



12. ‘We don’t talk about Sámi versus Norwegian; we talk about us.’ Local articulations of education practices in Sápmi

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Abstract This chapter investigates Indigenous education through the lens of school practices in Gáivuotna/Kåfjord/Kaivuono in Sápmi. The analysis is based on interviews with teachers and participation at the Sámi National Day celebration and a school camp. The schools in Kåfjord have developed locally situated practices that account for articulations of Sámi identity and enable a local sense of belonging. However, their scope for action is in some ways constrained by the demands of a national education framework.

Keywords Indigenous education | Sámi education | cultural interface | articulation

INTRODUCTION

Gáivuotna/Kåfjord/Kaivuono is a place in Sápmi and home to Sámi, Kven, and Norwegians. In 1992, the municipality became one of six across Northern Norway included in a Sámi language administrative area. This was part of a policy enacted to safeguard and promote Sámi languages, after centuries of Norwegian assimilation policies had almost eradicated them. In 1997, the national government established a Sámi curriculum in order to provide culturally relevant education to Sámi pupils. These frameworks have since shaped educational policies and practices in Kåfjord. Through an analysis of some of these, I ask whether the schools are able to develop and maintain practices that center local and Sámi experiences, within the framework of Sámi education in Norway.

This chapter engages with the topic of Indigenous education through the lens of school practices in one local context. From a Sámi perspective, researchers have investigated how processes of colonization and assimilation have impacted

Sámi society (Bjørklund, 1985; Minde, 2005). Much attention has been paid to curricular developments, demonstrating the change in policy towards improved education on Sámi issues and for Sámi pupils (Olsen, 2019; Olsen & Andreassen, 2018). Research efforts on the impact of the Sámi curriculum and role of Sámi schools have highlighted challenges on both policy and practice levels (Gjerpe, 2017; Keskitalo, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2013). However, there is still need for explorations of how these historical processes, policy developments, and school practices have an impact on each other.

Kåfjord has been subjected to processes of colonization and revitalization that are recognizable throughout the Indigenous world, but also include local particularities. I will situate Kåfjord's recent past and its effects on education before I provide an analysis of school practices. First, I investigate the Sámi National Day celebration and a school camp, as sites that articulate Indigeneity and a local sense of belonging. This will be further illustrated through an analysis of how teachers understand the role of Sámi identity, language, and culture. Finally, I will consider how, under the national system of Sámi education, the schools face constraints that limit the scope for local policy and practice development. While this chapter is based on one municipality in Northern Norway, I maintain it demonstrates an overall need for approaches that pay attention to local articulations of Indigenous education practices.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Though mainly empirical in scope, this chapter is written under the theoretical framework of Indigenous education. Scholars, such as Pigga Keskitalo, have written extensively on topics concerning education for Sámi pupils and use of Sámi pedagogy (see Keskitalo et al., 2013). I will employ Martin Nakata's (2007) concept *the cultural interface* to describe the empirical context in this article, as Sollid and Olsen (2019) have done. The interface is a dynamic space that de-emphasizes a binary understanding of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships. Instead, it accounts for multi-layered, contested positions and relationships that emerge when different systems of thought intersect (Nakata, 2007, pp. 195–212).

Several scholars have written about identity in the coastal Sámi area, and I draw on their work to understand identity as dynamic and contextual (Hansen, 2008; Hovland, 1999; Sollid & Olsen, 2019). Steinlien (2006) maintains that Sámi belonging in Kåfjord is influenced by its relational, cultural, and political aspects and makes space for both continuity and change. The anthropologist James Clifford (2001) has argued for similar notions of identity through his theory on articulated Indigeneity. His conceptualization draws attention away from Indigeneity as either

purely primordial or postmodern. According to Clifford, authenticity does not matter as much as cultural adaptations and processes and how they continuously produce understandings of identity. Articulation theory moreover allows them to include both consensus and conflict (Clifford, 2001, pp. 472–479).

My analysis is based on empirical material consisting of qualitative interviews and participation at two school events – the Sámi National Day celebration and a school camp. Pupils from ages five to sixteen attended these since the schools in Kåfjord comprise both primary and lower secondary levels. The first event included pupils from the two state schools in the municipality, while the second involved just one of them (subsequently, school 1). I have only been able to interview teachers from this school. As such, the analysis poses some challenges regarding representation and difference that will be discussed.

The research process has been collaborative. Together with a colleague, I attended the Sámi National Day celebration on February 6, in 2019. Afterwards, we interviewed two teachers at the local School of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA),¹ who had helped organize the event. I attended the celebration by myself in 2020. The second event is an annual camp for school 1, which I attended together with my colleague in August 2019. We had planned to go in 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was cancelled. I have also collaborated with colleagues in gathering and sharing empirical data. For this chapter, I have used four interviews with teachers who teach at both primary and lower secondary levels at school 1, and one interview with a municipal leader, conducted between the spring of 2018 and June of 2021. Quotes from the interviews that appear in this text have been translated from Norwegian to English by me.

