

NEW RESEARCH – NEW VOICES

# Girjohallat girjáivuoda – Embracing Diversity

## Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research

Pigga Keskitalo, Torjer Olsen, Anna-Lill Drugge and  
Rauna Rahko-Ravanti (Eds.)



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Girjohallat girjáivuoda – Embracing Diversity

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*Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research*

*Edited by*

Pigga Keskitalo, Torjer Olsen, Anna-Lill Drugge and  
Rauna Rahko-Ravanti



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Funded by the Research Council of Finland (decision numbers 328826 [Indigenous Pedagogy in Teacher Education; IPED years 2020–2023] and 355263 [Co-creating Linguistically Responsive Teaching in the Context of Endangered Sami Languages for Sami Youth; LINCOSY years 2023–2027]) and the University of Lapland.



LAPIN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND



Research Council of Finland

Cover illustration: Image by Sanni Harju-Nikula

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill”. See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](https://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 2542-9221

ISBN 978-90-04-52935-9 (paperback)

ISBN 978-90-04-71482-3 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-71484-7 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004714847

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Koninklijke Brill BV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Brill Wageningen Academic, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau and V&R unipress.

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# Foreword

It is my great pleasure to be in the position to write the foreword to *Girjohallat girjáivuoda – Embracing diversity: Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research*. This book is an important outcome of the *Indigenous Pedagogy in Teacher Education (IPED)* project that has run from 2020–2022, funded by the *Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS)*. The project brought together scholars from Umeå University (Sweden); UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø, Norway); the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (Kautokeino, Norway); the Sámi Archives (Inari, Finland); and the University of Lapland (Rovaniemi, Finland). Besides these parties, many other colleagues have also contributed to this book, making it a shared endeavour and an important part of research-based knowledge on Sami education, both in theory and practice. The project was planned and completed as an activity of the *University of the Arctic (UArctic) Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity*, led by the University of Lapland.

The IPED project comprised three workshops aiming to explore Indigenous knowledge, models, methods and contents within formal or non-formal education systems. The workshops were designed according to Rauna Rahko-Ravantti's (2016) 'tepee model' healing circle framework:

1. *Workshop I: Gurot loaidu and Olgeš loaidu (left and right side of the teepee)* – History and present day in education: Is teaching the embodiment of colonisation in Sápmi [Samiland]?
2. *Workshop II: Árran (fireplace)* – Present achievements, development of Sami education and its appreciation
3. *Workshop III: Uvssot (door)* – Developmental questions, wishes and dreams for Sami education, traditional knowledge and Sami languages in future education.

The framework-based workshops clarified the impacts of Sami education's history of assimilation, colonisation and language and cultural loss, and also summarised the present educational research, policy making and practices. Besides looking to the past, they highlighted positive visions of the future in the field of Sami education research and practice. This kind of positive overtone supports cultural and language revitalisation actions and decolonising education (May & Aikman, 2003).

Originally, the workshops were planned to be held physically in Tromsø, Rovaniemi and Umeå. Yet, as we all know, the coronavirus pandemic changed the world at the beginning of 2020. As a consequence, all workshops were

organised online, and the whole project team never met in person. However, this did not hinder the project; quite the opposite occurred. Via online platforms, we were able to have frequent and inspiring meetings, and the online workshops attracted much larger audiences than initially planned.

This book makes a strong contribution, in the Nordic context and beyond, towards our knowledge of Indigenous and Sami pedagogy, and education in and of Sami languages. In addition, the book contributes to developing pedagogical approaches that will improve our understanding of endangered languages and take traditional knowledge into account. Mainstream education should function ecologically by incorporating Indigenous knowledge and pedagogical solutions. Sustainable development and climate change, for instance, in educational contexts, are issues that might benefit from Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge. Teacher education institutions are also interested in developing content and curricula that will benefit future teachers by widening and deepening their understanding of Sami and Indigenous contexts.

I am sure that this unique compilation will benefit the cooperative researchers and institutions working with Sami education-related issues, be it at the research, policy making or practice level. Its authors are well-known experts in their respective fields of research, and the editorial team members are globally acknowledged scholars. The cooperation seen both within the project and in producing this book attests to the great expertise and commitment of its contributors. Our fruitful cooperation, that began with the IPED project, will continue, and produce further work of great value in the years to come.

*Tuija Turunen*

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# Introduction

## *Embracing Diversity in Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research*

*Pigga Keskitalo, Torjer Olsen, Anna-Lill Drugge and  
Rauna Rahko-Ravantti*

### 1 Introduction

Sami education has travelled on a long journey since the 1600s, resulting in diversity and different logics or knowledge regimes in education.<sup>1</sup> This edited volume *Girjjohallat girjáivuoda – Embracing Diversity: Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research*, emphasises the profound need to navigate Sami education contexts while celebrating and enjoying diversity. Tasks of this nature are crucial and require attention and discussion, as Sami society and educational institutions find themselves in evolving situations shaped by long-standing processes of change and ongoing educational needs among minoritised Indigenous peoples (Keskitalo & Olsen, 2021). The vast scope of this volume is to provide an all-Sami perspective of Sami education, by scholars from institutions providing teacher education in various countries with a Sami population. These include authors on Sami education from Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Russian Federation. In addition, a *Māori* perspective is presented. In *Aotearoa*, New Zealand, scholars and teachers have developed a *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, a ‘by *Māori*, for *Māori*’ approach to schooling (Smith, 1999).

The aim of this volume is to provide a broad picture of Sami education, covering these four countries, where Sami people traditionally live. Nowadays, a broader scope is called for within Sami educational research, as many Sami have moved to suburban areas, outside the core traditional Sami areas. Currently, more than half of the Indigenous Sami people live in cities, a tendency that is also felt amongst other Indigenous peoples worldwide (Berg-Nordlie et al., 2022). All the starting points and changes create, profoundly and constantly, new demands in Sami education. The authors of this volume represent various teacher education perspectives, based on their research and their work in higher education. The volume aims to construct those premises created in the course of a long education history, and what possibilities and challenges exist currently, while promoting the progression in Indigenous self-determination in education.

This volume is connected to the *Indigenous Pedagogy in Teacher Education (IPED)* project, funded by the *Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS)* as a cooperation between the research institutions in Nordic countries. The IPED project is a collaboration between the University of Lapland, Sámi allaskuvla, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Umeå University, Nord University, and The Sámi Archives. The project opened a space for scholars to share ideas and experiences in the research field. Some of the results are presented in this volume.

This volume aims to contribute to and enrich the existing body of knowledge concerning Sami education within a pan-Sami framework and the broader international landscape of Indigenous education. Sami education research draws upon interdisciplinary perspectives, orientations, and methodologies, providing comprehensive insights into Sami education within its contemporary contexts. This exploration takes into account the enduring historical consequences, the current realities and the future aspirations of Sami education. The volume underscores the profound influence of education as a dynamic force that shapes individuals, spanning generations from the birth of children to the wisdom of older generations. Within the context Sami education, this encompasses the intergenerational connections and socialisation processes that guide individuals towards becoming integral parts of their families, communities, wider society and the intricate tapestry of the cosmological and natural world. Education, in this context, emerges as a powerful catalyst.

As a distinct discipline within the broader spectrum of Indigenous education, the field of Sami education holds profound significance within Sami research. It serves as a critical lens through which to examine the enduring impacts of colonisation and assimilation on Sami learners and their families, as well as the institutional and societal factors affecting them. This examination encompasses not only the educational experience but also the intricate relationship that the Sami people hold with their ancestral lands, the vast cosmos that surrounds them, and their relationships within family, kinship, and society. Of particular importance is the pursuit of strategies to disentangle the complex web of colonial legacies while navigating the challenges of modern educational landscapes. This endeavor is crucial for securing a brighter future for Sami children and youth, who, within a global context, represent the future of Indigenous peoples worldwide. Furthermore, it highlights the pressing need to raise awareness within mainstream education about the specific educational requirements and cultural nuances of the Sami community, fostering greater inclusivity and understanding across educational spheres.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that these efforts, while substantial, are not always sufficient. Even as Sami education strives to integrate traditional

knowledge into contemporary institutionalised settings, new threats to education emerge. These challenges may include the repercussions of global crises, the impacts of climate change, and the ever-evolving landscape of policies like the Green Deal. In the Indigenous context, these developments necessitate a reevaluation of research and education strategies to address the unique challenges and opportunities they present, from adapting curriculum content to exploring sustainable educational practices that align with Indigenous values and environmental stewardship.

All articles are research-based and produced by active leading scholars in the field, developing and working with Sami education and research, or with Indigenous education. Research is growing in all levels of Sami education. More official programs are developed at many levels, and within various educational institutions. There are many scholars with funded research projects at higher education institutions. We have included different scholars to present their work in workshops and be part of this volume as well. We argue that every teacher education institution, no matter where their location in those countries with Sami people, should include Sami content as part of their programs. Actual realisation of this aspiration varies. Norway emphasises this task in national teacher education frameworks.

The volume is intended for scholars undertaking Sami and Indigenous research, and students studying in this field. It will also cater to a general audience interested in Sami perspectives in education, both nationally and internationally. The volume will also provide the perspectives of authorities and politicians, with current knowledge on the status and developmental needs of Sami education from a Sami perspective. There is a dearth of research of this kind available, so the volume should be well received in higher education institutions that provide teacher education, Sami studies and Indigenous studies programs, including many of the higher education institutions in countries where Sami people live. Comparative perspectives provide an opportunity to discuss – through scholarly discuss – the diversity that Sami education represents. Indigenous education, including Sami education, aims to heal an open wound resulting from assimilation and colonisation, wherein schools and education played an important part.

The volume provides new insights for Indigenous educators on how to work in diverse educational settings, and with the multiple needs of the pupils and students living in the Sami language administrative areas in Norway, minority language areas in Sweden, and the Sami homeland in Finland, and also outside these official areas, mostly in urban areas. Furthermore, it is envisaged that discussion on how to transform traditional knowledge and land-based education will lead to an advancement in the quality of Indigenous education.

## 2 Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives as a Starting Point for Sami Education

Focusing on Indigenous pedagogy and Sami education means that we are getting into a field with a lot of complex concepts, and with many different perspectives and approaches. As authors and editors of the volume, we see it as important to take Indigenous knowledge and perspectives as a starting point in working on these matters. Nonetheless, this does not mean that such matters are easily defined. The notions of 'Indigenous', 'Indigenous perspectives', and 'Indigenous education' carry a lot of historical baggage.

The Sami are the Indigenous people encompassing Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Although the nine Sami languages spoken today are mostly distinct from one another, and the Sami population is dispersed over a broad area across these four countries, they remain connected by deep cultural, historical, and linguistic ties (Hermanstrand, 2019). The concept of Indigenous peoples, as it is used today, is fairly new, and has grown out of the international movement of Indigenous peoples that was established, and has become a force to be reckoned with, since the 1970s. Still, the idea of Indigenous peoples is far older. For instance, in the Lap Codicil, the amendment to the border treaty between Norway and Sweden in 1751, ideas about the Sami were expressed that are quite similar to contemporary ideas.

An important aspect of understanding Sami communities today is the impact of change. The historical processes of modernisation, urbanisation, colonial processes of assimilation, Christianisation, and forced relocation resulted in profound changes for the Sami communities. Many Sami became part of their respective majority communities. The Indigenous Sami religion was replaced with Christianity. In parts of the main regions with a Sami population, people were moved against their will, as in Russia where the Kola Sami population were victims of the Soviet's forced urbanisation policy, and in Sweden and Norway where border-crossing Sami reindeer herding was banned in the 1920s (Lantto, 2010). In addition to the challenges mentioned, it is crucial to recognise the historical impact of the Second World War, which brought about forced relocations for Sami communities. For instance, during this tumultuous period, Sami individuals were compelled to relocate temporarily, seeking refuge in evacuee areas. Moreover, Skolt Sami communities have been relocated from their ancestral lands due to the re-establishment of state borders resulting from war and other state political factors (Tanhua, 2023). Additionally, historical and more recent forced relocations add another layer of complexity to the Sami educational landscape, highlighting the importance of addressing historical traumas and disruptions while forging a path towards a culturally rich and resilient future.

There are also the contemporary consequences of modernisation, which have resulted in the displacement of communities due to factors such as the construction of reservoirs, the allocation of significant areas for mining, wind farms, railways, high-voltage power lines, and tourism development. Given the multitude of consequences these developments entail for the Sami people as an Indigenous community, it is imperative that educational research, as well as education itself, shoulders the responsibility of comprehensively addressing and responding to these pressing questions.

The situation for Sami languages has completely changed through colonisation. Some Sami languages have disappeared, some are in danger of doing the same. Even North Sami, which, in parts of the main Sami regions has remained the majority language and has quite a few speakers, is considered an endangered language (Salminen, 2007). Today, as a result of the continuous Sami political struggle, and the last five decades of language revitalisation, Sami communities are alive and diverse. There are many ways of being Sami, and many Sami perspectives, so we need a contextual dimension when speaking of Sami perspectives or of Sami knowledge and tradition.

We do highlight the importance of an integral diversity perspective when we write about Sami education. As the Sami communities are diverse in language, geography, way of life and in how the Sami are affected and have been hurt by colonisation, Sami perspectives are therefore diverse. What it means to speak from a Sami standpoint cannot necessarily be taken for granted. That a South Sami perspective is the same as a North Sami perspective is not necessarily true. Adding other dimensions such as gender, geography and age complicates the matter further.

Nonetheless, there is a clear danger in over relativising such perspectives. In one of the workshops from this IPED project, a Sami scholar raised this as an issue and posed the question: Can the focus on diversity lead to division? Such a line of thinking, and emphasising diversity over unity, can create division and a weakening of the idea of the Sami as one people. We recognise this challenge and take it as an interesting and important warning sign when Sami diversity is a topic. We argue that with caution and care, a diverse perspective offers potential answers and possible paths to follow. We remain certain that a concept of diversity is necessary in order to understand the peculiarity of Sami regions with a Sami population and Sami education – and that diversity clearly reflects the situation in the Sami context. At the same time, we recognise that there is a limit when it comes to the potential relativisation and, thus, a fragmentation of Sami identity and community. Even though the boundaries of Sami identities, communities, and areas can be blurred, they still exist. The Sami remain one people. This balance of diversity without division is not a

simple one, but it is an important one. For the work in Sami education, writing from or including a Sami perspective requires stating explicitly what that perspective entails. Highlighting the importance of Sami perspectives means locating the Sami at the centre. This means that they are not exclusive or the only one used, but that this is the starting point. Potentially, a Sami perspective has local, national, and international dimensions that also carry the experiences of colonisation as well as a step towards decolonisation. And it is carried out through a humble kind of representation.

There are several levels when taking these reflections into the writing on Sami knowledge. On a conceptual level, 'Sami knowledge' requires definition and explanation, beyond that of stating that it is knowledge from a Sami community. Here, the cautious diversity perspective can come in handy. On an individual or identity level, Sami knowledge can mean 'our knowledge' or 'my knowledge'. This creates insight as well as the potential near-sightedness and requires reflexivity from the scholar and knowledge holder. On a political level, Sami knowledge can be seen as the knowledge of an Indigenous people, that is with certain rights attached. Regardless of which level we adhere to, in (educational) research, you cannot take for granted that your perspective and knowledge is that of everyone else, or that everyone knows where you are talking from. Thus, our emphasis of Indigenous knowledge as a starting point in writing requires a careful and self-critical approach. As Sami scholars coming from different parts of Samiland (*Sápmi* in the North Sami language), we should be careful of whom and what we aim to speak on behalf of. We argue that such care and caution is an important methodological claim.

### 3 Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia: Policy and Teacher Education Context

There is a general lack of knowledge of Indigenous and Sami cultures, circumstances and histories. Education has a key role in increasing this kind of knowledge, that can create positive attitudes towards Indigenous Sami people. In Nordic countries, the primary school curriculum already urges, on a national level, that everyone should gain knowledge of its Indigenous people (cf. Spjut, 2021), the Sami. This has consequences also for teacher education.

Although there have been government-funded initiatives aimed at revitalizing Sami languages over recent decades, it is estimated that only about 30 percent of the Sami population currently speaks Sami languages, according to data from the Ethnologue database (Vangsnes, 2013). One challenge for the

revitalisation of the language is the lack of qualified Sami-speaking teachers. Primary and secondary schools address some challenges through distance learning, though issues like access to appropriate teaching materials persist. Keskitalo et al. (2012) highlight the need for an educational approach that reflects Sami community values. Integrating Sami culture into school content enhances cultural relevance and promotes intercultural understanding (Keskitalo et al., 2012, p. 59). In these circumstances, it is obvious that teacher education has an important role in producing competent Sami-speaking teachers, in order to secure the Sami language and culture in the future.

Indigenous teacher education in Norway is provided by the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and Nord University. There is some diversity as to how this is organised. At the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, the teacher education program is given in North Sami, and qualifies teachers for being in full immersion schools. Nord University has a particular responsibility for Lule Sami and South Sami, both languages that are considered highly endangered, and provides a general teacher education, where courses in the respective languages are given. UiT does the same for North Sami, which means that as part of the general teacher education program, the student can choose the North Sami language and train to become a language teacher. A tendency in teacher education in Norway, on a wider scale, is an increased interest in and commitment to integrating Sami perspectives and knowledge about Sami community, history, rights, and languages into mainstream teacher education programmes. Sami teacher education institutions are currently taking the lead in this, with other teacher education institutions further south following.

In Finland, Sami perspectives in teacher education are provided by the University of Lapland and the University of Oulu. At the University of Lapland, the Faculty of Education operates a quota system for Sami-speaking students, and since its establishment in the 1970s, the faculty has provided basic studies in the Sami language. Currently, for example, courses in Sami language didactics and Sami pedagogy are offered. Curriculum contents of Sami issues are offered to all students in order to secure the northern university's responsibility to educate culturally responsive teachers. In the University of Oulu, the Giellagas Institute provides a post-graduate Sami language teacher education program at master's level in the three Sami languages spoken in Finland, North Sami, Inari Sami and Skolt Sami. In the Faculty of Education, there is also a quota system for Sami-speaking pre-service teachers. The University of Oulu has offered project-based programs for Sami teacher education and early childhood education teacher education.

In Sweden, at the department of language studies, Umeå University, the North, Lule and South Sami languages are taught to future Sami language teachers as well as to other students. Umeå University holds the national responsibility to develop and carry through teacher training in the Sami languages in Sweden. For several reasons, this is a challenging task. Given the fact that Sami teachers are much needed both in the compulsory Swedish schools and the Sami schools, language students are many times offered jobs before they have proceeded to an advanced level of language studies. This leads to difficulty recruiting student teachers that are willing to carry through with studies on an advanced level or proceed with doctoral studies in one of the Sami languages, or within Sami didactics or pedagogy. In Sweden, there are no requirements that teacher education programs provide general knowledge about the Sami people to the students in teacher training. It is up to every university to decide if or how Sami content is to be implemented in the teacher training programs. Recent research has shown that teachers in Sweden do not find themselves sufficiently prepared to teach about Sami issues in the classroom, and the lack of inclusion of Sami content in their teacher education was brought up as problematic (Drugge & Norlin, 2023). As there is lack of Sami language teachers, Sweden has started a project together with the Sami University of Applied Sciences to offer in-service teacher education for Sami language teachers.

In the Russian Federation, the situation is more demanding. Students at present are unable to study to become a teacher in one of the Sami languages spoken in Russia: Ter, Kildin or Skolt Sami. Akkala Sami passed away a few years ago (Zmyvalova & Outakoski, 2019). It is possible to study, for example, some courses in Ter Sami at the University of Oulu, Giellagast Institute.

#### 4 Authors and Editors of This Volume

A central characteristic of this volume is that the authors are an interdisciplinary field of scholars. We therefore aim to treat the field of Sami education as multifaceted, diverse, and intersectional, theoretically and practically.

The editors work in teacher education institutions, such as the University of Lapland, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Umeå University, and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, providing country-based teaching on teacher education. The editors represent the current IPED network who have a long and extensive practice in, and research-based knowledge of, Sami education. Pigga Keskitalo is professor in education, specifically on Arctic perspectives in education, at the University of Lapland, Faculty of Education, Rovaniemi, Finland, and an adjunct professor in multicultural education at the University

of Helsinki, in the Department of Education Sciences. Formerly, she worked for twenty years at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Norway, teaching in the Sami teacher education programmes. Torjer Olsen is a professor and the academic director of the Centre for Sámi studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Anna-Lill Drugge holds a PhD in history and is currently working with Sami higher education for the Department of Language Studies in the unit of Sami studies at Umeå University. Rauna Rahko-Ravantti works as an associate professor at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Norway, and currently works with Sami curriculum evaluation work in Norway.

The volume begins with the foreword by the editorial and network leader Professor Tuija Turunen from the University of Lapland. The introduction covers the theoretical and conceptual contents of Sami education from its standpoint as a decolonial interdisciplinary field of research. It will also delve into the content of the study programmes, addressing various forms of teacher education and the fields of Indigenous and Sami studies.

The theoretical section of the volume (Chapters 2–6) consists of philosophical, historical and methodological chapters, including a review of Indigenous education through a global lens. The chapters in the first part of the volume will be research-based theoretical presentations of and reflections on the current state of Sami education, its concepts, research and ethics. The second part (Chapter 7) of the volume presents the different aspects of Sami education in the four countries where Sami people live: Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland, as well as review the educational practices in different parts of *Sápmi*, specifically the traditional area where Sami people live and suburban areas, and the developmental needs of their ongoing educational practices and future challenges. In the third part of the volume (Chapters 8–13), the researchers will present the results of their new research, providing a picture of the kind of research that is ongoing in the field, and of the broad and interdisciplinary research and methodology, with the concluding remarks of the volume.

## 5 Volume Chapters

Sami education as a term covers many kinds of education for, with and by the Sami. It includes the Sami language and culture as Sami content in education for Sami learners in Sami regions, and also outside these areas, and in addition to this, the need to give education for learners in educational settings and teacher students nationally. The need to emphasise and describe Sami education is wide.

In this volume, the knowledge holders who have been included as part of the research processes come from different educational contexts, which is why

the articles differ in scope and content. Many of the texts have a clear connection to research practices within Indigenous contexts. In addition, some of the texts deal with issues related to institutional prerequisites, educational frameworks or textual content in the Indigenous educational setting.

Within the well-known framework of Indigenous methodologies, one of the core principles addresses the crucial importance of researchers anchoring their work with the people who are affected by the research. The research process should, ideally, be characterised by respectful relations, ethical awareness, and a willingness to create collaborations that are meaningful to both researchers and the knowledge holders. This point of departure should preferably permeate the whole research process from its very beginning when defining the research questions, to disseminating and bringing back the results for the Indigenous community to use, share and keep.

When focusing on research related to educational matters, we see that the line of reasoning outlined in the Indigenous methodologies field could also be beneficial if applied to the educational context. If transferred to the educational field of research, using the core principles of Indigenous methodologies, this could serve as a useful approach in order to establish respectful relations, and undertake research that is based on the needs expressed by the stakeholders in the educational institutions. As is the case within Indigenous research, collaborative practices in educational research also need to take their departure from defining who the stakeholder is in the specific context. On the one hand, this volume aims to promote specific Indigenous educational settings. On the other hand, the volume aims to interest the mainstream reader who seeks to develop his or her skills within the research field of Sami education. Or it might be interesting to those who carry an interest in minority issues. Regardless of the audience, the volume is intended to be valuable, albeit in different ways, to stakeholders and readers such as specific Indigenous communities, Sami teachers, parents, students, international audiences, or mainstream educators.

One matter that we want to underline as a backdrop to this publication is a well-known fact that is commonly recognised in many societies in which Indigenous peoples are present, namely the general lack of knowledge about Indigenous prospects. In *Sápmi*, knowledge about Sami and Indigenous perspectives is scarce, and an area that has a history of being neglected or insufficiently addressed within the educational system (Miettunen, 2020; Olsen et al., 2017; Spjut, 2021; Svonni, 2015). However, recent studies have shown that teachers in mainstream educational settings are eager to remedy this situation and want to do their part in changing the status quo (cf. Drugge & Norlin, 2023; Evju & Olsen, 2022; Korte et al., 2024). In order to do so, teachers express the need to be able to develop their own skills about Sami topics, so that they can feel

comfortable in passing on appropriate knowledge to their students. This volume is one step towards providing educators with insights that can encourage them to take the next step in their important efforts to leverage the general knowledge about Sami society among the upcoming generation – the pupils in schools.

In the first part of the volume, and first research article, Rauna Rahko-Ravantti presents domains that should be considered when researching Sami education. Her model is based on the medicine wheel (e.g., Pewewardy, 1999) and is applied to the Sami education context expanding mental, spiritual, physical and emotional operationalisations of Indigenous education, as action. In the second research chapter, Pigga Keskitalo and Torjer Olsen review Indigenous and Sami education progression and tasks by discussing complex concepts of the field. In the following chapter, Ylva Jannok Nutti and Máret J. Heatta discuss Indigenous teacher education's profound aim to connect traditional knowledge and institutionalised education. Next, Huia Tomlins-Jahnke's chapter on Māori struggles and priorities in the academy when building a Māori teacher education programme in Aotearoa New Zealand. The general theoretical part of the volume ends with Anna-Lill Drugge, Hilde Sollid, Torjer Olsen and Pigga Keskitalo discussing ethical considerations in Sami education research, from the perspectives of three countries with diverse educational systems and research-related systems. The second part of the volume features a chapter by Kristina Belančić, Ekaterina Zmyvalova, David Kroik, Hanna Helander and Torjer Olsen, who provide a comparative perspective of the institutionalised education systems in Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Federation.

The chapters in part three focus on current education research by scholars in Sami education. The first article by Hanna Outakoski's is about teaching and writing in *Sápmi*, where she presents the outcomes of her research among adult Sami language learners by analysing their backgrounds, motivation and experiences. The following chapter by Inker-Anni Linkola-Aikio deals with youth perspectives on Sami language in a secondary school context, in order to understand which ideas young people, share about endangered languages and their usage. Annika Pasanen's chapter on Sami language learning in Inari Sami adult teaching contexts describes how, despite being an endangered language, the vitality of the language has been improved. Heidi Harju-Luukkainen, Karianne Berg and Asbjørn Kolberg present a case study of the South Sami preschool and primary school in Norway as an important inclusive language and culture revitalising space. Again, Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä continues with the theme of early childhood education contexts by presenting the social dimensions and pedagogy of language nests, and how these are meant to function in a culturally responsive way. In the last article, Marikaisa Laiti discusses Sami early childhood education as a socialisation phenomenon through the concept

of communality in Sami early childhood education, meaning participation by children and adults in a shared and common arena.

The research field that focuses on education in a general sense is broad and extensive, containing a variety of different approaches that meet the complexities that emerge in different educational contexts. Up until recently, Sami perspectives on education have not been present to any large degree in the education research discourse. With this volume, our ambition is to contribute to nuance this discourse by contributing with perspectives that can offer new and relevant knowledge of benefit to teachers, students, and the research field as such.

### Note

- 1 In addition to Sami, the spellings 'Sámi' or 'Saami' are also recognised.

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**PART 1**

*General Theoretical Part*





# The Sacred Model of Sami Education Research

*Rauna Rahko-Ravantti*

## Abstract

In this chapter, I present the Sacred Circle, or Medicine Wheel, which is widely used in Indigenous research and was further developed in my PhD study to fit into a Sami educational context. The Sacred Circle enables us to see the connections between the experiences of teachers and the history of colonisation and the connections between the practices and structures of schools. It also helps to imagine the future of Sami education. According to the model, Sami teachers' perceptions are grouped by 'doors' opening to four cardinal points. The Western Door describes the influence of the history of colonialism on today's teachers' pedagogical practices. The Northern Door illustrates Sami teachers' experiences of inequality and otherness when implementing Sami pedagogy in Western school structures. The Eastern Door envisions the development of Sami education and its appreciation based on Sami teachers' experiences. The Southern Door leads to developmental questions and future wishes and dreams for Sami education. The Medicine Wheel in this context facilitates a multidimensional understanding of Sami education, integrating historical, contemporary, and future perspectives within a culturally relevant framework.

## Keywords

Sami education – Indigenous education – Indigenous research methodology – medicine wheel

## Čoahkkáigeassu

Dán kapihttalis ovdanbuvttán bassi gierddu dahje dálkkodanrieggá, mii geavahuvvo viidát eamiálbmotdutkanis. Heivehin iežan doavttirgáradutkanis dálkkodanrieggá sámeoahpahusa dillái. Bassi gierddu bokte sáhttit oaidnit oahpaheaddjiid oktavuodáid sin vásáhusaid sihke koloniserema historjjá ja skuvllaid geavdagaid ja vuogádagaid ektui. Dat maiddá veahkeha hámuhit makkár lea sámeoahpahusa ja -skuvlejumi boahttevuohta. Oahpaheaddjiid vásáhusaid sáhtá ipmirdit uvssaid

bokte, mat rahpasit njealji almmi guvlui. Viestaruksa govvida koloniserema historjjá váikkuhusa dálá oahpaheaddjiid pedagogalaš geavadagaide. Davviuksa ovdanbuktá sápmelaš oahpaheaddjiid vásáhusaid eahpedásseárvvus ja earáláganvuodas, go sii ollašuttet sápmelaš pedagogihka viestarmáilmmi skuvlaráhkadusaid siste. Nuortauksa govvida sápmelaš skuvlejumi ovdáneami ja dan árvvosteamii oahpaheaddjiid vásáhusaid bokte. Lulituksa ovdanbuktá oahpaheaddjiid skuvlejumi ovdánahttingažaldaid sihke boahhtevuođa sávaldagaid ja nieguid.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi skuvlen – eamiálbmotskuvlen – eamiálbmotdutkanmetodologiija  
– dálkkodanriekkis

### 1 Introduction

School and education have significantly affected Sami society. In each Sami state – Finland, Sweden, Russia and Norway – assimilation policy has been practiced in different, hidden or written forms (Keskitalo et al., 2014). Education is seen as a tool for national unity, social equity and justice in the Nordic welfare states, but the meaning of education differs for Samis. The educational policy of the Nordic welfare states has offered possibilities for higher education and better income but, at the same time, it has promoted alienation from the Sami way of life and the Sami language.

In this chapter, I examine the role of Sami education in today's Finnish schools based on the views of Sami teachers. Teachers are key players in the field of Indigenous education and their perspectives are worth highlighting. The development of Sami education should be seen as part of the decolonisation process, which involves a critical examination of colonialist structures and practices and the effects of colonisation. The decolonisation of teaching in the structures of a dominant society can be challenging as it requires teachers to have the confidence and courage to use Indigenous pedagogy based on their own educational traditions and to incorporate traditional practices into school life (McGregor, 2012).

The chapter highlights how the effects of the history of assimilation are reflected in the work of teachers in Sami and how current power structures in schools either continue the tradition of colonisation, placing Sami education in a different position, or enable decolonisation and Sami teaching to take effect. The chapter is based on my dissertation (cf. Rahko-Ravanti, 2016). In

my research, I wanted to draw a holistic picture of Sami education to find out how teachers perceive their work in Sami language teaching. Attitudes to Sami education among staff, collaboration between teachers in schools and power relations in everyday life all affect students' learning environment and understanding of themselves.

The process of civilisation can be seen as a form of colonisation. With the spread of Christianity, Sami people lost partly their connection to spiritual and cultural traditions, and the Sami language was replaced by the mainstream language in educational institutions (Lehtola, 1997, p. 32; Nyyssönen et al., 2018). Sami Lakomäki (2014) calls this cultural colonialism; it can also be called colonisation of the mind. One form of this is epistemic violence, which particularly targets knowledge and information systems and is a hidden or structural form of colonialism that manifests itself in asymmetric power relations and the legitimacy of Eurocentric knowledge, among other things (Kuokkanen, 2007, 2009).

Although Sami education has since been developed on a legislative and a practical level to support Sami students' identity, the history of assimilation is reflected in the work of Sami teachers as conveyed by structures and practices (Keskitalo et al., 2013; Rahko-Ravanti, 2016). Due to the transformation caused by the assimilation of Sami society, the transfer of the Sami language and culture, as well as traditional knowledge and skills, to the next generation is taking place more than ever before in schools (Rahko-Ravanti, 2016). This means that there are high expectations of schools and teachers in this regard.

Decolonisation can be seen as a counterweight to colonisation (Smith, 2012). Central to the decolonisation process is a critical examination of colonialist structures and practices and the effects of colonisation, as well as the construction of Indigenous practices based on students' own language, culture and values. In teaching, decolonisation has meant the stripping and revealing of Western worldviews and Eurocentric assumptions and values that affect the production of knowledge, and the creation of empowering practices based on Indigenous peoples' own values and worldviews (Kuokkanen, 2007, pp. 145–146). In revitalising the language and culture of Indigenous peoples, it is important that the customs formed through colonialism are curtailed and that the values and customs of the Indigenous culture are developed. Modifying school structures and practices to draw on the Sami's own starting points is a process that strengthens the Sami community (Balto & Johansson, 2015, p. 110).

The aim of this chapter is to produce knowledge from Sami teachers' own perspective and to present their voices. Although I study teachers' perceptions, bringing them to light is not the only goal; an important aim is to generate an understanding of Sami teaching and to make teachers' experiences visible. Capturing teachers' experiences involves interpretation; the voice

of the researcher becomes relevant in the consultation and reporting. As a researcher, I researched my own community and had a wealth of prior knowledge of the topic being researched (cf. Keskitalo et al., 2021). I am a Sami native speaker, educated teacher, teacher educator and have worked in Sami language teaching. From this point of view, my voice as a researcher is aligned with my research; however, I also look critically at the teaching of the Sami language in the light of decolonisation and colonisation.

## 2 Sacred Circle/Medicine Wheel, Method and Material

My research material consists of interviews with ten ( $N = 10$ ) teachers working in Sami education in the Finnish Sami homeland. The material was collected through thematic interviews. In the interviews, the topics covered were the purpose and significance of teachers' work and teachers' views on the status of Sami education, the curriculum, teaching materials, the role of the Sami language and traditional knowledge in schools, and their perceptions of the future of Sami education (Rahko-Ravantti, 2016).

The teachers are experts in research and have practical experience of working as Sami teachers. In total, there are only about 40 teachers in Sami language teaching (Rahko-Ravantti, 2016). Therefore, because the interviewees in the study might be easily identified, I did not describe their educational background, gender or age in detail. To maintain anonymity, I also did not code the citations of my interviewees. I justify this choice on the grounds that it is a study of a small community, the Sami. People who work as Sami teachers are also well known within the community, as is common in the small towns of the North. Coding the citations so that the descriptions of one interviewee could be combined using the respondent code might have led to the identification of the interviewee. The key questions in terms of my credibility as a Sami scholar are whether my research is accepted by the Sami teachers who are the informants of the research and whether I have correctly interpreted their message (i.e., whether I have succeeded in making their voices heard; cf. Bagele, 2012; Kuokkanen, 2009; Nystad, 2003; Smith, 1999/2012).

In this study, I theme the original material using the Sacred Circle. The Sacred Circle/Medicine Wheel is an abstract circle visualised by Indigenous peoples in North America that symbolises the cohesion of different aspects of life. The Sacred Circle represents a constant interaction between mental, physical, emotional and spiritual reality (Balto, 2008; Battiste, 2000). In the study, the medical environment is used to aid in the mapping and presentation of traces of colonisation, as well as in the therapeutic treatment of various problems.

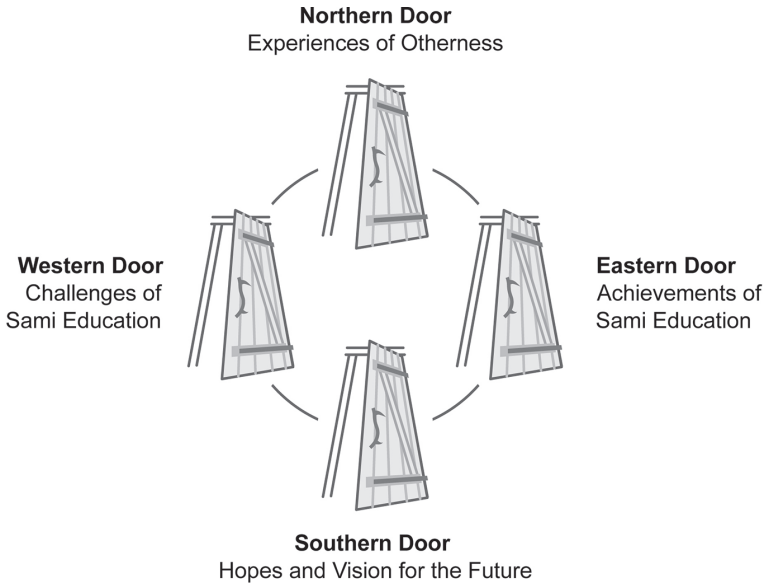


FIGURE 2.1 Sacred model to analyse the situation of Sami education (Source: created by Sanni Harju-Nikula. ©University of Lapland and Rauna Rahko-Ravanti)

The Sacred Circle is divided into the four cardinal points of north, south, east and west. Each direction has its own door. Behind these are elements that promote the decolonisation process. At the Western Door, I gathered teachers' views on how the legacy of colonialism manifests itself in schools and teachers' work today, reflecting their experiences of the consequences of colonialism. At the Northern Door, I mirrored the experiences of teachers through the phenomena associated with colonialism. At the Eastern Door, I collected the advances, strengths and joys of Sami education. At the Southern Door, I echoed the Sami teachers' dreams and visions of the future of Sami teaching and the direction in which they hope schools will develop.

### 3 Sami Teachers' Experiences

#### 3.1 *Western Door – Challenges of Sami Education*

The history of the Sami people and their education is deeply reflected in modern society and schools, especially in matters related to the teaching of the Sami culture and language. Modern schools in the Sami education context face numerous challenges, such as the weak position of the Sami languages, the risk of language shift to the dominant languages among young Sami speakers (Rasmussen, 2013), the influence of Western school culture and the limited

incorporation of local cultural features (Keskitalo, 2010). These issues contribute to the marginalisation of the Sami languages and impact students' proficiency levels (Juutilainen et al., 2014). Additionally, the lack of resources, appropriate learning materials, and adequate support in the education system further complicates the situation, highlighting the need for a culturally responsive approach to Sami education (cf. Keskitalo, 2020).

There are several structural problems in the organisation of Sami education. In the Sami region, as in other small localities, teaching is often organised by combining classes due to the small number of students. This can be beneficial for learners and from an economic point of view, it makes sense to keep teaching groups as large as possible. Other vice the groups may be very small due to the limited number of students attending Sami-speaking classes. In Sami language teaching, other factors should also be considered connection with group sizes, such as students' linguistic abilities, the need for learning materials and the fact that it is an Indigenous language at a disadvantage throughout society.

Teachers emphasise the importance of the Sami language. They recognise that students' diverse linguistic backgrounds present an enriching challenge, requiring additional support to help pupils develop the language skills necessary for effective learning (Rahko-Ravanti, 2016). There are several reasons for the variation in students' level of Sami language proficiency.

For minority and Indigenous languages like Sami, intergenerational language transmission may be harmed if older generations do not pass the language on to younger generations, resulting the language decline over time. Lack of support for the language in the education system can limit students' opportunities to learn and use it. The Sami language's historically poor status in society has impacted its prevalence and usage. This marginalisation has resulted in fewer opportunities for students to hear, speak and learn the language in their daily lives, contributing to varying proficiency levels among students living in multilingual contexts. Additionally, limited representation of the language in media, technology and digital platforms can affect its usage among younger people. Economic factors, social attitudes, urbanisation and globalisation, policies, cultural integration and lack of resources also harm the situation. (Rasmussen, 2013). The situation is common, especially due to the loss of language among the post-war generation, their children and grandchildren (Tervo et al., 2022).

The scarcity of Sami language learning material and the old age of the available books are challenges in Sami language teaching (Korpela, 2020). In Sami education, there is a limited selection of learning materials, whereas learning materials, for example, for education conducted in Finnish are plentiful and easily accessible. The scarcity of study materials highlights the challenges

faced by minoritised languages like Sami, which lack the support, power and resources available to more dominant cultures (Erkkilä, 2005, pp. 114–116). In addition to their teaching work, several of the Sami teachers prepare teaching materials for the Sami Parliament in Finland. Creating study materials takes time – time that could be devoted to the substantive development of teaching. The lack of financial resources allocated to the production of learning materials in the Sami language, and the scarcity of producers for these materials, have resulted in available resources often being translated from Finnish (and thus not culturally appropriate), or outdated study books that adhere to old curriculum views and pedagogy.

Another challenge that teachers pointed out is the teaching of Sami and local history. According to the basics of the curriculum, emphasis should be placed on Sami culture and supporting the cultural identity of students. Knowing your own history is part of the identity-building process. Historical consciousness and collective memory form the basis of the historical identity of the individual and the collective identity of the community. Common memories and images based on the past unite a nation or group (Virta, 2008). For Indigenous peoples, learning their own (perhaps even silenced) history is therefore relevant and empowering (Smith, 2003).

Teaching that happens in Sami language uses a Sami language history book translated from Finnish study material, in which history is – inevitably – dealt with from a Finnish perspective. Thus, Finns are defined as the main characters in Finnish history, with “others” at the edge of the story (Lakomäki, 2014). The situation is challenging for Sami education: The learning material is in Sami, but it lacks cultural sensitivity and does not include significant Sami history from the students’ perspective. The emphasis in Sami education is also on Finnish history, the aspects of which are more present, while the Sami’s own history is only touched on in teaching, if at all. In other words, the textbook threatens to reproduce the colonial and alienating view of the Sami, which may signal to students that their story and history are not valuable enough to be taught in schools. The teachers express that they try to supplement the history content with Sami content according to their abilities, but this is challenging in the absence of temporal and material resources (Rahko-Ravantti, 2016).

### 3.2 *Northern Door – Experiences of Otherness*

While Finnish teachers and Sami teachers working in Finnish school in this study are autonomous and independent actors, the school environment is highly regulated (cf. Sääntti, 2008). Sami teachers take students outside school premises to learn skills related to Sami culture and seasonal activities. According to teachers, land-based teaching is enjoyed by all students, but friction or

envy can arise if only students in Sami language teaching benefit from these activities.

These comments arise whenever we leave the school grounds. Last fall, we went to smoke meat. I included students studying Sami as a foreign language. It is a special opportunity for them to be outside school, which I see as an incentive for learning Sami. Then a student yelled in the school yard, 'Again, those studying Sami get to do something nice'. Other students rarely leave school as frequently as we do. We have a tradition and insist on operating this way.

This different approach, causing contradictions, clashes not only with Sami culture versus Finnish school culture but also with local versus school culture. Students in the North have a strong connection to nature, which does not fully align with the usual school operational culture. The research material suggests that students in Finnish language classes are less likely to follow a local Northern curriculum that includes cultural skills and land-based activities extensively.

Norms and institutional arrangements dominate school life, shaping activity possibilities and their significance. Teachers' remarks reflected their execution of Sami education in a Finnish school, whose culture has evolved over time, with a curriculum strictly confined to school hours and school buildings. Teachers interviewed encountered situations where they felt that the potential of the local surroundings and way of life was not fully integrated at school, thus the idea of inclusion was not fully realised.

Schools often emphasise learning within their walls, whereas Sami learning is more experiential. This difference is particularly evident in practices like reindeer husbandry, where family involvement and seasonal work are prioritised. Teachers note that this impacts student attendance and engagement. There is a need for educators to understand and empathise with the cultural backgrounds and specific needs of Sami culture, including the cultural significance of traditional livelihoods such as reindeer herding. This lack of recognition can lead to challenges in effectively supporting students (also Erkkilä, 2005, pp. 108–110). According to teacher experiences, daily school routines also reflect values of importance and dominance. These daily patterns influence student perceptions of power dynamics in society (Nousiainen & Piekkari, 2007, p. 10).

Teachers often feel a responsibility to foster harmony and understanding between the diverse operational cultures within the school environment.

I serve as a bridge between Sami students, teachers and the principal, ensuring that students' interests are well-represented and protected.

Here, a teacher describes their role, feeling compelled to safeguard students' interests in daily school life. Previous studies on Sami teachers depict them as mediators as the cultural interface – mediating between two cultures (Erkkilä, 2005, pp. 109–110). Mediators play a crucial role in bridging the gap between values at home and the formal school environment. This cultural interface can also amplify power struggles: cultures are either embraced or rejected, legitimised or marginalised, perpetuating otherness (Nakata, 2007).

While teachers ensuring that Sami perspectives, practices and values are respected and integrated within the educational framework, they also engage in decolonisation efforts aimed at recognising and dismantling historical power imbalances and cultural marginalisation within educational institutions. By acting as mediators, Sami teachers actively participate in decolonising education, challenging dominant narratives and promoting inclusive educational practices that validate and empower students' identities and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the role of the mediator is pivotal in fostering a more equitable and respectful educational environment that honors Indigenous knowledge systems and contributes to broader societal decolonisation efforts. Therefore, understanding Sami customs and educational strategies is crucial.

Many Sami teachers often find themselves expected to educate and take care of the whole school about Sami culture and education, even outside their regular working hours. This responsibility frequently falls on individual teachers rather than being embraced as a collective effort by the entire school. As a result, it can be both exhausting and burdensome for Sami teachers.

For example, on Sami National Day, a colleague inquired why we didn't arrange an event to teach about Sami culture. While I understood the intention behind the invitation, I didn't explain that this day is primarily a time for our celebration, not solely for conducting educational tours on Sami culture.

This quote highlights the widespread ignorance about Sami culture in Finnish schools. Individual Sami teachers bear the responsibility to educate others on who the Sami are and their culture. Textbook descriptions of Sami are often superficial and marginal, sometimes presented separately after Finnish history or ambiguously questioning their existence (Jauhola & Vehviläinen, 2015; Lampinen, 2013). This lack of comprehensive and respectful representation in educational materials and teaching contents, which may only occasionally be presented in festive contexts, in general, underscores the need for a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of Sami culture and history within the curriculum and school practices.

