POLITICS

A clear observation from this study is that there are a lot of activities on different levels of the nexus of Sámi education. The national curricula are going through

what I will term an Indigenisation process. Sámi matters and rights are put to the forefront. The Sámi parliament plays a major part in this, both in the curriculum processes and in the project of articulating a Sámi pedagogy for kindergartens. Further down in the nexus, leaders in municipalities, kindergartens, and schools work hard to answer to new demands – within a budget that has not been expanded – acting to put ideals and curricula into pedagogical practices.

To understand and navigate within diverse communities, there is a need for critical perspectives. Åse Røthing (2016, 2020) presents diversity competence as a key in contemporary educational contexts. Diversity competence consists of knowledge about diversity, skills to deal with and handle diversity, and norm-critical perspectives. I will dwell on the latter, as they connect well with the mentioned issues of being in-between and of hierarchies in Sámi contexts. Norm-critical perspectives are a way of understanding how some dimensions, aspects or roles are presented and/or considered to be what is norm and normal in a particular social context. When this happens, these relations are not questioned and do not even need to be defended. They can be taken for granted. A norm-critical perspective looks for such dynamics and aims to deconstruct them (Røthing, 2020).

In a Sámi educational context, there are norms and claims of normativity at play. Textbook presentations of a particular Sápmi as being the one and only Sápmi is one example (Gjerpe, 2021). The stories of not being good enough for the demands of the curriculum are another. This is when members of Sea Sámi communities, for instance, express how the arrangements for and the curricular presentations of Sámi language and culture do not (or poorly) fit their situation. As such, I ask through a norm-critical perspective about different levels of the nexus of Sámi education: What norms govern or form the Sámi curricula and the representation of the Sámi in the mainstream curricula? Which norms or expectations of what ‘Sámi’ means apply in the implementation of the curricula?

To counter the normative presentations, and with reference to Nakata’s concept of the cultural interface, it can be necessary to emphasise that there are many ways of being Sámi in Sápmi. These are to a great extent dependent on where in Sápmi you live and/or come from. One aspect of this is related to the distinction between Sámi and non-Sámi identities. It may, at least in some areas, be difficult to see people as belonging to only one category, ‘Sámi’ or ‘Norwegian’ (on the Norwegian side, that is), and that this is a dichotomic relation of either-or. In Sámi kindergartens, defining a Sámi child is similarly more complex than it may seem (Homme et al., 2021, pp. 247–248). The categories are to some extent in flux, especially in the most strongly Norwegianised areas. Here, the cultural interface is a good description of the Sámi community and a good starting point to articulate educational practices. Following Graham Smith (2017) in his description of

culturally transformative education in Indigenous contexts, Indigenous students are not homogenous and should be treated as such in their educational contexts. Rather, the transformative dimension of education makes it necessary to provide and build space for minority cultures, to protect languages at risk, and to struggle for an education that challenges norms and hegemony.

Returning to the everyday life of the research participants of this chapter, their endeavours are often more practically oriented. Even though they are dealing with matters connected to the huge topics and concepts mentioned here, they would still conclude that their main challenges are more practical ones. Who will be the teachers today, tomorrow, next week, and next year? How can we enable our schools and teachers in the best way possible to do the important job of putting Indigenous education into practice? At least they should not have to feel that they are not good enough for anyone.

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