My position as a non-Indigenous person in the field of Indigenous studies has shaped my outlook. Although an outsider perspective can be valuable in analyzing Sámi issues, I recognize that my viewpoint is restricted by my lack of first-hand knowledge of the variety and nuances of Sámi experiences. At the same time, Kåfjord is a place I am familiar with outside of this academic project, which also informs my position.

KÅFJORD: HISTORICAL PLACES AND EDUCATIONAL SPACES

Kåfjord is home to just over two thousand people, per January 2022 (Statistics Norway, 2022). In this chapter, it is relevant to speak of it as a municipality since

1 Schools of music and performing arts are found in municipalities nationwide and offer after-school activities for children and youth.

it dictates both policy and practice in the educational sector. There are two state schools located in different villages along the fjord Kåfjorden. They are both Sámi schools, which are schools that follow ‘a parallel and equal Sámi curriculum’ (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 4). Moreover, they can be categorized as bilingual (Keskitalo et al., 2013, p. 60). At school 1, 73% of the children received education in North Sámi, either as a language of instruction or as a subject, per January 2020. At school 2, 10% of the children received education in North Sámi (Visjona AS, 2020, p. 16). Additionally, a few pupils at school 1 are taught Kven as a language subject, according to one of the teachers.

This educational situation can be considered the most common one in the Norwegian part of Sápmi (NOU 2016: 18, pp. 96–99, 114–115). Moreover, it reflects a diversity at the schools in Kåfjord. School 1 is situated in one of the villages where Sámi language use and culture has been most prominent and persistent in the area. The second school is in a village that has not had as strong a relationship with Sámi identity, either now or in the past. Indeed, it is possible to speak about the villages as being at different ends on a scale of ‘Sáminess’ (Hansen, 2008, p. 20; Hovland, 1999, p. 122). These differences play out in educational settings, as well as in approaches to Sámi culture and politics overall. There is also a third school – a private, Christian school – that is not part of my analysis.

Kåfjord is not only a municipality, but also a place and community, or the collection of many smaller communities or rural villages. Depending on the context, people here describe themselves as belonging to a specific village; as Sámi, Norwegian, or Kven; or as a ‘Kåfjording’ (Lervoll, 2007, pp. 34–35). This sense of belonging speaks to the dynamic and ambiguous aspects of identity and how the boundary between who is Sámi or not can sometimes be difficult to outline. Moreover, this context invokes Nakata’s (2007) cultural interface, where the intersections between different relations, such as place, language, and narratives, shape ‘how we can speak of ourselves and each other, how we understand one another and the ongoing relations between us, and how we describe and represent our “lived realities”’ (p. 199). For further discussion on the relationship between place and education in Indigenous contexts, see Fogarty and Sollid (this volume).

The language law of 1992 as a starting point

The Sámi language law was implemented nationwide in 1992. Kåfjord became one of six municipalities in a Sámi language administrative area, where one of the Sámi languages was made equal to Norwegian not only in rights but also in use. The law is part of the Sámi Act of 1987, which was enacted to ‘enable the Sámi people of Norway to safeguard and develop their language, culture and way of life’ (The

Sámi Act, 1987, §1–1). The Sámi language law, or more precisely 'the language rules of the Sámi Act', was highly consequential for the education sector by giving Sámi pupils the right to education in a Sámi language. It also gave people the right to use and receive information in Sámi in government agencies, in courts, and at hospitals (The Sámi Act, 1987).

The law's proposal had met resistance, and after it was implemented it immediately received backlash in Kåfjord. People were worried about obligatory Sámi language teaching in school and about the requirements for Sámi language competency in public hiring processes. In 1994, the North Sámi name *Gáivuotna* was added to the official name of the municipality and placed above the Norwegian name Kåfjord on official signs, which further ramped up conflicts. Communities and families were split, people argued in local newspapers and homes, and the new road signs with Sámi names at the top were vandalized (Centre for Northern Peoples, 2021; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, pp. 158–161).

Being Sámi in Kåfjord during the processes of colonization and revitalization

This conflict must be understood in terms of its historical context and the impact of colonization on the Sámi. Since the thirteenth century, the Norwegian state had gradually increased its political, economic, and religious control of the northernmost parts of the country (Hansen & Olsen, 2004). From the mid-1800s, the state enacted an assimilation policy known as Norwegianization, through which the government sought to solidify its control over the Sámi population, by turning them into Norwegians, changing their way of life, and limiting the use of Sámi languages. In schools, children were prohibited from speaking Sámi, and in certain areas of Sápmi the government built boarding schools. Although these assimilationist efforts were overturned in the 1950s, their effects outlasted them by several decades (Andresen, Evjen, & Rymmin, 2021, pp. 157–172; Minde, 2005).