### 3.3 *Eastern Door – Achievements of Sami Education*

Students' enthusiasm and motivation bring joy to teachers by letting teachers know that they have been successful in their work and that the students are enjoying school (Korpinen, 2007, p. 37). The well-being of the students was a source of joy for the Sami teachers:

It is a pleasure to see how proud the students are of their own Saminess and identity.

This quote reflects the general situation of the Sami people today. Teachers experience feelings of success when they succeed in creating a positive image of the Sami for their students and when students feel proud of their own identity. The joy is emphasised by the fact that, unlike in the past, being Sami is now seen as a positive thing. The Sami have resolutely promoted their culture and rights on many levels over a very short time (Lehtola & Länsman, 2012, p. 13). Today, young Sami people are proud to be Sami (Rasmus, 2008), which is positive for the future of Sami culture. In her research, Helena Ristaniemi (2022) discusses the school memories of students who have participated in Sami education. Her research interviewees emphasise the importance of their Sami classes in the development of a strong Sami identity from childhood to the present day. In these school memories, the teachers played significant roles as cultural educators and subject teachers. Similarly, the teachers in the present study wanted to instil in their students' faith in the future and in the Sami people enduring.

I would like to think that Sami education gives students the courage to go to the school they want. There is no need to go study only the Sami language or handicrafts. You can do that later. The world is open. They should feel free to go where they want.

Thus, the teachers see Sami education as an opportunity for students to have both roots and wings. They do not think that the task of Sami education is to encapsulate, to lock students only into Sami culture. Rather, teaching aims to make students global, active world citizens.

The work of Sami teachers in different places has similar challenges and joys that unite the teachers. The latter often work alone and are thus solely responsible for implementing Sami education.

It is important for job satisfaction and coping to be able to get support from colleagues. It is rewarding to meet other teachers. I do not think that there will be a similar sense of belonging with our Finnish colleagues.

Therefore, it is understandable that connections with colleagues in the same situation are perceived as an empowering and positive resource. These connections not only provide support and encouragement but also foster a sense of community among Sami educators.

Moreover, it can be observed that Sami education has made progress. This reflects the improved rights in society for the Sami people, leading to an increasing recognition of the needs and perspectives of Sami students.

#### 3.4 *Southern Door – Hopes and Vision for the Future*

The development of Sami education has an important role to play because it is part of an empowering process. In the Indigenous context, the empowered school emphasises the social interaction of teachers and its use for the development needs of the whole school. The teachers hoped that in the future, colleagues, decision-makers and students would be more familiar with the special features of Sami culture.

Sami culture should be taught to everyone. This will certainly bring more understanding since we live here side by side.

According to the teachers, knowledge of Sami culture, in general, could help teachers understand students' lives better and foster greater harmony in their coexistence. It would be natural to assume that all children in the Sami homeland would learn about Sami culture and the history of their own area. The perspective raised by teachers is important because knowledge of Sami culture could influence decision-making on Sami education at both the municipalities and state levels. There is very little public discussion about Sami education policy and Sami education contents in Finland. The lack of debate undermines the potential for developing education. The invisibility of Sami education is therefore also problematic from the point of view of its development.

Teachers' dreams also focus on the status and appreciation of Sami teaching in Finnish schools. In the experience of the teachers, both prestige and equality are generally weak at present:

I hope that what is valued at home and in the Sami community will be valued here at school as well. Teaching should mentally support the Sami way of life and understand the Sami world of values. It is important that what we do at school is right for everyone, not just for our Sami students.

Equality is often perceived as treating everyone the same, even though true equality involves considering each individual's unique starting point. Teachers

believe that elevating the value and contents of Sami culture to a level of equality in school and society is crucial for future development and progress.

#### 4 Conclusion

In Sami education, the historical focus has been to teach Sami children the Finnish language. As the world has changed, the focus in Sami education has been on preserving and teaching students the Sami language. In addition to the language, cultural elements such as Sami handicrafts, musical traditions, reindeer herding, fishing and berry picking have been included in the teaching. This is something that each teacher in this study believes is important and a strength of the individual teacher.

Based on my data, the effects of assimilation on the Sami are manifested today in the diverse language skills of students, the lack of learning materials based on their own culture and, at a structural level, the lack of a clear educational policy for Sami education. The school model continues to be Finnicised, applying Vuokko Hirvonen's (2003) thoughts. The Samification of Sami teaching at the micro level (i.e., in classrooms) is impossible if the macro-level administrative and curriculum policies do not support change (Hirvonen, 2003; Keskitalo, 2010). These macro-level structures of the school create a framework for the day-to-day activities of the school and control the everyday life of the teachers. There does not seem to be any time left for the substantive development of Sami teaching.

In order for the Sami language to emerge from the state of assimilation and survive, action to revive the language must be long term and planned. In his study, Rasmussen (2013) states that teaching in the Sami language in Finland is not effective enough to maintain living language skills. There are many reasons for this, but the main problem is that Sami teaching is built into Finnish and Finnish-language schools, and structural factors place Sami language teaching in a subordinate position in school practices. Although Sami is the language of instruction today, it still has no place as an equal language throughout the school. Stronger resourcing for Sami and Sami-language teaching, as well as taking into account the possibility of positive special treatment when planning group sizes and class divisions, for example, could be major steps towards making Sami language teaching more efficient.

The daily interactions between Sami education and Finnish school culture can be complex and challenging. School is organised so that Finnish and Sami classes are taught in the same buildings within municipal schools. The prevailing operating models, traditions and customs guide what kind of

activities are possible in the school. The school culture is relatively permanent; schools change slowly, and change is driven by the principle of dynamic balance, according to which cultures regulate themselves. They have the means to protect themselves from internal and external threats of change (Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012, pp. 300–301). When applied to an individual school, this means that change is possible but very slow. The people working in the school adapt to the established habits and order of the school, and the prevailing teacher culture in the school sets the boundary conditions for the activities of individual teachers.

Based on my research, the opportunities for Sami teachers to implement Sami pedagogical practices are plentiful but narrow in scope. It could be said that room for maneuvering depends on the situation; therefore, teachers cannot always anticipate whether their solutions will fit the school culture or be permitted. Sami education operates at the interface of cultures, and the practical challenge of teaching is that the traditional school culture and way of working are seen as normal, while other possible ways of working are seen as different, marginal and sometimes even threatening (cf. Turunen, 2017).

The school operates in accordance with the goals of society, producing differences between students. The exercise of power related to segregation and hierarchies is not identified but taken for granted and apolitical (Riitaoja, 2013, pp. 20–21). Although Sami culture and Finnish culture are naturally different, I think the differences speak to the fact that thinking which strengthens differences dominates the school world and creates positions of otherness. Anna-Leena Riitaoja (2013) states that the role of a school is in itself contradictory: While it produces hierarchies, it strives for equality. Namely, combining classes of diverse ages and language abilities can sometimes complicate teachers' work. Achieving equality for the Sami would require positive special treatment, such as smaller student group sizes. Equality goals and objectives should be opened up at the level of individual schools, and the tension that has arisen between equality goals and the production of hierarchies should be recognised. This would require teachers and school leaders to have an awareness and an open discussion of school practices from the perspectives of different actors. Such work is essential to ensure the survival of diverse communities.

In the context of Sami education, the realisation of inclusion and equality would mean that the Sami could be involved in and influence the planning of education, from the basic education curriculum to local plans. Including Sami language and culture would mean greater sovereignty and better resourcing of Sami education. At the level of the state, municipalities and individual schools, it should be ensured that the voices and wishes of Sami teachers, students and families are heard in teaching and education. It is also important to consult

with Sami society. However, curriculum reform remains an unresolved issue in Finland.

When ethnic minorities have a real chance to make their voices heard, the surrounding society feels more familiar, more polyphonic and safer. This creates an opportunity for a genuine dialogue in which the exchange of ideas is safe and does not escalate into conflict. The more a person feels heard, the more interested he or she is in finding solutions. If the environment overrides the perspectives of the community in several different areas of life, the views may sharpen and the opportunity for dialogue may fade further (Ekholm & Salmenkangas, 2008).

The teachers in this study had experienced the tension related to reconciling their strong commitment to promoting the well-being of their communities and students with the paradigm of Western education. This tension strains teachers. In addition, teacher education does not always provide teachers with sufficient information to manage Indigenous local knowledge; thus, an Indigenous teacher will have to educate colleagues as well as teach students (cf. Kitchen et al., 2012). Finnish teacher education should prepare future teachers to meet both students and colleagues from foreign cultures and to be open to a new kind of school culture.

The development of Sami education at the interface of cultures can also provide opportunities to identify the special features of one's own and another's cultures, to share learning and to build a common identity. This assumes that representatives of the dominant culture take the position of learner and listener and strive to be aware of the rationale for their actions and ways of thinking. The interface of cultures opens up a new way of understanding ethnic groups, their cultures and their ways of doing things. This interface therefore becomes a space for learning and building a common understanding. The discussion extends beyond individual cultural practices, allowing different habits to coexist without subjugation or adaptation (Nakata, 2007; Turunen, 2017). The development of Sami education should not be left to individual teachers but should be seen as a shared task for the whole school and community.

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# Review of Indigenous Education and Sami Pedagogy

## *Key Tendencies and Notions*

*Pigga Keskitalo and Torjer Olsen*

### Abstract

This chapter portrays Sami education as deeply rooted in culturally specific childrearing practices and traditional knowledge passed down from through generations, enduring across diverse institutional settings within Sami educational contexts despite historical challenges, including colonialism. Aligned with global advancements in Indigenous education, Sami education reflects ongoing efforts in cultural revitalisation and asserting cultural sovereignty. It underscores the broader objective shared by Indigenous worldwide: nurturing youth in their distinct cultures, deeply connected to the cosmology, land, and water of each Indigenous community. The chapter highlights Sami education as evolving from colonial state policies to address contemporary and future educational needs while acknowledging the ongoing risk of Sami language loss. It situates Sami educational development within the global discourse on Indigenous education, noting recent institutional enhancements driven by legal support and increased resources, which have catalysed significant changes at educational and societal levels. Challenges remain, including the enduring impact of colonialism and assimilation, underscoring the ongoing imperative to safeguard the well-being of Indigenous children, families, and communities.

### Keywords

Sami pedagogy – Indigenous education – Sami education history – endangered Sami languages

### Čeahkkáigeassu

Sámi skuvlejupmi lea ovdánan guhkes áiggi čada oassin instituhtalaš ja árbevirolaš bajásgeassima. Otne sápmelaččaid skuvlen ja bajásgeassin čadahuvvo iešgudet

institušuvnnain. Sámiid skuvlema sáhtta geahččat oassin eamiálbmogiid skuvlejumi ovdáneami, man ulbmilin lea addit eamiálbmot mánáide vejolašvuoda doalahit sin iežaset kultuvrra ja giela ja oktavuoda eatnamii ja servožiidda. Sámi skuvlejumis lea dehálaš doalahit oktavuoda árbevieruide ja ealáskahttit sámegielaid, mat leat áitojuvvon dilis. Kapihttalis maiddá bukte ovdan ovdamearkkaid bokte, mo eamiálbmogat iešguđet báikkiin leat ovdánahttan skuvlejumi ja dutkama. Instituhtalaš ovdáneapmi sámi skuvlejumis lea maŋimuš mángalogi jagis ovdánan, dasa lea boahtán eambo doarjja ja resurssat. Oppalaččat sáhttit áicat skuvlejumis ovdáneami ja servodatlaš dásis maiddá. Das fuolakeahtta leat olu hástalusat ain, nugo kolonialisma ja assimileren ja mo de galggašii sihkkarastit mánáid ja nuoraid, bearrašiid ja olbmuid buresveadjima ja birgema. Bajásgeassimis ja skuvlejumis lea dehálaš rolla dálá ja boahtteáiggi hástalusaid siste.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi pedagogihkka – eamiálbmotskuvlen ja -dutkan – sámi skuvlenhistorjá – áitojuvvon sámegielat

### 1 Introduction

In order to comprehend and prepare for future educational concerns within the Indigenous Sami context, this chapter will look at previous and current Sami education practices, with the emphasis on understanding the progression, and to foresee the future challenges in the educational field as part of Indigenous education. When viewing the timeline of Sami education, the chapter acknowledges the importance of decolonial (Smith L. T., 1999/2012) and critical Indigenous education (Denzin et al., 2008), to analyse and describe the educational premises, as well as the challenges and developmental issues, of Sami education. A decolonial approach helps to understand and address the historical consequences and ongoing impacts on Sami education, promoting an education system that is more equitable and just for Indigenous communities, specifically the Sami in this case. Integrating critical Indigenous education, it advocates for educational practices that recognise and value the diversity of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge (Denzin et al., 2008). Indigenous education is a crossover or synthesis of two large and disparate fields of study: Indigenous studies and education. Methodological and conceptual debates are crucial in both these interdisciplinary domains. We relate to these debates, and discuss them through a review of the principles, foundations and practices.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss Sami education and the concept of Sami pedagogy, both of which fall under the canopy of Indigenous education. Sami education and pedagogy play a crucial role in preserving and revitalising the Sami languages, culture and traditions. Indigenous education is a growing field that on one hand relates to ideas of applying traditional childrearing practices and traditional knowledge into educational practices, with the goal of reducing the distance between non-formal and formal education, also showing the need to revitalise cultural knowledge in institutionalised settings (cf. Breidlid et al., 2015). As a philosophy, this has an effect on Indigenous education as a teaching and research discipline. By saying this, we would like to emphasise that the transformative nature of academic knowledge generation is dependent on conceptual and methodological exchanges (cf. Huber, 2009), opening new doors and producing the possibilities to build bright futures and collaboration for everyone affected by the Indigenous education context. From a broader viewpoint, Indigenous education encompasses a wide array of educational objectives, ranging from educating the general population about Indigenous cultures and issues to addressing the specific educational needs of Indigenous communities themselves (Keskitalo P. & Olsen, 2021; Olsen & Sollid, 2022a).

Sami education works in an area where present and future practices interact with traditional knowledge. In this regard, Sami people's languages, traditions, identities, and welfare are all important factors to consider when building quality education in the Indigenous education field (cf. United Nations, 2003). As a result of the global decolonial and indigenisation ways of thinking about and studying critical and alternative research paradigms and gaps, Sami education has become part of the global Indigenous education research, at the same time as it is now a relevant area of education, with its own premises and goals. Institutional progression, with Sami language teaching and education provision in various fields, has established the need to construct Sami education as an independent and established educational and research discipline.

Starting hundreds of years ago, several forms of action have been taken, from the state against the Sami people, beginning with the Church Enlightenment initiatives in the 1600s, and subsequent national state educational measures, called nationalism in the 1850s, and more recently, emphasis on Indigenous sovereignty (Keskitalo P., 2022; Keskitalo P. & Olsen, 2021). For a long time, many oppressive ideologies have had an impact on minorities, including Sami people, producing inequalities and othering. Because of historical and piecemeal development and its repercussions, assimilation and its aftermath including power-relations have influenced the language and cultural situations in the different regions, and these premises pose a challenge to

today's Sami education and add new dimensions of diversity and inclusion to pedagogical operations (cf. Minde, 2003).

Today, the field of Sami education is established and developed in close connection to the more general field of Sami research. Thus, there is also a close connection to the emergence of Indigenous research methodologies. Today, there is substantial literature on Indigenous research methodology. Decolonisation – the deconstructive and critical approach – and indigenisation – the endeavor to highlight and clarify how and what research should do in new ways – are crucial notions here. In this chapter, we will recognise the contributions of Indigenous researchers in various contexts (cf. Äärelä, 2016; Balto, 1997, 2008; Battiste, 2000; Denzin et al., 2008; Grande, 2008; Hirvonen, 2003; Laiti O., 2021; Nutti, 2018; Nystad, 2003; Outakoski, 2015; Rahko-Ravantti, 2016; Smith G. H., 2012; Smith L. T., 2012/1999) and authors of this chapter (Keskitalo P., 2010, 2022; Keskitalo P. & Olsen, 2019, 2021; Olsen & Sollid, 2022b). We will highlight key points on the history and current practices in Sami education. This chapter is based on the review and reflections on different perspectives of Sami pedagogy, referencing how Sami education has been institutionally and philosophically established, aligned with the progression of Indigenous education and the evolution of various Indigenous pedagogies.

## 2 Trends and Notions of Indigenous Education and Pedagogies

Indigenous peoples live in a variety of contexts around the world. Part of what Indigenous peoples do have in common is colonial history, which has been inflicted in a variety of ways but has generated similar effects, endangering many Indigenous languages (The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2018). Indigenous education arises from the heritage of an assimilation era, in which there are at least two main goals: initially, the focus is on preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages and cultures, while simultaneously aiming to enhance awareness of Indigenous histories, contexts, and challenges to promote greater equity within societies.

The progression of Indigenous education is connected to the global waves in different areas of the world, to start putting Indigenous needs in the centre, and emphasising these needs in critiques, that mostly arose since the 1960s in the different areas. The global advancement of the Indigenous research paradigm is linked to broader waves in the research field, where varied critical voices emerged throughout the humanities fields. More specifically, the growth of Indigenous research has been centred on the fact that, until recently, much of this research was carried out on Indigenous peoples, their, cultures,

and lands without involving them through consent, consultation, or active participation (Ormiston, 2010).

The global spread of Indigenous pedagogies implies taking a critical stance towards current education and ideology. Many additional Indigenous pedagogies around the world refer similarly to these broad pedagogical and educational efforts, for example, *Kaupapa Māori* (Smith G. H., 2003, 2012), Nehinuw pedagogy (Goulet & Goulet, 2014) and Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2008). Indigenous pedagogies are of course multifaceted but have a tendency to discuss emancipation and the nurturing of past heritage in Indigenous peoples' contexts around the world. Further, this seeks to be a basis to create hope, enhance widened collaboration, and care for people, with the aim of creating a better and more promising future for all children and young people in Indigenous societies, that are diverse and have diverse colonial histories (Denzin et al., 2008).

There is a strong division between different schools of education, and paradigms and differences in ways that that education is implemented. National education and Indigenous education can be seen and perceived differently. W. James Jacob et al. (2015, p. 3), for example, characterise Indigenous education as carrying the implication of the need to implement Indigenous heritage into children's learning:

We define the term indigenous education as the path and process whereby individuals gain knowledge and meaning from their indigenous heritages. ... Indigenous education is a spiritual as well as physical or mental learning process ... The indigenous education process is better understood as an eternal reciprocal, interactive, and symbiotic learning process.

The current diversity in Indigenous education comes partly as the result of various linguistic backgrounds and diversified pedagogical contexts in Indigenous teaching and learning. This has historical and power-relations reasons, shown on the impact on Indigenous children and families, in the form of language loss and change. Going from this to the discussion on pedagogy in diverse contexts highlights approaches such as culturally responsive pedagogy and the pedagogy of tolerance that aim to handle cultural differences in different ways (Gay, 2000). Being aware that these approaches often take their starting point in the majority society and carry a majority perspective, in real of Indigenous education, alternative approaches may hold relevance in challenging this perspective (Boyle, 2018). Important in this sense is the connection between self-determination and education, raised in different Indigenous contexts (Lee, 2015). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012) concluded

that self-determination is integral to the process of an Indigenous transformation of education. Along the same lines, Kim McBreen (2018) claims that when Māori takes central positions in defining the aims and methods of education, it is a part of a strive towards self-determination. In a US Indigenous context, Red pedagogy, as defined by Sandy Grande (2008), represents an Indigenous educational framework that integrates critical pedagogy with Indigenous knowledge systems. Its core principles include grounding in Indigenous epistemologies, engaging with mainstream critical theories, and emphasising the pursuit of democracy and self-determination.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori education, in the tradition of the *Kaupapa Māori* movement and philosophy, has had a huge influence on Indigenous education elsewhere. Russell Bishop (2008) advocated for culturally responsive education, specifically framed within Indigenous contexts, emphasizing the importance of educational practices that respect and incorporate Indigenous cultural perspectives and values. He proposed an education and educational spaces that can create 'learning contexts for previously pathologised and marginalised students in ways that allow them to participate in education on their terms as Māori, as well as becoming citizens of the world' (Bishop, 2008, p. 457). This change is central, with a strong emphasis on education on their own terms as Māori. Similarly, L. T. Smith (2017, pp. 79–83) discussed culturally transformative pedagogy in education. The connection to self-determination and Māori-centred pedagogy is emphasised here. Smith also addresses Indigenous diversity. She takes as a starting point the fact that Māori are not homogenous group as such, nor are they in their educational aspirations. Thus, Māori education cannot be based on a homogenous idea of the Māori community. Smith's and Bishop's perspectives clearly resonate with other Indigenous contexts, including the Sami context, where similar principles of cultural responsiveness and self-determination are emphasized.

The transformative aspect of education necessitates creating space for Indigenous and minority cultures, safeguarding endangered languages, and fostering critical awareness to challenge false consciousness and dominant hegemonies. It also involves acknowledging the incremental victories achieved on the path to broader societal transformation (Somby & Olsen, 2022). A part of this is the recognition of Indigenous education as relevant, and not solely for Indigenous students and children. Members of majority communities also need to be educated on matters relating to Indigenous communities, and to the relationship between Indigenous and majority communities. Teachers working with Indigenous students should be aware of their knowledge, world views, and human understanding (Santoro & Kennedy, 2016). Teaching should emphasise experience-based learning that considers informal learning conditions, in conjunction with parents, Indigenous society members, and elders.

Teachers must be mindful of the impact of students' backgrounds on their ability to learn and thrive in school. Collaboration between teachers can support these perspectives in teaching (Légaré, 2002; Santoro et al., 2011).

### 3 Colonial State Education Policy

Throughout history, there have been early and subsequent attempts by outsiders to have different impacts on Indigenous cultures. Education plays a crucial role in the history of the Sami people vis-à-vis European ideology and Christianity. Several approaches and measures have been utilised over the centuries in this regard. Even if the paths and degrees of success varied over the centuries, the consequences inevitably set in motion a chain of events that led to the current state of the Sami people.

It was decided in the 1600s that the Sami people needed to be educated, to serve as priests and instructors for the population, in order for Christianity to grow more effectively<sup>1</sup> (Grimberg, 1924; Lehtola, 2015; Lundmark, 2008). In the 1600s Christianity, through its missionaries, began to strengthen European hegemony in Scandinavia by training the Sami to be priests among their own, with the intention of transforming the Sami's cultural and linguistic characteristics as an Enlightenment ideal. An attempt was made to persuade Indigenous peoples to embrace national shared citizenship. These first kinds of major assaults against the Sami people have been witnessed in Scandinavia from the 1600s onwards, and then globally as part of colonial power. Christian beliefs, rites, and customs were imposed through education, which became a major influence on missionary operations (Lundmark, 2019). Before that, when the priests started to work with education among the Sami, children learnt, within the family, the life and ways to cope, learning by participating in family life, which has been, and is of course, the reality today as well. But the process since the 1600s has impacted on the Sami as becoming part of civil societies of the current Nordic countries, today with wide political Indigenous rights. From the beginning of the 1700s, for example, each of the Swedish Sami parishes saw a more active establishment of the school system, with one residential school (Norlin, 2018). The system was subsequently organised and institutionalised. In Norway, schooling in Sami areas came as part of the state-run Christian mission. In fact, a permanent schooling arrangement came into place in Sami areas before it did in the rest of Norway (Hansen & Olsen B., 2004).

When national states began to establish national schools in the 1850s, regulations varied as nationalist ideology became more prevalent. Norway, for example, established a state-funded and written strategy for its ethnic minorities, the Finnish origin Kven and Sami (Minde, 2003). The Norwegianisation policy

sought to enforce a language and cultural transformation among the Sami people, aiming to assimilate them fully into Norwegian language, culture, and customs. This policy was primarily carried out through the education system during the assimilation period in Norway (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022). The majority of this policy was implemented through the education system. Many Sami youngsters were sent to boarding schools, where they were forbidden to speak Sami (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). The strategy of Norwegianisation formally ended in the early 1960s, although the consequences are still felt today (Minde, 2003).

In turn, Sweden began to push its segregation policy towards the Sami, with Sami-speaking reindeer herders attending school in their settlements, while other Sami attended municipal village schools. The creation of hut-schools for reindeer herders who spoke Sami was one of the measures set up, with the idea that the 'Lapps should stay Lapps', and that they were not able to practice livelihoods other than reindeer herding (Lundmark, 2008). For those who attended municipal schools, this trend culminated in a loss of Samihood, with the reality of learning only the Swedish language in surroundings that highlighted the national Swedish culture. The segregation policy resulted in the loss of language and culture for those Sami who were not reindeer herders and spoke Sami, and it continues to have an impact on who is defined as a Sami, and their rights today (Svonni, 2017).

Fennomanian ideology from the 1800s onwards in Finland, which prioritised the Finnish language and culture, while neglecting minority concerns, in order to develop a strong nationhood through Finnish language and culture after the rules of Sweden and Russia, was imposed on Finland's minorities, and leaving their own cultures and languages with no attention or support in the education system. Because those in minority positions were not supported, the majority national language, Finnish, was often preferred, resulting in assimilation (Keskitalo P. et al., 2016).

According to Andrej Kotljarchuk (2019), although significant changes for the worse were evident from 1940 onwards, before that, the trajectory in Russia was progressive, with five Sami schools operating in 1917. Stalin modified the policy over the next 60 years in the 1940s, and as a result, Sami speaking was no longer allowed in the education system. For example, in the 1940s, 18 leading Sami scholars were held in detention centres and never returned to their villages, illustrating the unavoidable totalitarian stance towards the Sami in Russia, because the Soviets regarded the semi-nomadic Sami as a potential security risk. The aim, with violence against the Sami, was to ensure ethnic integrity in border areas, in case of invasion from the neighboring enemy states (Kotljarchuk, 2019).

Despite the state policies and also because of that, as a countermeasure, in the early 1900s, there were already attempts being made by the Sami to begin improving their situation (Lehtola, 2015). Since the end of the 1950s in the Nordic

Sami context, there have also been discussions in the educational field on how to maintain and resuscitate the various Sami languages (Keskitalo J. H., 2016).

We then enter the 1970s and 1980s, when policy changed, and Sami languages were reintroduced into the classroom in the present primary school system (Nyyssönen, 2019), and from the 1980s onwards, in Lovozero, as an extracurricular provision (Zmyvalova & Outakoski, 2019). Since the 1980s, in Nordic countries with a Sami population, educational efforts have included widespread support for education in kindergartens and primary schools, primarily in core Sami regions, but education practices can also be found beyond these areas. National funding is used to generate learning materials, and there is also action-based support in some places, including suburban areas, although sometimes or often only in a limited way. Distance learning alternatives have been developed to fill the void (e.g., Helander et al., 2022).

Efforts for language revitalisation have been developed in various Sami languages, but special mention deserves the Inari and South Sami contexts (cf. Pasanen, 2015; Todal, 2007). Sami teacher education, which includes Sami content and a didactic dimension in the Sami language, was introduced in Norway in 1989 at Sámi University of Applied Sciences (Elstad, 2023). An independent Sami teacher education reform was established in 2010 (Samisk høgskole, n.d.), in addition to the Sami school and curriculum systems in Norway in 1997 (Todal, 2003) and in Sweden in 1979 (Blossing & Söderström, 2013). There is no distinct Sami school system or dedicated curriculum tailored specifically for Sami education in Finland, and Sami education in Sami language classes takes place mainly in core Sami areas inside local school systems.<sup>2</sup> In Russia, the matter is more difficult, as extracurricular activities with Sami cultural content are provided only for younger children in a narrow context (Zmyvalova & Outakoski, 2019).

Although there has been considerable progress and relatively wide action-based support and funding acquired in Nordic nations for the Sami, challenges such as a lack of competent teachers, learning materials, resources, support, and teaching reachability remain (Aikio-Puoskari, 2009; Arola, 2020). Language loss has occurred as a result of the assimilation history, status of the minoritised Indigenous language, and attitudes towards language.

#### 4 Foundations on Sami Education Research

The foundations of Sami educational study can be traced back to earlier studies with tendential distinctions. You can observe the trend to document traditional childrearing practices in an ethnological manner (cf. Päivänsalo, 1953), following the arise of critical studies of schooling directed towards Sami people (cf. Hoëm, 1976; Høgmø, 1989). There is also interdisciplinary research that

has examined the impact of various ideologies on Sami existence and education progression in Sami regions (cf. Afanasyeva, 2019; Lassila, 2001; Minde, 2003; Nyssönen, 2007; Rahkola, 1999).

After the Sami teacher education programme began in 1989 at the *Sámi allaskuvla*/Sámi University of Applied Sciences, to verify the right to indigenous education sovereignty, Sami pedagogy began to grow alongside institutionalised Sami education progression. Consequently, Sami pedagogy was started, to be discussed and implemented, in order to pave the way for Sami thought in education through teacher education, to be transmitted with the teachers into the schools. A concept of Sami pedagogy, *sámi pedagogihkka* (North Sami), has been developed for Sami teacher education. It has been utilised in general discussions of teacher education programme actions, as well as in Sami teacher education pedagogy and subject didactic studies. With the help of various processes in policy making, the *Sámi allaskuvla* started to conduct teacher education programmes in the Sami language in *Guovdageaidnu* [Kautokeino], North Norway. Alongside this process, research that emerged has created questions and discourses for Sami education. *Sámi allaskuvla* has long been a vital institution for the development of Sami pedagogy and research.<sup>3</sup>

Since *Sámi allaskuvla* was established, two key researchers in the field, Asta Balto and Vuokko Hirvonen, were among the pioneers in articulating and establishing it as a research and pedagogical discipline at the institution (cf. Hirvonen & Balto, 2008). Earlier, Balto (1997) had published her research on traditional childrearing practices, based on observations and realisations in the realm of institutionalised education. In 2008, she released an action study and a book about Sami pedagogy, stating the following:

Skuvla válddahallá sámi bajásgeassima ulbmilaš dássin dan, ahte sihke oahpahuvvo ja beassá oahppat iežas kultuvrra vuodul. Sii (oahpaheddjit) deattuhit, ahte oahppama vuolgga lea sámi pedagogihkkii čádnon. (Balto, 2008, p. 10)

The school takes, as a goal of Sami education, that teaching will be conducted, and one can learn based on one's own culture. They (the teachers) highlight that the premises of learning is based on Sami pedagogy. (Author's translation)

According to Balto (2008, p. 10), teachers should emphasise Sami traditions as pedagogical practices, thus systematising, analysing, replicating, and adapting them into new contexts. The development of Sami pedagogy is linked to the goal of development and change, as a core from which pedagogy emerges.

Balto explained the intrinsic educational value as the creation of favorable conditions and emotions that facilitate learning and increase motivation. Coping with and supporting independence are two ways in which humans exhibit their desire to be decent (Balto, 2008). Self-efficacy is another term for the latter. Balto (2008, p. 26) says, 'We are decolonizing our own educational methods and witnessing unfair treatments by learning about history, re-constructing events, and reclaiming the past via stories'.<sup>4</sup>

Added to the important insights of the early generation of Sami pedagogues, mentioned above, has come the emphasis on Sami diversity and on Sami pedagogy, being built and articulated, based on different Sami localities. All in all, 10–20 years after, Sami pedagogy has come further, with new contributions of different kinds and on different levels (cf. Äärelä, 2016; Keskitalo P., 2010; Keskitalo P. et al., 2013; Laiti M., 2018; Linkola, 2014; Nutti, 2018; Nystad et al., 2017; Olsen & Sollid, 2022b; Rahko-Ravanti, 2016; Somby & Olsen, 2022).

Other higher education institutions, such as UiT The Arctic University of Norway, the University of Lapland, Luleå University, Umeå University, the University of Oulu and Nord University, have also produced Sami educational research and education programmes as part of their profiles in their teacher education programmes. Currently, all teacher education institutions are morally connected to the responsibility to educate pre-service and in-service teachers in Indigenous and Sami matters, so that every teacher will gain knowledge about Indigenous contents and be prepared to serve the knowledge in classrooms. When examining how to live as an Indigenous person in today's society, and survive its cultures and languages, Sami people's peculiarities and history serve as a new aim when evaluating a viewpoint on childhood. This has been seen as centring children in education,<sup>5</sup> and for example, can be seen also when Indigenous children and their languages and culture were also put in the centre in education institutions in Indigenous core areas in many places in the world, such as *Sápmi* and *Aoteoroa* New Zealand.

## 5 Discussion about Sami Education and Pedagogy

The ideas of Sami education and Sami pedagogy can shed light on current worries regarding the diversity and fragmentation of Sami education. In this context, education refers to the broad objective of imparting knowledge through both formal and informal contexts, whereas pedagogy, often used synonymously, specifically refers to teaching methods (Marshall, 2006). Institutionalised Sami education can be defined, in formal terms, as education for and by the Sami people, that is based on education policy objectives.

Sami pedagogy can be seen as a way of answering needs within the Sami communities. As such, it works on different levels: Traditional childrearing practices, the traditional knowledge in institutionalised settings in Sami kindergartens and various levels of schooling institutions applying educational goals. These goals are articulated in acts, curricula, and other documents that guide educational acts and practices at various institutionalised levels. The challenge is in the importance of maintaining strong connections between formal education and non-formal education in non-institutionalised settings. Sami pedagogy does not only apply to teaching methods and teaching premises in Sami contexts, but it may also be viewed in a broader sense as a scientific discipline, or an understanding of how teaching and learning should be organised, taking into account the spiritual and philosophical aspects of humanity as a continual progression of development work. This means that strong ties to traditional knowledge and traditional childrearing approaches, on the other hand, appear to be an important field to reaffirm. Sami pedagogy, like other Indigenous pedagogies, is based on the decolonial needs to transform and reorganise the teaching, so that it is leaning on the Indigenous culture and languages and historical starting points and will be consistent with the Indigenous community's worldview and values (cf. Wood, 2018).

Pigga Keskitalo et al. (2013) defined Sami pedagogy as follows:

Sámi pedagogy means the Sámi's own pedagogy that acknowledges the historical-cultural phenomena or burden related to the Sámi's position and strengthens the special features of the Sámi culture through teaching and classroom arrangements. The special features of Sámi pedagogy are intertwined with the paradigmatic changes of teaching that aims at squaring the learning environment and the learner's role with the Sámi culture. (Keskitalo et al., 2013, p. 96)

Sami pedagogy focuses on historical-cultural phenomena and burdens related to Sami status as an Indigenous people in a minority position, as well as the historical implications of cultural colonialism, which refer to the psychological and practical historical, global, and ideological effects and measures on Indigenous Sami people. It is the local and curricular-specific cases that form the educational reality and teaching practices. The distinctive aspect of Sami pedagogy is that it is linked to paradigmatic change or rethinking of learning spaces and learners' roles (Keskitalo et al., 2013). This is how Sami pedagogy is connected to pedagogical and educational sciences: Sami pedagogy connects pedagogical premises with culture and traditions.

Evaluating the first reform of the Sami school, which began in 1997, Hirvonen (2003) discussed Sami pedagogy based on her school research. Sami pedagogy appears when schools reach the fourth stage of Banks' multicultural education model, and it is at this point that we can start talking about multicultural Sami schools. Sami ontology and epistemology, in which school pedagogy and raising are founded, are the starting point for this stage. According to Hirvonen (2003), after that, we can begin discussing Sami pedagogy.

Pedagogy has, as its universal purpose, the acceptance of each individual's dignity and human rights, as well as of each person's uniqueness (Loreman, 2017; Øzerk, 2006; Valiandes, 2015). Many actions have already been taken in different areas and school settings. However, since primary schools were established in the 1970s, we can begin to discuss inclusive approaches from then on. More sophisticated solutions have been established as a result of increased efforts to talk about school settings for the Sami, in complex and diverse cultural and linguistic settings. The scope of this work is extensive and wide ranging. When Sami pedagogy is integrated into research, the goals are similar to those of Indigenous education and research, in that they aim to undermine colonial practices, adaptations, and prejudices. In addition, problems of identity and of being conscious of cultural essentialism or stereotyping, and being aware of them, occur in connection with Sami research (cf. Valkonen, 2009).

## 6 Future Expectations of Sami Education

The situation for Sami education clearly combines the tiny details of classroom activities and everyday childrearing with the local, national and international political picture, as well as questions of money and resources, alongside reflections on pedagogy and perspectives. This means that several discourses are at play here that, to some extent, clash. In its current form, the curriculum emphasises local content in addition to national aims. This means that governments, schools, and teachers engage with local curricula to choose what is relevant and meaningful to undertake at a local level. The content can also be assessed on a regular basis, or annually. It has been a long-standing deliberate custom that these local features are not always highlighted to the extent that they should be.

The situation for Sami languages, as is the case for most Indigenous languages that are still in use, is one of paradoxes and dilemmas. Historically, states have pursued measures that are intended to diminish or marginalise Sami languages. This has been successful, as can be seen in the disastrous decrease in the number of Sami speakers. On the other hand, states have extended their

recognition of Sami rights as an aftermath of years of revitalisation, and battles for Sami rights. Using the case of Norway as an example, the trend is evident in the field of education. Curricular and legal recognition has led to an increased demand for competence in Sami languages. All students in Norway have the right to learn Sami, and all Sami students have the right to receive an education in the Sami language (Marjomaa, 2014). Moreover, many vocational professions include, to a growing extent, the need for competence both about Sami communities and culture and in the Sami languages. However, recruiting teachers, scholars, and students for these domains is a very complicated endeavor. This represents and contributes to a general shortage of human resources. This discrepancy between ambition and mandate on the one hand, and the lack of resources on the other, is a challenging one, both for the field of practice and for academic institutions.

Another dilemma concerns who are at the receiving end of Sami education: Sami education can be seen and practiced both as education *for* the Sami and as education *about* the Sami, for all (Marjomaa, 2014). This distinction is key to understanding the complexities of Indigenous education and is recognisable across many Indigenous contexts worldwide. We have formerly argued that this should not be seen through the lens of dichotomies (Keskitalo & Olsen, 2021). Further, it is to be treated as a continuum where the boundaries between different parts of the continuum are blurry. In addition, we have claimed that there is a need to expand the understanding of Indigenous education in order to incorporate a more detailed and multifaceted perspective on Indigenous communities themselves (Keskitalo & Olsen, 2021). Indigenous communities are often, to varying degrees, closely connected to mainstream society, which suggests that Indigenous education is also best understood as complex and less dichotomous. Indigenous education can, following this model, be seen as divided between education for Indigenous students based on Indigenous knowledge, language, and curriculum on one side, and learning regarding Indigenous communities in a colonial system based on the language, culture and curriculum of mainstream society on the other. In mainstream schools, we can find similar diversity in the education on Indigenous communities and cultures, from Indigenous perspectives being integrated into school practices, to more old school presentations about Indigenous matters from outside perspectives. In Sami contexts, we see all of this at the same time. For future reference, we can see that decolonisation and indigenisation should be integrated into the educational system, in order to provide a proper Sami education in different parts of the continuum. Education for Sami students is considered a mission of the state educational system in Nordic countries. However, how it plays out and the implications for educational practices in different parts of *Sápmi* varies.

The purpose of this mission is to influence and actualise various state policies and practices, as well as to raise awareness of the opportunities and complexity of Indigenous teacher education. Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is important to the development of Indigenous education (Breidlid, 2013). It is critical to study the success of education for sustainable development in formal institutions, and whether that can incorporate Indigenous pedagogies to safeguard the futures of Indigenous peoples and their cultures to their continuing existence and measure of success. The distribution of traditional knowledge and linguistic terminology is linked with Indigenous sustainability; hence, Indigenous education is potentially an example of sustainable development.

## 7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the concept of Sami pedagogy as a convergence of traditional childrearing, and new understanding of children, with practical effects in socialisation and how this is interpreted in order to explain the evolution. Pedagogy is more than just teaching methodology; it ensures the coping of Indigenous languages and cultures and is a means to ensure human rights in a superdiverse society. It entails emphasising a broadly disseminated culturally and linguistically sustainable and responsive pedagogy. Sami pedagogy can be referred to as an established way, on an interdisciplinary level, to investigate, develop, and find solutions through research and practical implementation, in diverse Sami educational contexts, in the way Indigenous education has developed globally.

There is a growing need to enable Indigenous education's role in teacher education, both from Indigenous students' and mainstream perspectives. At the very least, all pre-service students in those regions, where Indigenous people exist, need to reach a level where they are prepared to take into account the diverse needs of all students at educational institutions. On the other hand, more competent teachers are needed to teach Indigenous languages and content. Thus, teacher education, in Indigenous contexts, needs to enable teachers to teach Indigenous languages and cultures to Indigenous students, as well as those who are involved in these regions, from a culturally inclusive and responsive perspective. Moreover, at a minimum, all pre-service students need to be prepared to teach curricular issues of Indigenous people to all students in countries that house Indigenous populations. To achieve these goals, all institutions from Indigenous regions should give study credits to Indigenous students, and also mainstream students, as well as produce research-based knowledge.

With these measures, teachers are prepared for the sustainable future of all students. At present, these measures are being actualised at different levels. There are different kinds of policies on how Indigenous education rights are granted. Currently, globalism and the move to suburban areas have raised new challenges for education to preserve Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities.

As the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and Sami matters is now all the time increasing, and there are still some gaps, there is an urgent call for fulfilling knowledge creation on many levels in Sami education and within mainstream education. There is also an urgent call for Indigenous children and youth to take on educational opportunities, that evolved from culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Teacher education is key when fulfilling both of these goals (Arola, 2020; Ngai & Koehn, 2011). Furthermore, teacher education concerning the Indigenous people's territories should prepare teachers who are competent to teach Indigenous languages and provide them with Indigenous students. Teaching should fulfil their demands and provide quality education for them. On the other hand, teacher education should also prepare teachers who will teach at mainstream schools and ensure that teaching about Indigenous peoples for mainstream pupils increases their knowledge adequately and increases equity and reduces racism in society.

Despite there being increasing awareness of these new demands for Indigenous education realisation at the national and regional levels, there is a gap in teachers' knowledge, hindering them from giving tuition for Indigenous issues to their students at a national level (e.g., Korte et al., 2024). Moreover, there are shortcomings of Indigenous language teachers, learning materials and resources (Arola, 2020). It was only in the 1960s that more inclusive educational practices were instated overall, which means that this is when Indigenous education and language education started to progress.

The absence of Indigenous content in university curricula is a problem that must also be addressed. Furthermore, there are beneficial practices, such as Sami teacher education, which is mostly conducted in various Sami languages, and language revitalisation activities. We can also learn from *Māori* models to make a significant shift in educational processes.

We welcome a culturally inclusive and responsive schooling policy for Indigenous education in the near future, worldwide, and realise that there are different practices and policies for Indigenous peoples and how they are treated. Furthermore, when Indigenous people increasingly move away from their traditional regions to suburban areas, new demands on education practices arise. National policies need to be abreast of these changes to ensure that ongoing gaps are taken care of, and that there are preparations in place to take care of the challenges that arise in the near future.

## Notes

- 1 Christian missionaries travelled around Sápmi as early as the Roman Catholic Middle Ages (Henrysson, 1993).
- 2 A few years ago, the City of Helsinki began a pilot program for Sami language instruction, and a similar initiative recently began in the City of Oulu Finland.
- 3 Research done in *Sámi allaskuvla* teacher education context: cf. Aikio, 2009; Balto, 1997, 2008; Keskitalo J. H., 1998; Keskitalo P., 2010; Nystad, 2003.
- 4 Author's translation.
- 5 More about understanding of child sociology created since 1980 children becoming in general important actors in their own lives in Alan Prout and Allison James (2015).

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# Connecting Traditional Knowledge and Institutionalised Education

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## Abstract

This chapter discusses how Sami primary school teacher education can be shaped in the context of the contemporary academic institutional setting, by including traditional knowledge. As part of the discussion, the chapter examines types of traditional knowledge and teaching modes that are utilised in teaching subjects, such as science and mathematics in Sami primary school teacher education. Since its inception, the Sámi University of Applied Sciences has provided Sami teacher education programmes for early childhood, primary and lower secondary school teachers. The programmes are taught in Sami and are founded on Sami culture-based practices. Traditionally, in the historically self-sufficient Sami society, knowledge has been transmitted from the older generation to the younger generation. The younger generation learnt from the older generation through an apprentice-like system. Today, there are challenges in maintaining this apprentice approach, as many Sami people live in cities outside their traditional living areas, and do not have access to culture-based practices. Further, because the Sami culture is multifaceted, like all cultures, not everyone engages in the same practices. Sami teacher education places the teaching profession in a variety of Sami and Indigenous contexts, where traditional knowledge is included as part of the curriculum.