In Kåfjord, Norwegianization policies coupled with the Second World War had especially damaging effects on Sámi culture and language. Towards the end of the war, people were forcibly evacuated further south, while German troops destroyed homes along with most of the Sámi material culture in Kåfjord. When they came back afterwards, parents began speaking Norwegian to their children (Andresen et al., 2021, pp. 291–298; Centre for Northern Peoples, 2021). The government's assimilation policies had turned Sámi language and culture into something people were ashamed of, and, in the decades after the war, many in the coastal Sámi areas distanced themselves from their Indigeneity (Bjørklund, 1985, pp. 393–395; Johansen, 2010, pp. 15–17; Steinlien, 2006, p. 108). At the same time, the growing

Indigenous political movements brought with them possibilities for change. The protests against building a hydroelectric power plant in the Alta-Kautokeino waterway in the 1970s gave Sámi rights issues national attention (Andresen et al., 2021, pp. 373–377). In Kåfjord as well, people organized into Sámi political groups, making it possible for many to reclaim a Sámi identity (Steinlien, 2006, p. 102).

Those in the so-called ‘pro-Sámi movement’ were attempting to reconceptualize what it means to be a Sámi. It led more people to reflect on their own histories and how Norwegianization policies had affected Sámi culture and language in the coastal communities. Local traditions and Norwegian phrases and dialects, which were previously thought of as somehow different, or only local, were now being rediscovered as having Sámi roots (Johansen, 2010; Lervoll, 2007). A local *gákti* (the traditional dress) was reconstructed from old images (Hansen, 2008, p. 50). People documented the many Sámi place names in the area, an effort that also mobilized political engagement (Hovland, 1999, p. 147). But while some in Kåfjord embraced the ‘new’ identity, others rejected it. They saw the revitalization process as an articulation of the entire area as Sámi. An individual’s reclamation of their Sámi identity led to, by association, a collective announcement of Indigeneity, which some people were vehemently against (Johansen, 2011; Hovland, 1999, p. 145).

While the revitalization efforts created conflicts in the coastal areas during the 1990s, the era also saw the growth of Sámi institution building locally and an increase in language learning and cultural awareness (Centre of Northern Peoples, 2021; Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, pp. 99–108). Kåfjord is home to the Indigenous music festival, Riddu Riddu. It is often mentioned as an expression of a local Sámi identity and as an arena for exploring it (Hansen, 2008, p. 9). While older generations in Kåfjord might have felt like they were neither fully Sámi nor Norwegian, younger generations have experienced that Sámi belonging and identity is not a simple either/or. It is possible to be both (and Kven) (Hansen, 2008, p. 81; Olsen, this volume). The conversation has, as Nakata (2007, p. 200) would argue, moved away from seeing the relationship between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous as dichotomous and fixed. Moreover, the revitalization processes have opened up for broader negotiations of what it ‘takes’ to identify as Sámi (Steinlien, 2006). But discussions over Indigeneity in Kåfjord were still at their height in 1997, when a Sámi curriculum was introduced for all the municipalities in the language administrative area.

Sámi curriculum: A source of conflict or opportunity for local education?

The Sámi curriculum of 1997 can be seen as a turning point for Sámi education (Gjerpe, 2017; Olsen, 2019). The educational developments of the previous

decades had been building towards this moment. By the 1990s, there were many voicing the need for a Sámi curriculum *and* enough support nationally to make it happen. On a policy level, Sámi children had gradually been given stronger rights to education in their primary languages (NOU 2016: 18, pp. 63–67). But on a practice level, many saw the need for education for Sámi pupils that would center Sámi languages, histories, and cultures (Magga, 2011).

The introduction of the curriculum was rushed. In Kåfjord, parents felt overlooked, and protesters saw the new curriculum as an attempt to 'Sámify' the children (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, p. 194). Instead, some argued for a curriculum that would emphasize the multicultural aspects of Kåfjord. Others, who generally were in favor, found the curriculum imbalanced towards Sámi culture and society associated with reindeer herding and felt it did not accurately represent the coastal traditions of Kåfjord (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, p. 182; Johansen, 2011, p. 95). After protests, the government revised the plan. Among other things, parents were given the right to choose whether their children should learn North Sámi. Once the curriculum was implemented, many discovered that through it, it was possible to achieve the multicultural, locally based education they had asked for. Pedersen and Høgmo (2012) claim that, while the conflicts over Sámi revitalization processes took years to resolve, many of them were eventually made harmless through social practice. Putting everything in the open allowed for inclusivity and reconciliation (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012, pp. 180–185, 215, 301–303).

ANALYSIS OF LOCAL EDUCATION PRACTICES

The Sámi National Day celebration

The Sámi National Day, or *Sámi Álbmotbeaivi*, was established in 1992 and is celebrated annually on February 6th. The date commemorates the day of the first national, Sámi political gathering in Tråante/Trondheim in 1917. Since 2003, the national day has been an official flag day and is celebrated across Norway (Sámi Parliament, 2019). In Sápmi, schools and kindergartens are important arenas for celebrations, and elsewhere in the country the day is often marked to highlight Sámi content in the curriculum. In Kåfjord, the national day has been celebrated since the mid-1990s and can be described as an established tradition. Although it has developed over the years, there are components of the program that appear constant.

The celebration(s) I attended took place at a Sámi cultural center in the village of school 1, and the pupils from school 2 were taken there by bus. The event was jointly put together by the schools, the local SMPA, one of the kindergartens,

and several of the Sámi institutions housed at the center.² In both 2019 and 2020, Riddu Ridđu arranged a school concert with different Sámi artists, and in 2020 the museum hosted the older pupils. The same year, staff from the Sámi Parliament helped serve food and clean up afterwards. The various host roles these institutions took on illuminate how the event provides an opportunity for them to engage with the schools.

There is an ongoing process in Kåfjord to establish February 6th as a day with its own traditions, symbols, and components. The event begins with raising the Sámi flag and singing *Sámi soga lávlla*, the national anthem. For lunch, everyone is served *biđus*, the traditional reindeer stew. Many of the pupils and teachers wear *gávttiid* or use other clothing or ornamentations that signifies a Sámi belonging. These aspects of the celebration are found elsewhere, both in and outside of Sápmi, and can therefore be described as part of a development in Kåfjord towards ritualizing the Sámi National Day (Olsen & Sollid, 2019). But many of the activities are also locally based. In 2019, the older pupils watched a movie made by and about people in the village of school 1. The artists holding the concert were locals, or from nearby communities. One of the games played outside by the younger children, called *riebangárđi*, has strong local roots (Solhaug, 2021).

The two schools celebrated together. Although they belong to the same municipality, there are apparently not many arenas where the pupils meet. As such, February 6th offers an opportunity for the kids to get to know each other. One of the SMPA teachers who organized the event in 2019 was pleasantly surprised at how well it had turned out. According to them, there had previously been some reluctance to the event on the part of school 2, or ‘slowness in relation to Sámi stuff.’ Such a description could point to the ambiguous relationship to Sámi identity that lingers on from previous conflicts. As such, the national day celebration can make visible how approaches to Sámi content in school practice are related to the different historical contexts of communities in Kåfjord. A sense of belonging to Sámi culture is articulated with differing strength from one place to another, and, following Clifford (2001, p. 473), there is room for both agreement and conflict in its expression.

But these differences did not visibly play out during the celebration itself. When asked about their role in the event, the SMPA teachers talked of wanting the day to be fun for everyone. Moreover, ‘we can focus on Sápmi being a peaceful nation and spend the day becoming friends. (...) And, well it is, in a local politics way, incredibly important.’ This was evident in the different activities, which put pupils together across grades and schools. The emphasis on coming together highlights

2 The local SMPA does not participate every year.

the Sámi National Day as a celebratory day for everyone, regardless of whether the pupils think of themselves as Sámi or not (Olsen & Sollid, 2019). It can be argued that because of the history regarding Sámi culture and language in Kåfjord, having fun and making friends across schools and communities becomes an important (local) political move that contributes to peace and reconciliation.

It appears the efforts to celebrate the national day as a community are deliberately made as part of a process of embracing and articulating a local Sámi culture. While the national day is an extraordinary occasion, the teachers spoke about these issues as part of their year-round practice. The camp offers an opportunity to emphasize Sámi topics from the beginning of the school year, and the week surrounding February 6th is spent highlighting different themes, such as language and identity, or Indigenous rights. Beyond this, speaking of Sámi topics as its own curricular entity is not as relevant. When asked whether the school defines this in their teaching plan, one teacher said, 'We don't separate it in *that* way.' The national day celebration and school camp provide opportunities for highlighting certain topics but there is no need for 'pulling out the Sámi [stuff].' However, the teacher stated that they do make conscious choices about *how* they highlight issues.

The SMPA teachers reflected upon a similar approach in their practice, in how they represent Sámi culture. One of them brought up the importance of honest language in teaching generally, in order to meet children where they are at:

[Not only looking to the past] is perhaps especially important, when meeting children, who have their own perspective on the world?