## Keywords

Sami primary school teacher education – traditional knowledge – sustainability – knowledge holders – Sami and Indigenous science and mathematics teaching

## Čeahkkáigeassu

Dán artihkkala guovddáš jearaldahkan lea mo sámi vuodđoskuvlaoahpaheaddje-oahppu hábme odđaaígásaš akademalaš institušuvnna ja fievrrida árbevirolaš máhtu oahpahussii. Lassin guorahalle árbevirolaš máhtu ja oahpahusvugiid sámi

vuodđoskuvlaoahpaheaddjeoahpuid oahppoprográmmaid fágain matematihkas ja luonddufágas. Sámi allaskuvla lea vuodđudeami rájes fállan sámi mánáidgárde- ja vuodđoskuvlaoahpaheaddjeoahppoprográmmaid. Sámi oahpaheaddjeoahppu sajáidahtta sámi oahpaheaddjeámmáha mánggabealat sámi ja eamiálbmoga konteavstaide, mas árbevirolaš máhttu lea oassin oahpus. Sámi árbevirolaš práksisat leat oahpuid vuodđun ja prográmmaid oahpahusgiellan lea sámegeiella. Historjjálaččat lea báikkálaš sámi servodagain árbevirolaš máhttu fievrividuvvon buolvvas buvvii. Árbevirolaš oahpahallimálla vehkiin nuorat ohppe áššiid vuorrasit buolvvain árbevirolaš oahpahallimálla mielde. Dán oahppohallimálla sealluheapmi dálá servodagas lea hástalus, dasgo stuorra oassi sámi álbmogis orru gávpogiin, olggobeal iežaset ruovttuguovvluid, eaige beasa searvat báikkálaš árbevirolaš doaimmaide jámma. Dasa lassin lea sámi kultuvra girjái dego earáge kultuvrrat ja buohkat eai leat čatnon seamma ealáhussii.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi vuodđoskuvlaoahpaheaddjeoahpu – árbevirolaš máhttu – guovddášvuohta – árbečeahpit – sámi ja eamiálbmoga luonddufága ja matematihka oahpahus

### 1 Introduction

Sami teacher education programmes have been offered to early childhood educators, primary and lower secondary school teachers since the Sámi University of Applied Sciences was established in *Guovdageaidnu*, Norway in 1989. Sami teacher education is currently provided through flexible teaching methods, including online teaching, teaching on campus, and through practicum placements at Sami early childhood centres and Sami primary schools in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Sami teacher education programmes are taught in Sami, and are based on Sami culture and society, and culture-based educational perspectives, and the regulations and guidelines in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016; Universities of Norway UHR, 2017). The purpose of Sami teacher education is to ensure that teaching is grounded in Sami culture and society, incorporating culture-based teaching perspectives. It aims to provide an understanding of Sami conditions, highlight the importance of diverse learning environments and recognize the nature as a key setting for education. Additionally, it seeks to position the teaching profession within a Sami and Indigenous contexts, where traditional knowledge is integrated.

The development of Sami higher education at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences was visualised using a three-step model (Guttorm, 2020;

Guttorm et al., 2014). The process includes three steps: (1) establishing a strong knowledge base, (2) *luohkkálanjas várrečoahkkii* (from the classroom to the mountaintop), and (3) fostering awareness and Indigenisation. This includes an extended teaching arena with new teaching methods informed by Sami learning perspectives, content that highlight traditional knowledge within the educational setting and promote awareness of multiculturalism, Indigenous peoples and minorities. Currently, the process of raising awareness and indigenisation is ongoing (Guttorm, 2020). It is a process of rediscovering and reconstructing the identities of Sami and Indigenous people.

The Sami culture is multifaceted; while similar to other cultures, not everyone is connected to the same experiences, so there is cultural diversity within Sami society. Furthermore, not all Sami peoples' livelihood practices are connected to traditional Sami knowledge, because many of them live in cities outside their traditional living areas. Moreover, as highlighted in the primary school curriculum in Norway, the core values of the education and training shall 'help us to live, learn and work together in a complex world and with an uncertain future' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019, p. 4). Thus, climate and societal changes will affect our societies. Indigenous peoples, for example Sami reindeer herders that live in a close relationship with the environment, are among the first to face the direct impacts of global warming. For example, wintertime snow conditions can become more difficult, due to frozen snow crusts and ice formation. This demands new ways of coping with the challenges the change presents. According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020), in Sami primary schools, pupils must be taught how to assess various sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed, using theories, methods, arguments, experiences and evidence. Additionally, pupils should receive education rooted in Sami values, as well as in the Sami languages, culture and societal life (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Sami teacher education must position the teaching profession within a Sami and Indigenous context, or across diverse Sami and Indigenous contexts, where traditional knowledge is incorporated (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016; Universities of Norway UHR, 2017).

This chapter discusses how Sami primary school teacher education can be shaped in the context of the contemporary academic institutional settings, by including traditional knowledge. As part of the discussion, the chapter examines types of traditional knowledge and teaching modes that are utilised in teaching subjects, such as science and mathematics in Sami primary school teacher education. Sami teacher education should meet the needs of Sami schools (Universities of Norway UHR, 2017).

## 2 Previous Sami School Research

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for the development of primary education in Norway. The first Sami curriculum for ten-year primary schooling was implemented in 1997. The reform of the implementation of the Sami curriculum was investigated by Vuokko Hirvonen (2004) and her research group. In their assessment, they investigated how effectively the Sami curriculum was being implemented. The teachers involved in the study stated that Sami children and youth learned most effectively through hands-on activities outside the school grounds, often in what was described as an “outdoor school”. Key elements of culture-based teaching for the Sami pupils included freedom, independence, connection to the natural environment, and storytelling. The purpose of the Sami curriculum was to highlight and persevere the knowledge passed down from older generations, relatives, and local sources. Hirvonen and Jan Henry Keskitalo (2004) compare the Sami school to a symphony, raising questions about how the reform was carried out and whether the Sami curriculum came together as a cohesive whole. However, it was discovered that the schools lacked the cultural and linguistic expertise necessary to fully implement the Sami curriculum, making it an unfinished symphony.

To achieve the aim of delivering an authentic Sami curriculum, teachers need to find new ways of teaching. According to Hirvonen (2004), we need approaches that make Sami culture and language the foundation of all school activities. This way, Sami values and perspectives can be integrated into daily practices across various school subjects. Furthermore, Pigga Keskitalo (2010; cf. Keskitalo et al., 2013) emphasizes that schedules, classroom environment, physical design and the role of teachers should be redefined to reduce the gap between the majority culture and Sami culture, aligning with the goals of Sami curriculum. Based on these findings, a change in teacher education is highlighted as important. The original Sami curriculum from 1997 was initially replaced with another Sami curriculum in 2006, and subsequently, a new curriculum was implemented in 2020.

Based on Hirvonen’s research, Ylva Jannok Nutti (2010) conducted an action research study in the Sami schools in the Swedish part of Sapmi. Sami school teaching in Sweden covers primary school grade one through six. The study focused on teaching in mathematics, as there is no specific curriculum for teaching this subject in Sami schools. Instead, each teacher is responsible for developing a culture-based approach to teaching in mathematics. As a result, cultural adaptations are rarely made in the mathematics subject. In the study, teachers designed lessons that included mathematical tasks incorporating Sami

cultural contents from pupils' everyday activities, such as cooking, baking, sports, reindeer herding, measurements and related them to the metric system. The teachers expressed views on Sami culture-based learning approaches that were like those in Hirvonen's (2004) earlier research, In the action research, one of the teachers explained the importance of culture-based teaching, emphasizing that traditional knowledge should be incorporated into the educational system. Another teacher observed that Sami culture-based teaching could offer Sami pupils the chance to learn academic subjects in their own language while engaging with Sami traditional knowledge. However, both teachers expressed that they lacked the necessary knowledge and time to developed a culture-based pedagogy

### 3 Approaches to Indigenous Teacher Education

According to Broke Madden (2015), teacher educators include Indigenous content and teaching modes into teacher education as following; (1) Learning from traditional Indigenous modes of teaching, (2) Pedagogy for decolonizing, (3) Indigenous and anti-racist education, and (4) Indigenous and place-based education. Madden stresses that these ways intermediate effective pedagogical approaches for integrating Indigenous knowledge into teacher education.

Jannok Nutti (2023) stresses that the first way 'Learning from traditional Indigenous modes of teaching' and the fourth way 'Indigenous and place-based education' are ways that essential parts of how Sami knowledge and cultural-based teaching modes are incorporated in Sami primary school teacher education. As Madden (2015) highlights teaching ways rooted in traditional Indigenous teaching methods are based on what is commonly known as traditional knowledge. In 'Indigenous and place-based education', teacher educators seek to connect teaching with both traditional knowledge and the realities that arise from the interconnected relationships shaped by specific places. Teaching frequently takes place beyond the traditional classroom, at locations serving as a means of renewing connections between people, place and non-human beings. Elders, or knowledge holders, often impart teachings about and on these places.

Sami traditional knowledge is 'the collective wisdom and skills of the Sami people used to enhance their livelihood for centuries' (Porsanger & Guttorm, 2001, p. 18). The knowledge ties the past, present and future together, as it has been passed down from one generation to the next during livelihood activities, transmitted orally and through hands-on-work and practical experience (Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011). Activities such as reindeer herding, fishing,

hunting, berry picking or other chores, are linked to different seasons and different places where these resources were available (Nilsen et al. 2022; Sara, 2003).

Jannok Nutti (2018) highlighted the passing down of Sami traditional knowledge (e.g. Nergård, 2006; Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011; Sara, 2003). Children today continue to engage in livelihood activities, learning about the best spots for fishing or berry-picking, and children from reindeer-herding families become acquainted with the land their families traverse with the reindeer herds. For those in reindeer herding, it is essential to learn about pastures, migratory routes, calving grounds, and other areas significant to the herds. When a reindeer herder speaks about the grazing areas, they often begin with place names, as each significant location has its own name tied to its historical use and traditional livelihoods. Many of these places are also immersed in stories, and through these narratives, children and young people come to grasp the land. Locations where people have lived are often also accompanying to specific yoiks, which can carry memories from the past. As these memories are shared, children and young peoples are able to connect with the ways of life of previous generations, lives that resemble their own. The memory could, for instance, recount the quality of grazing grounds, or share warnings about dangerous areas, often starting with an accident at the locations, and serving as a cautionary tale to remain vigilant when passing through.

Living in harmony with the land is a fundamental Sami value (Kuokkanen, 2009). The connection to the land are central in Oskal's (2000) investigation of Sami reindeer herders' perspectives on a meaningful life through the concept of reindeer luck. Reindeer luck depends on how one cares for the reindeer and maintains a good relationship with the land, including pastures, migration routes, calving grounds, or any plans that is seen as the home of the reindeer herd. In respecting these places, one learns to get along with others. Solveig Joks et al. (2020) discussed the Sami landscape word *meahcci*, and concluded with 'we are where we are, we do what we can do, we attend to it, and we try to care for it' (Joks et al., 2020, p. 12). The connection to the landscape is rooted in care. In teacher education, during an outdoor session with the student teachers, the concept of reindeer luck, along with appropriate ways to express humility and gratitude, is explored (Jannok Nutti, 2017). This discussion also considers practical implications for the classroom, supporting students extend insight into certain aspects of Sami lifestyles and worldviews.

The traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples provides valuable contexts that can deepen our understanding of the connections within the natural environment, the concept 'traditional ecological knowledge' (TEK) is part of traditional knowledge; it describes the traditional knowledge about animals, plants and their interactions (Berkes, 2018). This type of knowledge is more holistic

than the science of ecology; it consists of the culture of the place, traditions, rituals, stories and myths, which are inseparable, creating a knowledge base (Berkes & Berkes, 2009). TEK pedagogy should, according to Eun-Ji Amy Kim et al. (2017), respect the following five dimensions: (1) A place-based teaching approach, (2) Environmental education for sustainability, (3) Epistemological multiculturalism in science education, (4) Culturally relevant curricula, and (5) TEK cosmology. Tamsin Meaney et al. (2021), in connection with Jerry Lipka et al. (2005), also highlight that working with Indigenous communities in school mathematics can result in students learning more, as well as strengthening their Indigenous culture. Robby Zidny et al. (2020) emphasise that Indigenous knowledge provides valuable contexts that link science education to broader, more holistic worldviews essential for fostering sustainability. However, they note that more effort is needed to integrate traditional knowledge into science teaching, and this process must be approached with particular care and sensitivity due to the differing worldviews involved. Ethical considerations may involve discussions around the history of colonialism and its lasting impact on both societies and science education.

#### 4 Method

This chapter is based on a narrative methodological approach in which 'Narrative is retrospective meaning making' (Chase, 2005, p. 656) is used. The method was inspired by Gunvor Guttorm (2020), and the way she used her experiences to develop the duodji (traditional Sami handicraft) at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. Like Guttorm (2020), we see value in using our own experiences. Guttorm stresses that in her writing of her working life experiences, she was both narrator and interpreter. It was an approach to research and write that seeks to describe and analyze personal and professional experiences, in order to try to understand these experiences (Guttorm, 2020). For Jannok Nutti, this entails the experiences of being a programme coordinator and an educator in a primary school teacher education programme; for Máret J. Heatta, it includes the experiences of being a coordinator for and educator in science subjects. Furthermore, the narrative approach includes interviews, or rather a conversation, with the mathematics subject's coordinator and educator. Before writing the chapter and having conversations about the subjects, some basic thematic didactic questions (what, why and how) were asked.

The data resulting from using this type of introspection on experiences can be in the form of a narrative (Denzin, 1989). In writing, the researcher may

also consult with texts to help with recall (Delany, 2004). In this chapter, the Sámi University of Applied Sciences teacher education programme, course syllabuses, and teaching plans were consulted to help recall our experiences.

## 5 Sami Primary School Teacher Education

The Sami primary school teacher education programme at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences has a pedagogy of education and education with interdisciplinary content, with a focus on primary teaching as the main subject. The main subject is connected to scientific theory and method courses and the master's thesis. The programme also contains mandatory primary school subject courses, such as Sami language teaching, mathematics teaching and Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish language teaching. The student teacher also conducts a practicum in connection to all these subjects. The student teachers can choose to take another primary school subject course or take a course that can be relevant for teaching in primary schools. The primary school subjects are science, social studies, duodji (Sami traditional handicraft), physical training, religion, and food and health. Relevant courses could focus on an aesthetic subject, such as content from duodji, yoik, music, and storytelling, or they could focus on traditional knowledge.

Since the start of the primary school teacher education master's programme in 2017, students have taken and completed the mandatory primary school subjects: Sami, Mathematics, and Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish, and the elective primary school subjects, for example duodji, or science. In this chapter, we do not focus on the language subjects, or duodji, as this is a Sami subject. Instead, we discuss the science and mathematics teaching subjects.

## 6 Sami Science and Mathematics Teaching Examples

In science teaching, it has been important to include traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), as well as traditional knowledge, using differentiated teaching methods as part of the students' teaching practice. Science and TEK have common ground, and they can be taught together. Indigenous peoples have inquired knowledge through processes that are reminiscent of the scientific method; thus, knowledge is built through empirical observations of phenomena in nature. These observations form a somewhat repeatable pattern, which in turn forms the knowledge. This shows that science is not foreign to Indigenous peoples (Berkes, 2018; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2011).

When teaching Sami science, science concepts are connected and demonstrated with traditional practices, such as *njuovvan* (reindeer slaughter), *guollebivdin* (fishing), *gárdun* (ptarmigan snaring) and snow terminology. Examples of concepts that are natural to include in these activities are physiology (reindeer slaughtering and fish), ecology (ptarmigan snaring), and physics and chemistry (snow terminology). The options for including science in these practices are manifold, and the educator develops the teaching approach depending on the student group, and how well the subject was received.

For example, the science-related subject, the Sami knowledge holder(s) or elder(s), demonstrate the reindeer slaughter process, and the students actively participate in the process. Moreover, the process unfolds over the course of several days, and takes place in a cultural setting. The aim is to give the students the opportunity to learn how to utilise every part of the reindeer in a sustainable way. Sustainability is a core value in the science curriculum; thus, it must be included in all the school subjects (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In Sami traditional knowledge, *birgen* [coping] refers to a holistic way of life that promotes sustainable development and values, and sustainable use of resources. It consists of ethical and moral guidelines on how to live one's life with respect to nature, people and spirituality (Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011). These findings are aligned with the national core curriculum, which states that every pupil in Norway is to be given knowledge about Sami history, culture and language. The curriculum also states that the school should promote culture in the community and serve as a link between elders and youth (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). As Kristine Nystad (2007) stresses, due to the culture gap between the school and the local society, conflict has arisen between home and school, where elders do not recognise the importance of what pupils learn. There is an urgent need to make room for this knowledge in institutional settings before the knowledge holders pass on and the traditional knowledge disappears.

In mathematics teaching, the Sami narrative tradition is central, and the mathematics educator links the teaching to Jens-Ivar Nergård (2022). Nergård (2022) stresses that the worldviews inherent in the narratives link the narratives to the traditional cosmology and other cultural expressions. The teaching in mathematics is organised in blocks with intensive gatherings. This creates the opportunity for more projects based on in-depth learning facilitated by the educator, together with invited Sami knowledge holders or elders. When teaching mathematics, activities are linked to mathematical concepts and tasks, incorporating cultural elements such as the *lávnu* [a Sami tiipii-like dwelling], *ruvden* (a Sami braiding technique), Sami cooking, tasks related to pine trees and local surroundings. This includes utilising maps. The goal is to

move away from textbook-based teaching and use a more practical and functional approach. When teaching mathematics, the Sami language is central, and the students, together with the educator, investigate concepts and reflect on different ways to express the concepts, and to count. That is an important part of the teaching – as Anne Birgitte Fyhn (2011) stresses, our language is an expression of how we think and how we organise our lives. There are different ways to organise life based on what is appropriate in Sami cultural settings. Fyhn (2011) emphasises that it is important for the teacher education students to be aware of this and learn how to use that awareness in the teaching. This is also central in the teaching of sciences.

The practical work, and students' active participation in the activities, are central parts of teaching a subject. In mathematics, traditional measures and measurement methods are central. In earlier years, the mathematics educator gave the students an assignment to investigate the measurements, but now the educator first gives the students the opportunity to become familiar with the measurements and learn how to use them. The teaching is conducted in collaboration with Sami language educators, or traditional knowledge holders or elders. The science educator uses elders in teaching practice when possible. When students get the opportunity to have elders as instructors, and use knowledge from the Sami culture, combined with experimental scientific methods, they get an in-depth learning experience. For example, both the Sami and Norwegian science curricula emphasise the use of local culture and society as a resource (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016), as hands-on and inquiry-based learning, often in an extended classroom. This way of teaching has ties to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning. Thus, the teaching strengthens and develops the students' language and their cultural knowledge. Many Indigenous cultures, including that of the Sami, emphasise the importance of learning from elders, storytelling, place-based learning, learning from nature, observational learning, and having a holistic worldview (Aikio, 2010; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2011). The teaching takes the Sami language and traditional knowledge as a starting point for the learning and places' practical works. However, it is more than just practical mathematics, as highlighted by the mathematics educator. It is practical work based on Sami values, and it allows the Sami culture to provide the premise for teaching the subjects. The sciences and mathematics both have an interdisciplinary standpoint, and the teacher educators integrate practical and theoretical teaching, both in the classroom and in alternative teaching spaces, with and without external resources. The activities can be both familiar and unfamiliar to the students.

## 7 Conclusion

In the mathematics and science teaching subjects in Sami primary school teacher education, teaching includes Sami traditional knowledge from interdisciplinary activities from, for example, reindeer herding, hunting, *lávvu* (tiipii), *duodji*, cooking, and the use of the local surroundings. The Sami narrative tradition and language are central in this teaching. elders are used in the teaching to teach traditional knowledge in Sami primary school teacher education, and it is important to make room for their knowledge in contemporary institutional teaching settings, as it can give room, for example, for learning how to utilise every part of the reindeer. Not wasting anything is in line with Sami core values. Teaching that includes traditional knowledge can give room for learning how to live a more sustainable life, and sustainability is also a core value in the science curriculum.

The teacher educators develop the teaching content and methods based on the student group, and the outcome of the work, with the goals of creating in-depth learning experiences for the students and developing and strengthening the teacher students' Sami language and identity.

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# An Alternative Model of Indigenous Teacher Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

*Huia Tomlins-Jahnke*

## Abstract

Within higher education in *Aotearoa* New Zealand, an alternative Indigenous model of initial teacher education (ITE) was established in 2011, to prepare graduate teachers for one of two systems of education – *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* or *Māori* language immersion primary schools. A significant element of this Indigenous model of ITE is the partnership formed between the University and *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* Governance body called *Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa* (TRN). Many members of TRN are the architects of the grassroots revolution of *Te Kōhanga Reo* (Early Childhood *Māori* language nests) and the *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* movements of the 1980s. The *Māori* are the Indigenous people of *Aotearoa* New Zealand, a country colonised by the British in the 19th century. Colonial systems based on European customs and values were established, including state schooling aimed at assimilating the *Māori* to a European way of life by denying the *Māori* language from being spoken within school precincts, and *Māori* culture and values from being included in the school curriculum. Over 150 years of assimilatory policies and practices negatively impacted on the education outcomes of generations of *Māori* people which, by 1981, became the impetus for the establishment of an alternative system of education for, with, and by *Māori* people. The aim of this chapter is to share the experiences of establishing and implementing a unique and alternative Indigenous model of ITE provision, within a mainstream Eurocentric university, in collaboration with the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* community. As the only university based Indigenous ITE model in *Aotearoa* New Zealand, this chapter draws from information and data collected over a decade by Massey University in collaboration with TRN, and which also provides the basis for a set of key principles that have emerged in the implementation of the programme.

## Keywords

*Māori* education – Indigenous – initial teacher education – *Kura Kaupapa Māori*

## Čoahkkáigeassu

*Te Kura Kaupapa Māori ja māori* giela ealáskahttima oahpaheaddjeoahput leat doaimman Aotearoas Ođđa-Selánda jagi 2011 rájes. Álggahuvvon fáladagat vuodđuduvvet *māori álbmoga iežas* dárbbuide ja ulbmilin lea oahpahit sin diliid birra. Prográmmat vuodđuduvvet Massey universitehta ja Te Kura Kaupapa Māori hálddahusa Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa (TRN) oktasášbargui. Mánegasat TRN miellahtuin leat álgoálgosaččat doaimman 1980-logus vuodđuduvvon *Te Kōhanga Reo Māori* árrabajásgeassima giellabeasi álggaheamis ja *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* lihkadusas. Dát leat áidna eamiálbmotoahpahusa allaoahpahusa prográmmat *Aotearoas Ođđa-Selánda*. *Māorit leat* eamiálbmot Aotearoa Ođđa-Selánda, man Británnia koloniserii 1800-logus. Koloniála vuogádagat vuodđuduvve eurohpalaš dábiide ja árvvuide. *Māorit* assimilerejuvvojedje stáhta skuvllain eurohpalaš eallinvugiide ja seammás māori giela geavaheami skuvllain gildojuvvui. *Māori* kulturvra ja árvvut eai lean oassin skuvllaid oahppoplánaid. Čállois ovdanbuktojuvvojit duogášdieđut prográmmaid birra ja dieđut mat leat čohkkejuvvon Massey universitehtas ovttasbargus TRN:ain. Čohkkejuvvon dieđut leat addán vuodu oahppoprográmmaid ovdánahttimii.

## Čoavddasánit

māori skuvlejupmi – eamiálbmot – oahpaheaddjeoahput – Kura Kaupapa Māori

### 1 Introduction

In *Aotearoa* New Zealand, the provision of Indigenous-centred initial teacher education (ITE) within the academy is a very recent development, and a response to an increasing demand to prepare teachers for the *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* system of education.<sup>1</sup> In this system, the *Māori* language is the medium of instruction, underpinned by a philosophy predicated on *Māori* knowledge, culture and values as being central. As a movement, *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* represents the realisation of *Māori* aspirations for what counts as education, and the rejection of a colonial system that has successfully undereducated *Māori* learners for generations.

A brief history of *Māori* education within the colonial/neo-colonial context is outlined, in order to understand the significance of what has been achieved

in developing an alternative model of Indigenous teacher education within a western university setting, in partnership with the *Kaupapa Māori* imperatives; that *Māori* language, culture and values are central to *Māori* learner success; that the philosophy of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system is embedded within the ITE programmes; that access and participation of the *Māori* is increased when the realities of *Māori* lifeways are taken into account; and that *Māori* experts on a Board of Studies are best qualified to measure excellence and the quality of programme content and delivery. It is these principles that contribute to the over-arching question regarding what factors have been key to the success of an alternative Indigenous ITE model.

## 2 Historical Overview of Māori Education

New Zealand was colonised by the British during the 19th Century. In 1840 some 500 chiefs signed a founding covenant, the Treaty of Waitangi, with the British Crown. The Treaty gave permission for British citizens to enter and settle in New Zealand, and to establish governance, but with the guarantee that tribes would maintain sovereignty over lands, waterways and resources, while also receiving the benefits of British citizenship (Orange, 1987). Since the signing, the Treaty was never honored by the Crown, which has been the source of contention by *Māori* tribes ever since (Kawharu, 1989).

From the early 19th century, the first systems of schooling were the mission schools established by Christian missionaries, who Ranginui Walker (2004) describes as the advance guard of colonisation. The missionary schools flourished as the *Māori* ardently sought the opportunities the new world offered. In customary society, knowledge acquisition was highly valued. There was a stratified system of learning, where higher forms of knowledge were only accessible to selected authorities, through specialised schools of higher learning called *Wānanga*. The success of mission education was due in large measure to *Māori* as the language of instruction, which minimised cultural dislocation – in terms of the realities of *Māori* lifeways and what they were learning in these schools (Jahnke, 2021). Through the medium of the *Māori* language, *Māori* people were able to make sense of the scriptures from a *Māori* perspective.

However, as far as the missionaries were concerned, education was simply a mechanism for civilising the ‘natives’, which aligned with 19th Century thinking and colonial practice aimed at assimilating indigenous peoples to a ‘civilised’ way of life. By the early years of the 20th century, *Māori* language had been banned from the school precincts, *Māori* knowledge was outlawed as a result of the 1908 *Tohunga* Suppression Act, and the school curriculum, imported

from England, paved the way for intergenerational *Māori* underachievement that has persisted throughout the 20th century. Government interventions to *Māori* underachievement were mainly unsuccessful because they were solutions based on Eurocentric values, attitudes and standards that upheld a deficit orientation towards *Māori* learners that still holds today. The result of 200 years of miseducation of *Māori* learners is the successful reproduction of *Māori* underachievement, due in large part to the disjuncture between *Māori* realities and the school habitus – the curriculum, the structures, systems and Eurocentricity of schooling in *Aotearoa* New Zealand (Tomlins Jahnke, 2011).

In 1981, in response to the urgent need for *Māori* language survival, *Māori* leaders proposed an educational revolution by establishing early childhood *Māori* language immersion centres called *Te Kōhanga Reo*. Within a year *Māori* participation in early childhood soared as *Te Kōhanga Reo* were established by *Māori* communities throughout the country and outside of the State system. The government refused to acknowledge *Māori* aspirations and to provide state funding for a separate *Māori* system of education, despite *Māori* adults contributing to state taxes. But the State was powerless to stem the revolution, and the proliferation of *Te Kohanga Reo* that sprang up across the nation. Two years later, *Māori* education leaders unanimously passed a remit declaring the existing schooling system to be failing *Māori* learners, and urged *Māori* people to resist and withdraw from State education by establishing an alternative schooling model called *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori*, based on the principles underlying *Te Kōhanga Reo* (Smith, 1991); that is, a system of education for *Māori*, by *Māori*, predicated on *Māori* language, culture and values.

The remit was confirmed by the Waitangi Tribunal<sup>2</sup> in 1985 who found that, not only had the Government's education policy seriously harmed the *Māori* language, but that the combined effects of these policies on *Māori* children rendered them 'uneducated by normal standards' (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 1). The Waitangi Tribunal ruled that the education system 'is being operated in breach of the Treaty' and recommended an urgent inquiry into the education of *Māori* children (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 38). The damning outcomes of the Tribunal's report led to the Government finally agreeing to fund the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system of schooling,<sup>3</sup> although with significantly less resources than provided to English medium schools.<sup>4</sup>

In the intervening years, this alternative system remains a contested space (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2019). State resourcing of *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* remains low in comparison to mainstream schools, and tensions about what counts in the education of *Māori* children, in terms of the New Zealand curriculum, also remain contested. Many *Māori* parents have opted to send their children

to *Kura Kaupapa Māori* for their entire compulsory schooling, but only 12% of all *Māori* children are enrolled. The majority of *Māori* children are located in English medium schools (Tomlins Jahnke, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

The degree to which the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system offers autonomy, in terms of decisions about what counts in the education of *Māori* learners, has led to high levels of achievement and success in gaining relevant qualifications to enter higher education. Graduates of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* are a new generation of high achieving ‘native’ speakers of the *Te Reo Māori/Māori* language who are confident, secure in their identity as *Māori*, and accomplished in two worlds. Despite their entire education being delivered through the medium of the *Māori* language, many *Kura Kaupapa Māori* graduates go on to higher education including universities in Great Britain, Canada and the USA, studying diverse disciplines such as law, medicine, fine arts, political studies, and Indigenous development. Studies have found that graduates of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* are more likely to complete tertiary qualifications than their peers educated in English medium/mainstream schools (Crooks & Flockton, 2001). Furthermore, the characteristics that underpin *Māori* underachievement in mainstream schooling such as high suspension, truancy and dropout rates simply do not exist in *Kura Kaupapa Māori*.

The success of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* was confirmed by a recently launched report *Te Kura Huanui: The Treasures of Successful Pathways*, which found that *Kura Kaupapa Māori* education provided models of excellence for *Māori* education. Key conditions found to be essential for *Māori* learners to enjoy and achieve success were:

- a. *Mana Māori motuhake* – being *Māori*
- b. *Tikanga Māori* – ethical practice and customary protocols
- c. *Whanaungatanga* – relationships and connectedness
- d. *Ako* – Teaching and Learning
- e. *Kanohi Whakakite* – leaders as visionaries (Ministry of Education, 2021a).

One of the architects of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, Kathy Dewes, reminds us ‘in the 1980s *Māori* mobilized against the imminent linguistic and cultural extinction ... Forty years later we are grateful the government was now acknowledging that *Māori* could do it for themselves’ (Wiltshire, 2021).

The grassroots revolution in *Māori* schooling that emerged in the 1980s was also a revelation in the mindset of *Māori* leaders and educationalists, and their resistance to State oppression in favor of transformative action. And it is this legacy, this mindset of transformative action and vision, that is the inspiration and motivation behind the development of an alternative *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE programme.

### 3 An Alternative Model of Indigenous Initial Teacher Education

Offering *Māori*-centred ITE programmes within the Academy, where *Māori* educators decide what counts in the preparation of graduate teachers for *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, requires an alternative model of provision to that of the standard ITE programmes offered by tertiary providers. At Massey University two *Māori* ITE Programmes are offered by the School of *Māori* Studies and not, as is the usual practice, by the Institute of Education. The situatedness of the programmes within a *Māori*-centred academic environment is purposeful and political. The *Māori* education faculty need to control how the programmes are provided to *Māori* communities, within the boundaries of state legislation and university regulations. Furthermore, to maintain the integrity of the programmes and to ensure the safety of the *Māori* faculty, the programmes need to be located where the *Māori* language, culture, values and ways of being are norms taken for granted, such as within a *Māori* studies department. Outside of these conditions, the *Māori* faculties located in mainstream departments risk exposure to institutional bias and Eurocentric attitudes (Kidman & Chu, 2015), thereby creating more barriers to establishing *Māori*-centred qualifications. In *Aotearoa* New Zealand, university-based Indigenous degree programmes are extremely rare. The barriers to accepting Indigenous disciplines as legitimate for stand-alone qualifications remain deeply embedded in Eurocentric imperatives. They are imperatives whereby Indigenous knowledge is subject to the wider politics associated with western hierarchies of knowledge – what counts as valid knowledge? Whose knowledge counts, who decides, and on what basis? And central to the academy, as Foucault (1980) argues, relates to what discourses can be expressed about knowledge; who can speak, when can they speak, and with what authority?

The development and provision of alternative *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE programmes draws on the experiences of university-based *Māori* academics collaborating in partnership with school principals and leading teachers of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*. Drawing on practitioner approaches and experiences, what was found to work successfully was the model centred on establishing authentic partnerships between the *Māori* community and the academy. Furthermore, the transformation of ITE in the preparation of graduate teachers for the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system required the university taking into account the aspirations of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* community, that their children are educated through the medium of the *Māori* language.

As distinguished Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith maintains:

We cannot have a sustainable socio-economic revolution within *Māori* communities without a prior or simultaneous education revolution.

Such a revolution must build on our own models of transformation that appropriately respond to our aspirations to engage with the whole world while simultaneously growing our cultural and iwi citizenship responsibilities. (G. H. Smith, 2015, p. 6)

*The Kura Kaupapa Māori* system of education remains seriously under-resourced by the Government, so staffing and resource capacity at all levels are a constant challenge (Ministry of Education, 2019). After all, compared with over 170 years of mainstream English medium education, *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* have been in existence for a mere forty years. Until recently, the teaching workforce comprised fluent *Māori*-speaking teachers trained in mainstream ITE programmes, and teacher supply has become an increasing challenge. Currently there is a small pool of expert practitioners leading the field as principals and lead teachers. At Massey University, access to these experts for the development of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE has been achieved through a professional partnership and collaboration with *Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa* (TRN). TRN is a council of expert lead teachers and principals including the original architects and pioneers of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system. They advocate on behalf of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* sector, with the Government and other agencies, on all matters to do with state education policy, procedures and practices.

An initial approach by the *Māori* faculty to the TRN leadership in 2009 sought assistance to co-construct an ITE programme for *Kura Kaupapa Māori*. This approach was based on the assumption that as practitioners and architects of the system, TRN were the experts with long experience working in the sector, transforming whole communities through *Kura Kaupapa Māori* education. And without their combined level of expertise, experience, knowledge and skills, a programme that made sense to the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* sector could not be achieved.

From the outset, an authentic collaborative partnership was forged which proved to be integral to conceptualising and co-constructing two *Kaupapa Māori* immersion ITE programmes over the course of a decade. This was achieved through strengthening relationships with participating *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, their learners and the wider community, including local tribal networks. The *Māori* faculty capitalised on the unique learning management systems and structures of the university, where changes were sought by the administration to accommodate a preferred *Māori*-centred approach to programme delivery.

The community partnership method for delivering *Kura Kaupapa Māori* immersion ITE programmes within the academy is a pragmatic and positive solution to the preparation of graduate teachers for the *Kura Kaupapa Māori*

sector. And because the programmes are aligned with Government policy (such as increasing *Māori* teacher supply) and university teaching qualifications, the graduates are qualified to teach in either system – the *Māori* medium or English medium. Each year a detailed report on the programmes' progress, student academic outcomes, the retention rates and graduation statistics are formally presented at the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* sectors' national conference. The presentation of a report to the Conference is significant because it offers the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* sector not only an opportunity to provide advice and guidance, but also to challenge and generally hold the university and TRN to account, in terms of student success and the quality of ITE provision for their sector. By contrast to the eurocentricity of English medium education and schooling, *Māori* language, culture, knowledge and values are norms that are taken for granted in *Kura Kaupapa Māori*. Therefore, teacher training programmes must also take into account these norms and the nature of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, which calls for an alternative model. Historically all ITE programmes, including the *Māori* medium,<sup>6</sup> were constructed around priorities based on the English medium ITE. Recently, Government ITE policies and procedures have allowed for the development of the *Māori* medium, including the alternative *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE programme developed at Massey University.

Since the 1980s the provision of *Māori* medium ITE evolved as part of the national growth of *Māori* teacher education within Colleges of Education. The *Kura Kaupapa Māori* programmes however, are purposely situated within the multidisciplinary research and teaching environment of *Māori* Studies. Underpinning this model are at least six key principles that characterise the strength of the programmes as a necessary alternative, and which contribute to student success, but also transform the lives of the graduates, their families and their communities. So, what are the factors or key principles that have contributed to the success of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE model of provision?

The first is the principle of partnership which was established between the university and TRN and remains a key to the success of the programmes. For the university, the relationship with TRN is paramount in terms of the authenticity of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE programmes that have been co-constructed collaboratively, and the acceptability by the *Māori* community of such programmes being university based. There remains deep distrust among the *Māori* community of *Māori* programmes that are located within a university, particularly with the assimilatory agenda such institutions support, the power and control they wield over what knowledge counts, and the Eurocentric systems they support and perpetuate (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2019).<sup>7</sup> An important factor for the TRN supporting the university is the strong relationship that has been built up over many years. Paradoxically, many of the TRN members

are alumni of institutions, such as Massey University, where the programmes are located. Most local *Kura Kaupapa Māori* are staffed by graduates of the two Massey immersion programmes. Members of the TRN are well-known experts who have 'walked the talk' in the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* movement since its inception in the 1980s. They have struggled to establish *Kohanga Reo*, *Kura Kaupapa Māori* and *Wharekura*/secondary schools within their regions of Aotearoa New Zealand at great personal cost. They remain actively involved as principals, teachers, and politically active champions of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* and the survival of the Māori language.

The second principle is that of the *Te Reo Māori/Māori* language which is applied as the language of instruction for every course in the programmes. There is a correlation between pedagogy and practice relevant to *Kura Kaupapa Māori* in the preparation of teachers for the sector. Despite programme entry criteria requiring fluency in the *Māori* language, extending proficiency is a major emphasis. The assumption is that the *Te Reo Māori/Māori* language is the most relevant medium through which core values are best communicated, and the curriculum, based on *Māori* knowledge and culture, are understood. The programmes provide intensive *Māori* language learning grounded in *Māori* values and perspectives, as expressed through the philosophy of *Te Aho Matua*. Preparation of graduate teachers includes *Kaupapa Māori* pedagogical practices that also take account of tribal variances in dialect, customs and traditions that are practiced within the various *Kura Kaupapa Māori*. Over the duration of their study, students are exposed to a range of *Māori* language experts, teaching professionals and linguists.

The third principle is the application of *Te Aho Matua*, the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system. It is the only philosophy of education to emerge from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Te Aho Matua* is legislated by the government (Education Act 155A *Te Aho Matua*) and TRN are attributed as the guardians. All *Kura Kaupapa Māori* must subscribe to this philosophy, and it is what differentiates *Kura Kaupapa Māori* from any other type of school. *Te Aho Matua* is embedded within the curriculum of the programmes in order to orient students in their development as graduate teachers, and in their preparation for teaching in *Kura Kaupapa Māori* settings. An underlying assumption of *Te Aho Matua* is that quality teaching occurs when teachers are culturally competent within the *Māori* world, are self-aware and critically reflective of their practice and role within the *kura/school*, with the learners, their *whānau/families*, *hapū/subtribe*, *iwi/tribes*, and within other national and global contexts. Thus, curriculum planning, design and co-construction of every course within the programmes reflect *Te Aho Matua*.

The fourth principle of access and participation is applied by offering the programmes through mixed modality; that is online via the university's

virtual platform, which is supplemented by several *kanohi ki te kanohi*/face-to-face contact courses based at the university. The strength of mixed mode delivery is that it offers access for *Māori* students located anywhere in New Zealand, which allows greater participation without the need to relocate to the university, but to remain within the supportive environment of their families. Graduates of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* are accustomed to the close comfort of family-centred schooling. However, while some *kura kaupapa* graduates survive the challenges of university, many high achievers do not, due in large part to experiencing the university environment as impersonal and alienating, so they leave, unable to cope with overwhelming feelings of isolation.<sup>8</sup> The distance learning option therefore offers an optimum opportunity for students to complete their degree. However, there is also a risk in undermining the cultural preference and value of *kanohi ki te kanohi* or face-to-face contact and communication. For this reason, a specialist teacher support role, based at the university, was created and embedded in the programme to assist students with the online teaching and learning mode. With strong community links, TRN experts located in *Kura Kaupapa Māori* contribute to teaching in the programmes as an adjunct faculty. The distance learning option means collaborative teaching relationships with the adjunct faculty are achieved. They attend the week-long courses in person and teach the distance delivery options via the university's learning management system, to which all the adjunct faculty have access.<sup>9</sup>

The fifth principle of field-based support is applied at the point of selection and entry when students are assigned a *kura hāpai*, or host school. *Kura hāpai* volunteer to host students for the duration of their studies, thereby providing the benefits of a professional and family-centred environment. Some students are rural based, often with limited or no access to the internet, so in these instances *kura hāpai* provides students with access to computer and video conferencing facilities. Teachers in *kura hāpai* also offer students professional support and mentoring. This arrangement is a key facet of field-based delivery which serves to ensure the retention of students studying at a distance. Strong support for students from their *kura hāpai* contributes to their retention, and to students successfully completing their programme of study.<sup>10</sup>

The sixth principle is that of quality and excellence. Besides the regular university systems for ensuring quality assurance and excellence, a Board of Studies called *Te Pae Aho* was established, with a critical role of overseeing quality assurance and excellence in terms of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* ITE, *Māori* language proficiency, and the governance of the programme in accordance with *Māori* customs and values. It was also a strategy to protect the programmes from institutional interference. The Board comprises renowned, high profile, expert elders and retired university faculty members, who are not only cognisant of *Māori* immersion education because they are also pioneers of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*,

but they are experienced in the vagaries of mainstream education, and the pervasive and oppressive institutional systems and structures that have served to undermine the production of Indigenous knowledge within the academy.

#### 4 Conclusion

Developing and implementing *Kaupapa Māori* ITE programmes has been complex and challenging. Complex because the programmes are taught through the medium of the *Māori* language, in collaboration with a community organisation, and where all the courses are written in *Māori*, which has posed challenges for university administrators, systems and processes that are typically Eurocentric. The programmes require specialist expertise of the university faculty who are fluent speakers of the *Māori* language, who have taught in *Kura Kaupapa Māori* as past principals and/or lead teachers. The Adjunct Faculty are specialist community-led experts from TRN. Within the university, the programmes are purposely located in the School of *Māori* Studies, rather than at the Institute of Education, where mainstream ITE programmes are typically based. This can be problematic for an institution where perceived duplication may be present, and where there is often little understanding of the differences between western English medium ITE versus indigenous/*Māori* medium ITE.

The combined effects of the mixed mode delivery of distance ITE courses in the *Māori* language, aimed at the preparation of graduate teachers for the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system of education from within a western research-led university, ultimately results in various levels of contestation in terms of complying with, and adapting to, university structures and processes, some of which are often in opposition to *Kaupapa Māori* practices (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2019). These challenges have led to the development of unique structures, for example the programme design, and processes such as student selection, that are specifically tailored for *Kaupapa Māori* ITE. This outcome has been achieved through being independent of Eurocentric imperatives in the provision of ITE, and by adhering to a set of principles in the implementation of an alternative *Kaupapa Māori* model of teacher education.

The overall vision for the future of *Māori* education ultimately lies with positive outcomes for all *Māori* families. These are families who are self-managing, they are *Māori* speaking, especially within the home, they live healthy lifestyles and participate fully within society. Our families will confidently participate in the *Māori* world, within the wider society and global contexts. They will be economically secure as cohesive, resilient, and nurturing family units.

The demographic projections to 2050 indicate a browning of the *Aotearoa* New Zealand nation, where the populations of *Māori* and Pacifica peoples are

predicted to grow at a faster rate than the European population. This changing demographic is not the only reason why current *Māori* underachievement in the mainstream system of education is not to be tolerated, but such change has serious implications for the future of *Aotearoa* New Zealand. Some answers lie in the principles that underpin the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* System where *Māori* achievement and success are more likely to be realised (Ministry of Education, 2021b). Such principles underpin what counts as education for, with, and by *Māori*, where *Māori* language is normalised, and *Māori* knowledge, culture and values are central to the curriculum and modus operandi of the school.

The preparation of teachers for *Kura Kaupapa Māori* is critical for the future sustainability of this alternative system of education. Among the strategic goals identified by esteemed *Māori* leader and past Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor of Massey University, Professor Sir Mason Durie, in terms of the general direction of *Māori* education in the future, is ensuring the fulfillment of *Māori* potential by accepting student interests and aspirations as central to learning, and how educational systems are constructed (Durie, 2002). And when *Māori* potential is realised, as we are finding in the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system, we can expect all *Māori* students to be successful, to be equipped for a changing environment they can contribute to, and from which they gain benefits. This means they will be skilled in understanding, negotiating, and shaping a changing world. They will be well prepared to live and work successfully in a high-tech society. They will be passionate about learning, excited by discovery and undaunted by change (Durie, 2005).

Like the graduates of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system of education, *Māori* students will want to be *Māori*, they will want to engage in the *Māori* world, to speak the *Māori* language, and utilise cultural references throughout their learning. *Māori* success will be the norm, and there will be zero tolerance for students not reaching their potential.

### Acknowledgments

This paper is based on keynote given into this IPED-project 16 April, 2021.

### Notes

- 1 The two systems of education in *Aotearoa* New Zealand are *Kura Kaupapa Māori* or Maori language immersion schools, and English medium mainstream schools.
- 2 The Waitangi Tribunal is a permanent commission of inquiry established by an Act of Parliament in 1975. The Tribunal investigates and makes recommendations on claims brought by the Maori regarding actions or omissions of the Crown since 1840, that breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi.

- 3 The government refer to *Māori* medium and English medium sectors. The *Kura Kaupapa Māori* leadership prefers the descriptor 'Kura Kaupapa Māori immersion' indicating the genealogy of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system. I use the two descriptors interchangeably.
- 4 See for example the Te Kohanga Reo Waitangi Tribunal Claim (WAI 2336) to address, among others, increasing operational funding and guaranteeing pay equity for teachers of Te Kōhanga Reo. In February 2022 *Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa* (TRN) filed an urgent Waitangi Tribunal claim alleging the Crown had breached the Treaty in its obligations to Kura Kaupapa Māori. The claim sets out, among others, that Kura Kaupapa Māori are prejudicially affected by acts and omissions of the Crown legislation, policy and regulatory frameworks.
- 5 As of July 2021 2.8% of the total school population were enrolled in Māori medium education (Ministry of Education, 2023).
- 6 Māori medium refers to various levels of teaching through the medium of Māori language, from bilingual classrooms in mainstream schools to full immersion classes in *Kura Kaupapa Māori*.
- 7 Many *Kura Kaupapa Māori* Principals and their communities were not supportive of TRN partnering with a mainstream university to deliver ITE programmes aimed at producing graduate teachers for their sector due in large part to the history and struggle of establishing and maintaining Kura Kaupapa Māori. Personal Communication, Whaiti Chair, TRN 2012.
- 8 Personal Communication, TRN members.
- 9 Contractual Agreement between Massey University and *Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa*. Minutes of *Toi Kura* Meetings held from 2012–2021 attended by TRN adjunct faculty.
- 10 Graduate Destination records show high percentages of students who return to their kura hāpai as full-time teachers were closely nurtured and supported by their kura hāpai throughout their study in the programme.