It might be, that we have this idea about a lot of things that might not actually be a part of the kids' world. This romantic picture. But to make honest expressions and have honest language. And in particular because we live by the coast. (...) We have other cultural markers as well [besides reindeer], that we should say are Sámi! Not only coastal Sámi, but Sámi. I'm beating the drum for fish cakes.

While there are strong ties to reindeer herding in Kåfjord, the teacher reflected on the disadvantages of portraying a romanticized version of Sámi culture and advocated for highlighting several traditions that represent coastal Sámi culture today. On the one hand, cultural markers that unite Kåfjord with the rest of Sápmi are important. On the other, grounding them locally not only brings them closer to the children's everyday lives, but it also contributes to the process of reclaiming local Sámi culture in the area. This discussion also makes visible Kåfjord's recent history, namely the dispute in 1997 over a curriculum that more accurately reflected the children's reality.

As I see it, the Sámi National Day celebration provides the schools with a teaching opportunity that is situated locally. They have a well-established tradition in place that takes into consideration pupils' multilayered positions but still celebrates Sámi people as one people. Moreover, the day has become an arena for articulating an Indigenous belonging that is grounded in local cultural markers and traditions. The negotiations over what it means to be a Sámi and what it means to be a Sámi from Kåfjord speak to the dynamic state of Indigenous culture. This process of articulation allows for more nuanced perspectives on revitalization in the schools, as it highlights not authenticity, but persistence (Clifford, 2001, p. 479).

The school camp

The camp is held every year in August over one school week and includes children from one kindergarten and pupils from primary and lower secondary levels of school 1. The camp rotates between three locations – the fjord, the valley, and the mountains. The locations determine some of the themes for the camp, which covers many of the pupils' subjects and includes several interdisciplinary activities. In August 2019, the school camp was held at the seaside of Kåfjorden. The campsite was on a hill overlooking the fjord and the surrounding mountains, close to the remnants of a German fort built during the Second World War. The pupils helped setting up the camp, consisting of *lávut* and tents shaped like a *gohti*,³ and some of the older ones were responsible for preparing the meals served.

Throughout the week, pupils learned about local history and businesses, studied life in *fjæra* – the seaside area visible during low tide – and went kayaking, among other things. Those who receive education in North Sámi sometimes followed a separate teaching plan. They had language-based activities that focused on the local surroundings. While my colleague spent a lot of their time with this group, I joined the activities of the other lower secondary level pupils. We visited several farms and fishing companies close-by. At one point, a community member came to the camp site to give a talk about the history of the fort and the German occupation of Kåfjord. They also made an effort to mention the post-war history of the area and how it had affected Sámi identity and language.

These are just some of the activities we participated in, and they change from year to year. The ones mentioned here shed light on the relationship between the school and the community and reflect how the school camp implements the curriculum through local involvement (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 18). They

3 The *lávvu* and the *gohti* have historically been used to live in when moving with the reindeer herd, or as a permanent structure.

demonstrate the use of local knowledge by having the school invite outside speakers to give lectures on history and cultural traditions in the area. During a visit to a local farm, the owner took everyone to the old barn to show them their grandfather's *nordlandsbåt*, a traditional fishing boat used in Northern Norway since the Viking Age (Eldjarn, 2019). They drew attention to how this type of boat belongs to a Sámi boatmaking tradition as much as a Norwegian one. The comment speaks to the processes evident during the national day celebrations, of reclaiming cultural traditions as Sámi. It signals the effort among people in Kåfjord to reconnect their identities to the past, and as such, 'transcend colonial disruptions' (Clifford, 2001, p. 482). Moreover, both the farm owner and the community member who spoke about the war emphasized the *Sámi* aspects of local histories.

Throughout the week, I noticed various aspects of the camp that point to the strong relationship school 1 has to Sámi culture, language, and identity. This was despite several teachers telling me the camp would not consist of many activities that covered Sámi topics in the curriculum. In my interview with another teacher, which took place almost two years later, I mentioned my participation at the camp and asked them to give a general description of the school. The teacher brought up that the school camp offers pupils their first encounter with Sámi issues in the school year. They mentioned that place names and coastal Sámi fishing traditions are frequent topics during the camps by the fjord. Both this teacher, and others during the camp, discussed how they cover a variety of Sámi curricular content when they go to the valley or on the mountains, through activities focused on local storytelling, place names, and reindeer herding. As the pupils attend these school camps every year, the rotation offers multiple possibilities for addressing different topics.

Interestingly, then, it seemed that the teachers spoke in differing ways about the school camp as a site of learning about Sámi issues. This can be understood methodologically, in how I approached the question. Empirically speaking, it relates to the larger conversation on the ambiguous nature of 'Sámi content.' While some curricular topics can easily be defined as a Sámi topic, such as Norwegianization policies, other issues might appear more implicit. In Kåfjord, which exists at an interface where different understandings of identity and Indigeneity meet, the border between what is Sámi and what is not Sámi appears less clear-cut.

Another aspect that points to ties to Sámi identity and culture was markers in the camp itself. For instance, *lávut* and *goahti*-shaped tents were in prominent use. Some wore decorated belts and knives that are common when camping or spending time outdoors in Sápmi. Several wore clothing with the logo for Riddu Riđđu on it, indicating a connection to the local, Indigenous festival. Separately, these markers might signal different things to different people and are more ambiguous in their

expressions. Put together, however, they speak to where this camp takes place – in Northern Norway, in Sápmi, in Kåfjord. As a contrast to the Sámi National Day celebration, the school camp has fewer activities that can be sharply defined as Sámi. Despite this, we can understand the site as an ‘articulated site of Indigeneity’ (Clifford, 2001, p. 472). The markers can be seen as reflections of the revitalization processes in Kåfjord, where “‘Sáminess’ is something one can slip in and out of’ (Hansen, 2008, p. 81). The camp offers the possibility to express belonging to a place with a strong Sámi identity, while allowing for ambiguity through symbols that can also signify belonging to a community.

‘We might not always call it Sámi culture; we call it local culture’

In interviews with teachers from school 1, several remarked on how important the school camp is to their teaching. One of them described the valuable relationship that exists between the school and the local community:

Does the community play a role in [teaching according to the Sámi curriculum]?

Yes, I think so absolutely. It depends on the school. [This school] has been very good at using the local environment, and they have had a tradition with school camps, for example, where you use the local environment a lot, both in Sámi [language] education and otherwise. And they build quite a bit on local knowledge. Everyone kind of knows whom to talk to, who can make this or that, and who knows this tradition, everyone sort of knows that here.

This teacher was not from Kåfjord themselves but saw value in having resources outside of the school to rely on and the ability to make the teaching practice close to the pupils’ lived realities. They further stated that the school uses community involvement whenever it is possible to do so. It points to a locally grounded practice that builds on continuity and nurtures relationships between the school and the nearby community.

As with the school camp, the quote illuminates how local and Sámi perspectives are tied closely together. Of course, it is important to center local viewpoints in education regardless of connections to Indigeneity, but in Kåfjord, as in many other areas of Sápmi, local connections are impossible to fully separate from Sámi connections. Another teacher noted that the school does not have strict boundaries between what is *Sámi* or *Norwegian* when they teach: ‘We don’t talk about Sámi versus Norwegian; we talk about us. We are a mix of everything, both Kven and Sámi and Norwegian.’ Such a sentiment reflects how identity in Kåfjord is dynamic

and that teachers approach their teaching as an interface where different intersections shape how they understand and speak of each other (Nakata, 2007, p. 199).

Articulating local history and culture can moreover make room for interest in the Sámi aspects of these. One teacher stated that the school offers opportunities for pupils to explore their identities, especially because

[t]he school is in a way imbued with Sámi language and culture and an awareness of it. Even though we might not always call it Sámi culture. We call it local culture because that is what it really started with here. There is a focus on the local, right, but what is the local?

This statement evokes those made by some of the community members at the school camp, and signals how Indigeneity is approached through local content. The teacher also stated that awareness among pupils comes from the environment fostered by the school over many years. It is possible here to draw lines to the revitalization processes of the 1970s and '80s, which centered on untangling and negotiating what being Sámi (from Kåfjord) means. There was a movement to redefine and reclaim traditions and cultural elements, which had previously been described as local, as *locally Sámi* (Johansen, 2010; Lervoll, 2007). Based on conversations with the teachers, it appears this reclamation has also taken place in the schools.

Another important articulation of Sámi belonging in Kåfjord is place names (Hovland, 1999, pp. 145–153). Several of the teachers identified local place names as important to their teaching about the area as a Sámi area. One was asked whether their teaching practices might have an impact on the pupils' identity:

I think it has a lot do to with the focus we have always had at school, on local history, local culture. (...) And place names. I had never thought about [names of local places], that they are Sámi place names. It is just their names, you know. Suddenly, one day, when you have learned a bit of Sámi you understand that 'oh my goodness, those are Sámi names.' You have not really thought about it being Sámi, it just is. It is kind of part of the package that belongs to the village.