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# Ethics in Sami Educational Research

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## Abstract

In this chapter, we discuss the ethical considerations in Sami educational research. The Sami live in four countries with diverse educational systems and research-related conditions and rules, so there are different kinds of guidelines as well as national rules and processes to be taken into account. In addition, there are implications of Indigenous rights which need to be considered in each particular research project concerning also research ethics. In this chapter, we look at the differences and commonalities that national practices and demands create for research that involves Sami topics in humanities and, more specifically, in educational research. This research has implications for the Indigenous research context. To build a just and sustain research process is a commonly shared challenge among Indigenous peoples globally. Additionally, historical consequences, power relations and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples all affect how research and research studies are viewed in Indigenous societies. We bring forth what currently needs to be done to conduct ethically safe and responsible educational research, if involving minors and Indigenous people. We also explore how to gain trust, and how to conduct research that benefits Indigenous society.

## Keywords

Sami educational research – Indigenous research ethics – Indigenous research methodology – Indigenous rights – giving back

## Čeahkkáigeassu

Dán artihkkalis mii ságastallat eamiálbmogiid dutkanetihka birra sámi bajásgeassin- ja oahpahussuorggi dutkama oktavuodas. Sápmelaččat orrot njealji riikkas gos juohkehaččas leat iešgudetlágan skuvlendilit ja dutkama meroštalli vuogádagat. Dasa lassin váikkuhit iešgudet riikkaid njuolggadusat ja lágat, maid galgá váldit vuhtii dutkama plánedettiin ja čadadettiin. Lassin eamiálbmot- ja sámedutkamii leat iežas vuordámušat ja njuolggadusat, mas

lea váikkuhus dutkamii ja dutkanetiikkii. Dán artiikkalis guorahallat erohusaid ja oktasašvuodaid sámi bajásgeassin- ja oahpahussuorggi dutkkadetin iešgudetge Davviriikkas. Dasa lassin váldit vuhtii eamiálbmotdutkama vuordámušaid dutkiide ja dutkanprošeavttaide. Historjjálaš váikkuhusat, váldeoktavuodát ja eamiálbmogiid dilit váikkuhit dasa mo dutkan vásihuvvo ja válđojuvvo vuostá eamiálbmotservožiin. Mii loktet ovdan, maid galgašii dahkat vai sáhtta čadahit etihkalaš ja vásttolaš dutkama sámi bajásgeassin- ja oahpahussuorggis, mas dájvá leat velába fárus vuolleahkásaš mánát ja nuorat. Mii buktit ovdan maiddá mo hukset luohttamuš ja mo čadahit dutkama, mii ovddida eamiálbmotservoža.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi bajásgeassin- ja skuvlendutkan – eamiálbmogiid dutkanetiikka – eamiálbmogiid dutkanmetodologiija – eamiálbmogiid vuoigatvuodát – addit ruovttoluotta

### 1 Introduction

This chapter considers the ethics of research on Sami education. The article deals with the starting points of research in the Sami educational context, which consists of many potentially sensitive aspects. As a backdrop, we describe the different positions and situations of the Sami in their respective state contexts, in relation to research ethics. Further, we discuss how reflections on research ethics cover the entire research process, from planning, empirical work, community contact and participation, to writing and sharing. In addition, the article considers the kind of critical requirements that appear in research in the context of Indigenous education. The research ethics debate in the education field on Sami matters is important, as there are special conditions for research, depending on the diverse histories and situations of Indigenous peoples. For example, involving ethnic groups and minorities in research calls for specific ethical considerations that must be addressed.

The fact that the Sami live in four countries – Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia – adds to the unique perspectives on the ethics of Sami educational research. Each country has its own legal system as well as its own educational system, and particular regulations around ethical codes and practices. Research related to the Sami must consider the regulations and ethical guidelines of different countries. It must also consider the mainstream general

ethical principles of research, as well as the applicable ethical guidelines for Indigenous peoples and Sami research within the specific research context. In addition, the researcher must act in accordance with the ethical guidelines of his or her own discipline and research institute.

The background of so-called general research ethics development stems from the international work to develop a code of ethics for research (for example, the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki) (Vrhovac, 2004). In contrast, research ethics to protect Indigenous knowledge and heritage focus on consciousness raising among the Indigenous peoples globally (Battiste, 2007/2016). We can see that more detailed texts have started to criticise research conducted on the Sami since the 1970s (cf. Keskitalo A. I., 1976/1994).

In this chapter, we will discuss ethics in research on Indigenous education from within the contexts of Finland, Sweden and Norway. The purpose and perspectives are framed by the special ethical demands, from the point of view of general research ethics in educational research, to the specific context, for example, of Indigenous and Sami research with vulnerable young children in ethnic groups (framed by the EU data security more specifically). Before presenting country-specific questions, general perspectives and knowledge on Indigenous research ethics, including an overview of previous research, will be given to frame the discussion. This kind of research has been already done to some extent, but more systematic and in-depth research should still be conducted, which we are also contributing to with this chapter. The chapter is designed to discuss the educational research ethics in the context of Sami educational research, serving the needs of students and researchers doing practical research in the field. In this chapter we focus on the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian contexts, but would like to underline that the Russian Sami context needs to be added to the picture, which we hope to be able to do in the future.

## 2 Background

In recent years, the mainstream research agendas in the Nordic national legislation have increasingly been pushing towards the necessity for research to be relevant for the surrounding society (Regeringens proposition 2016/17: 50; Regeringens proposition 2020/21: 60; Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2015). For the field of educational research, this has led to an increased interest in research projects that focus on collaborative approaches between educational practitioners and researchers, with the ambition of producing scientific knowledge that is anchored and relevant for the schools, teachers and pupils as well as for the scientific community (for

example, the ULF-project in Sweden by the University of Gothenburg, Karlstad University, Umeå University and Uppsala University). With the goal of promoting collaboration between stakeholders and researchers in the educational setting, several ethical issues have emerged, highlighting the complexities that tend to appear when collaborative processes in educational research are initiated. For instance, the issue of anonymity, the risk of bias and the question of informed consent are inquiries that are mentioned as ethical dilemmas in these collaborative processes (Nihlfors, 2020). Many of the complexities that are raised within the mainstream educational research context are also familiar within the Indigenous research paradigm governing ethics. Incorporating experiences from the ethical conversations within Indigenous research – a field that has a vivid history of developing strategies that can raise ethical awareness – might therefore contribute to raising awareness about ethical strategies within the broader field of educational research.

The conversation about research ethics has been, and still is, ongoing all over the world. Although making use of similar definitions and discussing the same set of challenges, the structures that have been developed and implemented, to ensure that research processes are ethical, differ between different national contexts and subject areas. The seemingly similar but often different approaches to ethics in practice imply that what is ethical for some is sometimes not understood to be so for others. Thus, defining what is ethical frequently differs depending on the historical and societal contexts (Gallagher et al., 2016; Nygård & Saus, 2016).

During the past decade, research ethics have been increasingly highlighted in Sami research. This follows international developments and is strongly influenced by the international discourses around Indigenous methodologies, decolonisation, and indigenisation. By pointing out the common Indigenous experience of being ‘researched on’, the international Indigenous research community has strived to raise awareness about how ethical principles for Indigenous research should preferably be developed, to function for the specific cultural context in which they are to be used. One of the main points in the different guidelines, protocols, or regulations that focus specifically on Indigenous research is that they depart from the specific values and needs that the Indigenous community expresses. When compared to generally established ethical guidelines, Indigenous understandings of ethics in research can sometimes differ in substantial ways. Concepts such as respect, reciprocity, cultural safety and equality are some of the terms that are used to frame ethical discussions from Indigenous points of view. However, these concepts are not generally included in the overall mainstream research ethical discourse. Adding to this is the Indigenous motivation to include not only the individual

but also the collective perspective in ethical discussions – a standpoint that challenges the focus on the individual that has been the basic premise for ethical discussions since the formulation of the first ethical guidelines for research after ww2. Another recurring criticism that has been underscored by Indigenous communities is the often-stated Indigenous experience, that knowledge shared by the Indigenous community is collected and used for scientific reasons, creating new knowledge of importance – but not necessarily transferred back to the Indigenous community and society (Drugge, 2022).

Regarding Sami research in *Sápmi*, the conversations around ethical issues have been present since the mid-1970s, and have had different impacts, depending on historical contexts and nation-based development. As a pioneer in the field, Alf Isak Keskitalo (1976/1994) raised several theoretical and methodological issues in Sami research, calling for power relations within the academic context to be scrutinised and challenged (Drugge, 2022; Porsanger & Seurujärvi-Kari, 2021). The political development around ethics in Sami research has taken diverse directions and forms in the different countries in *Sápmi*, and the internal discussion within the Sami research community has contributed to pushing the issue forward through discussions, workshops, publications and conferences focusing specifically on ethics. Norway stands out as the country in which the ethical discussion has contributed to political change, as evidenced by the establishment of national guidelines available for Sami health research (Stordahl et al., 2015). In Sweden, the conversation around research ethics started off on a broader level during the beginning of the 2000s, leading up to a number of seminars, workshops and publications, highlighting the theme from different angles. Recently, the Sami Parliament in Sweden has adopted a research policy strategy to guide Sami research, including several ethical standpoints for researchers (Drugge, 2022). Additionally, in Finland, specific guidelines for Sami research have already been developed and established (Heikkilä et al., 2021). In all the Nordic countries in *Sápmi*, research on Indigenous matters is primarily required to connect to national legislation, which has implications for research ethics, as the legislation differs among the national contexts (cf. Drugge, 2022). In addition to the country-based approaches mentioned, the Sami Council (the pan-Sami political organisation with a collaboration across state borders) has initiated a bigger project, working towards the establishment of ethical guidelines for research related to Sami communities. Former joint effort towards creating joint Nordic research ethics standards was not finished, as the working group released a press release in 2016 (cf. Heikkilä, 2016). It seems that country-based regulations, practices and standards for the Nordic region are taking more time due to the complexities involved.

The issue of ethics becomes even more important in terms of research relating specifically to Sami education. Educational research often involves children, leading to a need for profound ethical awareness, and an ethical complexity in its own right. When adding the Indigenous perspective to the context, the concern about how to handle ethical issues from a culturally responsive perspective is even more relevant. Moreover, in the recent EU Data Protection Regulation (EU, 2016/679) (General Data Protection Regulation, 2016), there are aspects that require special attention. These include personal information that reveals, for example, ethnic groups and minors (Milkaite, 2021). According to the Regulation, in the context of activities enabling the realisation of fundamental rights and with the consent of the data subject, ethnic profiling is allowed in the context of scientific activities with appropriate safeguards. There are more obligations to protect groups, and research participants have more rights. In other words, research needs to justify its actions and benefits more carefully. Furthermore, research has the task of putting forth voices that might not be otherwise heard. Thus, it seems highly relevant in the Indigenous educational research field to discuss challenges and practices and identify the meaning and significance of research ethics (Battiste, 2007/2016).

There are also international regulations that affect and concern Sami research. Based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 (UN, 2007), Indigenous people have the right to self-determination, and the right to develop their communities, based on their habits and cultural norms and codes. There are also consequences for research ethics, for example, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) has applied ideas of Indigenous research ethics. Principles highlight, among others, the authority and presence of Indigenous communities and the Indigenous knowledge system (Sámi allaskuvla, 2021).

### 3 Country-Based Presentations

In the following section, we will present country-based reflections on research ethics in Sami educational settings. It is meaningful to explain practices at a more general level (meaning country-specific legislation and guidelines), before exploring the practical solutions. Cases and reflections from specific projects are included.

#### 3.1 *Finland*

In Finland, research is guided by the University Act (Yliopistolaki 24.7.2009/558), which mandates that research at Finnish universities adhere to high

ethical standards and good scientific practice. Additionally, the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) provides guidelines to promote responsible conduct in research and prevent misconduct. These guidelines apply to non-medical research involving human participants, including specific considerations for protecting personal data (TENK, 2019).

Each university in Finland has its own ethics board for reviewing research proposals when required by funding bodies or the nature of the research. The ethical principles and review processes are designed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2016) and other relevant legislation, such as the Constitution of Finland (1999/731), the University Act and other educational institutional acts. The principles emphasised by TENK include respect for human dignity, cultural heritage and biodiversity. These principles ensure that research does not cause significant harm to participants or communities (TENK, 2019).

An ethical review is necessary for research involving special categories of personal data, such as racial or ethnic origin, among others. These reviews help prevent reinforcing stereotypes, discrimination and other harms, ensuring that research is conducted respectfully and equitably. Additionally, an ethical review should be conducted if participation deviates from the principle of informed consent, when the focus is on minors under 15 years without parental consent, or when the research can harm participants in any way (TENK, 2019). There are available experiences on how researchers have resolved ethical questions, and they highlight the importance of collaborating with every participant, including on a societal level if possible (cf. Helander et al., 2022a; Keskitalo P. & Linkola-Aikio, 2022; Linkola & Keskitalo, 2016).

### 3.2 *Sweden*

In Sweden, there are also consequences arising from the recent EU data protection regulation. All researchers need to take into account EU legislation around research ethics when planning and conducting research, regardless of what subject area is in focus (General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016; 'Lag (2003/460) om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor Stockholm: Regeringskansliet; 2015'). In Sweden, ascertaining whether a research project needs to undergo an ethical review depends on whether the project includes the processing of sensitive personal data, as defined by the GDPR. Research that includes the processing of sensitive personal data, for instance, where information on individuals' Sami ethnicity is revealed, must undergo an ethics review (Drugge, 2022, Ethical Review Act, Lag 2003/460, The Swedish Ethical Review Authority).

There exist no specific guidelines formulated by national legislation for research focusing specifically on Sami issues. Recently, the Sami Parliament in

Sweden published a political research strategy that defines some key areas that researchers are encouraged to consider when engaging in Sami research: Sami self-determination; decolonising research; responsible research; and access to economic resources/investment in infrastructures. The document is available for those who want to access it, but it does not have the status of a legal document that researchers are obliged to follow (Sametinget, 2021). Previous research has shown that the lack of ethical guidance in Sami research sometimes creates uncertainty among researchers who aim at 'doing right' but fail to find support in how to do so (Drugge, 2016). Regardless of whether ethical guidelines for Sami research are available or not, in the end, it is up to the researcher to decide whether there is a need to include ethical discussions in the research process. Researchers in Sweden are, by law, free to choose methods, theories and research questions as they find suitable, and it is up to the individual researcher to decide how to proceed in their specific research processes.

The discussion on research ethics in Sami research is one that has become increasingly apparent during the last decade, demonstrated by a number of workshops, seminars and publications that have highlighted ethical issues (Drugge, 2022). Leaning on international development, and inspired by conversations in other Indigenous research contexts, researchers on the Swedish side of *Sápmi* have increasingly included ethical discussions as an integral part of their work. However, the discussions are frequently held on a theoretical level, and the transformation from theory to practice is not that easy to accomplish (Drugge, 2022; Nilsson, 2021).

With the ambition to achieve increased uniformity and efficiency, the ethics review process in Sweden was recently re-organised. Since 2019, it has been conducted within the framework of the new unanimity authority, the Swedish Ethical Review Authority. The Authority consists of regional departments that are located at six different universities in Sweden and consists of two different units: one with a medical focus, and the other for remaining areas of research. In many ways, the new organisation reflects the former in terms of the actual vetting process before 2019, but a significant change concerns the distribution of projects to handle. What was previously a regional responsibility – to handle the research projects at the home university – is now the opposite. This implies that research projects that have been submitted for ethical review are distributed randomly to any one of the six different regional boards, except the one located in their own region. The ambition has been to prevent situations of conflict of interest that are more likely to be present in the same geographical area. A more even distribution of cases and the prevention of possible regional differences in the review processes were other issues that led to this organisational change (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2016). Although with the

best of ambitions, this structural change does mean that Sami research projects, many times based in the northern areas and carried through by researchers predominantly at the northern universities, are assessed at universities that do not necessarily carry a Sami research tradition. There are no demands that Sami representation be present in the ethical review process.

In terms of educational research involving schools in Sweden, the Ethical Review Authority states that the main researcher of a project is responsible for ensuring that the collaborative partners in schools have knowledge of research ethics, and have a general understanding of ethical standpoints, expressed through legislations around research processes. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to determine whether a research project needs to undergo ethical vetting, based on the principles of sensitive data stated in the GDPR and the national Ethical Review Act (Lag 2003/460, The Swedish Ethical Review Authority).

### 3.3 *Norway*

In Norway, all higher education and research is regulated by the University and University Colleges Act, where § 1–5 emphasises that the activities, including research, shall be conducted in accordance with recognised scientific and ethical principles (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005). Recognised within ethical research, Sami educational research is juridically regulated by the Research Ethics Act (Forskningsetikkloven, 2017). This law regulates all researchers and research in Norway, regardless of the research field. The European GDPR (see above) is also applicable in Norwegian law (Personopplysningsloven, 2018). The Research Ethics Act requires national research ethics committees for all research disciplines. Currently, there are three committees: Medical and Health, Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities (including a separate committee for research on human remains). In addition, there is a commission for the investigation of research misconduct. These committees are responsible for both general national guidelines for research ethics for all fields of research and subject-specific guidelines. The only research field where we find a specific law is within health research (Helseforskningsloven, 2008). In this field, there is both a national committee and a system of independent regional committees for medical and health research.

The main picture is that research ethics in Norway formally consist of general and overarching laws and regulations that, to a limited degree, are tailored towards research on topics related to Sami education. It is, firstly, the Social Sciences and Humanities guidelines that are the most relevant for research on Sami education. In 2021, a new version was launched (NESH, 2021), and these guidelines mention Indigenous peoples specifically in paragraph 31,

which concerns respect for cultural differences. In the previous version of the guidelines (The Norwegian National Ethics Committees, 2019), the researcher was expected to avoid too much local co-determination. Today, the new guidelines have replaced the general stance of looking at 'other cultures' with an approach of dialogue, cooperation and understanding of cultural differences.

One of the cornerstones of Norwegian research ethics is the protection of personal data. All researchers collecting personal data from people are obliged to report the project to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). This notification is an ethical approval, where the NSD's role is to safeguard the research participants' privacy. An important part of the ethical approval is to describe how the project is going to deal with informed consent. This includes both tailoring the information about the research project and making sure the participants know what they give consent to. In addition, the researcher must explain if the research concerns 'special categories of personal data'. One of the special categories is information relating to 'racial or ethnic origin'. In Norway, this includes Indigenous people (Sami), national minorities (Kven, Rom, Romani, Jews and Forrest Finns), and migrants born outside Norway to parents who are also born abroad. To simplify, the main goal of defining ethnicity as a special category of personal data is connected to the history of research, where there were examples of abuses of power and unethical research towards disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (cf. NESH, 2021, section 31). Therefore, today's ethical guidelines highlight the researcher's special responsibility to conduct research that is not harmful.

Within Sami health research, a set of ethical guidelines has been developed. These guidelines are the result of a project initiated by the Sami Parliament and led by the Centre for Sami Health Research at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and they are now part of a formal structure. The Sami Parliament states that the guidelines are part of the process of ensuring that Sami health research is anchored in Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination. The formal aspect of this is the need to apply for permission to do research on matters related to Sami health. The Sami Parliament has issued a committee that has the authority to evaluate applications and to express a collective Sami consent (Sámediggi, 2019). Educational research still does not have a similar arrangement. However, some of the principles of these ethical guidelines are clearly relevant and recognisable, as they emphasise recognition of the Sami as an Indigenous people and respect for Sami integrity: 'The relations between Sami communities/informants and scholars with their institutions must be coined by respect, reciprocity, equity, responsibility, cultural safety, and Sami self-determination in any research project' (sametinget.no). On a general level, it is easy to see a similarity to the kind of ethical research guidelines expressed and followed in educational research also.

Given the broad scope of research ethics laws and guidelines, each project needs to develop its research ethics. This process is typically led by the researcher who is responsible for submitting the research ethics notification to the NSD. In a recent project on Indigenous citizenship and education (cf. Olsen & Sollid, 2022), one of the first steps in the research ethics process was to include consent in the funding application from a municipality to be a focus site of research. This gave an overarching approval for researchers to approach educational institutions in the municipality, and also be in dialogue about the local education sector's needs and main questions. According to the guidelines, it is the individual participant who formally gives their consent to participate. To reach the individual teacher and others, researchers approached the school rector. Without the rector's approval, it was not possible to approach the teacher. Indications of the different levels of consent can be ascertained from this short description.

#### 4 Reflections

This chapter is based on a descriptive study, to present and give basis to compare three different national systems of research ethics for Sami educational research. Here, these descriptions reflect on some of the pressing questions that emerge from these cases. As we show, the space for Indigenous perspectives in research ethics varies from country to country, but there are also some commonalities. First, the national laws and guidelines provide frameworks on how to conduct educational research, while the EU data security law mandates certain requirements for ethics design, ethical considerations and conducting research, especially in research with Indigenous groups and minors with certain starting points and contexts. Based on our three cases and experiences, research funders, and even publication channels, may have certain requirements for research ethics. As the three cases show, beyond the formalities, research ethics in Sami educational research also includes informal and project-specific decisions about research ethics. On this basis, the question is to what extent the Sami right to self-determination is part of the formal regulations and guidelines, and that the Sami themselves are represented in research ethics committees. Are they listened to in cases when official committees and services discuss and approve research ethics plans in research projects on Sami education? Who is to decide which values Sami educational research projects can or should use in developing research ethics that centres on Sami perspectives? These questions also point to the need to address the relationship between the right to Sami self-determination in research and all researchers' academic freedom.

From the descriptions, we can see that the research ethics in Sami educational research are dynamic, and include both formal regulations and informal norms, where community norms and practices play an important role. Seeing research ethics as a process practically means finding a case-based way from regulations to practice. From a formal research ethics perspective, the individual has the sovereign right to decide whether they will participate. However, the community (for example, school leadership and school owners) is important in the process of granting access to students, teachers and their parents. Whether local educational authorities support the research project or not, the researchers need to respect the local authorities' right to self-determination. There are national differences in how open schools are, and how the role of research has been understood. Part of the local decision is the perception of research as relevant to the local community and the possibility of institutional growth through academic collaboration.

There are some critical questions that can and should be raised, at least in part following Debashish Munshi's et al. questions (2010): What is in it for the Sami people or for Sami teachers, families and children? Who benefits from the research done? This also includes considering whether the research may potentially be harmful on any level. When is research so harmful that it is not ethically correct to be conducted? We know that loading educational institutions and their employees and children with the research tasks is problematic, and lack of time and resources might be a reason for not granting access to researchers. In many Indigenous contexts, there is talk of research overload or research fatigue. How can research institutions ensure or work towards a situation where research projects do not wear communities or people out?

There is an obvious relationship between educational research as a mainstream field of research and Indigenous research. As the three national cases show, the ethics aspect of this relationship is influenced by continuous developments in the overarching regulations and practices that are typically based on the perspectives of the majority. One area of importance in the process of indigenising research ethics is related to data, for instance, questions related to data ownership, data management and recent developments in the politics of open data. It is a complicated issue to what extent data of ethnic groups' children, adolescents, teachers and parents can be shared as open data. Here, a balance between supporting the reuse of data, and making the voices of the Sami heard on the one hand, and avoiding harmful reuse and misinterpretations on the other, must be a concern. In the light of the different ethical standards that embrace the field of Sami research, there is a need to problematise the definition of the community/collective when discussed in terms of Sami society.

When the ethical guidelines for Sami health research in Norway mention respect, reciprocity, equity, responsibility, cultural safety and self-determination as ideals and virtues, they clearly mirror literature belonging to Indigenous methodologies. They are indeed virtues that are called for in actual research projects. Still, it does not necessarily go without saying how they are implemented. When scholars have a personal connection to a particular community or village, managing and taking care of those relations is a matter of importance. Taking care of the relations implies taking care of the community. These relations, basically knowing people, enable and remind researchers to show respect and responsibility. As an example, even though the municipality was a formal partner in the *Indigenous citizenship and education research project* (cf. Olsen & Sollid, 2022) and had allowed research to be done, one of the schools never responded when the researchers reached out. Although this meant an adjustment to the research project, based on the value of the school's right to self-determination, it was not meaningful to push the mentioned school. Reciprocity is an ongoing process. By writing about topics important to people, schools and kindergartens in the municipality, research contributes through telling their stories and lifting their perspectives. As the project reaches its end, the aim is to return to the municipality, to disseminate results, and have conversations based on the findings and analysis. As the project also embraces other parts of the Indigenous world, part of the reciprocity and rewards of the project means sharing knowledge, perspectives, and findings from these other places. Thus, the connection between this particular place and other places can enable new knowledge. Lastly, there are clearly ethical reflections needed in writing about the communities. This is an understated aspect of research ethics, but an aspect researchers need to particularly highlight in Indigenous research. When writing about people, there is responsibility for their stories and for how they are (re)presented. This requires respect and care. It does not mean that critical perspectives are off the table, but that it is possible to write about them in a manner that will develop the complex educational and societal conditions for Indigenous children and youth, and for their present and future.

In the *Socially Innovative Interventions to Foster and to Advance Young Children's Inclusion and Agency in Society through Voices and Story* research project, collaboration was conducted with teachers, parents, school children, school leaders and education organisers. The project illustrates that change in school culture and teaching can be achieved through extensive collaboration, especially when teachers collaborate with university researchers to create a shared space for teaching development (cf. Helander et al., 2023).

As described in this text, ethical guidelines for Indigenous research often challenge the focus on the individual, calling for a greater understanding of the

importance of collective consent. Given the fact that the discussion on ‘who’ is to be considered Sami is vivid all over *Sápmi*, the definition of community and collective is not always easy to delimit (Nilsson, 2020; Nyssönen, 2007). In a Swedish context, this can be exemplified by the contemporary consequences of political strategies that have effectively divided the Sami people into different groups with unequal access to resources. Community consent among one group does not automatically imply the consent of others. The need for cultural responsiveness is therefore not only an issue concerning the relation between the Indigenous and the mainstream, but also a concern that needs to be directed towards our own perception of what the Sami community in the contemporary context actually means in each different situation. Although seemingly homogenous for an outsider, the Indigenous community includes different identities, histories and experiences. As noted by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, [...] ‘as a society on the margins there are groups of *Māori* who are marginalised from *Māori* society and culture, some of whom may also be excluded from the dominant society and many of whom may experience multiple forms of marginalisation’ (Smith, 2006, p. 5). Also, in a Sami context we have reason to scrutinise how our history has affected how we interpret the collective, and acknowledge, as expressed by Joyce Green in the case of Métis identity, that ‘[t]he colonial and racialised history of Canada has led to many Aboriginal identities, and thus, of histories and communities. Not all of us fit a formula, and not many of us fit only one formula’ (Green, 2011, p. 169).

In educational research in general, researchers navigate in a highly diverse academic context, where the research community, as well as the education sector, are both important in shaping and framing research relevant to society. In Sami educational research, there are more layers that intersect in all projects. It is not only the local and nation-state levels that are relevant. As Sami researchers need to collaborate across borders, a more overarching Sami perspective is relevant for developing high-quality research ethics. In order to achieve this, we may need to be able to find an arrangement that emphasises a practical and institutional understanding of what such an overarching Sami perspective may be. This would require looking beyond Sami diversity and multivocality, at the same time as it becomes an integral part.

Beyond the topic of research ethics, there has been a lot of discussion in Finland, Sweden, and Norway about Sami identity and the boundaries and/or outreach of Sami identity. This also has implications for the understanding of Sami research and research ethics. For research ethics committees and/or bodies of different kinds, it is not necessarily easy to decide how they are put together – and to figure out who should decide it. There is no singular Sami institution who ‘owns’ the right to define and set the boundaries for

'Sami research' across the entire *Sápmi* context. Looking at the discussions on identity, we see how Sami research ethics can be entangled in similar kinds of discourse. It may be unavoidable. Still, we argue (or hope for) a more pragmatic approach, and for an approach that is less preoccupied with the identity of the scholar than with the topic and design of the research.

An occurring dilemma still remains: Should the work on Sami research ethics primarily be done within and in order to improve the respective national systems of research ethics, or should it primarily be done through the development and articulation of a cross-state solution and arrangement within outspoken Sami channels? We argue that there is a need for both, and that one should benefit the other. The making of a Sami system of its own can clearly be seen through the lenses of self-determination. At the same time, as not all research on Sami-related topics is done through explicitly defined Sami projects, we cannot remove ourselves from the mainstream system.

Finally, as part of a global network of Indigenous scholars, Sami educational research is also inspired by and in dialogue with Indigenous research codes of conduct around the world. The question is how these global perspectives on Indigenous research ethics can be put into practice in *Sápmi*. In that sense, the ethics of writing seems to be a relevant question for further discussion. The question of competency building in the Indigenous society is also a good question. Who is going to benefit and learn? How will the research participants benefit and learn? Questions of Indigenous involvement in research projects and delivering knowledge in Indigenous communities are highly relevant ethical considerations. The urgent question is also from where the research needs arise.

## 5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have followed the steps to discuss the construction of Sami educational research ethics with its plethora of regulations and ethical codes. There are plenty of decisions to make and contemplate before commencing data gathering, if the research consists of such starting points. This chapter is an attempt to establish and reflect upon commonalities and differences in a comparative perspective in the countries with Sami people, Finland, Norway and Sweden. We have observed that overall, an Indigenous perspective is downplayed rather than emphasised.

The starting point for Sami research ethics is the right to self-determination. Regarding this, national guidelines seem to carry many unresolved questions. For example, open data is one issue and is not yet sufficiently problematised.

The issue is to plan everything in good order beforehand and secure the consent of research participants.

This chapter has provided two foci: an overview of the system and challenges in Sami research ethics across countries, and its implications for educational research. There are other nuances and aspects in Indigenous research ethics that call for more debate and research, and these need to be explored more in the future. These are wider research paradigm-connected and methodological aspects. Thus, further comparative studies may be needed to highlight the intrinsic challenges that exist in the environment of research in Indigenous contexts, to both ensure fairness and proper representation, but also to fine tune understanding of research ethics, to ensure optimal contribution of research to the field of education.

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**PART 2**

*Sami Educational Context*





# Institutionalised Sami Education in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia

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## Abstract

The school was one of the main institutions where policies of colonisation and assimilation took place. Currently, in the four countries where Sami people reside, namely Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, different policies for supporting Sami languages are implemented. Sami language instruction in schools varies in these countries. Alongside traditional classroom teaching in these four countries, remote Sami language education is exclusively provided in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. In Norway, two universities offer various Sami language courses as part of their teacher training programs. Additionally, the Sámi University of Applied Sciences provides teacher education for both early childhood and primary/secondary education, delivered in the North Sami language. In Sweden, the Umeå University offers Sami language courses. In Finland, several universities offer Sami language courses. In Russia, the Murmansk Arctic State University offers a philological master program titled 'Technologies of the Sami Language Teaching'. The Institute of the Peoples of the North of Herzen University offers pedagogical education at the bachelor level. Within this education, Sami language courses are provided. This chapter illustrates positive policy trends regarding the Sami people and their languages in the four countries. Moreover, there is a growing number of projects focused on Sami language acquisition and professional development across these countries. Nonetheless, there is ongoing work needed to enhance current trends.

## Keywords

Sami education – Sami language teaching in schools – Sami language in higher education – teacher training – Sweden – Finland – Russia – Norway

## Tjåanghkan tjaaleme åarjelsaemiengïelesne

Skuvle lij akte dejstie vihkielommes institusjovnh juktie saemide koloniseeredh jïh assimileeredh. Daelie, dennie njieljie laantine gusnie dah saemieh åroddh: Nöörje, Sveerje, Såevmie jïh Russlante, ovnese policyh guktie saemien gielh dåarjelidh. Dah policyh sinsitneste joekededtieh. Dah Leah joekethlaakan sinsitneste tjaalasovveme jïh vielie dah Leah joekethlaakan implementeesovveme. Laantine ovnese saemien giëleööhpehtimmieh skuvlesne faalasuvvieh. Ööhpehtimmieh dovne skuvlen sienie jïh gaskeviermien tjïrrh. Maajhööhpehtimmie maanaskuvlesne, noereskuvlesne jïh jaarhkeskuvlesne ajve Nöörjesne, Sveerjesne jïh Såevmesne. Nöörjen raedtesne, göökte universiteeth giëlekuvsjh faelieh. Dah giëlekuvsjh lohkehtæjjaööhpehtimmiej sienie. Lissine, Saemien jilleskuvle noerhtesaemien lohkehtæjjaööhpehtimmieh faala. Dah lohkehtæjjaööhpehtimmieh maanagïertese, maanaskuvlese, noereskuvlese jïh jaarhkeskuvlese. Ööhpehtimmiegiële noerhtesaemien. Sveerjesne, Ubmejen universiteete giëlekuvsjh giëlelohkehtæjjide faala. Såevmesne, ovnese universiteeth giëlekuvsjh lohkehtæjjide faelieh. Russlaantesne, Murmansken arktiske staateuniversiteete jïh Noerhtealmetji instituhte Herzen universiteetesne lohkehtæjjaööhpehtimmie utnieh dejtie lohkehtæjjide guhth edtjeh Saepmesne barkedh. Daate kapihtele vuesehte guktie policyh dej nieljie laantine buaranieh jïh åvtanieh. Vielie, jienebe prosjekth sjidtieh mah giëlelohkehtimmien bijre jïh giëlelohkehtæjjide dej nieljie laanti tjïrrh. Læjghan, seammasienten kapihtele vuesehte jïjnjh barkoe aajmone juktie jorkesimide mejtie buerkiestamme, bueriedehtedh.

## Baakoeh

saemien ööhpehtimmie – saemien giëlelierehtimmie – saemien giële jollebe ööhpehtimmesne – lohkehtæjjaööhpehtimmie – Sveerje – Såevmie – Russlaante – Nöörje

### 1 Introduction

This chapter is a joint attempt of researchers within the field of Sami education to provide insights on different aspects of the Sami language teaching in primary and secondary education, as well as the Sami language teachers' training, in the four countries where the Sami people live, namely, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The language situations in these four countries differ from each other, in terms of the different legal status of the Sami languages, the number of Sami language speakers, and the status of the Sami language in the school curricula. This chapter aims at (a) identifying and describing

differences, and also possibly finding similarities, in how the Sami language education at schools and teacher training programmes are organised and practiced, and (b) describing relevant policies and legislation on Sami language education in the different educational contexts.

This chapter is organised as follows: Firstly, we present practices of Sami language learning at schools in and outside of *Sápmi*. Secondly, we provide an overview of how the universities in each of the countries promote Sami languages teaching. At the end of this chapter, we summarise the teaching contexts of the Sami languages, identifying similarities, differences, successes, and challenges. Our approach is primarily descriptive and provides an overview, which is of interest for both researchers and policymakers. In addition, outlining the country-specific Sami language education context provides an opportunity to identify some of the main contemporary trends, and provides lessons to be learnt by and from these four countries.

From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, the states' purpose was to assimilate and colonise the Sami people through different policies. Colonisation is often understood as the takeover of lands, but the term also refers to the takeover of the minds of the colonised peoples, usually through Christianity and the school system (Kuokkanen, 2000). The school system was one instrument of colonialisation, segregation, assimilation, and dispossession in the Nordic countries and Russia – both through regular schools and residential schools. In Norway, a separate written assimilation policy was introduced. Sweden implemented a policy of segregation, as Sami-speaking reindeer herders attended the nomad school, while the other Sami attended municipality schools. In Finland, the Finnish language and culture were emphasised without any special attention to minorities. In Russia, due to the totalitarianism caused by Stalinism, many Sami-speaking teachers were sent to camps from which they never returned to their villages and families (Kortekangas et al., 2019). As a result of colonisation, the Sami languages have gone through dramatic changes. Sami dialects disappeared, and some Sami languages were pressured to near extinction.

The Nordic countries apply different policies and strategies to support the Sami language teaching at school, and to maintain the Sami culture and language revitalisation. Five out of ten Sami languages are taught in schools in the Nordic countries now, while in Russia, one language, Kildin Sami, is taught to a limited extent (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018). The Sami people across these countries have gained different legal support. In Norway, the Sami are recognised as an Indigenous people (The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, Article 108; Sámi Act (Sameloven)). They are also a minority but are not part of the five officially recognised national minorities. In Sweden, the Sami people are

recognised as an Indigenous people (Ministry of Education, 1977), a national minority (Ministry of Culture, 1998; SFS 2009: 724), and a people (Ministry of Justice, 2009). Finland recognises the Indigenous status of the Sami in its Constitution (The Constitution of Finland 7.7.1995/974). In Russia, the Sami are recognised as one of 47 Indigenous peoples (Постановление Правительства РФ N 255 от 24 марта 2000 [Regulation of the Government of the RF N 255 of March 24, 2000]).

Nowadays, the Nordic countries support the development of the Sami language through various policy improvements. For example, in Norway, the Sami curriculum was introduced in 1997. In Sweden, in addition to the National Curriculum, a Sami National Curriculum for Sami schools was established in 2010 (Belančić, 2020). Sami schools, Sami school programmes, and Sami language courses were established. Besides this, Sami colleges and teacher education programmes, in and outside of *Sápmi*, the traditional land of the Sami people, were introduced to improve Sami language learning. The establishment of these Sami policies and institutes were steps on the path of an attempted reconciliation with the Sami peoples (Gjerpe, 2017).

This chapter's information is based on the authors' respective research work and experiences (cf. Belančić, 2020; Helander et al., 2023; Kroik, 2018; Olsen, 2020; Zmyvalova, 2015, 2022). Important data consist of documents, educational programmes, curricula, and language policy materials. In the following, we clarify some of the terminologies used in this chapter. The whole area of the four countries where the Sami population have traditionally lived is called *Sápmi*. When we discuss educational and language policies in the respective countries, we use other terminologies. In Norway, according to the Law 1987-06-12-56 (LOV-1987-06-12-56), Sami and Norwegian are equal languages in so-called *administrative areas for the Sami Language*. The *Sami administrative area* in Sweden means that municipalities are obliged to provide, education, elderly care, and general information in Sami (SFS 2009: 724). In Finland, this area is called *Sami homeland*, where the Sami languages have their official status (Sámi language Act 1.6.1999/731). In Russia, there is no official name for the territory.

## 2 Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia

### 2.1 Norway

Approximately 50–65,000 Sami people live in Norway, and Lule Sami, South Sami, and North Sami are official languages in Norway (IWGIA, 2021). As Norway has changed its policy from assimilation to recognition of the Sami, there is now a greater need for more Sami language competence. As with

many Indigenous peoples all over the world, questions regarding language and identity are also highly politicised in the Sami context. Although this section regards the national level, we do not avoid the implications and connections to other Indigenous contexts.

### 2.1.1 Main Tendencies in Norway

A historical overview of the situation in Sami education in Norway has been explored by many researchers already (Hirvonen & Keskitalo, 2004; Olsen, 2020). From the time of the Christian missions in the early 18th century, the school was a key arena for state policies to be put into practice. This was supported by Norwegianisation, the assimilation policy that led from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. The goal of Norwegianisation was to assimilate the minorities living within the state borders. The Sami were on the receiving end, and experienced this multilateral political ideology and practice, particularly in schools. For Sami communities, Norwegianisation had a devastating impact. Some Sami dialects disappeared, while other Sami languages were pressured until (near) extinction. The practices in schools and amongst teachers varied, from actual banning to different kinds of sanctions directed towards Sami language use in school. These impacts have changed the Sami community.

Contemporary policy on Sami education has resulted from assimilation and colonisation. From the mid-1980s, however, Norway has changed its policy towards the Sami, as demonstrated in the Sami Act of 1987, the Sami Article in the Constitution of 1988, the opening of the Sami Parliament in 1989, and the ratification of ILO 169. In 1997, the first national Sami curriculum was launched. Despite some challenging aspects, this was an important milestone when it came to Sami education (Gjerpe, 2017).

The curricula across all educational stages, from early childhood to higher education, increasingly align with the principles of a system that emphasizes the importance of recognizing Sami rights (Olsen, 2020). The education system, from kindergarten through teacher education programs, is legally required to deliver instruction in Sami languages for Sami students and to provide education about Sami story, society, languages, and rights for all students in Norway. The changes in the Sami language policy from 1980s onwards has had a positive effect on the Sami culture and language revitalisation, as the role of the schools changed from one of assimilation to one of (re)vitalisation.

Following, we will demonstrate an example of South Sami language school teaching, which serves as an interesting and illustrative case. In Norway, South Sami is taught as a first language or as a second language. Children who speak Sami at home can follow the curriculum for Sami as a first language (Sami 1),

and children who speak Sami as a second language, or those with no prior knowledge, can follow the curriculum for Sami as a second language (Sami 2). For children who start their second language education in Sami later during their schooling receive Sami as a second language (Sami 3).

There are three main schools that provide most of the South Sami language teaching. They are located in Snåsa, Hattfjelldal and Røros. The first two are former boarding schools. All of them are within the Norwegian administrative areas for the Sami Language. *Åarjelsaemien vierhtiesáafoe* in Aarborte is now a centre for remote Sami teaching. *Åarjelsaemiej skuvle* in Snåsa has school children that attend school in situ as well as distance students. *Saemien goevtese* in Røros arranges the South Sami teaching for Sami children both physically and remotely. All three schools host various meetings for schoolchildren where they can meet peers and learn the Sami language intensively. In 2020, p. 101 children in total received education in South Sami. 35 children received South Sami as a first language (school subject called 'Sami 1'), while 66 children received South Sami as a second language (Sami 2), respectively 16 students received Sami 3 (Sámi allaskuvla, 2021).

#### 2.1.2 Sami Language Teacher Training

The teacher education program faces many dilemmas and challenges, as Sami language teachers are too few. In the areas where North Sami has maintained its role as the majority language, in inner Finnmark, there is a gap between the demand for language teachers in schools and teacher education, and the potential teacher candidates. In the areas hardest struck by assimilation, in the Lule Sami and South Sami language areas, as well as in the Sea Sami and Marka Sami areas, the number of language users has decreased. Therefore, fewer potential teachers are available in these areas.

At present, both local schools and kindergartens, as well as teacher education institutions, struggle to recruit teachers. Sami teacher education programmes are introduced in many universities and university colleges of Norway. These programs are to provide education to ensure that student teachers receive relevant knowledge about the Sami.

The three institutions in the northernmost part of Norway, Nord University, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, have an additional mandate and obligation regarding the three official Sami languages. Nord University provides teacher education in both Lule and South Sami, as well as an early childhood education teacher education program with a Sami profile. UiT The Arctic University of Norway also has a Sami teacher education in North Sami for upper secondary education. Both Nord University and UiT The Arctic University of Norway have ambitions to include

and integrate Sami knowledge and perspectives into their main teacher education programs. The Sami University of Applied Sciences provides North Sami teacher education both for Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

The teacher training program for South Sami teachers at Nord University deserves special attention, since the program as such, and its dynamics, illustrate both good practices and challenges regarding language revitalisation of the Sami languages.

In 2018, Nord University established a programme for training teachers in South Sami. In the first year, only one student was enrolled in the programme. In the second year, four students were enrolled in the teacher programme, and in addition, a few more students were enrolled in language courses that ran in parallel with the programme.

Now, the South Sami primary teacher education programme is a five-year master's degree, taught mainly in Norwegian. However, the language of instruction for the South Sami language course is South Sami. David Kroik, who teaches South Sami at Nord University, observed university students facing challenges with South Sami being the language of instruction. At the same time, students' language knowledge in Sami differs, which makes teaching also challenging.

Both educators and students raise the question as to whether the programme is a Sami teacher education programme, or a Norwegian teacher education programme providing South Sami language courses for teachers. Several attempts have been made to urge the university to implement Sami perspectives, philosophy, and language throughout all parts of teacher education, without any success.

Not only does the overall structure of the teacher training programme face challenges, but the South Sami subject does too. Although the access to literature in South Sami has expanded dramatically in recent years (Kroik, 2018), literature, especially in fields such as phonology, sociolinguistics, and language teaching and learning, is limited. Only a few scholars are proficient in these academic fields as well as in the South Sami language. To increase access to literature in South Sami, university teachers create assignments resulting in products that can be used among educators, teachers, parents, and South Sami language revitalisation stakeholders. For example, students can transcribe recordings of now-passed native South Sami speakers, or students can make audio recordings of children's books.

## 2.2 *Sweden*

The Sami people live in the Swedish part of *Sápmi*, stretching from northern Lapland to Dalarna in the south. In Sweden, there are no official statistics for the number of Sami people. However, one assumes that between 20,000 to

40,000 Sami live in Sweden (Pettersen, 2011). The five Sami languages, South Sami, Ume Sami, Pite Sami, Lule Sami, and North Sami have an official minority status in Sweden.<sup>1</sup>

Due to the Education Act (SFS 2010: 800), the Sami people have the right to receive equal education, regardless of their place of residence in Sweden. Additionally, the Sami people have the right to use their Sami language with governmental authorities (SFS 2009: 724) if they live in one out of 25 current municipalities in the Sami administrative area.<sup>2</sup> These municipalities are responsible for protecting and promoting the North, Lule, South, Ume, and Pite Sami languages and culture, and for highlighting the development of the Sami languages (SFS 2009: 724). Sami people living outside the administrative municipalities enjoy the right to use Sami with authorities if authorities have Sami-speaking personnel. Also, if the municipality has qualified Sami speakers, Sami people have the right to receive elderly care in Sami.

### 2.2.1 Sami Education In-Between

Sami children living in the Swedish area of *Sápmi* can attend one out of six Sami schools, starting from grades one to six. Sami children who cannot attend a Sami school due to distance can get Sami teaching in several subjects (for example, Sami Language, Sami Handicrafts, Home and Consumer Studies, and Social Studies) in primary and secondary education, through integrated Sami teaching. Integrated Sami teaching can be taught both in the classroom and remotely. Integrated Sami instruction can be delivered remotely, but only when a municipality is unable to hire a qualified teacher in Sami or another subject. These courses are included as part of the standard school schedule for compulsory education (Belancic, Wuolab & Lindgren, 2022).