Through a process of learning North Sámi, these place names opened a door for the teacher to talk about Kåfjord as a Sámi place. Several teachers used place names in their teaching and noticed how pupils made similar discoveries and connections. In this sense, a teaching practice that centers on local culture and surroundings has opened for talking about the Indigenous identity of a place (Fogarty & Sollid, this volume). Kåfjord's Sámi identity becomes articulated through place names. This practice is also a sign of a continuous revitalization

project, which reclaims Indigeneity and thus resists the colonial attempts at disrupting it (Clifford, 2001, p. 482). As evidenced by the school camp and the Sámi National Day celebration, there is room for both explicit and implicit expressions of Indigeneity at the schools. Through the teachers quoted here, we can see how they employ local history and culture in their teaching practice and moreover how ingrained these aspects appear to be. How the teachers talk about the 'local' and 'Sámi' aspects of their teaching reflects the historical and contemporary situation in Kåfjord.

Sámi schools in policy and practice

Some of the debates during the 1990s revolved around ensuring pupils were given an education that reflected their experiences. The current local practices described above very much echo this goal, but certain aspects of the standardized education system still place Kåfjord at the periphery. As such, discussions of locally based education call for a broader analysis of the framework of Sámi education, in particular the conditions under which schools enact their practices and develop policies. One such condition is the Sámi curriculum. In addition to Sámi language subjects, it offers plans in most subjects that are separate from, but run parallel to, the Norwegian curriculum. There has been some research that suggests the differences between the Sámi and the national curriculum are small (Gjerpe, 2017; Keskitalo et al., 2013). This is noteworthy, considering one of the sources of conflict in Kåfjord earlier was whether the introduction of the Sámi curriculum would radically change what was being taught in schools (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012). There has recently been a reform that indicates that the curriculum has been strengthened (Mikkelsen, 2020; Olsen & Andreassen, 2018).

One teacher, interviewed prior to this reform, was asked about the difference between the Norwegian and Sámi curriculum. They remarked that the Sámi one presupposes a certain amount of Sámi language competency. It can make it challenging for pupils who do not have Sámi as a subject; for instance, when working on competence aims that address differences between the two languages:

[In order to] have a conversation about the differences between Norwegian and Sámi, you kind of have to know the language in order to understand:

Yes, you almost have to. We have interdisciplinary projects related to the school camp every year. (...) And when we cover other topics, we make sure to have tasks that can be done in both Sámi and Norwegian, and we mix the pupils, at least in the lower secondary school.

These projects, such as the school camp, bring pupils with different language competencies together, which helps the teachers overcome some of the language barriers in classrooms where not every pupil is bilingual.

Several teachers brought up how important interdisciplinary projects and practices are for including Sámi topics in many different subjects. It ensures such content is not limited to pupils who are taught North Sámi at school and can make other pupils more interested in learning more. An interdisciplinary focus might also lessen the burden for Sámi language teachers of organizing Sámi projects. One such teacher reflected on how vital it is to have a stable number of Sámi-speaking teachers at the school to build good practices. They wondered about the situation at the other school and how difficult it must be for the lone teacher(s) to ensure that Sámi language and culture is a natural and constant presence. This relates to the different circumstances of the schools, as being located at an internal center and periphery in terms of 'Sáminess' in Kåfjord, which affect the teachers' scope for action. As I have not been able to interview teachers at school 2, the comment above represents only half of the picture. Still, it points to a larger problem in Sámi education in Norway – a lack of educators with Sámi language competency (NOU 2016: 18, p. 120). For Kåfjord, as well as other municipalities in Sápmi, the national educational policies for Sámi schools thusly present certain limits.

These are also found in the relationship between the municipality and the Sámi Parliament. As the latter is responsible for Sámi education nationally, the municipalities in the language administrative area are dependent on their funding and policy decisions. The municipal leader wondered about the parliament's future plans for these municipalities, including Kåfjord. While they get opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, the municipality often do not have the capacity to attend. The leader worried therefore that some voices end up not being heard in important discussions. As such, the vulnerability of a small municipality becomes apparent not only in teaching but also decision-making. The municipal leader further brought up disappointments over the Sámi Parliament's decision not to grant funding to create textbooks, which the municipality had applied for: 'The Sámi Parliament chose not to give us funds because [the books] were also in Norwegian. Then you do not recognize that to get anywhere, we have to use the language that is here.' The leader described this as not feeling good enough and was frustrated over not being able to establish practices that are better suited for the pupils in Kåfjord.