In addition to the Sami integrated teaching, Sami children anywhere in Sweden can choose to study the Sami language. Even if a child does not speak Sami at home, the child has the right to receive teaching in Sami. There is no requirement for a child to have a basic level of the language to get access to Sami teaching. The municipality is obliged to arrange the Sami teaching, even if there is only one child applying to study Sami.

Instruction in the mother tongue can be provided under the Sami syllabus (as a first or second language), as part of Modern Languages, through the Student's Choice or School's Choice programs, or outside regular school hours. However, the curriculum does not specify the number of teaching hours for this subject, leaving it up to each municipality to determine the allocation of time. For example, in the municipality of Lycksele, students from kindergarten to grade six receive Sami teaching twice a week for 60 minutes (Lycksele kommun, 2017).<sup>3</sup> Also, if a municipality is not able to recruit a qualified teacher in a Sami integrated school, the subject can be taught remotely, either as part of regular

school hours or beyond, depending on the curriculum. Even though Sweden has regulations on teaching Sami, it is not clear how these regulations apply in practice outside the Sami administrative area.

In 2020, 729 students had received access to learn Sami as a mother-tongue (Skolverket, 2021). However, only 458 received teaching in Sami, either through integrated Sami teaching or remotely. These numbers indicate that almost 40 percent of the eligible students did not receive Sami language teaching. This can be explained by the lack of qualified teachers and teaching recourses (Belančić, 2020).

### 2.2.2 Teacher Training in Sami

Since 2016, Umeå University has had the mandate to provide Sami teacher education, but only free-standing remote courses were offered, with the opportunity to add on a supplementary pedagogical education (*kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning, KPU*). These supplementary courses are taught remotely, to reach a greater audience across the country. Since 2020, Umeå University has had the task of expanding and promoting the teaching in Sami for pre-school, compulsory school, upper secondary school, and higher education. Activities include, but are not limited to, language courses for beginners, as well as further education for practicing mother tongue teachers, scientific courses of literature, Nordic co-operation, research, and academic environments focusing on Sami (Regeringen, 2020). Additionally, Umeå University and Uppsala University provide Sami language beginner courses to everyone interested in learning Sami.

## 2.3 Finland

About 11 000 Sami live in Finland. Many Sami have lost their mother tongue under the pressure of the Finnish language. The Sami have a self-governance of their language and culture in the Sami homeland comprising Enontekiö, Inari, and Utsjoki, as well as the northern part of Sodankylä (The Constitution of Finland, 17.7.1995/974). In the Sami homeland, the Sami have the right to use their Sami language with public authorities, and outside the homeland with governmental authorities (Sámi language Act 1.6.1999/731). The Sami-speaking children have the right to Sami language early childhood education throughout the country (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 540/2018). The Sami-speaking pupils have the right to receive teaching in Sami in the municipalities of the Sami homeland. However, 75 percent of Sami children in primary and secondary education live outside of the homeland, in 230 municipalities (Keva, 2020). None of these municipalities is required to provide Sami language education, but have an option to provide extra-curricular teaching, two hours weekly, according to the Finnish Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Decree, 2009/1777).

### 2.3.1 Sami Teaching in and Outside of the Sami Homeland

Sami language teaching began in the late 1970s, in the municipalities of the Sami homeland. The teaching of Sami-speaking pupils in pre-school, primary and upper secondary education should be provided mainly in Sami in the municipalities of the Sami homeland. Since 1999, this has been secured by a special provision in the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision (1705/2009, p. 45 § 1 mom). Therefore, it is possible to provide Sami language teaching in all subjects in the curriculum. However, the possibility is sometimes limited, since the subject teachers with Sami language competency are not widely available in all school subjects. In practice, 51 percent of Sami teaching is considered as enough to cover the education act demands. However, a special financial provision encourages the increase and development of teaching. The regulation can therefore be considered a successful example of positive action and special measures of the Indigenous people (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

Supplementary Sami education outside the Sami homeland has been available since the 1990s. It is regulated by a decree of the Ministry of Education of 2009 'on the criteria for state support for supplementary education of foreign-language, Sami-speaking and Romani-speaking pupils in basic education and upper secondary education' (1777/2009). According to the municipalities, the state subsidy does not correspond to the actual costs of teaching, nor makes it possible to create full time and permanent teaching positions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

Currently, only 10 percent of the 2000 Sami children who live outside the Sami homeland receive extra-curricular Sami language teaching (Helander et al., 2023). It is offered to pre-school, primary school, and secondary school students for up to two hours weekly, if at least two students are enrolled. Students' language proficiency and skills, as well as their age, may vary within the group. In the end of the school year, students receive a separate diploma for participating supplementary Sami education. This may affect both the attitudes of students and schools, as studying the Sami might not be seen as important as studying other subjects that get a numerical grade for the official diploma. It is also challenging to find Sami language teachers in Finland, with only a few teaching hours. Therefore, supplementary teaching has been available, mainly in the larger cities.

To tackle this problem, it is necessary to develop distance education for students who live outside the Sami homeland. The ongoing project *Pilot Project on Distance Education* in the Sami languages offers supplementary Sami teaching. The number of students in the project has increased dramatically in recent years. During the school year 2021–2022, there were about 100

students; in the school year 2022–2023, 150 students are already studying for the project. The project did not only overcome pedagogical challenges, but also economical ones, as full-time teachers were hired. (Pilot Project on Distance Education in the Sámi languages, 2021). However, Sami teaching outside the Sami homeland cannot be left to the project, and therefore distance education for Sami language learning is essential and needs a permanent place (cf. Helander et al., 2023).

### 2.3.2 Sami Language Teacher Training in Finland

Currently, the Giellagas Institute of the University of Oulu has the national responsibility for training teachers in the Sami language and literature subject. The universities of Oulu and Lapland have quotas for Sami-speaking preservice teacher applicants in the selection of students. There is a shortage of qualified Sami language subject teachers and special education teachers in primary and secondary education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

In recent years, the University of Lapland has organised studies in Sami pedagogy and Sami language teaching and learning for pre- and in-service teachers. The *Ketterä korkeakoulu project* of the University of Oulu, launched in 2019, provides additional courses to train qualified teachers in Sami quickly. The course targets applicants who are either proficient in the Sami language and willing to study to be a teacher, or qualified teachers who want to study Sami. The courses are organised in the Sami area, although some studies are conducted as distance studies (Ketterä Korkeakoulu, 2021).

## 2.4 *Russia*

According to the Population Census of 2010, 1550 Sami people live in Russia, and more than 80 percent (1370) of them live in the Murmansk Oblast (Federal State Statistics Service, 2010).<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, Kildin, Skolt, Ter, and Akkala Sami languages were spoken in the territory of the Russian Sápmi, including the Murmansk Oblast. The Kildin Sami language is the widest spoken Sami language in the Kola Peninsula (Blokland & Rießler, 2011).

Sami children in Russia have the right to learn their Indigenous language at school (Zmyvalova, 2015). Russia signed and ratified most of the international legal acts regulating this right. These acts are the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil, Political Rights; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. However, the acts directly relevant to the Indigenous peoples' rights, such as the ILO 169 and

the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are not in force in Russia. Both national and regional legislation regulate Indigenous peoples' rights, including their rights to language learning at school. The federal legislation encompasses such legal sources as the Constitution of the Russian Federation (RF); the Federal Law (FL) N 82-Φ3 of April 30, 1999 'On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the Russian Federation'; the FL N 74-Φ3 of June 17, 1996 'On National-Cultural Autonomy'; the Law of the RF N 1807-1 of October 25, 1991 'On the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation'; and the FL N 273-Φ3 of December 29, 2012 'On Education in the Russian Federation'. The regional legislation includes the Law of Murmansk Oblast N 984-01-3MO of 30 June 2008 'On State Support of the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North of the Murmansk Oblast Carrying out Traditional Economic Activities'. There is no law on the preservation of the Sami language in the Murmansk Oblast.

#### 2.4.1 Sami Language Teaching in the Lovozero School

The only school in Russia where children can learn the Sami language is in the Lovozero village.<sup>5</sup> The only Sami language which is taught is Kildin Sami. The Sami language school subject has gone through some changes in the past decade. The Sami language subject has been renamed more than three times, and at times it was excluded from the school programme or was taught as part of an extra curriculum activity. Currently, this school subject is an extra curriculum or non-obligatory school activity. Therefore, teachers of the Sami language at school have free choice in deciding upon a name for the subject, as well as the content thereof. Currently, the subject is called "*Еннь килл/Mother tongue*".<sup>6</sup>

According to the timetable, each Sami language class takes place once a week, for 45 minutes. Sami classes take place on Fridays after school. Children of Sami origin as well as of non-Sami origin are admitted to the course. The extra curriculum school activity is taught to the pupils of the first to fifth grades. During the field trip in 2019 to the Lovozero school, the observation of the classes demonstrated that the teacher attempted tuition in the Sami language. In cases where the children experienced difficulties in understanding, the teacher changed to the Russian language.

#### 2.4.2 Sami Language in Higher Educational Institutions

At present, there is no single legislative act in the RF regulating indigenous language teaching in higher educational institutions. The federal subunits were given legislative and executive power on this issue. Some of them have created a strong legislative basis for Indigenous languages teaching. In the academic

year 2022–2023, the Murmansk Arctic State University started a two-year philological master's programme called 'Technologies of Sami language teaching'. This is a positive, promising initiative that can contribute significantly to the Sami language revitalisation in Russia (ТАСС, 2022).

The Institute of the Peoples of the North of the Herzen University in Saint Petersburg offers pedagogical education at the bachelor's level, which includes mandatory courses in Indigenous languages. The Institute offers three specialisations of pedagogical education at the bachelor level: culturology; education in the field of native language and literature; and pedagogical education (*Направленность (профиль): Культурологическое образование* [Profile: Culturological Degree]; *Направленность (профиль): Образование в области родного языка и литературы* [Profile: Education within the Field of Language and Literature]). The language of tuition in all three specialisations is Russian.

### 3 Sami Language Teaching across the State Borders – Overarching Reflections

The fact that the Sami live in four different countries, and the Sami language has a different status in these countries, has a significant impact on Sami language teaching. Yet there are some similar tendencies.

We have found that Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia provide Sami teaching to some extent, although the possibilities for students to study vary. In Sweden to date, primary and secondary education is not provided solely in Sami. While children can attend a Sami school and receive teaching mainly in Sami, integrated Sami teaching provides only a few school subjects in Sami and core subjects in Swedish. In the Murmansk Oblast area in Russia, only one school provides Sami language teaching. In Norway, children can receive teaching in North, South, and Lule Sami throughout their compulsory education. This is also true for Finland, where the Basic Education Act guarantees the right of Sami-speaking children to receive most of the education in the Sami language in the Sami homeland. However, more Sami people are moving outside the *Sápmi* area, and most of the Sami children nowadays live outside *Sápmi*, where the Sami language teaching is less certain.

Due to the shortage of Sami teachers across *Sápmi*, and the increasing number of students living outside *Sápmi*, remote teaching seems to be an effective way to provide Sami language learning. For the smaller Sami languages, such as Inari, South, or Skolt Sami, remote teaching is beneficial. Besides Russia, all the other countries provide remote education in primary and secondary

schooling, both in and outside of *Sápmi*. In Finland, the number of students learning Sami outside *Sápmi* has doubled, through the pilot project focusing on Sami remote teaching. However, in Finland, 90 percent of the 2000 eligible Sami children did not receive teaching in Sami outside the core area. The same is true for Sweden, where 40 percent of the eligible students did not receive Sami teaching, due to a lack of teachers.

In Norway, Nord University and UiT provide various Sami language courses within teacher training programmes, and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences provides North Sami teacher education both for Early Childhood Education as well as Primary and Secondary Education, solely taught in North Sami. Since 2016, the Umeå University has been responsible for providing teacher training, but due to a lack of qualified teachers, only courses targeting in-service Sami language teachers have been provided in Sami. In Russia, the Institute of the Peoples of the North of the Herzen University offers pedagogical education at the bachelor's level. Within this education, Sami language courses are provided. Furthermore, the Murmansk Arctic State University offers a master's program in linguistics called 'Technologies of the Sami Language Teaching'. In Finland, no university has been assigned a teacher-training programme in Sami, however, several universities provide Sami language courses for teachers.

Additionally, several initiatives have been launched to provide a fast-track education for either Sami speakers who wish to pursue teacher education, or in-service teachers who are interested in teaching in Sami. Despite these various courses targeting Sami language teachers, the South Sami teacher education programme shows that the limited access to literature in South Sami, as well as Sami values, views, and knowledge in teaching being ignored, hinder teachers' education throughout compulsory education. Thus, there is a risk of the marginalisation of the Sami language and Sami values throughout all levels of education in *Sápmi*. The Sami people and their languages have legal recondition in the four countries. However, the above-mentioned challenges demonstrate a gap between legal provisions and their implementation.

#### 4 Conclusion

There is an observed increased interest in Sami languages and their revitalisation. We register positive policy and legal trends as well as an increased number of projects targeting Sami language learning across the four countries. These initiatives and policies are important steps to improve the Sami's education. Still, there are some gaps that need to be filled. For example, in primary and

secondary education, Sami is often taught outside the regular school hours, and often other subjects are not taught in Sami. The same is true for most higher education, where only the language course is taught in Sami. Not only should the Sami languages be taught in primary, secondary, and higher education, but there should also be Sami language teacher training programmes in all school subjects that respect the needs of children. Sami education should not only include language learning but also knowledge about, *inter alia*, culture, history, traditions, and values.

If we ignore the children's need for comprehensive language education in the educational systems, we will lose another generation of speakers. It is therefore important that the four countries work together with endangered language pedagogy on practical solutions. However, the current position of Russia in international society makes it challenging for the Russian Sami to cooperate with Sami of other countries (Zmyvalova, 2022).

### Acknowledgements

Ekaterina Zmyvalova extends her gratitude to Roman Gaidamashko, Elisabeth Scheller, and Hanna Outakoski.

### Notes

- 1 <https://www.samer.se/samiska>
- 2 <https://minoritet.se/forvaltningsomraden>
- 3 <https://www.lycksele.se/kommun-och-politik/nationella-minoriteter/samiskt-forvaltningsomrade/samisk-integrering-i-skolan/>
- 4 The total number of Indigenous small-numbered peoples in Russia is calculated based on the Census's data, where Indigenous small-numbered peoples indicate their identity which they themselves consider relevant. At present, there lacks a federal registry of persons belonging to Indigenous small-numbered peoples in the Russian Federation (RF). This registry will be established and starts working on February 7, 2022, in accordance with the legislator's plan.
- 5 It is worth mentioning that other places provide Sami language teaching in the Murmansk Oblast. The Northern National College is among these institutions. (Pupils receive secondary professional education after the 9th or 11th grade). Among the means of learning Sami language is the services of the private teacher. Besides this, one of the kindergartens provide Sami language teaching to children of preschool age. The National-Cultural Centre provides such services as well.
- 6 Пояснительная записка. Рабочая программа “Еннь килл / Родной язык” [Explanatory note. Working Program “Еннь килл / Mother tongue”], accessible at [Lsoshlovozero.ucoz.ru](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/I_yBSdxBFm8oww), [https://disk.yandex.ru/d/I\\_yBSdxBFm8oww](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/I_yBSdxBFm8oww) (accessed March 30, 2022).

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**PART 3**

*Research-Based Practices*





# Teaching and Learning Writing in Sápmi

*Hanna Outakoski*

## Abstract

This chapter looks at studies done in the field of Sami literacy research between 2010 and 2022 and looks at some interesting new developments and community initiatives within Sami literacy studies that have yet not been fully investigated. The chapter reveals an emerging field of study and pedagogical and didactic development that enter the Indigenous literacy landscape, which is often loaded with linguistic input and literacy content in languages other than Sami. The complexity of the context is reflected, among other things, in the empirical studies that have investigated the writing processes of multilingual language learners in *Sápmi*. The learners often view, or experience, writing in the Indigenous heritage language as less fluent and more laborious than writing in the state majority languages, or even in English. Policy document analysis suggests that the steering bodies do not treat the locally spoken and learned heritage languages as equal to the majority languages, which creates an inherent literacy gap between the languages. Attitudes and language ideologies among the learners and teachers have the potential to create negative hierarchical views on languages, writing, and language learning. Development of research, practical training, and community initiatives, as well as implementation in teacher training, is needed to counteract views, ideologies and practices that may undermine the future of local literacies and that put the growth of future generations of Sami writers at risk.

## Keywords

Sami language – Sami education – literacy – writing instruction – Sami pedagogy – Sami language didactics – Indigenous writing

## Čoahkkáigeassu

Dát kapihtal guorahallá ja čoahkkáigeassá sámi čálamáhtolaš dutkamušá mii lea dahkkon jagiid 2010 ja 2022 gaskkas. Kapihtal suokkardallá maddái muhtun miellagiddevaš odđa prošeavttaid ja servoša siskkáldas čálamáhtolaš álgagiid mat

eai leat vel diedalaččat ja dárkilit dutkojuvvon. Kapihtal čalmmustahtá odá dutkansuorggi ja pedagogalaš ja didáktálaš ovdánumi, mii lea sirdáseamen eamiálbmogiid čálamáhtolaš máilbmái, mii fas bealistis lea dievvame sisdoaluin man gáldut leat dávjá eará gielain go sámegeias. Konteavstta girjáivuohta oidno earret eará empíralaš dutkamušain mat leat čielggadan ja kárten mánggagielat giellaohppiid čállinproseassaid Sámis. Oahppit navdet dahje vásihit dávjá ahte eamiálbmotgillii čállin ii leat nu njuovžil ja sii vásihit sámegillii čállima losibun go čállima eanetlogugillii dahje vaikkoba eangalsgillii. Stivrendokumeantaid analysa fas geažuha ahte eiseválddit eai oainne báikkálaččat hállon ja ohpon árbegielaid seammá árvosažžan go eanetlogugielaid, mii dagaha gielaid gaskii iešaddiluvvon čálamáhtolaš eahpedásedeattu. Ohppiid ja oahpahedjjiid doaladumit ja gielalaš ideologiijat sáhttet vuolggahit negatiivvalaš ja hierárkkalaš ipmárdusa gielaid, čállima ja gielaid oahppama ektui. Lea dehálaš ovdánahttit dutkamusa, geavatlaš hárhallama ja giellaservoša siskkáldas čálamáhtolaš proševttaid vai sáhttit vuostálastit dakkár oainnuid, ideologiijaid ja geavadiid mat soitet cakkadit báikkálaš čálamáhtu ovdáneami ja mat váikkuhit negatiivvalaččat čuovvovaš sámi čállibuolvvaide.

## Čoavddasánit

sámegeiella – sámeoahpahus – čálamáhttu – čállinoahpahus – sámi pedagogihkka – sámegeiella didaktihkka – eamiálbmotčállin

### 1 Introduction

This chapter explores and describes a locally emerging field of study and practice, that is, the processes of writing and teaching writing in the Sami language, which both belong to the realm of literacy studies. In *Sápmi*, literacy and writing have been less researched than other areas of study, although they are closely connected to many important areas of meaning-making, society building, Indigenous citizenship and school success, and in the majority contexts often motivate a growing and influential body of research. In the Sami context, the research in this field is steadily growing, but has yet to receive more attention, to be able to inform present and future educational practices.

Rather than being an analytical study, the exploration of this new field takes the form of an overview of the recent developments within Sami literacy research, research informed practices, and three community initiatives that create a promising new arena for literacy development and movement forward. This state-of-the-art description takes into consideration the focus groups of this volume, who range from international academics and other

academically interested public to in-service teachers or teacher students and non-academic audiences. This chapter contributes to the needs of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic audiences by offering a timely account of Sami literacy research in the beginning of 2020. At the same time, it is a valuable source of knowledge for students and teachers who look for support in their teaching practice, or in their own studies, both inside and outside the Sami context. This chapter attempts to answer two of the main questions that these two groups can be expected to face as they become familiar with this emerging field of study, under the greater umbrella of Sami Studies and Indigenous Studies:

What is Sami literacy and writing research in the beginning of 2020?  
What are the next important steps in this field?

The chapter is organised as follows. Following this short introduction, the second section narrates the background and context for the emerging field of Sami language didactics in which literacy and writing research reside. Observe that second section does not attempt to function as a background for Sami education in general, but focuses on the relationship between Sami language, literacy, and didactics as they are perceived and manifested in the higher Sami educational structures. The focus of section two is on higher education, because it has visible structures such as steering and vision documents, course plans and course offerings, while the relationship between Sami language didactics, literacy, and the regular school sector is at present hidden in the practices of less researched classrooms.

After the context section, Section 3 offers a rather compressed background to how writing and learning and teaching writing in general are viewed in research and by the practitioners. Section 3 underlines the fact that the literacy studies that have been done in *Sápmi* so far have had a specific focus on the *learning-to-write* approaches, and that one of the possible ways to move the field forward is to extend the scope of studies to include also *writing-to-learn* approaches. Section 4 describes the present developments in Sami literacy research and provides the reader with examples of the latest research projects and their results. According to this section, there is an ideological, practical, and policy-based imbalance between languages in *Sápmi* that benefits writing and writing instruction in majority languages and is often disadvantageous for the Indigenous heritage language. Section 5 describes a few examples of interesting community initiatives that offer us clues as to where positive advancement is taking place in the Sami literacy development, and what some of the natural next steps in research can be. Section 6 offers final thoughts and an attempt to summarise the answers to the questions asked in this section.

## 2 Sami Language Didactics and Writing in Higher Education

From the beginning, in the Sami higher education context, there has been a very clear-cut separation of Sami linguistics and pedagogy in the teacher training programmes, comprising of a remaining and enduring didactic gap between the two fields. A remnant of this separation is still visible at most Sami higher education institutions. At the Sami University of Applied Sciences, the organisation is still based on the division between the department of teacher education and the department of language, handicrafts, and society. However, a partial overlap between teacher education and linguistics is evident in the actual course offerings. A similar clear-cut separation between Sami linguistics, Sami literature, and, for instance, Sami culture and history repeats itself in the course offerings of Sami related contents at all the Nordic universities that offer such courses. For example, in Umeå and in Oulu, the degree programmes have been divided between language studies and history/culture.

According to the course plans, the main goals of most of the Sami language, literature, and societal courses are connected to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and, in some cases, values and worldviews. The implementation and mediation of the acquired knowledge and skills are seldom mentioned. Students who are enrolled in the teacher training programmes may feel that the opposite is true of their education, where implementation and mediation are expected but not always supported. They may also feel that there is too little time or space within the programme to strengthen the linguistic and cultural knowledge base that may be partially missing due to issues connected to the challenges experienced in heritage language environments.

Based on the last 10 years of research done within Sami literacy development and didactics (cf. Lindgren et al., 2016; Outakoski, 2014, 2015a, 2021; Pietikäinen & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2013; Sullivan et al., 2019), I further suggest that the models for why and how literacy instruction should be done in *Sápmi* are still today influenced by models that do not support Sami literacy development. The reflections of these influences are materialised, among other things, in official steering documents (Belančić & Lindgren, 2020), in hierarchical language attitudes (Hornberger & Outakoski, 2015), and in writing practices in and out of school contexts (Belančić et al., 2017; Outakoski, 2015b).

In the Nordic universities where Sami languages can be studied as a part of a national teacher training programme, the language subject and the didactics are separated in such a manner that the Sami teacher students follow language didactic courses designed for the respective country's majority language or for second language learning and not for Sami languages. Some universities offer optional courses in Sami language didactics in addition to language didactics

in the majority language. The Sami literacy instruction in schools and at universities focuses on the formal and regulatory practices, rather than on a wider understanding of the potential in writing and reading processes. This happens even though Sami pedagogy as a sub strand of the wider notions of Indigenous and common pedagogy has experienced a remarkable development since the start of the first Sami language programmes at Sámi allaskuvla, The Sámi University of Applied Sciences, and other Nordic universities.

Thus, although the Sami language was already taught at higher education institutions during the 1700s (Statens forvaltningstjeneste, 2000), it is not before now, at the beginning of 2020s, that the Sami higher education institutions open new positions for staff within Sami language didactics. The processes of opening, describing, and filling these positions lead to the exploration of something new within Sami and Indigenous didactics. Whereas access to Sami languages and writing skills initially equalled access to the Christian mission transferring and power controlling medium, the role of Sami language teaching in higher education today is clearly directed toward language communities' internal educational needs.

There is finally room for discussions on what, why, and how we should teach when we are preparing teacher students to teach Sami languages. These discussions are supported by the ongoing pedagogical research that is done within the Sami educational sector, and those discussions are also supported by the solid groundwork laid down by Sami linguists and language teachers. Contextualised pedagogical models and principles can now be combined with students' and teachers' linguistic knowledge to support and mediate the understanding of why and how we should be learning and teaching Sami language and literacy, and not only focus on what should be learned.

Now that Sami writing instruction is taking form within the emerging Sami language didactics, it is important to situate the new field within the writing research tradition. In the next section, two main approaches to research within writing and writing instruction are discussed, and one of the approaches is found to be more established in the Sami context than the other, providing us with new clues of how to develop this field in the future.

### 3 Approaches to Learning and Teaching Writing

Writing is a complex research subject, comprised of, for example, different aspects and perspectives on the writer, the text, the reader, the context(s), resources, pedagogy, and didactics of writing instruction. Challenges and opportunities for development in this field are, to a large extent, defined by

language and educational ideologies, policy decisions, and documents that steer and direct writing instruction at different educational levels. Writing texts, reading, and understanding texts, and many other activities that are connected to writing and reading can be studied, for example, from linguistic, sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and didactic perspectives. Within language educational and literacy research, it is a common practice to use a mixed methods approach as the basic methodology (Calfée & Sperling, 2010). Such an approach can have a broad focus on several aspects of writing, ranging from the socio-political and local contexts to the stylistic and linguistic details of the text, or it may have a concentrated focus on a few aspects of writing, but seen from different perspectives.

Within research on learning and teaching writing, there has traditionally been two theoretical and pedagogical perspectives that divide the interests of the researchers. These two theoretical research traditions tend to focus either on the ways we learn and teach writing (*Learn-to-write approaches*), or on how writing facilitates and aids learning (*Write-to-learn approaches*). For further reading and references, see Roz Ivanič (2004) for a thorough introduction of the discourses and contexts, or for learning and teaching writing; Bazerman et al. (2005, pp. 57–65) for an overview of the ‘write to learn approach’; and the edited volume by Rosa M. Manchón (2011) for extended discussions on the interplay between the two perspectives in the context of learning additional languages.

When seen from the language didactic point of view, both theoretical orientations that have been mentioned here are important and not in contradiction with each other. However, this division of interest can be good to remember when we read and interpret studies and research results coming from the writing research field, since the division has the potential to shape language didactic models in different directions – the first focusing on what, how, and why we write, and the second focusing on the role of writing as thought shaper and interpreter of the ‘inner speech’ (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 149). In the Sami context, the former focus has been preferred so far and very little is known about Sami writing as a means of learning. This is certainly one of the emerging and new areas of inquiry that needs to be strengthened, broadened, and has the potential to move Sami literacy research forward.

Apart from these two main research pedagogical approaches to writing, the educational sector, schools, teachers, and principals may approach writing as a necessity, described in steering documents, and seen as an inseparable part of a top-down design of the schooling system. Further, if the teachers lack the didactic and pedagogical tool kit for writing instruction, and/or are unknowing of the different pedagogical approaches to writing, there is a risk that writing instruction is reduced to a list of contents and boxes that need

only to be checked off during the education. The consequences of such a *necessity* approach have the potential to counteract the literacy development goals of the very same steering documents, as literacy goes from being a dynamic process of personal and societal development to being merely a list of skills that can be measured and graded. The risk of this happening is stronger in, for example, the Sami context where writing and literacy are viewed as belonging only to the formal school context and not in peoples' free time or being foreign to the Sami culture (cf. Hornberger & Outakoski, 2015; Outakoski, 2015b). This implies that the need to develop literacy research in *Sápmi* and in Sami languages is urgent, to counteract negative views on writing in the local heritage language. To understand how Sami literacy research has approached negative views, ideologies, writing practices and other research objects, we now turn our focus to the next section, that exemplifies the state of the art in the beginning of 2020.

#### 4 Literacy Research in Sápmi

Literacy as a research subject is a rather new addition to the Sami research tradition, although writing and its features as part of the literary tradition in *Sápmi* have long been a popular research subject within, for example, literature studies (Ahvenjärvi, 2017; Fredriksen, 2015, 2021; Gaski, 1987; Hirvonen, 2008; Mattila, 2011). Globally, literacy is closely connected to different national contexts of school research and pedagogical and didactic studies and has a much longer history than in the Sami context. In other Indigenous contexts, literacy studies are also often connected to the bi- and multilingual contexts in which most Indigenous peoples find themselves today, and that shape their writing practices (de la Piedra, 2006; Gort, 2008; Hare, 2012; Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014; Hornberger, 2003; Mendes, 2006).

Literacy studies that focus on reading in Sami languages are very few and reflect the threatened state of Sami languages in a society where other languages are constantly present, and often dominate the literary landscape of Sami pupils. In a book that is based on her doctoral thesis, Jorun Høier (2007) focuses on reading and literacy in a bilingual Sami context. Her main finding is that bilingual Sami pupils develop better understandings of texts written in Norwegian, the majority language, than in Sami. Høier's study differs from most other studies within the Sami literacy research field, as it looks at reading using the *reading-to-learn* approach. In the master study that focused on reading habits among bilingual Sami speaking upper secondary students, Nina Ødegaard (2020) found that keen readers prefer reading in the original

language, and that even though the Sami students want to see more literature in Sami languages, they might themselves not consume that literature in Sami. Within the wider Sami literacy field, the research on reading needs to be further developed.

Literacy studies that focus on the processes and teaching context of Sami writing have so far been concentrated in Umeå, Sweden, but since 2019 we are seeing an increase in Master-level investigations that study writing and Sami language didactics on the Norwegian side of *Sápmi* (cf. Eira Heahtá, 2020; Hætta Klemetsen, 2019; Pettersen, 2019). Also, a group of researchers at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, led by Professor Sari Pietikäinen, has engaged in studying Sami languages and writing through the complex discourses of multilingualism and multimodality (Pietikäinen, 2012; Pietikäinen & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2013, 2014).

The following three subsections will present recent, ongoing, and planned literacy research projects that focus on writing, literacy, and writing instruction in the Sami educational context. The base for these studies is in Sweden.

#### 4.1 *Multilingual Writers and Their Complex Context*

The three-year research project, *Literacy in Sápmi*, was funded by the Swedish Research Council (project ID 2011-06153) during the years 2012–2014. The project investigated the context of literacy development for North Sami learners between the ages of 9 and 18, and examined their writing development in the three languages that the pupils were learning in parallel in school: North Sami, the national majority language, and English.

The data in this trans-Nordic project was collected from 12 school districts in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, and consisted of stories and texts written by multilingual Sami learners; survey data from the pupils, their parents, teachers, and school leaders; interviews with teachers and principals; and observational data from the writing sessions. The texts were collected with the help of a keystroke logging programme that was also used for the technical analysis of the texts considering such matters as fluency, length, duration. The texts, the observations, survey summaries, and the interviews were analysed using methods from discourse and text analysis. Some of the pupil texts were also analysed, using text analysis tools from the tradition of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Lindgren et al., 2017). A more detailed description of the methodology is provided in Outakoski et al. (2019).

The main findings of this project highlighted the complexity of the multilingual context in which Sami learners grow up. The results showed that the scales on the continua of biliteracy (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) could be very different, depending on where and how the learners were brought up and

schooled (Outakoski, 2015a). Those pupils who lived in the core areas of *Sápmi*, where Sami language is widely used in the everyday life of the pupils in school and outside school, as the medium of instruction and as the main medium of communication within the family, were more likely to experience some degree of balance in their daily use of different languages. However, Sami learners who lived outside the core areas, and/or who lacked the linguistic support in out-of-school contexts, often struggled with Sami writing.

According to the analysed data (Belančić et al., 2017; Hornberger & Outakoski, 2015; Outakoski, 2015b), the Sami language is often perceived as a language that is difficult to write and has more value when spoken fluently. This, in turn, has negative effects on literacy and language attitudes. When analyzed through the lens of the Continua of Biliteracy framework, it becomes evident that the Sami literacy experiences of many young learners are largely confined to the academic setting and prioritize written over oral traditions. The teachers see the school as:

An ideological space with the knowledge to adapt to new times and as an implementational space that can be an island of language revitalization while families and communities are facing pressures on Sámi language use. (Hornberger & Outakoski, 2015, p. 43)

Thoughts and attitudes toward Sami literacy vary a lot between countries, regions, and even locally between schools, which reflects the complexity of this educational context (Outakoski, 2015a).

This study is rather exceptional in the context of Sami literacy research and writing research, as it is the only large-scale transnational, empirical, and experimental study that has been carried out in *Sápmi* so far. Studies of this kind require a thorough ethical approval process as they are carried out in the school environment and gather information and materials that are connected to an ethnic minority group represented by both minors and adults. Such studies also require much more time and resources than usual Master or PhD projects. Requirements for the project staff are also very high as multilingual, multicultural, and social competence is needed of those who will be visiting the schools. All this said, development and new projects are needed in the empirical and experimental area of Sami writing research, and one way of promoting such projects is to scale them down to suit smaller projects from Bachelor and Master levels upwards.

#### 4.2 *Opening and Closing Spaces for Sami Language Use*

In another study, Kristina Belančić (2020) investigated the instruction and use of the Sami language in Sami schools in Sweden. She found that Sami

language use in schools is regulated both by the official frames offered by the educational policy of Sweden and by language attitudes and beliefs. In her study, Belančić concludes that ‘ideological and implementational spaces can be opened or closed, and support or hinder the use of Sami languages’, and that:

At the policy level, access to knowledge in and about Sami and to support functional bilingualism opens spaces for Sami language use. Whereas the unbalanced access to Sami and Swedish knowledge, fewer Sami teaching hours, and no national tests in Sami close spaces for Sami language use. At the grassroots level, teachers identified the combination of place and play as a facilitator for Sami language use, with the potential to open spaces for language use that support pupils’ willingness to use Sami. For pupils, positive attitudes towards Sami are connected with open spaces for Sami language use, whereas negative attitudes towards Sami are connected with few opportunities to use Sami resulting in closed spaces for Sami language use. (Belančić, 2020, p. IV)

One of the most important findings of this study has to do with the ways official steering documents, such as national course and school plans, create an inherent imbalance between writing and literacy instruction in Sami languages and Swedish. Belančić and Lindgren (2020, p. 614) argue that:

The SNC [the Sami National Curriculum] does not offer equal opportunities for pupils to develop Sami and Swedish languages. Thereby, it does not give them the full opportunity to participate as democratic citizens in all aspects of Sami and Swedish society, nor to develop their identities as multilingual, multicultural and Indigenous individuals.

What the opportunities for Sami language development, literacy attainment, and improved bilingual proficiency are in the rest of *Sápmi* and surrounding areas is yet to be studied. Studies of language curricula, literacy goals in steering documents, and several other literacy and writing-related questions offer ways to broaden the field beyond texts and language studies.

#### 4.3 *Collaborative Research Creates Didactic Models for Sami Literacy*

The studies presented in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 have provided Sami literacy researchers with valuable knowledge about writing processes, the contexts of writing, and the use of language in Sami schools. Both projects have also

produced outcomes that can inform the practices of literacy instruction in Sami schools, higher education institutions, and in other contexts where Sami learners are learning writing and reading in Sami, and where teachers are developing new didactic strategies for Sami literacy instruction. However, the earlier projects did not investigate in detail how teaching and language didactics affect the acquisition of literacy in Sami and other languages in a real-time classroom interaction context. This is done instead in three collaborative projects where the classroom learning, teaching, and literacy practices are mapped, investigated, and discussed in collaboration with the Sami teachers and pedagogues at Sami primary schools and pre-schools.

One of the projects investigated the ways teaching supports writing in a multilingual heritage language context at one Sami school and in Sami teacher training and language programmes at higher education institutions in Sweden, Norway and Finland. This International Post-Doctoral project was funded by the Swedish Research Council (project ID 2017-00474) and was supported by Umeå School of Education. Among other things, this project has resulted in a methodological comparison of two Sami literacy studies that will hopefully inform future practices in the field of Indigenous literacy research. The main contribution of that study is that it acknowledges Indigenous research principles as a valuable source of ethical and methodological support for researchers who work in different literacy settings both inside and outside of Indigenous contexts (Outakoski, 2021).

Another project is an ongoing collaboration with OISE [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education] at the University of Toronto. It investigates the role of play and games in learning Indigenous languages and is divided into several different case studies that take place in Canada, Sweden, and New Zealand. The Swedish case had a postdoctoral fellow working with the Sami teachers for the initial 2-year period and has later received a three-year research grant from the Umeå School of Education, which will keep the project going until December 2024.

A third project, which is funded by the Swedish Institute for Educational Research (project ID 2021-00041), began in 2022, and focuses on literacy practices in multilingual pre-schools and school classes in Sweden. The translated title of the project is “Mother tongue, minorities, and linguistic heterogeneity: Teaching practices in pre-school and school with the focus on literacy”.

These three projects are expected to inform future teaching practices and didactics within the field of Sami literacy and Sami writing instruction. The research methodologies of these projects also embrace the knowledge of the in-service teachers, that are seen as important research partners and designers of the future Sami language didactics.

## 5 Literacy Supporting Community Initiatives

Besides the Sami literacy learning and teaching efforts that are mobilised in pre-schools, in compulsory education, upper secondary education, and at higher education programmes, we also see several community initiatives that support literacy in a non-formal and naturalistic way. Although the outcomes and impacts of these community writing arenas have yet not been systematically investigated, their effects on writing in Sami should not be underestimated.

Below, I describe a couple of such community arenas or initiatives for writing, but these are in no way representative of all micro and macro initiatives that take place in public and in the Sami homes. The selection of the following three examples is made based on their usability in connection to, and as a complement to, writing and writing instruction in schools. These also exemplify new and interesting areas of study that can help move the field forward, and to further highlight objects of study and perspectives of inquiry that may profile Sami literacy and writing research as something slightly different from similar studies done in the majority context. There are good opportunities, for example, to describe what contents should be included in Sami and Indigenous literacy, and to strengthen the collaborative research methodologies that can create a stronger connection and association between the Sami literacy research field and Indigenous research methodologies.

One of the arenas that is more readily accessible for an expanding number of writers and readers is the one of social media. Social media helps languages expand to new domains that promote innovation and creativity, helps to reach varied audiences, and promotes the inclusion of new groups of language learners, speakers, and users (Outakoski et al., 2018, p. 29). Social media-supported writing in Sami languages is essential if we want to ensure revitalisation and future language development. The preliminary results from the collaborative research projects imply that the Sami educational sector has yet to embrace this new arena of writing, as it is still rather invisible in classroom practices and as a didactic choice in Sami teacher education.

Another welcomed initiative is the establishment and funding of Sami author communities such as *Bágo čálliid siebrie*, a non-profit Sami author and writer association, or *Sámi fágagirjjálaš čálliid ja jorgaleaddjiid searvi*, the association for professional Sami translators and authors of non-fiction. Such associations create long-needed author and translator communities that offer support for new and established writers in the form of courses, advice, a support community, and help when applying for external funding. It is also easier for external actors and potential employers to find professional writers through organised associations. Potentially then, these associations function as

an internal engine in creating new and interesting employment opportunities within several branches, in which skilled Sami writers are sought after. One of the didactic strategies in Sami schools should then, automatically, be to invite representatives of these associations to visit Sami schools and to inspire future Sami writers to continue developing their Sami writing. The positive effects of writing workshops that are combined with a meeting with Sami professional writers have been one of the research topics in my post-doctoral project and will hopefully be available for readers soon. Another emerging research topic within professional Sami writing includes translation studies, that can be easily included in the research of Sami literacy in schools where a great number of the readings are translations.

Finally, I want to promote community and societal initiatives that strengthen Sami literacy and reading skills among the Sami. One such initiative has been the library bus, or mobile library, that for years has operated between the neighbouring municipalities of northernmost Finland and Norway. Due to increased costs, the library bus was immobilized for a short period of time, and the initial cooperation between earlier partners was stopped. However, the mobile library initiative came back as a new collaboration between the municipalities of *Unjárga/Nesseby* and *Deanu/Tana* in Norway and *Ohcejohka/Utsjoki* in Finland. The library bus offers readings for different audiences in several languages, Sami included. For the initiative to reach its goals of increasing numbers of readers in the three northern municipalities, the initiative should be investigated and included in the didactic models and goals of the schools in the area. Parents of young children need guidance and suggestions of what to read, and the schools can also arrange theme days or other reading activities in connection with the library visits which take place twice a month. It is much easier to retain and develop reading when it is made into a natural routine at home and in school, than if it only consists of forced and sporadic reading efforts.

## 6 Conclusion

Recalling the first question that was asked at the beginning of this chapter, I conclude that this chapter presents several key research projects that were recently completed or are presently underway in the field of literacy in the Sami context in the beginning of 2020. The chapter reveals an emerging field of study and pedagogical and didactic development that enters the Indigenous literacy landscape, which is often loaded with linguistic input and literacy content in languages other than Sami. In the beginning of 2020, Sami literacy

research is still a field that can be summarised and defined according to the individual projects that shape the present frame for the field. As the projects multiply in the future, the shape of the frame will also change, as it should. In the beginning of 2020, the whole field is still very much influenced by the methodologies, affordances, and limitations that follow the ‘learning-to-write/read’ approaches, that is, the questions that ask ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ we are learning or teaching in connection to writing or reading. Such research questions have led to investigations of multilingual writing processes, research on the phases and characteristics of writing, the context and prerequisites of writing and writing instruction, studies of reading comprehension, reading, and writing preferences, and to different content-based studies that look at either the texts themselves or, for example, the steering documents and the influence of their contents in Sami literacy. As literacy is so closely connected to education, most of the studies have been done in close collaboration with schools, learners, homes, and other research partners within the educational sector.

Turning then to the second question, concerning the development and growth of Sami literacy and writing research, I conclude that the several different examples of potential new research projects that have been suggested throughout the chapter show that the field offers many future research opportunities. Sami literacy and writing can be studied from several different perspectives, including pedagogy, linguistics, didactics, and language sociology. Writing and reading research done in Sami educational contexts has the potential to directly inform practice, and to help shape Sami language didactic models that spring from Sami knowledge and values. Such models are then expected to better consider the challenges and affordances connected to the complexity of the heritage language context, and to language revitalisation and Sami society strengthening efforts. Two specific examples of natural future steps in the field have been identified to be (1) the development of new empirical and experimental projects that can be locally adjusted and scaled down to suitable size, and (2) projects that investigate writing using the ‘writing/reading-to-learn’ approaches that are interested in understanding how writing can shape and support our learning processes.

This chapter has also looked at some interesting new developments and community initiatives within Sami literacy studies that have not yet been fully investigated, but that can be easily included in future didactic models of teaching and learning Sami writing and reading. As studies of Sami language didactics and different aspects of literacy among the Sámi emerge, it is critical that we support these efforts and find new academic and human resources in the Sámi educational field.

## Acknowledgements

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all my research partners and research participants. These collaborations are the base and the strength of this emerging research field and make literacy studies possible in the Indigenous Sami context. I also thank the organisers of the IPED (*Indigenous Pedagogy in Teacher Education*) Network for providing the frames and prerequisites for this work. I also want to thank the reviewers for their valuable, constructive, and encouraging comments.

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# Students' Language Attitudes in an Indigenous Sami School

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## Abstract

This chapter discusses youth attitudes to the Sami language, and their experiences of language choice at school. The research material includes 18 survey questionnaires for the students, and 6 interviews and researcher's classroom observations in a secondary school from 2009 to 2013. The research was conducted in a Sami core area in Norway in a secondary education school. Through questionnaires and student interviews, this chapter aims to give voice to youth in Sami region. Giving voice to the students and children and marginalised groups is seen as one of the tasks of educational research, and in developing equality in education. Through observations the researcher reveals everyday practices in the school. The survey and interviews show that most students felt confident in using Sami and Norwegian, as well as functioning in a bilingual community. Although the Sami language was seen as a key tool for integration into the local community, students were concerned about the future of the Sami language. They also felt responsible for passing the language on to future generations. The Sami language was considered to have a value of its own, and the students were motivated in learning and preserving the Sami language. The students showed language awareness and interest in the position of the Sami language. This chapter provides information about students' attitudes to Indigenous Sami language and motivation for language learning, as well as about their experience with Sami language in the school environment. This information is relevant to developing Indigenous and minority education or bilingual educational institutions.

## Keywords

Sami education – language attitudes – Sami language – Sami youth – bilingual education – Indigenous youth – Indigenous education

## Čoahkkáigeassu

Suokkardalan nuoraid gielladoaladumiid ja vásáhusaid sámegeiela geavaheamis skuvllas. Dutkanmateriála sisttisoallá studeanttaid gažadanskovi vástádusaid (N = 18) sihke jearahallamiid (N = 6) ja lassin dutki observašuvnnaid joatkkaskuvllas jagiin 2009–2013. Dutkamuš čadahuvvui joatkkaskuvllas guovddáš Sámi guovllus Norggas. Gažadanskoviid ja jearahallamiid bokte bohtet oidnosii nuorra mángggagielat sámegeielahálliid jurdagat sámegeiela oahppaneavttuid birra. Dat ahte jietna addo margináliserejuvvon joavkku nuoraide ja mánáide adnojuvvo oktan pedagogalaš dutkamuš bargun ja ulbmilin lea dásseárvvu ovddideapmi oahpahusas. Dutkamuš čadahuvvui álgoálbmotskuvllas, gos dutkamuššii jearahallon nuorat ledje oahppin. Gažadanskovi vástádušat ja jearahallamat čájehit ahte eanaš nuorat dovdet iežaset oadjeabassan sámi ja dárogeiela geavaheamis ja maiddáí doaibmamis guovttegielat servošis. Vaikke sámegeiela máhttu vásihuvvo leat guovddázis báikálaš servodahkii gullamis, de nuppi dáfus studeanttain lea fuolla sámegeiela boahhtevuodas. Sii maiddáí dovdet ovddasvástadusa sámegeiela sirdimis boahhtevaš buolvvaide. Sámegeielas lea sin mielas iežas árvu ja studeanttain leage motivašuvdna oahppat ja seailuhit sámegeiela. Studeanttat čájehit gielladiđolašvuoda ja beroštumi sámegeiela sajádahkii. Dát kapihtal ovdánbuktá odđa dieđuid studeanttaid doaladumiin ja giellaoahppanmotivašuvnnaš álgoálbmotgiella sámegeiela guovdu nugo maiddáí sin vásáhusain sámegeiela sajádagas skuvlabirrasis. Dát dieđut leat relevánta álgoálbmot ja unnitloguálbmogiid oahpahusa ovdanahttimis nugo maiddáí guovttegielat oahppoinstitušuvnnaid ovdanahttimis.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi skuvlejupmi – gielladoaladumit – sámegeiella – sámenuorat – guovttegielat-oahpahus – eamiálbmotnuorat – eamiálbmotskuvlejupmi

### 1 Previous Research on Language Attitudes and Language Learning Motivations

Language attitudes refer to attitudes towards one's mother tongue and other languages, whether one knows the language or not (Baker, 1992). Language attitudes can be categorised as expressed attitudes, in words or attitudes that are expressed through actions (Kunnas, 2006). Attitudes can also explain and predict actions (Baker, 1992). For example, an attitude expressed as an action could mean that a person begins to study a certain language and reflects how much effort and time the person spends learning a language. At the same time,

an attitude does not necessarily lead to an action (Arola, 2006). Additionally, a positive attitude towards a language can promote learning, and learning a language can change and improve attitudes (Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010). Students' and surrounding society's language attitudes are of crucial importance for the schools' language policy and bilingual (multilingual) education programmes to succeed (García, 2009).

Language learning motivation can be categorised as instrumental, integrative, and continuity motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Todal, 2002). Integrative motivation means wanting to belong to a particular group, or that an individual feels that language skills improve social abilities and are therefore useful in belonging to a group. The key is the desire to belong to the speaker group. Integrative motivation reflects the desire to belong and identify with a group, whereas instrumental motivation indicates a desire to gain financial or career benefits through language knowledge (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Continuity motivation explains the desire to study the language of one's ancestors, in which case the motivation is to connect with one's own history and identity (Todal, 2002). The problem with categorising the motivation to study a language, according to the above model, is that these learning motivations usually overlap, and one person might exhibit several motivations (Sarivaara, 2010). Learning motivation is considered crucial for language learning outcomes. Motivation, however, is the sum of many factors (Liebkind, 1999), such as values, experiences, self-esteem, expectations, and needs. The school environment, class environment, and the teaching situation and its arrangements have a major impact on the student's motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 1996).

People usually have an integrative attitude towards their mother tongue; that is, they identify with the speakers' group. Language choice can express belonging to a group, ethnic identity, and cultural heritage (Fishman, 1991; Giles & Johnson, 1987; Hatoss, 2003). Language can play a more central role in the identity definitions of some ethnic groups than in others (Liebkind, 1999; cf. Romaine, 2000; Schmidt, 2008). The Sami language has a symbolic value (Lehtola, 1997; Valkonen, 2009, p. 71), which supports the importance of maintaining the language. However, the relationship between minority language and group identity is not always simple. Language shame can lead to a wish to break away from the language speaker group, or to a language shift. The language shame experienced by the Sami has led to the loss of language for some generations (Anttonen, 2010). A person might identify as part of a speaker group, even if he or she does not speak the language in question (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). Such a language can be called an identity mother tongue (Leiwo, 1999). According to language revitalisation studies, Sami language skills strengthen Sami identity. This is one of the strongest reasons to study the Sami

language (Huss, 1999; Todal, 2002). Sami youth resilience research has shown that knowledge of the Sami language and culture is an important resource for Sami youth, and it supports a sense of belonging to the community (Nystad et al., 2017).

## 2 Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Context

This research was conducted in one of two state-owned Sami upper secondary schools in Norway. The school was founded in 1952 as a special vocational school for Sami youth. Over the years, it has developed into a school with a strong emphasis on Sami culture and language (Samisk vgs., 2023). The school has a nationwide responsibility for two Sami curricula programmes (a reindeer herding programme and a *duodji* [Sami handicraft] programme). Other programmes include Sami language studies, and lessons conducted in the Sami language and related to Sami culture. Approximately 70% of the school staff speak Sami, and during the 70 years of the school's history, the proportion of Sami-speaking students has been 80–90%.

The position of the Northern Sami language is very strong in the area where the research school is located, as 95% of less than 3,000 inhabitants identify themselves as Northern Sami speakers. Additionally, Northern Sami language is used as an equal language in the community administration (Guovdageainnu suohkan, 2019; Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021). Also, a youth language attitude survey conducted in the local lower secondary school in 2014–2015 shows that young people in the village consider their knowledge of the Sami language to be generally high (Dannemark et al., 2017).

According to the existing educational law, Sami students have the right to learn the Sami language. Some upper secondary schools can conduct education in the Sami language and have Sami programmes in their curricula according to Opplæringslova (1999) [The Education Act]. The latter case applies to Sami upper secondary schools as the one in the research village. This does not mean, however, that the Sami language is the only means of communication in the research school, nor that students would be able to complete their education only in the Sami language without using any Norwegian. The students have the Norwegian language as a compulsory subject at school, and they must know Norwegian to pass the national exams, and most of the written exams are in Norwegian (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011, 2024).

Many central Sami and Indigenous institutions are located in the area and according to its vision the local municipality aims to be the ultimate Sami

community (Guovdageainnu suohkan, 2019) The inhabitants of the local community are young of age compared with the other communities in Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021). All this gives a picture of a lively and dynamic Sami society with several career possibilities. The area can be seen as a good environment in which to grow up with a solid Sami identity (Hovland, 1996) This, of course, may have an impact on students' attitudes towards the Sami language.

## 2.2 *Method and Material*

My research material consisted of students' views on the Sami language and its position in the school. I used survey forms (N = 18), interviews (N = 6) and classroom observations (cf. Linkola, 2014). The age of the students who took part in the survey ranged from 16 to 25 years. The survey was conducted during school lessons with the help of teachers, and with permission from the headmaster and the parents of those students who were under 18 years. The students themselves decided whether they want to fill out the questionnaire, and some of them also agreed to be interviewed.

Most of the respondents studied Sami as their first language, but around 10% studied it as a second language from the first grade, or as a second language that they had begun to read in secondary or upper secondary school. Even so, most of the students had a family background in the local Sami community or in other Sami communities. The group included both students who had lived in the village all their lives, and students who had completed comprehensive school elsewhere.

## 2.3 *Ethics of Sami Youth Research*

When conducting research among Indigenous youth and in a school, there are several particular research ethics questions that must be considered, and questions of power, human rights, and democracy must be considered carefully (King & Schielmann, 2004). In Indigenous research, it is important for the researcher to be aware of the power relations. This applies very much also to research among minors. According to the principles of Indigenous research, even an external researcher should know the local culture and language and work according to the objectives and wishes of the community (WINHEC, 2011). As noted by Tove Bull (2002), researchers must possess a thorough understanding of Sami history, traditions, culture, and language. In addition, the community must trust the researcher and the research objectives. This requires, for example, communicating the research results to the community, respecting and honouring the knowledge owners, and meeting with the community members after the research has been completed (Barron, 2002; Bull,

2002; Hill & May, 2013; Nystad, 2003). A key aspect of Indigenous research is the researcher's relationship with the community. The idea of common needs is important for cooperation. The researcher should assess his or her own knowledge of local culture and community traditions, and his or her position as an emic or etic researcher (Barron, 2002; Bull, 2002; Porsanger, 2007). However, Gunvor Guttorm et al. (2023) point out that we all live in interaction, so it would be incorrect to consider oneself a total outsider as a researcher.

Traditionally, a longer period of time spent in the research area, living within the researched group, has been a central part of the ethnographic methodology (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Ethnographic research emphasises what people do and say in particular situations, and in certain settings. Since the researcher interprets things through one's own cultural background, it is typical for ethnographic methodology to bring out the researcher's position as a part of the research ethics and reliability (Keskitalo et al., 2011; Linkola & Keskitalo, 2016).

I conducted my research after having worked at the research school for 9 years and lived in the village. Although I was originally an outsider in the community, as my origin and family background are in southern Finland, as a schoolteacher living in the village, I had been a member of the local community for several years before conducting the research. During the fieldwork, I was no longer working at the school and not all the students knew me, but I was familiar to the school staff and knew the school's daily practices well. I am also fluent in the local Sami language and can communicate very well in the other local language, the majority language Norwegian. As a former member of the school staff, I was considered a bilingual member of the school community by my former colleagues, but maybe not by the students. Because the students were of or approaching legal age, ethical considerations focused particularly on power dynamics, given the researcher's past and current connection with their teachers, as well as the sensitivity required when conducting research among considered vulnerable groups.

It is pointed out that research should benefit the Indigenous community and should be carried out by building a relational accountability between the researcher(s) and the local Indigenous community. Special considerations should be given to that when non-Indigenous researchers are doing research that involves Indigenous people (Francett-Hermes & Pennanen, 2019). For my research, the school headmaster and the parents of students under 18 years old were contacted and asked for permission. I also discussed about the research aims with the students. The research was financed by the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. The research plan and implementation were discussed in Sami research and pedagogical forums. The primary results were presented and discussed with the local schools, Sami teacher education and also wider with Sami community. This chapter is written in English for an international

Indigenous and western academic community, whereas articles and presentations that were written in the Sami language benefit the local community better.

One of the special considerations for Sami educational research is the anonymisation of informants. Especially when the research deals with minors, the researcher has to protect a vulnerable group, and at the same time give voice to the youth also (Helander et al., 2022; Linkola, 2014, p. 99). Indigenous youth are marginalised and vulnerable, because of both their cultural background and their age. On the other hand, they too must be given voice and authority to their knowledge. A small community creates challenges to anonymisation (Keskitalo & Linkola-Aikio, 2022). I have chosen to anonymise the students and their answers by using codes and by providing examples of their answers through student excerpts. By providing student excerpts this chapter aims to strengthen student voice.

### 3 The Importance of the Sami Language to Students

In the survey questionnaire, the students were asked to choose from among five alternatives of how important they considered Sami language knowledge to be for them personally. In addition to choosing the level of importance, students could add their own comments or arguments to the answer. Students could choose to answer the questionnaire in the Sami language or in Norwegian.

All of the students who responded to my survey questionnaire considered Sami language proficiency to be quite important, important, or very important to them. More than half (10/18) of the students answered that Sami language proficiency is very important to them. These 10 students studied the Sami language as their first language. Three students considered Sami language knowledge to be important to them personally. One of them did not read Sami as a first language. Four out of 18 students found Sami language knowledge to be quite important to them. One student out of these four did not study Sami as a first language.

I have divided students' arguments into the following four groups:

1. *Mother tongue or 'language I've always spoken'*: This type of explanation was used by four students, all of whom read Sami as their first language. This can also be interpreted as an integrative attitude towards the Sami language, as the language is perceived as part of its own identity.

The following are some examples of the questionnaire answers:

*Go lea eatnigiella* [Because it is my mother tongue]. (Student no. 13)

*Go lean olles eallinagi hupman sámegiela* [Because I have spoken the Sami language my whole life]. (Student no. 12)

*Lea eatnigiella ja vuosttašgiella* [As a mother tongue and my first language]. (Student no. 8)

2. *Communication (answers of the type ‘all people close to me speak Sami’)*: This was the response of five students, also second-language learners (N = 2). They explained the importance of Sami language knowledge for communication and belonging to a group (an integrative attitude towards the Sami language).

The following are examples of answers:

*Danne go mu váhnmæt hupmet sámegiella, ja áhkut, ádját, ja buot mu lagas olbmot* [Because my parents speak the Sami language, and grandparents, and all the people close to me]. (Student no. 11)

*Pga. trivsel blandt egne venner* [To enjoy my time with my friends]. (Student no. 16)

*Nu gulalahan eanemus olbmuiquin* [That’s how I communicate with most people]. (Student no. 15)

3. *Concerns about language loss or feeling responsibility for the preservation of language*: This was the questionnaire response of four informants who read Sami as a first language. The respondents in this group thus referred to the importance of *continuity* of the language.

Some examples of the student answers in this group are as follows:

*Go eai nu mánggas máhte dán giella ja mii han fertet hupmat dan vuoi ii láhppo oalát* [Because so many people don’t speak this language, and we need to speak it so it doesn’t disappear completely]. (Student no. 3)

*Vai ii jávkka sámegiella* [So that the Sami language does not disappear]. (Student no. 6)

4. *Richness of the language or language knowledge as adding richness to a person*: This is how two of the students responded in the questionnaire. In addition to these, one more student mentioned both the richness of the language and the importance of language knowledge for communication. The remaining three students did not give any arguments.

The following are some examples:

*Giella lea riggodat* [Language is a richness]. (Student no. 17)

*Danin go mu mielas lea buorre go máhtán dakkár giella maid nu ollugat eai máhte* [Because I think that it is good that I know a language that not so many people know]. (Student no. 9)

*Jeg leser/lærer det fordi jeg liker det samiske språket og fordi det er nødvendig å kunne samisk her hvor jeg bor* [I study it, because I like the Sami language and it is necessary to know the Sami language here where I live]. (Student no. 21)

The students were also asked to estimate how often they thought they would use the Sami language in the future. With this question, I wanted to find out how students felt about the future of the language, which again can provide insight into their language attitudes or motivation to learn the language. Attitude research can be used to explain current activities or to predict future solutions (Baker, 1992).

Although some students' answers reflect concerns for the future of the Sami language, they seem to have a positive vision of using the Sami language in the future. Most respondents, 11 students (61%), believed that in 10 years, they would speak the Sami language as much as they did at the time of the survey. Four of them even thought that they would use the Sami language more in the future; one of them was a student who was studying Sami as a foreign language.

Three out of 18 students believed they would use the Sami language less in the future. These students also answered that they were planning to move out of the village. Those who did not see themselves as a part of the community in the future did not think that they would use the Sami language in ten years as much as they did at the time of the survey.

Other answers showed that the *local community* functioned as an important support for the language use, and as a motivational factor in studying the Sami language. The Sami language was shown to be an important factor for integration into the community. The community elders were seen to be an important motivation for Indigenous language use (cf. McCarty et al., 2011). Knowledge of the Sami language was mentioned to be important in order to be able to communicate with older people. This was mentioned both from the youth point of view and from the elders' point of view. The latter would need services in Sami because their knowledge of the majority language is not as good.

*Don birget, muhto it gulahala buohkkaiguin, earenoamážit it boares olbmuiquin* [You get along, but you cannot communicate with everyone, especially old people]. (Student no. 3)

*Jos boares olbmot galget birget, de fertejit eatnasat máhttit sámegiela* [If old people are to survive, most of us must know the Sami language]. (Student no. 18)

*Ollusat eai máhte dárogiela nu bures ja de leage buorre go hupmá sámegiela* [A lot of people don't speak Norwegian that well, so it's good to know the Sami language]. (Student no. 12)

*Det finnes en del folk her som ikke kan særlig mye norsk* [There are some people here who don't particularly know much Norwegian]. (Student no. 7)

If you don't know the local language at all, you can soon feel like an outsider in the community, even though you would be able to manage in the majority language.

*Vai ipmirda, mii dáhpahuvvá* [To understand what's happening]. (Student no. 9)

Sami language knowledge is considered important for *integrating* into the community (Linkola, 2014; cf. Länsman & Tervaniemi, 2012). In their answers, the students stressed that the village is a Sami community, where Sami is the natural language of communication.

*[Bygda] består jo bare av samer, hehe. Men de som ikke forstår samisk kan fort føle seg utenfor.* [(The village) consists only of the Sami, heh-heh. But those who don't understand the Sami language can quickly feel like outsiders]. (Student no. 7)

*Mun in jáhke olmmoš dovdá iežas gullevaž jus ii máhte* [I don't think people feel like they belong (in the village) unless they know (the Sami language)]. (Student no. 13)

*[Gilis] lea bággu [máhttit sámegiela] go buohkat hupmet dan. Muđui it gulahala ja dohkkehuvo* [(In the village), you must (know Sami language) because everybody speaks it. Otherwise, you cannot communicate and be accepted]. (Student no. 10)

*Hvis man bor i et samisk samfunn, spesielt et lite et, så er det nok viktig å kunne hvert fall litt samisk. Jeg klarer å følge med på hva som blir sagt. Jeg prater ikke samisk, men forstår mye, så når noen prater samisk til meg,*

*svarer jeg på norsk (med mindre jeg MÅ ta det på samisk).* [If one lives in a Sami society, especially in a small one, it is important to know at least some Sami. I can follow what is being said. I don't speak Sami but I understand a lot, so if someone speaks Sami to me, I answer in Norwegian (if I don't HAVE TO speak in Sami)]. (Student no. 19)

However, in general, the students consider that people know the majority language well.

*Dáppe máhttet sihkkarit buohkat dárogiela* [I'm sure everyone here knows Norwegian]. (Student no. 11)

*De aller fleste er flinke i norsk* [Most of them are skilled in Norwegian]. (Student no. 16)

The language situation in the research village was also mentioned as a contrast to other areas that were considered to be more Norwegian speaking.

*Ja, som her i (bygda) er det viktig, man føler seg dum hvis man ikke kan (samisk). Kor viktig det er kommer an hvor man bor, bor du i (bygda) ja, bor du i Tromsø nei.* [Yes, like here in (the research village) it is important. You feel stupid if you don't know (the Sami language). How important it is, is dependent on where you live, if you live in (the research village), yes, if you live in Tromsø (University city in Northern Norway), not]. (Student no. 20)

These comments show the importance of knowing the Sami language at least passively in the local context. In a functionally bilingual community, being a monolingual majority language speaker can be experienced as an exception and a hindrance to integrating into the community, even though the Norwegian language is also seen to be something that everybody knows. These opinions reflect both subjective experiences (internal) and also collective ways of behaving towards people not mastering the Sami language (external). It also reflects the position of the Sami language being the community language.

#### 4 Youth Experience of the Languages at School

The students were asked to estimate their experience of their language use at school, and how important it is to know the Sami language at school. The answers varied according to whether the Sami language was considered

important for studies and learning, or just the social climate at school. In the student questionnaires (N = 18) one third of the students (6/18) considered it to be very important or important to know the Sami language in order to study at the school. Seven students considered it to be not at all or only a little important to know the Sami language. The answers contained comments that the teachers adapt their language use to the Norwegian speakers, so that the Sami language isn't actually needed. The rest of the students answered that they don't know.

When students were asked to estimate how important the Sami language is at school otherwise, like during the breaks and social contacts, half of the students felt that it is important to know the Sami language so that you would not feel like an outsider. On the other hand, two of the students stated that there are many students at the school that don't know Sami language, and yet they can enjoy their time at school socially.

In the interviews the students explained how they chose a working language during the lessons with other students.

*Sámegillii eanemus lunddolaš go sámegiella lea eatnigiella ja hálddašit dan buoremusat* [The Sami language is the most natural, since it is our mothertongue and we know it best]. (Student interview no. 1, 2011)

*Dat lea geainna mun lean joavkkus, dábálaččat sámegillii* [It depends on who I work with in a group, mostly in Sami language]. (Student interview no. 4, 2011)

*Joavkkus jos muhtin hupmá dárogiela de mii čállit dárogillii. Sámegielfágas dieđusge sámegillii. Ja jos beassá ieš válljet, de čállit dárogillii go lea álkit gávdnat sániid* [In the group, if someone speaks Norwegian, then we write in Norwegian. During Sami language classes, we write in Sami of course. And if we can choose ourselves, then we write in Norwegian, because it is easier to find words]. (Student interview no. 6, 2011)

The students explained their experience of written Norwegian language being used at school.

*Soaitá báhpiriin eambo dárogiella, muhto gullo eambo sámegiella. Soaitá lea juoga man nehtas viežžá ja lea juohke skuvllas seamma* [There may be more Norwegian used in the papers, but I hear more Sami language. It may be that they take it from the internet, and it is the same in every school]. (Student interview no. 5, 2011)

*Leago dan dihtii ahte kontor bargit leat dárogielagat eaige buot áiggiid jorgal (teavsttaid sámegillii)? Dahje leago dan dihtii ahte skuvllas leat dárogielat oahppit, vai máhttet sii maid lohkat? Sámegielagat máhttet gal lohkat dárogiela* [Is it because the school office personnel is Norwegian speaking and they don't always translate (texts in Sami)? Or is it because there are Norwegian speaking students in the school, so that they can also read? Sami speaking students can read Norwegian]. (Student interview no. 1, 2011)

*Mánnga oahpaheaddji hupmet dárogiela, girjjit leat dárogillii ja go eará báikkiin bohtet diedut (dárogillii)* [Many teachers speak Norwegian, and the study books are in Norwegian as well as the information from outside school (arrives in Norwegian)]. (Student questionnaire no. 3)

The written majority language is preferred in many situations because it is the language of the study materials and internet services as well. Therefore, in literal practices, Norwegian is preferred, even if would be at the expense of the Sami language and the school's Sami profile. Not all teachers or other school staff speak Sami. In addition to this, the students encounter the Norwegian language almost daily in textbooks and when communicating with some of the school personnel (Linkola, 2014). Also, according to the Norwegian new Act relating to language, the Norwegian language is the administrative and primary official language of Norway (Språkløva, 2021 [The Language Act]). This leads to the understanding that every citizen has the right but also a need to learn Norwegian in order to function and take a part in the democratic society. It is seen as a benefit to all citizens of Norway to learn Norwegian and to be able to function in the Norwegian language (Språkrådet, n.d.).

Some students actually reacted to the fact that the Norwegian language is used at the school. The students feel that the Sami language would need more support than the school is able to give.

*GO EANÁŠ DIEDUT LEAT DUŠŠE DÁROGILLII JA OAHPPOGIRJJIT MAID, vaikko dát [lea] mahkáš Sámi joatkkaskuvla!* [Since most of the notices are only in Norwegian and study books, too. Even though this should be a Sami school!]. (Student questionnaire no. 6)

*Dat galggašivčče doalahuvvot sámegillii aivve* [It should be kept only in Sami language]. (Student questionnaire no. 3)

Thus, the secondary school linguistic context in the Sami core area is not monolingually the Sami language. It is bilingual (Sami and Norwegian languages

used daily) due to practical reasons like the heterogenic language background of the students, language knowledge of the school's personnel, and lack of study materials in the Sami language, but also due to the national language policy, like national exams and curricula (Observations Linkola, 2011; Linkola, 2014). Thus, the National language policy still puts emphasis on the Norwegian language as the official priority language of Norwegian society, even though the Sami language has an official language position in Norway.

## 5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed youth language attitudes towards Sami language and experiences of their linguistic environment. Young people saw the Sami language as an important personal skill for themselves and for future generations and felt a responsibility for language vitalisation. Sami language proficiency was seen a part of Sami identity and family relations.

The study highlights the importance of the Sami language as a mother tongue and a community language. The youth also expressed a desire for a strengthened position for the Sami language, and they were ready to act on this. Although the research participants felt that the Sami language was of personal importance to them, they pointed out that communication and getting along with others is most important. Yet some students expressed dissatisfaction towards the position of the Sami language at school, and they were also critical towards majority language's usage at school.

Although this research shows that Sami youth believe in the future of the Sami language, they also feel that the Sami language is threatened, and needs special support to survive. Sami youth also see that their own choices play a role for the future of the language. Schools can open an arena for discussion about these questions that concern the youth and promote ways to increase and revitalise Indigenous language use. By open discussion and language planning, schools can work towards an integrative environment and mutual understanding among different language users. It is crucial that the school staff is aware of the nature of multilingualism and understands the importance of language planning as a part of the school's practices and pedagogical work.

Those students that took part into this research for ten years ago, are now grown up and may have families and children of their own. It would be fruitful to study whether the language choices they have made in their lives compares with their attitudes as young high school students. In the future pedagogical methods for supporting linguistic diversity in the school environment and their connection to student attitudes should be of interest for future research.

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## “Language of My Home Region”

### *Ideologies of Non-Sami Adult Learners of the Inari Sami Language*

*Annika Pasanen*

#### Abstract

Inari Sami is an Indigenous language that has lived through significant change, from critical endangerment to reversing language shift and expanding language use in the community. One very important factor in the revitalisation is a one-year, intensive adult education of Inari Sami language and culture, arranged by the Sámi Education Institute. Via this education, a significant number of new speakers have emerged in the community. Among these are Sami reclaiming their language, and also non-Sami individuals learning the language. This chapter focuses on non-Sami learners of the Inari Sami language. Narratives from three group interviews are analysed in the light of language ideologies, especially those concerning the authenticity of the language, the legitimacy of the new speakers, and a belongingness to the community. Understanding the phenomenon of new speakers, in all its diversity, is crucial in the current sociolinguistic situation of the Sami.

#### Keywords

Inari Sami – language revitalisation – new speakers – language ideologies

#### Čuákankiäsu

Anarâškielâ lii algâaalmugkielâ, mon sosiolingvistlâš sajattâh lii muttum radikaallávt. Ton tile lii ovdánâm kriittâlâš uhkevuálásâšvuodâst jorgoppel kielâmolsoimân, já kielâ kevtim siärvusist lii lasanâm čuuvtij. Kielâiäláskitmist uáli tehâlâš roolist lii lamaš anarâškielâ já -kulttuur ive kukkosâš, intensiivlâš škovlim rävisulmuid, mon uárnee Säämi máttáattâskuávdáš. Taan škovlim peht kielâsiärvusân láá ittáám ennuv uddâ sárnooh. Sii juávhust láá sämmiliih, kiäh láá vâldimin maasâd jieijâs kielâ, já meidde ij-sämmiliih, kiäh halijdeh oppâđ anarâškielâ. Taat kirjeloho vuáju anarâškielâ ij-sämmilâš uáppeid. Kuulmâ juávkkuusahhiittálmist väljejum narratiiveh analysistojeh

kielâideologiai uáinust, nuuvt ete eromâš huámášume lii kielâideologiain, moh lahtojeh kielâ autentlášvuotân, uddâ sárnoi legitimiteetin ja kielâsiärvusân kulâmân. Sämmlilj tááláá sosiolingvistlâš tiileest lii uáli tehálâš iberdid uddâ sárnoi kirjáás tiilijd já táárbuid.

## Čoovdásäänih

Anarâškielâ – kielâiäláskitem – uddâ sárnooh – kielâideologiah

### 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on *language ideologies* of adult learners of the Inari Sami language (*anarâškielâ*). In the field of sociolinguistics, language ideologies refer to thoughts, beliefs, myths, and principles connected to languages. Language ideologies emerge on both institutional and grassroots levels and regulate state language policies and individual language choices (Schieffelin et al., 1998). Inari Sami is one of the numerous Indigenous languages of the world that has been revived, after decades of assimilation and language shift. Of the nine or ten<sup>1</sup> Sami languages, Inari Sami, North Sami, and Skolt Sami are spoken in Finland. Inari and Skolt Sami are spoken by a couple of hundred speakers, mostly in the municipality of Inari, whereas North Sami may have 20–25, 000 speakers in Finland, Sweden, and Norway (Sámi Giellagáldu, n.d.). All Sami languages are endangered to varying degrees,<sup>2</sup> and the Inari Sami language had reached the stage of serious endangerment when effective language revitalisation began, with language nest activities in 1997. In addition to language nests, community-based revitalisation activities, mother-tongue medium basic education, university studies, Sami media and dynamic corpus planning have increased the vitality of the language (Aikio-Puoskari, 2016; Olthuis, 2000, 2003; Olthuis et al., 2013; Olthuis & Trosterud, 2015; Pasanen, 2014, 2015, 2018a).

Since 2009, one of the key factors of the revitalisation has been an intensive, full-time, one-year training of the Inari Sami language and culture for adults. This has already resulted in approximately 120 *new speakers*.<sup>3</sup> This concept refers to speakers who have learned the language in question outside family settings, for example, through language immersion or learning programs for adults. New speakers became a specific interest of the research in the 2010s, through studies concerning changing and developing communities of regional or minority languages, including Irish, Basque, and Catalan (O'Rourke et al., 2015). New speakers are a very topical issue in the whole Sami world (Olthuis et al., 2013; Johansen, 2019; Jonsson & Rosenfors, 2017). In the Inari Sami speech

community, where the intergenerational transmission of the language was interrupted for decades, new speakers play a particularly valuable role. A significant proportion of them are now working in Inari Sami domains, such as language nests, schools, and the Sami Parliament. Many are also transmitting the language to their own children (Pasanen, 2022).

My postdoctoral research project (2017–2021) focused on new speakers of Inari, Skolt, and North Sami, their experiences on learning and speaking the Sami language, and their positions in Sami speech communities (Pasanen, 2018b, 2019, 2021, 2022). In this chapter, I analyse language ideologies of the learners of the Inari Sami language, reflected in three group interviews. These ideologies relate first to the ownership of the language and legitimacy of the new speakers, especially non-Sami speakers, and second to the authenticity of the language, self-criticism, and coping with incomplete language skills.

The main research question of this chapter is: What kind of language ideologies connected to the ownership and authenticity appear in the group interviews with the learners of the Inari Sami language? This question is examined through the following sub-questions:

1. How do the learners describe their experiences in speaking Inari Sami outside the classroom?
2. What do they think about their legitimacy as non-Sami learners and speakers of a Sami language?
3. How do they position themselves in the Inari Sami-speaking community?
4. How do they value their Inari Sami language skills in the context of the whole speech community?

The aim of this study is to bring out new information about learning an endangered, reviving language as an adult. In order to strengthen the speech community of Inari Sami – and other endangered languages – it is important to recognise and understand the phenomenon new speakerness, as diverse as it is. This chapter is the first case study on the group of learners of a Sami language coming from outside the traditional speech community, that is, the ethnic group of the Sami.

This research topic is familiar to me both personally and through grassroots project work. I am a Finn, born in central Finland, and I speak Finnish as my mother tongue. I have lived in Inari for a long time, and I learned the Inari Sami and North Sami languages through intensive language studies. My children have acquired Inari Sami in the language nest and later in Inari Sami–medium education. I have worked on various revitalisation projects, such as the first intensive education of the Inari Sami language in 2009–2010 (cf. Olthuis et al., 2013).

## 2 Sociolinguistic Context: Losing and Taking Back Sami Languages

The sociolinguistic situation of Sami languages dramatically weakened in the second half of the 20th century, as a consequence of various historical and socio-economical changes and assimilationist state politics (Aikio, 1988; Hyltenstam et al., 1999; Minde, 2005; Lehtola, 2014; Nyysönen, 2014). In Finland, the rather dramatic language shift from Sami to Finnish took place among the Inari and Skolt Sami in general, and in places, also among the North Sami-speaking population. In the case of the Inari Sami, intergenerational language transmission was interrupted completely. Finnish replaced Inari Sami as the main language of families in the 1950s, and only a few children born in the 1960s acquired the language. When reversing the language shift started in language nests in 1997, there were only a couple of young speakers in the whole community. Inari Sami had become a language of the grandparents' generation (Olthuis, 2000, 2003; Pasanen, 2015).

Because of the language shift, one or more Sami generations in many areas have grown up without the Sami language. They either never acquired it, or they have been unable to maintain their language competence. Many Sami individuals have strong psychological barriers to speaking the language, even if they know it in principle. This phenomenon of *lost generations* is a global concern, wherever a language shift has taken place (Olthuis et al., 2013, pp. 217–222). Along with the revitalisation of Sami languages, various practices in taking back language and solving the problem of lost generations have emerged (Aikio-Puoskari, 2016; Huss, 1999; Juuso, 2009; Olthuis et al., 2013; Pasanen, 2015, 2018a; Rasmus & Lane, 2021).

For the lost generations of the Sami in Finland, one of the main arenas of language revitalisation is a one-year, full-time training in the Sami language and culture, arranged by the Sámi oahpahušguovddáš/Saamelaisalueen koulutuskeskus = SOGSAKK [Sámi Education Institute] in Inari. North Sami has been taught intensively since the 1990s, and in its current form, of one academic year, since 1999. Inari Sami was first taught for an intensive period of five months in spring 1999. The first full-year educational programme was organised in 2009–2010 by the Giellagas Institute at the University of Oulu, SOGSAKK, and *Anaráškielâ servi* [Association of the Inari Sami Language] (Olthuis et al., 2013). Since 2011, intensive studies of Inari Sami have been arranged by SOGSAKK, and Skolt Sami became a part of the institute's curriculum in 2012. All three languages are usually taught in parallel each year, with some exceptions (Aikio-Puoskari, 2016, pp. 52–56).

Language education at SOGSAKK includes both classroom instruction, independent studies, language training in Sami-speaking workplaces, and practical courses on Sami culture. Another important part of the education of Inari and Skolt Sami is the so-called master-apprentice language learning: informal oral

communication with native, usually older speakers of the language (Hinton, 2002; Pasanen, 2015, pp. 249–312). Meetings with the language masters take place outside the classroom, typically in the home of the master. Intensive studies at SOGSAKK are targeted at people wishing to learn the Sami language who are able to concentrate on full-time study for the entire academic year. The goal of the training is to provide fluent, productive language skills. Many graduates, especially of Inari and Skolt Sami studies, are recruited for Sami-speaking jobs right after their education, due to the acute need for Sami-speaking employees in many fields. Many graduates continue their language studies at the Giellagas Institute at the University of Oulu.

There are two main groups of students: (1) students of Sami origin taking back their heritage language; and (2) non-Sami students wanting to learn Sami for various reasons, such as the needs of the labour market or their wish to support the Sami-speaking community. Respondents to my 2017 survey (see the next subchapter) were asked about the ethnic group they primarily identified with. Of the 85 new speakers who responded to the survey, 38 reported Finnish as their primary ethnic identification, and 32 identified primarily as Sami. The remaining 15 did not specify their primary identification or reported an alternative ethnic identity, but according to their subsequent responses, many seemed to have Sami roots.

SOGSAKK is a mostly state-funded vocational institute, and the only educational institute in Finland whose position has been defined by a separate law (Laki Saamelaisalueen koulutuskeskuksesta 9.4.2010/252). This is due to its special role in the education and development of the Sami population and Sami domicile area in Finland. Therefore, when funding SOGSAKK, the state is also funding the education of new speakers of Sami languages, and consequently promoting an important part of the language revitalisation.

### 3 Methodological Framework of the Study

The data of my postdoctoral research consist of quantitative survey data from 2017 and qualitative interview data from 2017–2020. The survey was addressed to people who had graduated from the year-long intensive training of Inari Sami, North Sami, or Skolt Sami language and culture during a certain period.<sup>4</sup> The whole target group included 132 participants, and 85 responded to the survey. After the survey, I interviewed teachers and former teachers of each Sami language, as well as students and former students of these studies. Both individual and group interviews were conducted (cf. Pasanen, 2018b, 2019, 2022).

In this chapter, the focus lies on three group interviews or research conversations that I had with a group of students of Inari Sami language and culture

during one academic year. Their studies began in August. The first conversation took place in mid-September, the second in mid-February, and the third at the end of May, when the studies were about to end. I refer to these research conversations as Conversation 1 = C1, Conversation 2 = C2, and Conversation 3 = C3. Conversations lasted from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours. C1 and C2 were conducted in Finnish, and C3 mostly (~90%) in Inari Sami, according to the wishes of the students. C1 and C2 took place in the classroom, and C3 was conducted online via Zoom. Five students attended all three conversations, three students attended only the first one, and one attended the second and third. There were altogether eight students in C1, and six students in C2 and C3. For the sake of anonymity, no personal information will be provided, nor about the academic year of the conversations. Most of the participants were female, which is quite typical in the field of studies and revitalisation of Sami languages (cf. Bull et al., 2021). I will refer to the students by male or female pronouns randomly. Naturally, I have deleted proper nouns and other recognisable information in the quotations. The abbreviation 'IS' will be used to refer to 'Inari Sami'.

The students of these three research conversations were mostly Finnish. There were only two Sami students in the first conversation, and the participants of the following two conversations were all non-Sami. In the Inari Sami class of that specific academic year, non-Sami students happened to form a clear majority. Attending group interviews was voluntary, and a couple of students did not attend. There was a very small amount of data from Sami students, and unlike with the others, I was not able to follow their process through multiple conversations. For these reasons, only the data from non-Sami learners was included in this chapter.

#### 4 Findings: Language Ideologies of the Learners of Inari Sami

I will now analyse the new speakers' narratives that reflect ideologies related to (1) the authenticity of the language, attitudes of the community towards new speakers, and attitudes towards one's own language skills; and (2) the legitimacy of learning IS and belongingness to the community. Numbered paragraphs are organised in such a way that authenticity and attitudes towards language skills are discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.4, and legitimacy and belongingness in Sections 4.2. and 4.3.

##### 4.1 *Don't Speak Finnish to Me!: Using the New Language*

During C1, at the point when studies had been going on for a month, I asked students how they find speaking IS or other languages in general. Were they

speaking boldly or struggling with self-criticism? One student had been studying linguistics and had a lot of experience speaking foreign languages. She knew the key factor of success: Tolerance for feeling silly.

I'm so used to sounding silly in most languages. In the evenings, I may be wondering whatever I happened to say that time, all those invalid verb forms, but usually it doesn't slow me down in that situation.

Another student said that he had already started to speak IS in various situations and described humorously how it often went: he threw himself into communication without hesitation, but to his own surprise, noticed at some point that he did not have enough vocabulary. However, he felt confident in his own learning, knowing several examples of people who had learned the Sami language from zero to fluency in the same training.

So that I'm not worried at all. Some sort of magic trick is apparently going to happen here at some point.

A couple of students talked about hesitations and self-criticism. One tended to take mistakes and failures very seriously and engage in self-accusations but found a way to move forward.

But on the other hand, then comes a new day, and you can always get excited again.

During C2, in February, students already had experience using IS outside the classroom. They had met their language masters (see the sub-chapter 2) for the first two days, and many had other interlocutors as well. One student talked about her conscious language practice: She started conversations with unknown people, in public places, with authorities, and overall, in IS. This is somewhat unusual in Inari. Others admired her choice. How wonderful that someone had the determination for that!

Because otherwise I don't know who would speak [Inari Sami], and it would be such a pity if one speaks, and we didn't use [Inari Sami]. So, I have decided to act like this because I can't deduce from anyone's nose whether she knows or not.

During the process of language learning, many people find it useful to make conscious agreements in terms of language choice with speakers or other

learners. One student reported such an agreement with a classmate who knew IS from her early childhood.

Don't speak Finnish to me!

This was working out well and had been a significant benefit to the student's learning process. Other students also talked about the importance of that particular classmate to their own language use. Children are often praised as ideal interlocutors for the new speakers (Rasmus & Lane, 2021). One student highlighted this aspect and felt that adults had a lot to learn from children's liberality, flexibility, and creativity.

They are my idols when they boldly speak however they like. So, in principle, we are in the same situation.

One conversation topic of C3 in May was the attitudes and practices of the IS-speaking community. Students spoke a lot about the tolerance (see Section 4.3) of the community. Some of them also mentioned a kind of by-product of tolerance: many native or stronger speakers of IS never corrected the language of the learners. Students assumed this to be due to general politeness, but for a learner, it could also be harmful. One student described how she tried to search for a word or phrase but was left without a response.

Even if I try to ask the other person, what's that word, and search the beginning of the word and so on, that other one doesn't respond, doesn't tell me what the proper word would be.

This experience is interesting, considering the general discussion on learning Sami languages, and tolerating or criticising the language of learners. In this context, the term 'language police' is often used, referring to a native speaker of a Sami language eager to address mistakes and shortcomings of other speakers and language learners (Johansen, 2019; Jonsson & Rosenfors, 2017). In the Sami media and social media, there are often experiences and opinions about whether it is desirable or inappropriate to correct others' language. Quite commonly, new speakers appreciate the help and advice of stronger speakers, but only when given in a sensitive and respectful way.

#### 4.2 *If It Has Been Okay for Me to Study English and Kamas': Legitimacy of Learning Inari Sami*

In the following, I will explore what do the students think about their own position and legitimacy as non-Sami learners of a Sami language. In C1, I asked

non-Sami students how they felt about their role as non-Sami learners of a Sami language. One said that she had been thinking about this recently, especially in relation to cultural appropriation, which has been discussed a lot in the Sami context. She felt that language learning should not be linked to cultural appropriation, and in her opinion, the Inari Sami community needed new speakers outside their ethnic group. She considered IS to be one language among many others, and that it was normal and desirable for Finns to learn it.

Well, of course a Finn must know the Sami language!  
If it has been okay for me to study English and Kamas.<sup>5</sup>

Some students who had lived in Inari for a long time clearly considered IS a local language, the language of the region they had settled in, and may be living in for the rest of their lives. They wanted to see IS as a neutral language of daily life and do their best to normalise its use. One student said that she considered learning IS her duty once she had moved to the territory of this language. She wished to learn the language to increase the number of speakers, to have daily interactions with people, and to make IS a more normal means of communication in her new home village.

In essence, I feel that I will get to master the language of my home region, which is a huge thing for me. I want to be a part of such a cultural shift. So that it wouldn't be automatically Finnish when I meet someone in the shop, just because both are not Inari Sami.

The need and effort to get new IS speakers outside the ethnic group is not a new phenomenon. In my PhD thesis, I defined ethnic neutrality as one of the key ideologies of the revitalisation of IS (Pasanen, 2015). It has been visible since the beginning of the revitalisation process in the 1980s. During the decades of revitalisation, this ideology has been expressed aloud and implemented in practice, even if it has sometimes also been contested and criticised. Membership of *Anarâškielâ servi* [Association of the IS language], the leader of the revitalisation activities, has always been based on knowledge of IS, not ethnicity. Chairmen of the association have repeatedly written in the editorials of the journal *Anarâš* about how important every single speaker is for the language, regardless of ethnicity, and how the language cannot be owned by anyone. They have celebrated all new adult speakers. They have stated that children of the language nests should have a right to wear the Sami costume and identify with Sami culture, no matter what their ethnic background is.

In terms of choosing children for language nest groups, *Anarâškielâ servi* has always emphasised the commitment and language skills of the family over

ethnicity. In this regard, the ideologies of language revitalisation of *Anarâškielâ servi* differ from those of the Sami Parliament of Finland. According to the principles of the Sami Parliament, revitalisation activities like language nests are seen strictly as a matter for the ethnic Sami group. The ideology of ethnic neutrality is not only promoted by the leaders of IS revitalisation but is also reflected in the narratives of the language masters, or the elder, native speakers of IS (Pasanen, 2015). Despite all this, learning the Sami language as a Finn does not always feel ‘neutral’ at the individual level.

#### 4.3 *‘What Am I Doing Here as a Finn?’: Ethnicity and Belongingness*

Now, I will introduce some ideologies linked to ethnicity and community membership. Feelings of belongingness and experiences with the attitudes of native speakers were discussed a lot during C2 and C3. C2 took place shortly after the students had spent their first two days with the language masters, and by C3, they had had a couple more days. All the students regarded the IS community as an open and tolerant group, in which all speakers were accepted and supported.

The Inari Sami speech community seems to be very supportive and positive in general, and it kind of feels good to use the language with anyone you happen to know to speak it.

‘With anyone’ refers to a general norm among the speakers of IS: people tend to use the IS language whenever possible. In C2 and C3, there were three students who had learned North Sami earlier in life and had spoken it quite actively. They all felt that they had been much more warmly welcomed as learners of IS than as speakers of North Sami. They now saw their own future as speakers of the Sami language in the Inari Sami speech community.

So, I’m just happy to switch camps [laughs].

Another said he had heard a lot about the difference between the Inari and North Sami communities in their attitudes towards learners, but only recently understood what it really meant.

You can’t know it until you begin to learn the language yourself. That the sense of community is totally different among the Inari Sami.

These experiences are in line with the data of my 2017 survey, which targeted new speakers of Inari, Skolt, and North Sami. Respondents’ experiences

with the community varied a lot depending on the Sami language they had been studying. Graduates of the IS language studies reported significantly more positive experiences, in relation to the attitudes of native speakers during their studies, than new speakers of North and Skolt Sami. Accordingly, new speakers of IS identified much more frequently as members of the community than new speakers of North and Skolt Sami (Pasanen, 2019).

Students' thoughts about their own roles in the community varied greatly, due to their different backgrounds. Some had been living in Inari for decades, while others had just moved there. During their education, the COVID-19 situation affected both the curriculum and leisure time for activities and meetings. It also limited their opportunities to get to know IS speakers outside the classroom, and by the end of May, some students did not have relationships with native speakers of IS, other than their language masters.

What 'speech community' and what 'getting into the community'? Well, I don't have such an experience, I have no idea how to get into that community. For me, I think, this stuff with the language master's has been super important. Because every single person you get to know that speaks IS, has, in a way, increased my own feeling about being more inside the community.

As the following excerpt from C3 shows, new speakers may identify with certain types of IS speakers, while the whole community may be another issue. In this context, I do not have the opportunity to discuss the concept of the speech community, which is naturally contextual and ambiguous. However, an 'academic IS speaking community' exists, since university studies and researchers have played an important role in the revitalisation (cf. Olthuis & Trosterud, 2015).

I feel that I have become part of a kind of academic Inari Sami-speaking community, but I know maybe two older native speakers.

Feelings of acceptance and belongingness in relation to IS speakers also greatly depends on the personality of the new speakers. Connection between the language and ethnicity seemed to be something that everybody had considered, but in a very different manner. For some students, it was a sensitive question that had been bothering them, and for others, this was not the case. Regardless of personal feelings, they were all aware of the topical discussion concerning the right to express and represent Sami culture, and the definition of the Sami (Junka-Aikio, 2022; Sarivaara, 2016). They felt that it affected their

studies and their positions, even if no negative feedback had ever come from the IS community.