These examples point to Kåfjord's position on the periphery of education policy and reflect the constraints of a national system. The municipal leader argued for the need to 'use what is here.' It echoes the revitalization efforts to reclaim and rearticulate a sense of belonging that accurately represents Kåfjord and highlights

pragmatism as a means for continuity (Clifford, 2001, p. 479). Despite the challenges with funding, the municipality was able to create new textbooks. While they are an important tool in the Norwegian education system, textbooks in Sámi languages are few in number, and have received criticism for following the familiar pattern of only representing a small part of Sámi society (Gjerpe, 2021; Keskitalo et al., 2013, p. 62). Two teachers at school 1 responded to this by creating their own materials, basing the books on the school camp and its three locations – the fjord, the valley, and the mountain. As Sollid (2019) argues, the textbooks locate language-learning in the community while relating to common experiences in Sápmi. Such a local initiative is a possible answer to the lack of national resources. Nonetheless, this example, together with others presented here, illustrate some of the challenges of the Norwegian education system that have an impact on local school practices in Kåfjord.

DISCUSSION

The schools in Kåfjord have over the past thirty years undergone several cycles of change and renewal, both due to local and national educational processes and societal developments. We can look at these processes through the concept of the cultural interface, as occurring in a dynamic space of negotiation. The schools are sites where different experiences and narratives meet and shape teaching practices. To understand local articulation of education in Kåfjord, we must be informed by ‘the historical specificities of this Interface’ (Nakata, 2007, p. 198). The coastal population in the area was subject to colonization by the Norwegian state, which disrupted the continuation of Sámi society and language use. Through processes of resistance and revitalization, people in Kåfjord have been able to rearticulate a Sámi sense of belonging.

I argue for adopting Nakata’s (2007) understanding of an Indigenous interface to the Kåfjord context. Here, people hold multilayered positions that are dynamic and reject that *Norwegian* and *Sámi* are binary oppositions. It is possible to be both, or even more (Hansen, 2008, p. 81; Olsen, this volume). The Sámi National Day celebration and the school camp serve as illustrations of opportunities for locally based practices that account for such multilayered positions. In Kåfjord, the February 6th celebration is articulated through well-known Sámi symbols (Olsen & Sollid, 2019, p. 129). It communicates the importance of celebrating belonging to a larger community and place – Sápmi. At the same time, the schools have incorporated elements that affirm their relationship to the local community and ground them in the lived realities of the pupils. The school camp exemplifies this as well, by bringing pupils into the community and welcoming knowledge holders

into the school setting, which is a vital aspect for the further development of Sámi education (Keskitalo et al., 2013, p. 56).

These grounded school practices make room for both apparent and ambiguous notions of Indigeneity. They disrupt the need for authenticity, which Clifford (2001, p. 479) argues should be secondary to processes of cultural and societal adaptations and persistence. The rejection of binaries is evident in how teachers describe their pedagogical approaches as well. While (re)claiming something as Sámi can be an important part of a revitalization process, they emphasize articulations of belonging over definitions. This takes into consideration the historical and contemporary processes that shape peoples' understanding of identity in Kåfjord and account for the diversity of experiences with Indigeneity. Who 'we' are as a community, is more important than 'Sámi versus Norwegian,' as one teacher described it.

According to Clifford (2001), while Indigenous cultures adapt and change, they also 'transcend colonial disruptions' (p. 482) through their relationship to place. This is evident in several ways. The reclamation of Sámi place names is a sign of transcending the colonial power's attempt at disruption between people and their language. The relationships to place are further reaffirmed by using Kåfjord's landscapes – the fjord, the valley, and the mountains – in teaching practices. They provide sites of education (the school camp) and frameworks for learning (the textbooks).

The schools have worked long-term to establish practices that center local histories, cultures, and languages and seem to find possibilities for doing so at the cultural interface. But following Nakata (2007, p. 200), we can also contextualize the interface as a space of constraints. While the Sámi curriculum has provided many possibilities, the municipality of Kåfjord are faced with challenges within this national framework. Some are related to the limits of the curriculum as a policy, while others speak to the negotiations taking place within Sápmi. In some ways, Kåfjord is considered a center for Sámi culture, for instance due to the local and global importance of Riddu Riđđu. In other ways, the municipality still exists on the periphery of Sámi education policy and must strive to ensure the needs of their pupils are met. By establishing locally grounded practices, the schools have been able to curtail some of these constraints. It seems that the way forward for Kåfjord is to continue the work of building these, while advocating for room within the national system to adapt education frameworks to local circumstances.

FINAL REMARKS

After centuries of colonization policies, the introduction of the Sámi language law and curriculum in the 1990s created conflicts that affected all Kåfjord. The schools

in the municipality have established teaching practices that build on these experiences but moreover are centered on the lived experiences of their pupils, as they are today. The past and present processes in Kåfjord are related to, and relevant for, challenges and opportunities found elsewhere in Sápmi. In many Sámi communities, negotiations take place between national frameworks and local needs in education. Regardless of particular contexts, schools at the cultural interface might find possibilities for locally situated education through teaching practices that reflect Indigenous history, society, and identity, and articulate a sense of belonging that represents pupils' everyday realities.

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