I have been wondering a lot about what I am doing here as a Finn. And what I haven't thought before, but comes to my mind now, is that it doesn't come from the Inari Sami community, it comes from somewhere else.

In other words, an unspoken critique was there, the legitimacy of a Finn to learn the Sami language had been questioned. Where and by whom? 'Somewhere else', not by the speakers of IS. Only one other student talked about a concrete example of contempt from a group of North Sami speakers in the nightlife in Inari. Most students hadn't experienced anything directly negative in terms of their position, but they recognised critical attitudes, for example in media discussions.

#### 4.4 *'Our Inari Sami Is the New Inari Sami': Authenticity of the Language*

Finally, I take a look at the ideologies of the IS learners, related to their own language skills and the quality of the language. The students talked a lot about the authenticity and quality of the language and the level of language competence in all three research conversations. Students' attitudes towards their own competence varied a lot, with some being very self-critical and others more confident. They were all able to locate themselves realistically in the wider context of revitalisation and new speakers: they knew that new speakers were needed, and new speakers could not speak perfectly from the beginning. Before C2, one of the students had been offered an opportunity to start teaching some subjects in IS at the school. It caused her much thought.

What kind of bad Inari Sami will the children learn from me then! But recently I decided that maybe I should think about it in a different way, that if I won't take up the task of teaching it, or if someone else won't, and I'd prefer it to be someone else, but as long as there is no one else, I could do that. It's better after all than what's happening now, that they have to transfer to that Finnish class so that there won't be any Inari Sami at all then.

Two other students who were considering working in IS in the future shared the same thoughts. Some students were a little worried, since they felt they had been left without some essential information on the language, such as possessive suffixes. They did not consider it as only their personal loss, but as part of a wider issue: their responsibility for the future of the language.

Our Inari Sami is that new Inari Sami that will go on because we are becoming teachers, and we will share these language skills. So, in a way, if our Inari Sami lacks possessive suffixes, will they be maintained in the future?

Interaction with the language masters carried multiple meanings for the students in relation to belongingness, communality, and acceptance. It was also the best possibility for the learners to hear IS from native speakers.

It was so wonderful to listen to the native speech, beautiful, flowing. I used to look closely at the direction of the mouth and wonder how that was possible, since what comes out from your own mouth doesn't sound the same. And we talked about it. When you learn the language as an adult, it may necessarily never sound the same.

That excerpt was from C2. During C3, the same student criticised the idea that only native speech is proper and authentic, in contrast to the language of new speakers.

I never like it that nowadays, when one hears the language of elderly speakers, then people say that is the real language. And that is how people nowadays speak, that would not be a real form of the language somehow. That I don't like at all. There are many different kinds of Inari Sami language, and all of them are good in my opinion.

On the one hand, the student appreciated and admired native speech and knew he would never reach that level. On the other hand, he considered all levels of language skills equal and important. According to his ideology, emphasising the authenticity of native and 'old-time' speech was problematic.

## 5 Discussion: Research Results in the Context of New Speakers

As the results of my doctoral thesis (Pasanen, 2015) prove, Inari Sami language has been taken back and strengthened according to very clear and conscious ideological principles (cf. Pasanen, 2018a). From the beginning, there has been a conscious goal to increase the number of speakers and widen the speech community, regardless of ethnic boundaries. Attitudes towards imperfect language skills, different speakers, and diverse language use have been very open and tolerant. IS language has consciously been raised as a core value of the IS culture. Language has been promoted by creating monolingual IS spaces. In

the speech community, speaking *IS* to anyone who knows it appears a clear norm. In my thesis, I claimed that these ideologies have been raised by the initiators and leaders of the revitalisation, but that they also reflect the wider linguistic culture of the Inari Sami (Pasanen, 2015, pp. 359–367; on the linguistic culture, Schiffman, 1996).

Based on the findings of this chapter, inclusive and tolerant ideologies of the *IS* community seem to be well known among the learners of *IS*. During *C1*, all the non-Sami students of this class were aware that they were welcomed and needed in the community. They recognised the general acceptance of the community towards new speakers, including non-Sami speakers, but most had also questioned their own participation and roles (see Section 4.2). They knew that imperfect language skills were a normal phenomenon in the *IS* speech community, but they were also concerned about the defects and gaps in their language skills (Section 4.4). When it came to speaking *IS* outside the classroom (Section 4.1) and belongingness in the community (Section 4.3), students' experiences varied significantly according to their backgrounds and personalities. As speakers, some students were reportedly very self-critical, while others felt bolder and more confident. For some students, the feeling of belongingness was already quite natural and important, while others had hesitations about their own position.

The learning of Indigenous or minority languages by the members of the majority is, naturally, not only a Sami phenomenon. Various ideologies and principles have been reported among different ethnic groups in relation to the ownership of the language, some groups being more open and some less willing to make the language available for outsiders. Ideologies of the Aboriginal Kurna community have been highlighted by Rob Amery (2000, pp. 234–237). Andrew Cowell (2012) has compared ideologies in the revitalisation of Hawaiian and native languages of North America also from this point of view.

It is important that different types of 'learnerness' and 'speakerness' are described in the research and at grassroots level. There is no one ideal type of learner or speaker. Endangered Indigenous and minority languages can and should be learned by people of various backgrounds, motivations, ideologies, and personalities. Hesitations, fears, disappointments, and feelings of failure deserve attention, too, because these emotions are a normal part of learning a new language.

Sini Rasmus and Pia Lane (2021) focused on the experiences of those learners of the Sami language who are taking back their heritage language. Their analysis shows what an emotionally loaded process it often is, to study a language that one has missed because of assimilation. Comparing the data of Rasmus and Lane and mine, many similar ideologies and experiences occur between

Sami and non-Sami new speakers, but there are also interesting differences. Sami learners taking back their language may have strong community support, and opportunities to use the language widely in their social networks, but they may also be subject to expectations that outsider learners do not meet. Some of the interviewees of Rasmus and Lane had been criticised for acquiring the ‘wrong dialect’, since they learned the standardised Sami language instead of the dialect of their home region or family. Their relatives might even refuse to speak Sami to them, due to the strong habit or psychological barriers caused by traumatic assimilation history. Sami learners may struggle with harsh self-criticism when trying to speak a language that they ‘should’ have been able to speak already (Rasmus & Lane, 2021).

This is something I personally experienced when learning North Sami through intensive studies at the Sami Education Institute in 1995–1996. There were both Sami and non-Sami students in the class. I used to visit the village of some of my Sami classmates. When meeting their parents and relatives, they gladly spoke Sami to me, and I was praised profusely for my language skills. At the same time, my classmates’ attempts to speak Sami were humorously criticised, for example, by complaining that they had been ruined by the wrong dialect. I had learned the same variant, but as a Finn, I was free from the expectations of learning a certain dialect.

Finnish learners of Sami languages have their own challenges. In my data, one student summarised his own hesitations with a very elementary question: ‘What am I doing here as a Finn?’ Learning a Sami language for someone not from the Sami community is not the same as learning any foreign language. There are numerous reasons for this, beginning with the fact that the Sami and the majority population are not in equal positions. For centuries, bilingualism in Sami and Finnish has been a one-way form of bilingualism: learning the language of the other group has been expected of the Sami but not of the Finns. Now that Sami languages are being revived and strengthened, there is a growing interest in learning Sami languages among the non-Sami, and a concrete need to expand the group of Sami speakers. The prestige of Sami languages has changed dramatically, as knowing Sami has become a great advantage in the labour market, and a kind of social capital in the community. Sami languages may gradually become something that the new speakers of this study wished for – a normal part of the daily life of the whole community of their home region.

## Notes

- 1 The number of Sami languages depends on whether Akkala Sami is counted or considered extinct.

- 2 Particularly critical is the sociolinguistic situation of Sami languages in the Russian Federation, where prerequisites for cultural and linguistic revitalisation have not been nearly as favourable as in Nordic countries.
- 3 This is an estimation based on the data of my post-doctoral study. By the end of the academic year 2015–2016, altogether 64 persons had graduated from the intensive adult training of Inari Sami language and culture. Since then, the studies have been organised annually with an exception of one year, with approximately ten graduates per year.
- 4 In the case of Inari Sami, the research period was 2009–2016, while for North Sami, it was 2011–2016 and 2012–2016 for Skolt Sami.
- 5 Kamas is an extinct Samoyedic language of the Uralic language family, once spoken in southern parts of the Krasnoyarsk region.

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# You Just Need to Shower Them in the Sami Language

## *Practices Teachers Use to Revitalise Children's South Sami Language*

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### Abstract

Linguistic and culturally safe learning spaces are important from both language and culture revitalisation perspectives. This study has been conducted in a South Sami preschool and primary school in Norway. The South Sami (South Saami) is the southernmost Sami population, frequently described as a minority within the minority. The estimation for South Sami speakers in Norway is around 300, making the language severely endangered. This paper takes a closer look at how preschool and primary school teachers describe the South Sami language learning space from an instructional practice perspective. For this study, in total, three preschool teachers and three teachers from primary school were interviewed. This textual data was analysed with content analysis. According to the results, teachers approached South Sami language instructional practices from four main categories. According to the results, the entire South Sami educational context was seen as an important inclusive language and culture revitalising space.

### Keywords

South Sami – language learning – education

### Tjåanghkan tjaaleme áarjelsaemiengiesne

Gieeldh j̄ih kultuvreldh jearsoes lierehtimmiesijjeh Leah vihkeles dovne gielen j̄ih kultuvren jealajimmien vuajnoejste. Dam goerehtimmiem áarjelsaemien aarhskuvlesne j̄ih maadthskuvlesne Nöörjesne dorjeme. Áarjelsaemieh áarjemes saemien áálmege, j̄ih daamtaj áarjelsaemieh állermaahta goh unnebeláhkoe unnebeláhkosne. Aerviedamme, medtie 300 almetj̄h Nöörjesne mah áarjelsaemien soptsestieh, j̄ih dannasinie gieles aajhtoen nuelesne. Daate tjaalege lihkebe vuartesje guktie aarhskuvlen j̄ih jáarhkeskuvlen

lohkehtæjjah áarjelsaemien gielelierehtimmiesijjieh aktene lohkehtæjjan lohkehtimievuajnoste vuajnoejste buerkiestieh. Dotkemisnie golme aarhskuvlelohkehtæjjah jih golme maadthskuvlelohkehtæjjah goerehtallin. Daam teekstedaatam sisvegejoekhtehteme tjirrh analyseeri. Illedahki mietie lohkehtæjjah áarjelsaemien gielen lohkehtimiedaepieh njieljie áejvieboelhki mietie geatskanin. Illedahki mietie abpe áarjelsaemien skuvlebyjrese vuajnalgi goh akte vihkeles sijjie mij gielem jih kultvrem jealije.

## Baakoeh

Áarjelsaemien – gieleööhpehtimmie – ööhpehtimmie

### 1 Introduction

Language or languages are an important part of any culture. Through our languages we communicate and build a sense of relationship to our communities. According to the Salzburg Statement (2018), all 193 United Nations (UN) member states and most people living in them are multilingual. Around 7100 languages are spoken across the world, and around 2500 of these are endangered. Therefore, millions of people around the globe are denied their inherent right to maintain, enjoy and develop their language of identity and sense of community. From these premises, societies need policies and practices that support language and culture learning, and maintenance of them, which will also contribute to social cohesion. Creating culturally and linguistically inclusive and safe learning spaces for Indigenous learners are of importance for Indigenous communities. According to Kevin Brown (2019), safe learning spaces can be inviting for Indigenous people and their philosophy. Students can come to these spaces, as they are, and they can cultivate their own growth. In these type of spaces, Indigenous learners can manifest their cultural practices of learning and construct and Indigenous community. Language is also learned in these spaces. Therefore, culturally, and linguistically, safe learning spaces are one answer to these societal needs (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022a, 2022b).

From these premises a theoretical framework for this paper was created. The framework of this paper consists of research connected with culture and language, but also with the Indigenous history of Norway. Therefore, an underlying framework for this paper is the linguistic and cultural exclusion of Sami languages in Norway throughout its history. According to Olga Shchukina et al. (2019, p. 192), Norwegian legislation provides the largest degree of self-government and the possibility of enjoying cultural rights, including teaching

the Sami language and its preservation, from all the countries where Sami people live. Furthermore, Shchukina et al. (2019) argue that the Norwegian public policy towards the Sami population has reached a new level, which can now be characterised as cultural pluralism. Nathan John Albury (2016) argues against this and points out that the policy rhetoric indeed promises that all Sami have a right to develop their home language, and that all Norwegian children will become familiar with Sami languages and culture, but the rhetoric has not been operationalised to benefit all Sami, nor promote Norwegian familiarity with the languages. In this Norwegian context, where discrepancies still exist on all levels of society, creating, culturally and linguistically, inclusive, and safe learning spaces for Indigenous learners becomes crucial for the revitalisation of the Indigenous languages.

The South Sami is the southernmost population, frequently described as a minority within the minority (Hermanstrand et al., 2019). This study has been conducted in a small rural Indigenous preschool and school centre in Norway, in the southernmost part of Saepmie. The estimation of South Sami speakers in Norway is around 300 (Ethnologue database, 2020), making the language severely endangered (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.; Cocq, 2012). The extinction of it can be fought with the help of language revitalisation. Therefore, this study has been conducted in an educational space that is the last frontier, fighting for the cultural and linguistic existence of the South Sami Indigenous population. In this educational space, we wanted to take a closer look at how teachers in both preschool and primary school describe the South Sami language learning environment in their ECE working context. More specifically, the research question for this study was, *how do teachers describe their language revitalising actions in educational practices?* The data was collected with the help of semi-structured interviews during the autumn of 2019, with three preschool teachers and three primary school teachers, and analysed with the help of content analysis.

The theoretical frame for this paper is divided into two parts. In the first part we describe the Indigenous Sami context of Norway, to give readers an understanding of the historic context. We will also give readers an understanding of the educational policies of today's Norway. Then, we move on to describing what language revitalisation is, and what type of pedagogical practices support language maintenance and learning. After that, the data and methods are introduced, as well as the findings. We will conclude this paper with a discussion on language revitalisation through the lens of teachers' practices in the South Sami ECEC and primary school language learning environments.

## 2 Indigenous Context of the Sami People in Norway

The Sami people are the Indigenous people that inhabit areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Northwest Russia. There are altogether nine Sami languages spoken today. Thus, the Sami should be considered as one people or nation sharing common cultural, historical, and linguistic roots (Hermanstrand et al., 2019). During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Sami population of Norway were subject to extensive assimilation policy, which is referred to as Norwegianisation policy. The main aim was to initiate a language and cultural shift among the Sami, making them fully Norwegian in terms of language, culture, and customs. This policy was primarily conducted through the school system. For instance, Sami children were enrolled in boarding schools, where speaking Sami was restrained (Niemi, 2017). This Norwegianisation policy was abolished by the early 1960s, but the effects are long-lasting. In many cases the language was not passed on to the next generation (Minde, 2003), creating linguistic barriers between the generations. The government of Norway has made efforts to revitalise the Sami languages of Norway. However today, only around 30% of the Sami speak Sami (based on figures in the Ethnologue database, 2020; cf. Vangsnes, 2018). This language situation poses specific educational challenges (Albury, 2016; Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022a, 2022b; Keskitalo et al., 2012). The children need to learn their heritage language and culture. One challenge in all this is the lack of qualified teachers speaking Sami. In primary and secondary education, this is partly solved through various forms of distance education. Another challenge is that there are only a few public arenas for the children to practice and to speak the Sami language in natural situations (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022b). Other challenges are connected to adequate teaching material but also, according to Pigga Keskitalo et al. (2012), is the need to develop an education paradigm that aligns with the requirements of the Sami community. There is a need (Keskitalo et al., 2012, p. 59) to transform the Sami community's own culture and tradition, its values, stories, expectations, norms, roles, ceremonies, and rituals into school knowledge which would improve multiculturalism and the inclusion of Sami culture in schools, where a Sami curriculum would be utilised. The same would also be the case for the early childhood education context (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022b).

According to the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, the Sami in Norway have status as an Indigenous people. In Norway the education system, from early childhood education to the end of primary education, follows the international regulations. For instance, the central authorities must make it possible for the Sami people to protect and to develop the Sami languages,

culture and societal life that is addressed in the Education Act (2020). Furthermore, all children and students 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* (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6). Also, all Sami schools must

ensure that the pupils receive education and training based on Sami values and the Sami languages, culture, and societal life. The values in the objectives clause are also Sami values and apply in the Sami school. It is important to have a holistic Sami perspective and an Indigenous people's perspective in the Sami school, and to focus on material and immaterial cultural heritage, such as traditional knowledge, *duodji/duodje/duedtie* and the importance of familial relations. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4)

During the early years, the Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Task of Kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017) highlighted the special position of minorities with an official status. According to this plan and the Kindergarten Act (2005), 'Sami kindergartens shall promote the children's Sami language skills, strengthen their Sami identity, and promote Sami values'. In these kindergartens/preschools, Sami is the main language of instruction. However, these documents do not elaborate on what Sami culture is, or what traditional learning and working methods are. Therefore, the Sami preschools and schools might interpret it differently, even if the Framework Plan for the Content and Task of Kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 25) states that *Sami kindergarten children shall be supported in preserving and developing their language, their knowledge and their culture, irrespective of where in Norway they live.*

### 3 Language Revitalisation in the Sami Context

In this chapter, the study presented has been conducted in the South Sami preschool, called *Suaja maanagierte*, and the South Sami primary school called *Aarjel-saemiej skuvle*. They are both situated in the same building. This is the only learning space in the world dedicated primarily to teaching South Sami language and culture from childhood to adulthood. The school was established in 1968 after the Gaske-Nørjen Saemienskovle in Hattfjelldal that had been the only one to provide education in South Sami since 1951. Today this so-called South Sami resource center offers distance education and language workshops

for students with South Sami, North Sami, and Lule Sami languages. Schools that are unable to offer Sami to students with the rights to Sami education can receive these services from Hattfjeldal resource center. The preschool and primary school are a part of a South Sami centre that also comprises a secondary school, and a dormitory for children travelling to school from further away. Children come to this South Sami center from all over Norway and Sweden. As mentioned before, only a part of the children in Norway identify Sami as their primary language. Therefore, children attending early childhood education and primary and secondary school have diversified linguistic backgrounds. This means that the children have varied needs regarding the development and maintenance of the South Sami language, but also the culture. According to a study from this language space, the South Sami early childhood education space, and the teachers working in it, was seen as an important and inclusive language and culture revitalising space, with a clear societal responsibility (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022a, 2022b). According to Marguerite Maher and Lisa Buxton (2015), the educational success in settings like this is about making Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing the key components of learning opportunities provided to the children, supporting awareness of their social and cultural heritage. However, it is not only the children who need language revitalisation in South Sami. According to Heidi Harju-Luukkainen et al. (2022a, 2022b), the teachers are also language learners of South Sami, that struggle alongside the children to acquire and use the Indigenous language. However, the teachers were aware of this challenge, and had found ways to overcome these challenges, for instance with the help of linguistic resource teachers.

Revitalisation of an endangered language is not only about local processes, but it is also about history, different practices, policies, beliefs in the society and so on, affecting the possibilities of learning a language and maintaining it. According to Sarivaara et al. (2013, p. 14), language revitalisation refers to a process where, using different actions, the aim is to revitalise a language in areas where it is in danger of disappearing, and it supports the vitality of the language. The purpose is, therefore, to increase the number of language speakers of an endangered language and widen the domain of language use. Language revitalisation is a complex and multidimensional process that includes both societal and individual action. Sarivaara et al. (2013, p. 14) describe this process as following:

At the societal level, language revitalisation is connected to national and international legislation and cultural policy. Whereas at the individual level, language revitalisation is affected by attitudes, cultural heritage, and circumstances in which the speakers of the language live.

Revitalisation efforts can make a difference. A study conducted by Annika Pasanen (2015) demonstrated that on a global scale, Inari Sami revitalisation was exceptionally successful. During the research period, transmission of the language to children was resumed, and adults began to learn and reclaim the Inari Sami language through intensive language education. Older native speakers took on an active role in the revitalisation process, and the use of the language increased significantly in several integral domains, such as the home and school.

Teachers are the fighters at the forefront of the revitalisation work across the Sami area. The language and culture-supporting practices teachers use are of great importance. For instance, Marikaisa Laiti (2018) has studied closer teaching practices and contents of Sami ECEC. These were specifically related to the development and maintenance of the relationship with nature, culture, and language. In these contexts, children were provided with various opportunities to practice elements of Sami culture such as doing handicrafts, using fire, fishing, and picking berries. ECEC followed or imitated cultural activities, even when children were not able to experience authentic Sami activities. The most important factor for reversing the language shift in Inari Sami was creating language nests, where Sami was the medium of school instruction, and where intensive language education had been given to adults as well (Pasanen, 2015). Äärelä (2016) describes an ECEC language nest as a space where regular education is provided, but where children can learn about the Sami language and culture as well. Pedagogical practices regarding children's language in language nests are close to language immersion practices (Äärelä, 2016; cf. Harju-Luukkainen, 2007). In language immersion, like in language nest programmes, teachers use a variety of instructional practices to support children's language acquisition, as well as to scaffold their understanding (Baker, 2011; Bergroth & Björklund, 2013; García, 2009; Snow, 1990; Harju-Luukkainen, 2007; Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2019). Harju-Luukkainen (2007, p. 139) has developed a model on the different instructional practices for immersion contexts. This model is based on a review of both national and international literature. According to Harju-Luukkainen (2007), a leading idea in immersion education is to incorporate a high language intensity, use a wide variety of language-rich teaching materials, and versatile pedagogical activities (for example, playful learning, drama, technology, and music-supported learning), where the instruction is done through the medium of the immersion language (cf. Baker, 2011; Harju-Luukkainen, 2007). The teacher's task is to ensure that the language is introduced and used in various situations, as well as on a linguistically appropriate level for the children. A variety of language learning opportunities should be provided, including songs and stories embedded in

the daily routines (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Since the teachers serve as linguistic role models for the language, the way they use the language is highly significant (Savijärvi, 2011). It is, however, important to note, regarding the Sami context, that the language is not the only object of revitalisation. Sami language is always connected with Sami culture, and the ways the language is supported and strengthened (Äärelä, 2016).

Parental collaboration is also of importance when children are learning a language. According to Harju-Luukkainen et al. (2022a), teachers in the South Sami context, described the context for their parent–teacher collaboration from three larger frames of reference. These frames highlight the promotion of children’s Sami language skills, strengthen their Sami identity, and promote Sami values. These three frames shared cultural understanding, goals, and the responsibility among teachers and parents. According to Harju-Luukkainen et al. (2022a), preschool teachers in Indigenous settings can, with their ways of working with parents, create an open arena for children and families to learn the Indigenous language. In these arenas the language nests provide a tool to organise the education for both children and parents, as well as for others living in the community (cf. Äärelä, 2016; Pasanen, 2015).

#### 4 Data and Methods

This research was conducted as a part of a research project called ‘How to support language learners in the South Sami language?’ It was a study of teachers’ competence in instructional practices and was funded by the Regional Research Fund (Regionale forskningsfond, RFF Trøndelag), Norway. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Norway in a South Sami preschool. In total, three teachers from this preschool and three teachers from the primary school were interviewed during the autumn of 2019, with the help of semi-structured interviews. These interviews were between 57 to 66 minutes in length. The questions were connected to the teachers’ practices connected to language teaching, focusing on the following themes: strategies used in language learning, verbal, visual and non-verbal; challenges in South Sami language learning; and priorities in language learning. The entire textual data was analysed with the help of content analysis. According to Robert Weber (1990), content analysis may address language, content meaning, techniques of communication, specific events, or all these simultaneously. In this study, the focus of the content analysis was the textual data developed from the interviews. According to Judy H. Gray and Iain L. Densten (1998), content analysis examines patterns and structures from textual data and selects key features that researchers want

to pay attention to, develops categories and aggregates them into perceptual constructs to grasp the meaning. In this study, the first step in the analysis was transcribing the interviews verbatim. Then, the research team read through all the transcripts to get an overview of the data. After that phase, preliminary themes were aggregated. In the next step, the research team looked for meaning units (sentences or paragraphs) describing the phenomenon studied. After this, codes were generated, describing how the teachers talked about language learning in their teaching context. These codes were then studied more closely, and thematically sorted into four main categories. The thematic coding was reviewed and reorganised where needed by the research group members, and finally, names that best described the themes were defined.

Since this study was conducted in a South Sami context and the researchers did not speak the language, all interviews were conducted in Norwegian. However, it is important to note that the teachers in the preschool considered themselves bilingual, and hence were fluent Norwegian speakers. The transcribed interviews were then translated into English.

As regards ethical considerations, this study adheres to the international and national guidelines for research ethics, including those set by the National Committee for Research Ethics (2022), with special considerations to research with Indigenous people. The research team has provided its participants with adequate information about the field of research at the beginning of the study; the purpose of the research; who will receive access to the information; the intended use of the results; and the consequences of the research project. The research team also respected participants' autonomy, integrity, freedom and right for co-determination. The participants could choose if they wanted to participate in the study, and they were able to determine their participation at any time. The data has been processed in such a way that personal matters and information were kept confidential (cf. Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022a, 2022b).

## 5 Results

In this study our main question was how do teachers describe their language revitalising actions in educational practices? Therefore, in this section we will describe in detail how teachers in ECEC, and the school context described the South Sami language and learning environment, from a language-supportive instructional perspective. From our textual data codes were created, and then thematically sorted into four main categories, that were as following:

1. Language immersion approach in teaching
2. Multimodal approach on language learning in various spaces

3. Playful language learning practices
4. Teachers as role models for language learning.

### 5.1 *Language Immersion Approach in Teaching*

When revitalising an Indigenous language, practices used in teaching are of importance regarding the children's learning outcome. According to Harju-Luukkainen (2007), a leading idea in immersion education is to incorporate a high language intensity, use a wide variety of language-rich teaching materials and pedagogical activities. In this study, the teachers described the South Sami language environment from a language immersion perspective (cf. Äärelä, 2016), where the children were 'showered' in the South Sami language every day in order to learn the South Sami language. The teachers used the word 'shower' to describe the rich use of the South Sami language in the educational context. Furthermore, the teachers understood and saw this language-rich environment as a great opportunity for the children to learn the South Sami language. One of the teachers described the language immersion environment as following:

You just need to shower them in the Sami language. The children who come here are bathed in the language every day, that is just fantastic.

However, it is important to note, that many children in the school context spoke Norwegian as their mother tongue. The teachers talked about how language immersion and 'bathing' the children in the South Sami language also meant that the teachers tried to limit the use of the majority Norwegian language. One of the teachers even talked about the avoidance of speaking Norwegian to the children in the South Sami learning space. She expressed it very clearly:

Preferably no Norwegian.

The teachers' attitude towards South Sami language learning was positive. Some of the teachers talked about their good experiences with using the South Sami language continuously, and how this in the long run would improve the children's language skills:

It is incredible how much they understand if you just speak to them in this one language over time.

Even though the teachers tried to talk as much of the South Sami language as possible to the children, they had to admit that it wasn't always easy. The teachers themselves did not necessarily speak fluent South Sami, so they were

simultaneously learning the language with the children. One of the teachers referred to this as the children taking a ‘light shower’ in South Sami instead of a bath:

We try to bath them (in the South Sami language) but sometimes it is more like a light shower.

In summary, the teachers described that they understood the meaning of language immersion practices, speaking the Indigenous language to the children all the time, and that the majority language, Norwegian, should not be used, but this was not necessarily easy to fulfill at times, due to teacher’s own lack of language knowledge.

### 5.2 *Multimodal Approach on Language Learning in Varying Spaces*

Using a wide variety of practices while teaching the South Sami language to the children is of importance. According to Harju-Luukkainen (2007), the teaching materials should be language-rich, as well as the variety of pedagogical activities used, like play-based, drama-based, technology-enhanced, and music-based pedagogy. As an approach to language learning in the South Sami context, the teachers talked about taking a multimodal approach in their pedagogical practices. This was done to develop the children’s South Sami language competency. Even though they didn’t all use the same approaches or practices, they agreed on the use of a multimodal approach, and that this involved activities including both the children and the teachers. One teacher described this approach as ‘learning by doing’:

It is important to be active and to choose different activities ... It’s all about learning by doing.

Furthermore, one teacher described that the use of all senses and movements is important while learning the South Sami language:

We use all the senses (when teaching the language), listening, seeing, tasting, and smelling ... and of course, movements.

In addition, one of the teachers described how the use of body language and mimicry by the teachers could improve the learning of language for the children:

I use my body language a lot ... it is important that they (the children) can watch my mimicry which makes the language more vivid.

Several of the teachers talked about how they use one special method called 'Bravo'. This is a method developed to explore sounds, letters, and words in combination with sensory experiences and physical activity, as following:

That we have tools like 'Bravo', which is really specific, helps the children put meanings to the words.

Children's language learning can also be supported with different types of oral and visual pedagogical practices in the educational setting. In the South Sami context, the teachers supported the children's language acquisition by using a varied combination of oral and visual practices:

We use concretisation a lot, say the words, show the picture or object.

In these visual and oral practices, the key was seen to be the repetition of the word. For instance, one of the teachers described how she uses repeated naming in combination with showing children a suitable object:

Showing the children, the object, then saying the word over and over again, that's a way I like to work.

The teachers also talked about how they took advantage of the everyday routines and saw them as opportunities to teach language to the children. Mealtimes and dressing between activities were highlighted as important language learning arenas. One the teachers expressed it as following:

Mealtimes are good learning environments, as all the children and all the adults are present at the same time.

In summary, the teachers described different ways to use the body, their senses, and to learn by doing, together with the children. They approach the activities from multiple language supportive perspectives to teach and to enhance the language learning in different situations. Furthermore, the teachers also used multiple oral and visual practices, as well as multiple learning arenas, taking advantage of the daily routines.

### 5.3 *Playful Language Learning Practices*

According to Jonna Kangas et al. (2020), the different definitions of play and playful learning seem to provide insights into the cultural language games of people, which are divergent in sociopolitical and historical contexts. Therefore,

play and playful learning can be seen as a multidimensional and dynamic notion located in different contexts and cultures. Playful learning activities were frequently used by the teachers and learning the language through play was described as an essential element in their teaching practices. Despite this, the teachers talked about the special focus needed, and their role in facilitating the use of South Sami in spontaneous play between the children. Two of the teachers especially mentioned this when talking about the use of South Sami language in the ECEC context:

We need to focus on how to get the children to speak South Sami when they play. Several of the children speak mostly Norwegian (when playing) ... it is important that we as adults participate actively to facilitate more South Sami language in play situations.

Even though the teachers saw their role as facilitators of the language, that are much needed in play situations, they described that the number of children that speak South Sami as their mother tongue in a group makes a difference. It is then more likely for the children to use South Sami when playing:

It helps that we have several children now who have South Sami as their mother tongue, they are good role models when the children are playing.

In summary, the teachers described children's play as an important forum to learn the South Sami language. They saw themselves as important language facilitators that could support children in their language learning during play, but where peer support had an important role as well.

#### 5.4 *Teachers as Role Models for Language Learning*

As well as being language facilitators in play situations, the teachers saw themselves also as important role models in supporting the children's South Sami language learning in general. One element that all the teachers talked about was how their own attitude towards South Sami language use was important. Furthermore, one teacher stated that if the adults don't use South Sami themselves, they cannot expect the children to use the language:

It is important that we, as adults, speak South Sami, when we talk together, that way the children learn that this is an important language and we can't tell the children to speak South Sami if we don't use it when we communicate.

As South Sami is not a language that the children necessarily will meet outside of the ECEC and school context, the teachers talked about how their use of the language is a way of showing the children that this is a vivid language:

We (as adults) need to show the children that this is a language that is alive.

But it is not just when teachers communicate with each other that was described as an important opportunity to speak South Sami. As a role model, one thing to do was to try to answer the children in South Sami when the children talked to them in Norwegian. This was described as a successful strategy:

If the children speak to me in Norwegian, I sometimes am a bit tricky and answer them in South Sami ... my experience is that they immediately switch to South Sami.

One of the teachers expressed it nicely when talking about the importance of being a good role model:

What we can do is be a good role model (and speak South Sami), because we cannot force them (to speak South Sami).

In summary, the teachers described their role, as language role models of South Sami, as crucially important, and that their attitude towards the South Sami language was of importance and transferred to the children as well.

## 6 Discussion

This study has been conducted in an educational space that is the last frontier, fighting for the cultural and linguistic existence of the South Sami Indigenous population. Our research question was, how do teachers (in ECE and the school context) describe their language revitalising actions in their educational practice? The data was collected with the help of semi-structured interviews during the autumn of 2019, with three preschool teachers and three primary school teachers, and analysed with the help of content analysis. According to Erika Sarivaara et al. (2013, p. 14), the revitalisation process is connected to the national and international legislation and policy. At the individual level, language revitalisation is affected by the attitudes, cultural heritage, and circumstances in

which the speakers of the language live. However, Pasanen (2015) has demonstrated that the revitalisation actions can be successful. Children's language can be resumed, and adults can reclaim their Sami language. In all this, teachers in both ECEC and school contexts can make a big difference with their educational language and culture-related practices.

According to the results of this study, the teachers described language supportive practices from four main categories. These were (1) Language immersion approach in teaching, (2) Multimodal approach on language learning in various spaces, (3) Playful language learning practices, and (4) Teachers as role models for language learning. In language immersion, language nest programmes as well as in the educational context of South Sami, teachers use a variety of instructional multimodal practices (visual, sensory, different learning spaces etc.) to support children's language acquisition as well as to scaffold their understanding (Baker, 2011; Bergroth & Björklund, 2013; García, 2009; Harju-Luukkainen, 2007; Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2019; Laurén, 2000; Snow, 1990). According to Laiti (2018), typical practices and contents of Sami ECEC are related to the development and maintenance of the relationship with nature, culture, and language. In these, children are provided with various opportunities to practise elements of Sami culture such as doing handicrafts, using fire, fishing, and picking berries. All of these were evident in the teachers' practices in the South Sami context as well.

The teachers of this study talked about their use of a multimodal approach, just like in the language immersion setting, to develop the children's South Sami language competency. Even though all the teachers didn't use the same practices, they agreed on the use of a multimodal approach, and that this involved activities for both the children and the teachers. The teachers also used the advantage of everyday arenas for language learning, like nature and mealtime activities. These arenas have been noted as very important learning spaces in South Sami settings previously (Äärelä, 2016; Laiti, 2018; Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022a, 2022b). Play-based learning was also popular among the teachers and learning the language through play was described as an essential element in their teaching practices. According to Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin (2000; cf. Harju-Luukkainen, 2007), the teacher's task is to ensure that the language is introduced and used in various situations, as well as on a linguistically appropriate level for the children.

A variety of language learning opportunities should be provided, including several songs and stories embedded in the daily routines. The teachers of this study also used a lot of repetition to support the language learning of the children. According to Harju-Luukkainen (2007), a leading idea in immersion education is to incorporate a high language intensity, use a wide variety

of language-rich teaching materials, and pedagogical activities, just like the teachers did in the South Sami context. Furthermore, the teachers in the South Sami context also saw themselves as important actors in the revitalisation work, where their own attitude towards language teaching was crucial. This can be seen as an important element in the success of the revitalisation of a language (Sarivaara et al., 2013; Pasanen, 2015). Language revitalisation is, according to Sarivaara et al. (2013, p. 14), a complex and multidimensional process that includes both societal and individual action.

According to the results, the entire South Sami educational context was seen as an important and inclusive language and culture revitalising space. Revitalisation of a language does not happen on its own. It is the systematic and goal-oriented work of society, as well as of the teachers in the school context, including parents (Pasanen, 2015; Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022b). This interview-based study gave only a snapshot of those language revitalising pedagogical practices teachers identify using on a regular basis. To get a deeper understanding of these practices, a larger study would be needed. This would be important, since we know that children's language can be resumed and reclaimed with the help of education. Therefore, there is an urgent need for more research on Indigenous pedagogy, especially from the South Sami context.

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# Sami Language Revitalisation

## *Language Nests' Social Dimensions in Terms of the Surrounding Sami Community, Culture and Languages*

*Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä*

### Abstract

This chapter highlights the social dimensions of Sami language nests in the Sami language revitalisation context in the Finnish side of *Sápmi*. Sami language nests are part of the Sami language revitalisation efforts in the Sami region of Finland. Language nests are either Northern Sami, Inari Sami or Skolt Sami. Sami language nests are part of the Sami community and reflect the social cohesion of the community. In particular, they concretely support the realisation of language revitalisation when Sami children and the elderly experience a linguistic connection. The language nests operate as part of the Sami community, and adhere to the values of Sami education, an aspect of which is community. The goal is to nurture the growing child into the community through language and practical action, despite being an individual member of it. The everyday activities of the language nests reflect the daily activities of the community. Resource people from the Sami community strengthen the implementation of traditional knowledge, language, and educational approaches in the language nests, together with the teachers. Language nests emphasise a child's holistic growth so that all activities have a place in the child's upbringing. Together, these form the social dimension of Sami language nests. In this article, I discuss the inclusion and integration of children in the Sami community through the Sami language for the holistic purpose of Sami language nests. This article is based on a dissertation written in 2016 and subsequent developmental activities, in which the role of language nests as a social environment has been seen as central.

### Keywords

Sami language nest – social dimension – Indigenous education – language immersion

## Čoahkkáigeassu

Dát artihkal čalmmustahtá sosiála dimenšuvnnaid sámegielat giellabesiin sámegiela ealáskahttima konteavsttas Suoma bealde Sámis. Sámegielat giellabeasit leat oassin sámegiela ealáskahttindoaimmaid. Giellabesiid giellan lea juogo davvisámegiella, anársámegiella dahje nuortalašgiella. Giellabeasit speadjalastet servodaga sosiála oktiigullevašvuoda. Earenoamážit giellabeasit dorjot konkrehtalaččat giellaealáskahttima ollašuttima go dahket vejolaččan diliid gos sámi mánát ja vuorrasat olbmot besset vásihit gielalaš oktavuoda. Giellabeasit doibmet oassin sámi servodagas ja čatnasit sámi oahpahusa árvvuide gos guovddažin lea searvevuolta. Ulbmilin lea bajásgeassit mánáid sámi servošii giela ja geavtlaš doaimmaid bokte. Giellabesiid beaivválaš doaimmat speadjalastet servoša beaivválaš doaimmaid. Resursaolbmot, sámegielat ja kulturguoddit nannejit ovttasráđiid oahpaheddjiiguin árbevirolaš dieđu, giela ja pedagogalaš lahkonaŋvugiid giellabesiin. Giellabesiin deattuhuvvo máná holisttalaš ahtanuššan buot doaimmain. Ovttas dát doaimmat hábmejit giellabesiid sosiála dimenšuvnnaid. Dán artihkkalis gieđahalan mánáid fáttmasteami ja integrerema sámeservodahkii, mii dahkkojuvvo sámegiela ja hollistalaš bajásgeassin vugiid bokte giellabesiin. Dán artihkkala vuodđun lea nákkosgirji, mii gárvánii jagis 2016 ja dan maŋŋá čadahuvvon ovddidandoaimmat. Giellabesiid rolla servodatbirasin adnojuvvo dehálazžan.

## Čoavddasánit

giellabeasit – sosiála bealit – eamiálbmotbajásgeassin – giellaealáskahttin

### 1 Introduction

The children gathered at the table in the living room and drew reindeer earmarks on paper. The language nest teacher sits a little aside and follows the children's hustle and bustle. Soon, she gets up and gets the children a piece of paper where they can read their own reindeer earmarks. The children begin to study the paper carefully and continue to make their own reindeer earmarks. (Field notes 19/5/2015)

The above research diary entry is from the afternoon play of the children in a Sami language nest. It describes moments of free activity in the language nest where the children's own games are supported. Supporting free play and

self-direction are at the heart of Sami education and are characteristic of this unique form of revival of the Indigenous language and Sami language nests. Supporting self-direction is based on the Sami culture of coping, in which a person grows into an individual who can cope with the surrounding environment (Aikio, 2010).

In Finland, the Sami language nests are strongly connected to the Sami communities and are ECEC settings for children from birth to school age, using total early language immersion. They have thus become part of Sami early childhood education, the task of which is to raise children with the values of the Sami community, and to maintain their Sami language skills. The language nests are part of the Sami community and the community values of Sami early childhood education, one of which is communality. The goal is to raise the child in a community as its individual member. It has always been central to Sami education that the whole community raises its children.

As with other Indigenous language nests, the purpose of the Sami language nesting activities has always been to increase the number of native speakers. All three Sami languages that are spoken in Finland are endangered, or in danger of disappearing. Of these languages, Northern Sami, Inari Sami and Skolt Sami, the Northern Sami language has the most speakers. Northern Sami is commonly spoken throughout the Sami region, and also in Norway and Sweden. More broadly, there are nine Sami languages, and several of these are regionally bound in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Day care for Sami children is organised in many different ways in the regions of these states. In Finland, Sami language day care is organised for native-speaking children and also day care, based on complete early language immersion, for Sami children whose families do not speak the Sami language as a home language (Pasanen, 2015; Sámi Parliament, 2019).

In Finland, Sami language nests started with a Skolt Sami language nest at Lake Sevettijärvi in 1993, prompted by the fact that the UN's International Year of Indigenous Peoples was being celebrated at the time. The first Inari Sami language nest was established in Ivalo in 1997 (Pasanen, 2015). Currently, there are 12 language nests in Finland: seven Northern Sami; three Inari Sami; and two Skolt Sami nests (Sami Parliament, 2019). The language nests are mostly part of the local municipalities' Sami language ECEC services.

The debate surrounding Sami language nests has long emphasised its importance in reviving the Sami language. However, the importance of Sami language nests to the entire Sami community, and to the vitality of the community, is widely acknowledged within the community. Sami language nests are an expression of the values, educational methods, and social dimensions of

the community. In this article, I examine the social dimensions and specifics of Sami language nests from the perspective of my dissertation and subsequent developmental measures. I present what the attachments of Sami language nests are to the Sami community, how sociality is seen in the Sami community, and how it is implemented in Sami language nests.

This chapter is based on my former study (Äärelä, 2016), which explores Sami Early childhood education and care (From now on ECEC) in a language nest from the inside. The core focus of the doctoral research was on the revitalisation of the endangered Sami language. The objective of the study was to provide a new perspective on Sami language revitalisation by analysing the revitalisation of Sami language among children in the North-Sami language nest. The focus was on the functions and activities of the nest, and how Sami language use was supported and revitalised by it. In this kind of Indigenous research, the foundation and methodology for producing new knowledge are based on the Indigenous people's own thoughts, needs, knowledge, and experiences (Rigney, 1999).

The project was also conducted in compliance with the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) research standards and ethical guidelines, which underline that Indigenous research must use the local language respectfully as a foundation for interpretation and meaning (WINHEC, 2011). As language was central to this study, and all communication with the participants was conducted in Sami, only a Sami-speaking researcher could have conducted it.

Research on Sami education has been placed in the context of its organisation, boundary conditions, and social dimensions. The principles of Sami education have been described in the research of Aimo Aikio (2007, 2010), Marita Aikio (2008), Asta Balto (1997, 2008), Else Målfrid Boine and Merete Saus (2012), Cecilie Javo et al. (2004), Marikaisa Laiti (2018), and Marianne Storjord (2008). Research on Sami pedagogy sheds light on the fundamental aspects of Sami education and training from the viewpoint of the Sami community, school, and teachers (cf. Keskitalo, 2010, 2017; Rahko-Ravanti, 2016).

The language nest is a diverse and multifaceted phenomenon. It emphasises educators, children, parents, toys, educational materials, indoor and outdoor spaces, language arrangements, and the local community. As a community member, the researcher was familiar with the children in the language nest. Hence, the children approached the researcher every time she visited the language nest. The children also invited her to be involved in their activities. In the case of an Indigenous community, particularly its children, it is important to act with respect towards the community and adapt research to the needs of the community. This is, of course, the basic principle of Indigenous ethnography

(cf. Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), but it is also an important consideration that, for example in this study, the researcher is also part of the social structures of the community under study.

## 2 Indigenous Language Nest Activities

Revitalisation is a reverse language exchange that seeks to secure a connection with an endangered language at individual and community levels (Fishman, 1991; Huss, 1999; Pasanen, 2015). According to Fishman (1991), the revival of language is conscious, as considered by members of society, and planned action is aimed at creating a status quo and better cultural situation. Huss (1999) sees language revitalisation as a positive language exchange, as opposed to language assimilation. According to her, at an individual level, one can speak of an event involving language in which the person or group experiencing the exchange relearns the language that they lost. At the societal level, this is a situation where an endangered minority language takes over wider areas of activity, such as education and training, and thereby begins to intensify.

Language nest instruction was developed in the suburbs of Montreal, Canada, in the city of Lambert in the 1960s. The starting point for the development of language immersion education in Canada was the country's official adoption of bilingualism in 1969. After becoming bilingual, it was necessary to know both English and French. Language skills had a clear societal value due to their economic, political, informational, and cultural background. The basic principle of the Canadian language immersion is that the children taking part in the language immersion are members of the regional language and are taught a minority language. In the implementation of language immersion teaching, it is essential that the child's mother tongue and culture are respected. The model of language immersion teaching that began in Canada is called early complete immersion, which begins in kindergarten and uses only the immersion language (cf. Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1978; Siguan & Mackey, 1987).

Indigenous language nesting activities and language immersion schools arose out of the need to halt the loss of language and support a high level of development of children's Indigenous language in families where the language is disappearing. Language nests and cultural values play a key role in the preservation of language immersion activities and language resuscitation. Language nests and language immersion schools are part of a wider language recovery activity involving the community, homes, school, workplaces, and media (Hinton & Meek, 2016; Olthuis, Kivelä, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013).

Within four decades, language nests have become globally widespread as a means of reviving Indigenous languages. Indigenous language activities are considered to have begun with the *Māori Kōhanga reo* movement in *Aotearoa*, New Zealand, in the early 1980s (Hinton & Meek, 2016; Olthuis et al., 2013; Pasanen, 2015). From there, the language nesting method quickly spread to Hawaii. The educational activities of both Hawaiian and *Māori* language nests are based on the Indigenous cultural philosophical view of education. It reflects the culture's own values, developing through a human being, and is central to Indigenous peoples' educational ideologies. Later, language immersion methods were also introduced among Indigenous groups in North America (Hinton & Meek, 2016). The Sami people started to use the *Māori* language nest model for language nesting in the 1990s, but it had already been discussed in the late 1980s (Pasanen, 2015). In addition to these structured, long-lasting, and planned models, the language has been revived locally in a number of different ways among Indigenous peoples around the world. These local and individual actions have played a far-reaching role in the development of structured methods of language regeneration, and thus in the emergence of language nest patterns. Indigenous local associations and activists may have found language resuscitation to be possible, proceeding from local to national language recovery programmes that include language immersion and language nest models suitable for the area.

Sami language immersion is part of the global language immersion activity, and of the global revitalisation of Indigenous languages. In the revitalisation of the Sami language, the method of language immersion has been used with children. Initially, language-showering, that is, shorter-duration activities, have resulted in long-term and targeted actions in a language-revitalising way, such as language nests. Since the 1990s, Sami language nests have emerged as necessary to revitalise the Sami language and have been in operation especially in the Sami region of Finland. Language nests not only provide language education, but also strengthen the Sami culture and way of life. In addition, language nests bring communities closer together, thus supporting Sami language and culture in a broader sense.

Language immersion is like an umbrella under which several different language programmes can be placed (cf. Harju-Luukkainen, 2013). One of these is the language nests of Indigenous peoples. The goal of language immersion is bilingualism. In the Sami community, the goal is multilingualism, which has supported intercultural interaction and multiculturalism throughout history in the Sami area (Lähteenmäki, 2004). Language acquisition is necessary to support kindergarten teachers, caregivers, grandparents, and parents, where all the adults around a child should speak the Sami language as much as possible, even when they only know a few words of the language.

### 3 Elders, Godparents and Other Support Staff Roles in the Language Nest

Sami education is based on raising and supporting children to become people who get along in life: you need to get along with nature and by yourself so that you manage to live in the Arctic area. You also need to get along with other people, because all of us need help sometimes. Moreover, if you get into trouble in the cold Arctic weather and do not receive support from others, it could be disastrous. The social dimensions in Sami society also include their values and ways of communication. Sami society values connections between families. It is important to have strong social connections between families (cf. Aikio, 2010; Balto, 1997).

In Sami culture, the family is a broad social community where kinship and a sense of belonging are very important. In Northern Sami and Skolt Sami, the family has traditionally been made up of several generations. In Inari Sami, the family is usually a nuclear family (cf. Sámi parliament, 2009).

Sami language nests are often supported by godparents, who act as support persons for the language nests. These godparents are members of the Sami community who speak Sami and know how the language nests work (cf. Sámi parliament, 2009; Sodankylän kunta, 2017). Godparents can have a wide range of responsibilities, from negotiating the organisation of language nests, to everyday content, and visits to language nests. The role of the godparents of language nests are based on the traditions of the Sami community, where many godparents have been chosen for children, and who have always played a significant role in being present in a child's life.

The teachers of the language nest actively keep in touch with the surrounding community. They participate in nearby events with the children of the language nest, and the language nest is frequently visited by guests. In language immersion, close contact with the environment is common, which aims to ensure that children can use and hear the language in everyday situations, even outside the kindergarten (Mård, 1996). In addition, language nest teachers and children participate in many training sessions and events that they consider important to their work. Community and cohesion play a very important role in Sami education.

Language nest teachers consider community involvement to be an important part of language activities. According to them, community is strengthened through language nests:

I think we have more of these than even in ordinary Finnish-language day care. In that sense, we are really lucky. After all, it's nice to have people

visiting here, yet we're so much here with this same gang. Of course, then comes the feeling that someone else is also interested in what's going on here and wants to give it their own addition as well. (Interview transcript 25/11/2014)

In addition to the community's own support staff, there are many visitors to the language nests, representing various Sami cultural actors, language projects, media producers, and other experts in traditional knowledge. There are several Sami cultural actors, both permanent and temporary. One permanent player is the Sami Children's Cultural Centre *Mánnu*, which is under the Sami parliament. *Mánnu's* task is to strengthen the cultural identity of young Sami people, value Sami traditional knowledge and skills, and strengthen co-operation between Indigenous peoples. The purpose of the activity is to revive the Sami language, strengthen community spirit, and preserve traditional knowledge. The activities are carried out by organising cultural events, camps, or workshops for children and young people in the Sami homeland.

Visitors are important reinforcers of traditional knowledge, language resources, and community representatives for language nests.

The children gather around the guest on the covered floor. The guest takes out the rabbit and presents it to the children while asking questions about what colour it is and how it moves. The children respond excitedly; a rabbit is an animal familiar to them. The guest then takes the drum and presents the traditional rabbit joik. (Field notes 28/4/2015)

The use of these resource persons is common in the revitalisation of Indigenous languages. Often, there are only a few language speakers, so all possible resources are considered. This is also a natural way of working in communities where upbringing revolves around the community. The resource people at the language nest are often older people in the community who had taught, among other things, throwing the lasso and baking. Parents also met frequently in the language nest.

The parents have visited too. Last spring, one dad brought the reindeer here and then we cooked the meat soup in that *lávvu*. (Interview transcript 9/10/2014)

In addition to cultural content, visitors and resource people play an important linguistic role in language nests. According to the language nest teachers, the guests are able to support and promote the children's speaking and use of

the Sami language. They also stressed the importance of a linguistic model. According to them, the use of the Indigenous language is influenced by the fact that other languages are spoken by guests. The use of the Indigenous language is a priority if the children know that the guests do not speak the official languages.

#### 4 Social Dimensions and Culture

The language nest teachers also emphasised the importance of the community's traditional livelihood, reindeer husbandry, in the daily life of the language nest. According to them, the everyday life of the language nest was tied to the activities of the surrounding community. For example, the community's reindeer husbandry culture was strongly reflected in the language nest. At the time of the reindeer gathering, the children were at the fence with their parents. A language nest cannot function without a connection to the environment and its own community. The connection with the region's traditional livelihoods was a strong and integral part of the everyday life of the language nest. The language nest was thus a kind of cradle of culture and an essential part of cultivating the language.

We have reindeer in every family. That is what is shown here. And every child is at work with their father all the time. (Interview transcript 9/10/2014)

The fact that the entire community raises the children has been central to Sami education. The language nest was part of the child's daily life, and thus carried its share of the child's upbringing. According to the language nest teachers, the fact that not all activities can be implemented in the language nest should be taken into account when educating children about culture and community. Thus, they emphasised the holistic growth of the child so that all activities have a place in their upbringing. The language nest had all the prerequisites to support the child's growth in their own culture, but the child must also get involved in reindeer herding and work in the forest, and day care or other activities should not prevent this.

However, if a child is expected to become a reindeer herder, then that child must be able to walk with her or his reindeer herder father or mother and not only so that we play with reindeer but that the child learns with their parents as well. (Interview transcript 12/5/2015)

According to the language nest teachers, they seek to participate in community events and occasions targeted for children. Every year, they also participate in the Sami community's own events for children. Since there were no frequent events in the immediate area, each one was happily welcomed. In particular, they were waiting for events in the Sami language. The connection of the language nest to their own immediate environment was reflected, among other things, in the fact that they frequently visited community activities during the day. They were part of the everyday life of the community, and by no means lived alone or apart from the community. For example, they had a godparent sheep in a Sami family that kept sheep near a language nest.

In educational sociology, socialisation is seen as an intergenerational interaction event, in which new generations become involved in their surrounding community (Antikainen, Rinne, & Koski, 2021). The social dimension of Sami education is, above all, about how the Sami generations prepare to perform and further develop the various functions of society and be part of the community culture. Solveig Joks (2007) also emphasised in his research that socialisation takes place through the participation of children in community activities. Children are involved in forming a culture together with others. Therefore, cooperation and social relations, and the ability to maintain these, are important skills.

## 5 Social Dimensions and Language

Language plays a crucial role in Sami education, as a path towards the Sami community and its cultural wisdom. Kerttu Vuolab (2000) has written that minority languages are like foxes that must survive alone without the safety of the herd. To survive, a fox must look and listen, be fully aware of all the surrounding dangers, and be prepared to hide, run away, and consider all other creatures in the forest. Following this metaphor, language nests are like fox nests, where children participate in language revitalisation efforts aimed at restoring the appreciation and significance of the Sami languages through the intergenerational transmission of culture.

The Sami Early Childhood Education Plan (Sámi Parliament, 2009) emphasises the importance of language, highlighting that language builds a shared world vision and culture. Through language, children have the opportunity to participate fully in the Sami community. As the Sami people have historically interacted through different languages and cultures in *Sápmi*, they appreciate strong language skills. Language is not only an important means of communication and interaction, but also a symbol of ethnic cohesion (Balto, 1997). This sense of cohesion is at risk of being lost, due to the effects of the assimilation

policies enacted over the past 50 years and more. For many children, the Sami language nest may be their only Sami language environment.

The interviewees highlighted the language nest's strong interaction with its own community and people. The language nest was a holistic part of the community and its families. According to the language nest teachers, belonging to one's own close community is important, and they are trying to strengthen it. This strengthened the cultural and linguistic dimensions of the language nest. The linguistic dimension was also strengthened by the cooperation of language nest instructors with other language nest instructors and their joint training. It was important for language nest instructors to be able to share experiences, exchange ideas, and be part of the language community.

Sami language nests link language and culture. Language is also used as a link to the social dimensions. How you speak and respond are different in each cultural group. Language also includes social meanings.

Within language nests, children are included in language revitalisation activities, which are more of a quest for simultaneous bilingualism than successive bilingualism. This involves the commitment of the entire family and community; everyone who speaks the language must speak it with the child, even outside the language nest. Most of the time, the other speakers are grandparents who have learned the language at home, as children's parents have mostly lost their language because of the assimilation policies. Connecting the generations of speakers in this way is one of the most important functions of language nests as part of the language revitalisation process (Olthuis et al., 2013; Pasanen, 2015).

Sami language nests use a language immersion approach, in which language learning occurs through genuine interaction in everyday practices, with complete linguistic and cultural immersion. The educators use only Sami when interacting with the children. They also know children's backgrounds in the Sami families, the names of the Sami families, and of course their Sami names. Moreover, the society supports the use of the Sami names in the interactions.

The activities of the language nests are based on Sami ECEC principles, and the cultural values underlined by the community and traditional livelihoods; they are also borne out of a desire to promote the development of Sami identity (Sami Parliament, 2009). The goal of the language nests is for children to achieve functional bilingualism in Sami and Finnish for different purposes in everyday situations (Pasanen, 2015). In addition, language nesting revives the Sami language and culture in the whole community, and thus strengthens the Sami sense of belonging.

The Sami have retained their traditional knowledge, lifestyle, and livelihoods from generation to generation. Through intergenerational experiences, Sami practices connect the past, present, and future (Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011). In

Sami education, children are co-owners of their education. They are responsible for their actions, and their self-esteem develops naturally through action. The community supports its children's individual development and cognitive enhancement and expects children to face new challenges and find ways to overcome them. By conquering challenges, a child's autonomy increases.

Non-verbal communication is also used in the Sami community. Non-verbal communication plays a significant role in voice communication. Underlying wordless communication is the idea of a person who is sensible, strong, and mentally balanced, when they do not have to talk all the time or cannot speak. A person should have good non-verbal communication skills. For example, you do not have to talk all the time in a conversation; you can also be quiet, as silence has meaning too. Nature also speaks in silence, and in the same silence, there is more room for the acquisition of knowledge (Aikio, 2010).

## 6 *Searvvuš* in Language Nest Pedagogy

According to this research, the Sami community and the inclusion of children in the Sami community is one of the priorities of the language nest. The everyday life of language nests is intertwined with the activities of the surrounding environment, and activities that include language planning and the planning of language learning and teaching. Traditional livelihoods, such as reindeer herding, are also strongly represented in the language nest. At the time of the reindeer gathering, the children are accompanied by their parents at the fence. In accordance with the language nest pedagogy implemented in language nests, language nests have their own special pedagogical approach, which strongly strengthens the traditional way of education in the Sami community, Sami culture, and language revitalisation and language acquisition. Language nests are an integral part of the community and its families.

The research results presented language nest practices that were divided into primary and secondary practices. According to the research findings, the primary and secondary practices were Sami-speaking activities that were based on the Sami culture. The cultural values of Sami upbringing could be recognised in the everyday life of the language nest. As a whole, everyday life appeared as a socio-cultural basis for growth, to raise children as a part of Sami culture and language community. According to this study, language nest teachers actively developed their work in collaboration with the surrounding community. They tried to develop and renew it, even though the continuation and availability of resources of the language nest were uncertain. Language nests do not have common national guidelines, and there are no learning materials based on the language immersion method to be used in language nests.

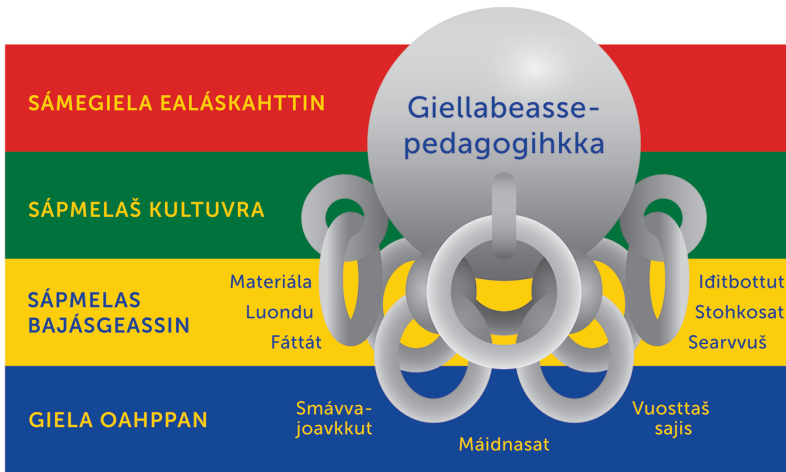


FIGURE 12.1 Language nest pedagogy (Äärelä, 2016. Source: Created by Sanni Harju-nikula and Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä. ©University of Lapland)

The model of language nest pedagogy was constructed in the form of a Sami cradle ball (*šielia* in North-Sami). The rings illustrate the principles of language nest pedagogy, which are the practices through which children learn the language in the language nest. The main Sami colours in the background highlight the Sami framework of language learning: the revitalisation of the Sami language; Sami culture; Sami education; and Sami language learning. This doctoral research was the first to describe the practices of a Sami language nest. As a pioneering work, it provides first-hand information about the operations of the language nest and the implementation of language immersion in the revitalisation of the Sami language in early childhood education.

As part of Sami education, the language nest activities are based on concrete experiences, the natural environment, and the family community. Education focuses on individual freedom and choice, emphasising *oktavuohta lundui* [connection to nature], *iešbirgejummi* [wellbeing], *iešrádálašvuohta* [self-reliance], *gierdevašvuohta* [endurance], and *friddjavuohta* [freedom] (cf. Balto, 1997). The Sami have their own social operating model, which prioritises family, friendship, and the Sami character (Aikio, 2010).

## 7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the role of Sami language nests in the socialisation of Sami children into the Sami community. I have presented what socialisation in the Sami community means in general, and how it should be implemented in a Sami context with the Sami way of child rearing. At the same

time, I have pointed out how, according to my dissertation, socialisation reaches all the activities that are undertaken in the language nest. Sami children socialise not only in the Sami community, but also in other surrounding communities.

Language nests have an indisputable role in the socialisation of Sami children in their own community. Only a community can teach children its social dimensions, and ways to communicate and connect with each other. For this reason, the social dimensions of Sami language nests should be strengthened in various ways, including at the organisational level. This should mean that at the national level, language nests should be considered in light of the needs of the Sami community. As Sami language nests, or any Sami kindergarten in general, are integral parts of the Sami community, the support and role of the community should be visible at all levels of their organisation.

However, accessing resource people to visit language nests is not always easy. There are various reasons for this. The revival of the Indigenous language is fuelled by a strong colonial history in which speaking the language has been forbidden. The older generation of the Sami community has also experienced a strong assimilation of history and identity, as well as a ban on language by the majority. The role of resource people should be strengthened as part of Indigenous educational institutions.

According to language nest teachers, visitor could have more frequent and regular appearances. The language nest teachers had decided to take part in the small events in the area, even if they were in Finnish. This is likely to reflect the environments in which language nests operate. Both within and outside the Sami area, language nests operate in multilingual environments of which the children are members. The aim of language nest activities is to socialise children into the surrounding communities. The same goal should be achieved in all kindergartens, where real equality takes centre stage.

For the language nest, the community comprises a local one with which they actively interact in everyday life as well as in the wider Sami community, which includes other language settlements and the rest of the Sami community. From these, they gain support and a sense of belonging, and are able to share the basic elements of the language nest, language, and culture. The people of the community visit the language nest as resource people, the organisations of the Sami community bring cultural content to the language nest, and the joint training gives new impetus to the work. These are the resource factors of the language nest, and an essential part of the prerequisites for the operation of the language nest.

In the past, measures to secure the operation of the language nests mostly concerned the financial resources, on the basis of which the implementation of the operation had been secured (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture,

2012, 2014). According to the latest study on the development of Sami language teaching and language nest operations, the conditions for language nesting activities should also be developed at the basic level in the early childhood education plan (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

The children of the former Sami communities lived under conditions very different from today's Sami children. Despite this, socialisation processes have strong cultural features and traditions. From the perspective of the future of the Sami community and the inclusion of the well-being of children, it is important that social environments are strengthened and created in Sami kindergarten activities and Sami language nests.

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# Searvelatnja

## *A Communality Principle in Sami Early Childhood Education (SECE)*

*Marikaisa Laiti*

### Abstract

In this chapter, I discuss firstly how Sami early childhood education (SECE) supports Indigenous Sami children grow up as members of their Sami culture, community, and society. Hence this supports their enculturation. To grow up into one's culture or to become a member of it needs active collaboration and connection with the members of that culture and society. One way to support enculturation is through communality. Here, I investigate what kinds of *searvelatnja*, spaces for collaboration and participation, early childhood education professionals create and use. To study this, I used interviews conducted in 2016 with early education professionals (N = 23) who worked in SECE groups in Finland. They focused on everyday implementation of SECE. Thematic content analysis was applied, and *searvelatnja* was used as a frame of analysis. There were four categories to be found regarding how spaces for collaboration and participation were implemented in SECE. The second goal of this chapter is to discuss further how these findings could be utilised to develop Sami early childhood pedagogy in collaboration with stakeholders. Sami pedagogy is necessary for the indigenisation of educational institutions in the Sami context.

### Keywords

Sami early childhood education – institutional learning – Sami pedagogy – Indigenous pedagogy – communality

### Čeahkkáigeassu

Dán kapihttalis ságastalan dan birra mo Sami árrabajásgeassin (SMGP) doarju eamiálbmot sámi mánáid bajásšaddat iežaset sámi kultuvrra, servodaga ja servodaga lahttun. Jus galgá bajásšaddat iežas kultuvrii dahje šaddat oassin das, de ferte aktiivvalaččat bargat ovttas ja čatnat oktavuoda kultuvrra ja servodaga lahtuiguin. Okta vuohki

doarjut enkulturerema lea searvvušvuoda bokte. Dán čállošis gieđahalan jearahalamiid, maid čađahin jagi 2016 ovdaskuvlaoahpahusa ámmátolbmuiguinn (N = 23), geat barget sámi árrabajásgeassin joavkkuiguin Suomas. Dán čállošis čalmmustahtán árrabajásgeassima árgabeaivválaš čađaheami. Gávdnojit njeallje kategoriija das movt ovttasbargo- ja oassálastinsajit ásahuvvojit árrabajásgeassimis temáhtalaččat analyseređettiin. Loahpas ságastalan movt bohtosat sáhttet geavahuvvot ovddidit sámi árramánávuodapedagogihka. Sámi pedagogihkka dárbbasuvvo go oahpahusasahasat sámáiduhthuvvojit.

## Čoavddasánit

sámi mánáidgárdepedagogihkka – institutuvnnalaš oahppan – sámi pedagogihkka – eamiálbmotpedagogihkka – searvvušvuolta

### 1 Introduction

Yes, it is this a kind of communality. That's what we do notice ... and it's kind of ... it's a kind of resource. (Interview 4)

The interview excerpt above summarises one of the main focuses on Sami early childhood education: communality (Laiti, 2018). Communality refers to sense of belonging and to collaboration which are built in the interaction between community members. Here communality relates to the holistic idea of Sami society with Sami early childhood education as part of it. This chapter is built on the idea of *searvelatnja*, a principle of communality in Sami context. This North Sami term refers to collaborative learning space where people from different generation come together to work and learn (Sara, 2003). Balto (1997, p. 24) writes, the goal is not only to learn the concrete things there. Also, Sami values, history, and valued ways of life are to be carried on to new generations. In *searvelatnja* is a question about the valued way to learn together in shared situations.

When working together on culturally important matters, there is also enculturation at hand. By enculturation, I refer to the process of growing up as a member of one's Indigenous community, with the help of older members of that community (Keskitalo, 2010, p. 30). It could be seen as a parallel process to socialisation, where the child is growing up as a member of the main society. Here, I am interested in approaching Sami early childhood education (SECE) as an arena for Sami children's enculturation.

One essential issue for children is identifying with one's own cultural community and the feeling of belonging to it, which develops in the process of

enculturation (Aikio, 2007; Nystad et al., 2017). The goal of enculturation is to ensure membership in the Sami community and society, which is needed to be able to act as a member of the culture (Rasmus, 2004, p. 138).

The process of enculturation is based on the children's daily and regular experiences (Gallimore et al., 1993). The importance of everyday experiences is essential to realise from the perspective of maintenance and continuity of the Sami cultures and languages. What really matters in children's learning is what they do and experience in daily life, how it is organised and implemented (Nutti, 2019; Rogoff, 1990, 2003).

The role of communality in SECE has been a central issue among Sami early childhood education professionals. This I have experienced when I was working in different positions in Sami early childhood education in the past 20 years, first as a teacher and then as head of an SECE centre. Later then, I was in academia as a researcher, both in Finland and Norway. I have done research on implementation of SECE in Finland (cf. Laiti, 2018). Now, I am working on a research and development project, *SÁMOS* (Sikku, 2019), studying Sami early childhood pedagogy in Norway. The transformation of informal ways such as *searvelatnja* into formal educational practices is the focus of the project.

In this chapter, I study and discuss how SECE professionals describe their ways to support young Sami children, to learn and experience Sami languages and cultures, as well as how they support children growing up as Sami. I'll focus in more detail on how communality is implemented in SECE, and more precisely on what kinds of shared learning and participation possibilities children are provided with. To explore this, I have used the following two research questions to study communality in SECE: 1. What kind of collaborative and shared activities did Sami early childhood professionals say that they organise in SECE? 2. What kinds of inter-generational ways of working did they use in their work?

New knowledge is needed to develop SECE pedagogy and, on the other hand, to support SECE professionals in their work. The Sami have developed their own ways to support children's learning and development (Balto, 2005, p. 86). According to my earlier research (Laiti, 2018), these ways work largely as the basis of pedagogical practices in SECE. Yet more research is needed to develop Sami early childhood pedagogy. The existing knowledge (Äärelä, 2016; Äärelä-Vihriälä & Turunen, 2022; Balto, 2008; Becher et al., 2019; Jannok Nutti & Joks, 2018; Laiti, 2018; Nutti, 2019; Storjord, 2008) of SECE pedagogy provides a good basis for this. What is needed is a more systematic and detailed knowledge of the present pedagogical thinking and practices.

The SECE professionals work in small units and communities and have few opportunities to communicate with other professionals (Lehtola & Ruotsala,

2017). Professional networks are rare and occasional, because there are no routines for that in the educational system in Finland. This has caused uncertainty in pedagogical implementation and the usage of the informal Sami education in a formal ECE context. Professionals need more encouragement and knowledge to decolonialise and transform their pedagogical practices. The more there is knowledge sharing, the better it can empower the professionals to use their cultural experiences and knowledge in their work with young Sami children in SECE.

So far, the focus of SECE pedagogy has mainly been on Sami languages, how to maintain and revitalise them, and Sami contents and materials (Laiti, 2018; Storjord, 2008). The Sami ways of organising learning, such as *searvelatnja*, have received less attention in ECE research. Less attention is paid to the traditional wisdom or knowledge of supporting children's learning as a basis of early childhood education pedagogy. At the same time, there is a lack of research on the implementation of Sami pedagogy. In this chapter, I would like to remind the reader of the importance of the role of SECE in children's enculturation.

## 2 Contextualising SECE

The SECE system in the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden) is an institution that organises and leads national laws and curricula. In each of these countries, Sami children have a right to have support to grow up as Sami. In Finland, all ECE is organised by the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018). In Norway, it is the Framework plan for kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), and in Sweden, Curriculum for the preschool (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018).

Based on these national documents, Sami children have a right to have support in their growing up as Sami and be members of their communities. In Finland, the National Core Curriculum for early childhood education and care ECEC (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018, p. 49) emphasises 'children's right to have support for Sami identity and awareness of one's culture'. They must have the opportunity to learn Sami traditional skills and knowledge. The personnel, together with guardians, should take care of preserving linguistic and cultural heritage. In Norway, Sami kindergartens should provide support for children in 'preserving and developing their language, their knowledge and their culture' (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, pp. 7–8). Curriculum for the preschool has a similar kind of idea regarding Sami children's ECE, saying that children who belong to the Sami people should receive support

in language and be ‘promoted in their development of a cultural identity’ (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018, p. 9). Therefore, there is strong support for enculturation on the national level.

In addition to national-level guidelines in Finland, there are two guidelines for SECE: The Sami Early Childhood Education Plan (The Sami Parliament, 2009) and the Manual of Daily Practices (The Sami Parliament, 2013). These have no official status, but SECE professionals use them as cultural guidelines (Laiti, 2018). These documents open up the objectives, values, contents, and practices of the SECE that can be utilised at the levels of local planning and implementation of ECE. Values related to nature, family, relatives, livelihoods, and handicrafts, as well as to language revitalisation, are at the core. Conscious work to support linguistic and cultural features is an important part of the Sami ECE (Keskitalo & Määttä, 2011; The Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012; The Sami Parliament, 2009).

### 3 Enculturation through *Searvelatnja* in SECE

There is a rich mental, spiritual, philosophical, and pedagogical wisdom and knowledge of teaching and learning in Sami culture (Aikio, 2010; Balto, 1997, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2009; Porsanger, 2007). According to Balto and Kuhmunen (2014, p. 63; cf. Aikio, 2010) the goal for children’s teaching and learning is to become self-reliant, independent people. Learning practical traditional skills and work activities are of great importance in this. When talking about the enculturation process of Sami children, the question is not only about learning traditional activities, materials, or languages but also about the spiritual teachings and knowledge, and ways of organising children’s learning.

Indigenous people have their own contextually bound ways of childrearing and enculturating. There are several Sami scholars (Aikio, 2007; Balto, 1997, 2005; Bjøru & Solbakken, 2021; Boine & Saus, 2012; Nergård, 2011; Sara, 2003) writing about principles connected to Sami ways of child upbringing. They mention, for example, *birgejupmi* – getting along, *nárrideapmi* – teasing children, *duála/moai* – dual – form of talking, *balddalahkai* – side by side way of doing things, *ovttas* – together, or *searvelatnja* – room to participate and collaborate between generations.

Pigga Keskitalo (2010) has studied enculturation in a school context and found three central mediators between the cultural knowledge and school implementation. The structures mentioned were time usage, importance of place/space, and understanding of knowledge. Also, Barbara Rogoff (1990, 2003) has studied children’s learning among several Indigenous peoples, and

has found that apprenticeship, guided participation, and scaffolding are methods shared across cultures to organise children's learning.

According to my earlier study (cf. Laiti, 2018), there were four cultural models connected to pedagogical thinking and implementation, and to ways daily life was organised. A cultural model is a mental map which guides the interpreting of the surrounding life, for example, what is valued and deemed worthy of implementing. Cultural models connected to ECE refer to ideals of teaching, child-rearing, and education.

Enculturation was one of the cultural models guiding the SECE (Laiti, 2018). One central issue in this cultural model of enculturation was the way Sami early childhood education professionals thought back on adults' and children's collaboration, their shared activities, and shared common spaces in institutional life. This was indicated in many ways in the research conversations. The ECE professionals wanted the children to experience the Sami ways of doing things, meet with other Sami, and spend time outside in woods, parks, riversides, and lakesides. The early education workers wanted children to have regular connection with the Sami community, have shared activities, the feeling of being together, gaining common experiences, and connecting with other community members. These themes relate to communality and as such, are essential in working with young children in the SECE. This is like what Mihkkal Niilas Sara (2003, p. 125) calls in North Sami *searvelatnja*. This literally means 'space for collaboration and participation between generations'.

Growing up in one's community and culture, together with other members of the community, happens through social learning (Laiti & Frangou, 2019). Balto (2008, p. 54) names two ways of learning: by oneself and through a mediator. One way is that adults teach intentionally in everyday life situations. They organise teaching and, at the same time, intentional possibilities to learn. They work as mediators of culture. The other way to approach learning is through the children's own unintentional learning by observing, listening or watching (Balto, 2008, p. 14; Rogoff, 2014; Rogoff et al., 2004). Here, there is no intentional teaching, children can observe and learn, they can try things by themselves. In *searvelatnja*, both kinds of learning are possible; there is intentional teaching and plenty of possibilities for children to experience, try, follow, and learn.

#### 4 Methods

The method used in this study was a narrative approach (Lieblich et al., 1998). The idea in a narrative approach is first that knowing happens in the narrative way, and second that knowledge is possible to produce from the stories

someone tells. The study material consists of a special type of interview called research conversations with purpose (Lichtman, 2006, p. 116). Interviews were produced with SECE teachers and assistants (N = 23), who were working as early education teachers and assistants in Sami early education units, in different parts of Finland. They work with children daily, so they have an important role in enculturation.

The data were initially collected for my doctoral dissertation. I was talking with them about everyday life in the Sami early education units in Finland. The purpose of these research conversations was to have an idea of what happens in the everyday work of SECE, what goals they have, how they plan the activity, and how they implement them (Laiti, 2018). Here I reuse the data, and hence analyse it from a new perspective, with a different concept.

The interview data was analysed with qualitative content analysis using the research questions prepared for the study. The actual analysis was carried out using three steps (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). I had the idea of *searvelatnja* in my mind when reading the data for the first time. In the first, data-reduction step, the interview data were narrowed down to keep the most relevant content. In the second step, the research data was clustered, by seeking for similarities in content and organising it according to these groups. In the third step of analysis, thematic content categories were formed as subcategories (Mayring, 2004), that represented the study's most important information.

I have respected the ethical guidelines of Indigenous and Sami research (cf. Battiste, 2007). In Sami research, ethics are informed not only by general ethical principles but also by Sami research policies and culturally specific concerns. The Sami community of early education is small, and people know each other, so there was a need to take care of anonymity. Another central ethical principle in this research was an 'ethical attitude' (Syrjälä et al., 2006, p. 191) that emphasises the personal relation of the researcher with the history, traditions, culture, and language of the persons studied. Respecting their expertise in the matter at hand, Sami and Indigenous research respects the local ways and forms of knowledge (Keskitalo et al., 2012, p. 268). In this research, it has meant that the research material is produced in researchers' and educators' mutual conversations. Ethical requirements for Indigenous research, such as responsibility for disseminating information and benefiting the Sami community, are respected in this research (Keskitalo et al., 2012; Linkola & Keskitalo, 2016).

## 5 Findings: Organising Rooms for Participation and Collaboration

When reading and analysing the conversations, I noticed the many ways in which the workers described communality, the importance of feeling a sense of

belonging to the community and ways to foster that. According to the analysis, there were four categories to be found, regarding how the *searvelatnja*, communality, principle was implemented in Sami ECE units. First it was implemented in everyday collaboration. Then it was showed by valuing visitors. The third way educators expressed the principle was by going outdoors. In SECE, organising gatherings and visiting cultural events were used to express communality. Next, I will present these in more detail and provide material examples of them.

### 5.1 *Shared Everyday Activities*

Sami early education professionals encouraged and expected children to join in activities considered important in the Sami culture. The early education teachers and assistants talked about sharing their attention and cultural experiences with children in their everyday lives. By this, they referred to different types of activity sharing and collaboration on Sami matters. Activity sharing could refer to working together in the daily lunch situation.

In eating situations, children are taken to distribute food as ‘maids’ and ‘hired men’, as Sami parents are used to do, so there are eager helpers who want to come to share that food, and mugs and forks. Like this. It’s such a thing for kids, they like to do it. (Interview 12)

Children were participating actively in preparing lunch time in the everyday situation described above. Yet participation did not necessarily mean actively joining the activity; but instead, being around when something happened. This is as Rogoff et al. (2004) write, that observing is a typical way of everyday learning. Also observing, or ‘being around’, were considered as important ways of sharing culturally valuable knowledge, as the following excerpt shows:

We have one worker. She has made a Sami hand puppet. She had also done this at work, and the children have been able to see how to make straps, how to make a belt. (Interview 2)

In addition to sharing, educators referred explicitly to fostering communality in SECE everyday life. Educators referred to strengthening communality among children by giving responsibility to older children.

Yes, we’re trying to have the older ones, that they’d pay attention to the smaller ones. They would remember that they’re bigger ones and that they’re setting an example, so they get the good feeling. Now I’m bigger, here I help’ ... Yes, similar things what one would do at home with one’s own children. (Interview 12)

Another interviewee thought back to how communality was fostered among children, and not only among children but also among parents.

We have children of different ages in the group, so that ... Well, it promotes communality ... Well, it promotes that, siblings are allowed to be in the same groups and that parents come in, sit and talk. They know others' children too. (Interview 4)

Sami early education professionals organised everyday life situations according to the *searvelatnja* principle. Working and collaborating with children is the basis of any kind of ECE. What makes SECE special are the contents of the activities, the materials that are used, the meanings given to activities, and actions by the teachers and assistants. Balto (2008, p. 41) writes that activity with cultural meaning or interpretation is enculturating.

## 5.2 *Open Doors and Welcoming Attitudes*

The second category emphasises the meaning of Sami community members for the SECE. Everyone in the study talked in one way or another about the important role of visiting parents, resource persons, or other community members. SECE is organised in places isolated from Sami communities. So, all connections with community were highly valued. Community member visits were establishing inter-generational *searvelatnja* learning spaces. Specially valued were elders who came to collaborate with children with some cultural matter or skill. They might demonstrate different kinds of *duodji* (Sami handicraft), prepare traditional food, or have storytelling workshops with children. An early education group might have excursions with them, as one interviewee narrated:

Once a year, you could say, that there has been someone who has visited us. The wool has been carded here and the children have been able to try it themselves ... And roots have been raised with a resource person in the spring. It is for handicraft in our Sami culture. (Interview 1)

The traditional interpretation of *searvelatnja* refers to the situations where different generations meet, and the elders make it possible for children to learn traditional (either concrete or immaterial) knowledge. The resource person's *searvelatnja* differs from visitors, who are also welcomed and valued, in that there is an intention to open up some aspect of Sami culture important in the local community. The *searvelatnja* visitors form is different kind; they are more like messengers from the community and, on the other hand, they play a

crucial role as language models. Here, one interviewee talks about the meaning of a visitor who had a child with her.

It's so rich for our children that there is another adult who speaks Sami and then it's a surprise that ... There is a little girl who also speaks the Sami language, even though she is not here in kindergarten. That's kind of the way to expand awareness. (Interview 15)

The informant explains the meaning of communality for children's cultural awareness. During visits, *searvelatnja* serves as a language learning and identity strengthening arena. For Sami children there are very few possibilities to have support for their Sami language learning and understanding of what it is to be Sami, the same as also Melissa Mesinas and William Perez (2016) found when studying identity building among Mexican adolescents.

Above I have illustrated the importance of visitors for children's enculturation. Leo KILLSBACK (2019) writes about traditional kinship in the Cheyenne context and deems it as a foundation of sovereignty. Here, one informant puts it into words well, in connection with the importance of visitors:

So, we learn how to behave when an older person comes. ... To get up and shake hands and ... just the basics ... how to do that ... will just go sit down with the kids, talk ... be in it ... there's nothing really organised ... that it's just talking, then the kids are in it. (Interview 1)

Open doors and welcoming attitudes in SECE groups were described in many ways by ECE professionals. This was one common matter in their stories. They said that this was one natural way to have a connection with the Sami community.

### 5.3 *Getting Outside*

The third category of communal activities is named, 'getting outside'. It reveals how essential the professionals thought it was to go outside, especially out from the kindergarten yard, to go to nature, and to the woods to experience the origin of Sami culture. Going out happened even during the coldest days.

The principle is that there is no such thing as not being able to go out ... even if it is minus 40 degrees frosts and we get dressed and then we are out for 5 or 10 minutes. That we go out every single day. (Interview 20)

Nature is a shared approach in Indigenous ECE (Lunda & Green, 2019; Rowan, 2015). Experiencing participation and collaboration outside was considered

valuable in many ways. As in the next citation, children, workers, and resource persons all participated in ice hole fishing. Being together was explicitly emphasised by the teller:

In a couple of weeks, we are meant to go ice fishing with a resource person ... that he'll arrange, and we'll go ... If those bigger ones (children) get excited and then the little ones could walk around there and see from one hole in the ice to another one what those big ones do and ... Even then, the fact is that we are together there. (Interview 2)

Ylva Jannok Nutti and Solveig Joks (2018) wrote about outdoor activities' importance for communality and enculturation. According to them, going out to the yard or to the woods or to parks or the riverside/lakeside is to get children to feel connected with nature, and to make it natural to be outside. For research informants, being outdoors was a meaningful source of culture; it was a place of feeling togetherness. Both the educators and the children enjoyed it. There is a feeling of sharing the focus, as the following example shows:

The kids are sitting on hummocks. ... and ... eating berries they found ... We try to find out where there could be a fox's nest ... and what could be a bear's nest and ... (laughs) and all that ... even children love to move around in nature. (Interview 18)

Sami early education professionals connected outdoor activities with communality. Outdoors provided Indigenous cultures that are developed in nature and nature-related activities (Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018; Jannok Nutti & Joks, 2018; Lunda & Green, 2020). Going out from inside provides different kinds of learning opportunities connected with culture. Nature and outdoors are important places for Indigenous learning about traditional ecological knowledge (Lunda & Green, 2020) and identity (Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018).

#### 5.4 *Gatherings, Celebrations, and Events*

The fourth category, 'gatherings, celebrations, and events', presents the way *searvelatnja* was implemented, for example, by organising or participating in all kinds of community events, either on the premises or virtually. One way that early education professionals described their methods of enculturation was the participation in different kinds of events or organising them by themselves. They said *here all kinds of events for parents are organised* (Interview 16). They talked about having different kinds of celebrations together with families, relatives, and community members.

And, for example, we are instead of parents' evenings ... when there were always children in the parents' evenings, we started to have bearašeahkedat, family evenings. (Interview 14)

In these gatherings, communality and the feeling of togetherness were especially at hand. Educators said that these were organised so that people could meet with each other, to share the latest news from the community, get support in cultural and language matters, and feel a sense of togetherness. One interviewee described the importance of participating in the events with other Sami people as a touching experience:

Yes, of course, it must be said that ... the events ... like ... the events of the Sami youth or other what is being held in Inari, there is a sense of pride in going there. ... In a way that ... that we are the same people. And of course, this language for me is something ... it's so nice that it connects people there. (Interview 12)

There were different kinds of examples of gatherings in the kindergarten where parents and relatives could participate, too. Children and adults were celebrating Christmas together or having an outdoor meeting in the spring around the fireplace.

Well, mostly that communality has been reflected in the fact that parents are terribly interested in joint activities and everything ... And if we want to organise something, they are always involved. (Interview 17)

In these gatherings, they could share the latest news in the community around the fire and meet with other Sami families.

For example, yesterday afternoon we had a kind of sausage frying event in the yard where parents had been invited. We had a barbecue there hot ... and there was an idea of communion ... And I noticed that when they came it was right away, 'Hey, you're here too and ... what's up?' And 'Bures, bures' [Hello, hello] ... and there I noticed well again, that kind of cohesion of our Sami. (Interview 4)

All kinds of gatherings, meetings and celebrations are known to be important for Indigenous knowledge sharing and identity forming (Edge & McCallum, 2006; Laiti O. & Frangou, 2019). The meetings, gatherings, and celebrations were spaces for sharing information, the feeling of belonging, and being

together. As Mikkel Nils Sara (2003, pp. 125–127) writes, these kinds of situations teach the system of kinship and the social and communicative skills connected to it.

## 6 Discussion

Above I have presented practices in Sami early childhood education that were organised according to the *searvelatnja* philosophy. The findings show that Sami early education professionals arranged different kinds of activities to make it possible for children to participate and collaborate between generations. They provided children with Sami activities to participate in and experience daily and, on the other hand, on a longer-term but regular basis. They encouraged children to collaborate with each other, and the older children to help the younger ones. According to the interviews, children could participate from early on, and they could observe different kinds of work activities, hear stories about these, and at the same time help among them and practice skills connected to these. The purpose of all these activities was to strengthen children's connectedness with Sami community, culture and life.

Going outdoors, there where Sami culture comes from, was an important act of communality and mean of enculturation. The stories showed that there were activities where children and adults had shared focuses in the kindergarten. They collaborated in different types of cultural activities, from ice hole fishing to duodji and gatherings, in many of which there were different generations on site. Children participated in activities with older generations, both in intentional and unintentional ways, being around, observing and actively participating. These were important moments for the children's enculturation; in all of these, they had the possibility to connect to the Sami way of life and to the Sami community. In these situations, there was Sami knowledge and thinking used.

The results in this study show that there are already plenty of pedagogical acts and events in SECE that support children's enculturation. What seems to be missing is a holistic system that would bring all these already existing acts, events, thoughts, and implementations together. To implement Sami culture and traditions and to maintain and revitalise the Sami languages, there is a need to develop systematic pedagogy in SECE. Yet, what is needed more are the elders, and the members of the community, to participate in the ECE implementation. Sami society need to take SECE as an important part of it, and support it, to base the implementation to the Sami thinking and philosophy. SECE needs to be a respected part of Sami society, in order to be able to enculturate children, to help them grow up as Sami.

## 7 Concluding and Opening New Doors

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed how the *searvelatnja* philosophy was transformed into pedagogical practices in the SECE institutions in Finland. The grounds for Sami pedagogy is the traditional knowledge of child-rearing, such as *searvelatnja*. To succeed in enculturation, I suggest that in addition to using Sami languages and contents, it is necessary to transform the traditional ways of organising children's learning and development to the form of institutional pedagogy in a more conscious and explicit way. As Balto (2005, p. 104) writes,

as an Indigenous people, the use of Sami pedagogy in modern life can encourage and strengthen their identity and cultural values, and our model of learning can be recognised as part of our own epistemology and cosmology for life.

Transforming the cultural ways to communicate, to organise the social orders, to connect with the land, and to understand time connects children with the Sami ways to live and manage Sami communities and society. This type of organising provides children with continuity and a holistic base to get connected with the Sami life. This, I think, is possible even if there are international affiliations, national laws and curricula, and strong ideas directing the work in ECE. At the same time, there is space for local and individual proactivity. There is always a possibility in every situation to transform the Sami knowledge into practical pedagogy, and at the same time into the possibility for children to experience their Indigenous culture. On the other hand, every situation is a possibility for the child to deepen her/his relationship with the Sami community.

There are many matters, such as strong institutional structures and ideas, the fragmentation of the SECE community, and a shortage of SECE professionals that challenge the implementation of enculturation. Challenges must be recognised and resolved, not only on the local level, but also on the national and even transnational level. SECE teacher education answers to some of these challenges by building a teacher network and adding early education teachers' cultural awareness and its importance in the implementation of SECE. It also raises professionals' understanding of connecting Indigenous cultures to institutions. It is of primary importance to use the knowledge gained from this study in the training of ECE teachers, as well as in courses for educating SECE workers.

Membership in the Sami community is not self-evident in the colonised, assimilated minority situation. Fostering the Indigenous culture and languages is a continuous, holistic process. As this study shows, Sami ECE has an important role in connecting everyday life with the Sami cultural bases with a high

level of consciousness. A feeling of belonging is essential in growing up in an Indigenous community. Supporting children in this by guiding them to participate and join the Sami community is one of the most important goals for SECE. The strong start provides the grounds for development in other areas like language and traditional practices of Indigenous culture. The most important matter for children during their early years is to have a strong connection with the Sami ways of life.

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# Girjohallat girjáivuođa – Embracing Diversity

## Sami Education Theory, Practice and Research

Pigga Keskitalo, Torjer Olsen, Anna-Lill Drugge and  
Rauna Rahko-Ravanti (Eds.)

Unveil the dynamic world of Sami education across Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia in this book. This vital volume presents cutting-edge research from top scholars, enriching teacher education with innovative, interdisciplinary insights. Discover unique contributions through a blend of Sami and Māori perspectives, and navigate the profound impacts of history on modern educational challenges and Indigenous self-determination.

Embracing diversity means that Sami diversity is taken as the starting point for the reflection on education in Sápmi. The book crosses borders and contexts and allows for different voices to be heard. This book brings together scholars from the fields of Arctic and Indigenous education as contributors. The edited volume has been structured in three parts: 1. general theoretical part, 2. introducing Sami education context, and 3. research-based practices.

Cover illustration: Image by Sanni Harju-Nikula

ISBN 978-90-04-52935-9



ISSN 2542-9221

NRNV 12