



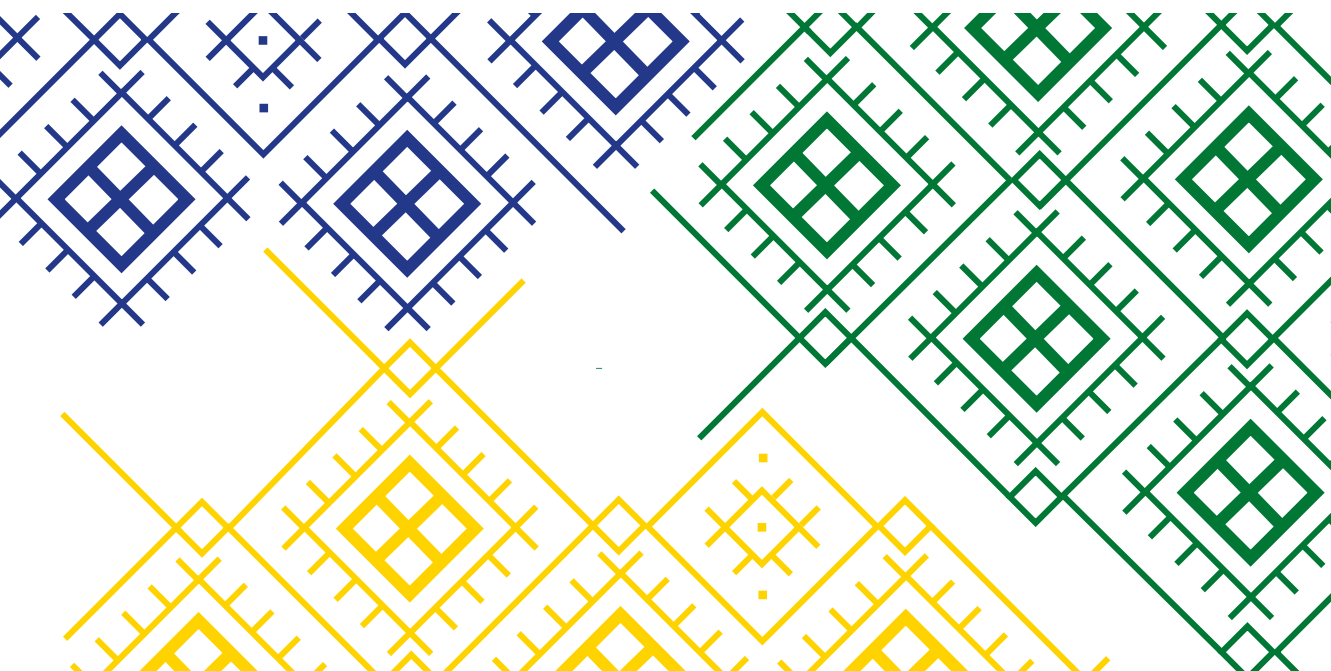
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What does and could decoloniality do in the context of developing Sámi teacher education in Finland? The case of Ketterä Korkeakoulu

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Abstract

This article provides glimpses into the practical implications of applying decoloniality in the Indigenous-non-Indigenous collaborative planning and implementation work for the pedagogical study unit of a new Sámi teacher education pilot program – Ketterä Korkeakoulu, which was carried out from 2019 to 2021. The focus of this research is on the nexus of social action that took place in the Pedagogical Working Group and its Follow Up Group meetings of the pilot program in order to trace decolonial gestures and the absence thereof. What decoloniality did and could potentially do in the curriculum planning and implementation process is discussed in this article using a mixed methodology of nexus analysis and thinking with theory. From a decolonial perspective, the planning and implementation work faced onto-epistemological challenges resulting in selective inclusion of Sámi content and pedagogy in the program. The study also shows gestures towards decolonial/Indigenous futurities and decolonial options for further inclusion of Sámi education trajectories in national Finnish curricula.

Keywords:

Sámi teacher education, decoloniality, curriculum development, Nordic exceptionalism

Introduction

What does and could decoloniality mean and offer in practical terms in the context of developing Sámi¹/Indigenous teacher education in Finland? And more specifically, in the context of the Ketterä Korkeakoulu (Agile Academy, hereafter Ketterä) multimodal and expedited Sámi teacher education pilot program (2019–2021)? In the absence of widespread discussion about decoloniality in Finland and the confusion around what decolonization means and does, this article provides some clarification on what modernity/coloniality and decoloniality mean and then practically do in this specific context.

The Ketterä Sámi teacher education pilot program was initiated and led by Sámi education specialists and researchers to meet an immediate need in Finland, and particularly in the Sámi Homeland area, for formally linguistically proficient² and formally pedagogically qualified subject teachers for Sámi education contexts. The program was organized by Giellagas Institute and the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu. By the end of the pilot program, the project had produced altogether 23 qualifications: 13 formal pedagogical qualifications and 10 language proficiencies in North, Aanaar and Skolt Sámi, with some 6 graduates still pending graduation from their respective Master's programs³.

The social actions under analysis in this research are the negotiations between par-

ticipants in the planning and implementation work for the pedagogical study unit of the pilot program, that took place in and around the meetings of the Pedagogical Working Group (PWG) and its Follow Up Group (FUG). Studying these social actions opens up situated knowledges that bring us closer to seeing de-/colonially informed onto-epistemic assumptions and enables tracing the practical doings of decoloniality. The groups consisted mostly of Sámi participants specialized, broadly speaking, in either Sámi education or language, or both. They held key positions and were able to represent required instances such as the Sámi Parliament in Finland, the Sámi Education Institute (SAKK), University of Lapland, the different Sámi language groups. Teacher trainees in the program and Giellagas Institute were also represented. Furthermore, the groups included a non-Sámi researcher-participant, and 2-3 non-Sámi participants from the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu (hereafter FoE). The latter held positions needed to oversee that the plans met requirements of a teacher education program that enabled trainees to acquire formal pedagogical qualification in Finland. The FoE as an institution also held the position to determine which of the suggestions made by the Ketterä Korkeakoulu program planning groups would be appropriate and accepted. These requirements again are determined by Finnish national teacher education requirements set by the Finnish Ministry of Education and

1 The Sámi are the only recognized Indigenous people on the European continent. There are approximately 10600 Sámi living within Finnish borders, of which more than 2/3 live outside of the Homeland area and approximately 75 percent of children under the age of 10. Approximately a third of the 10500 Sámi living in Finland are Sámi speakers. The Sámi Parliament has special rights of governance within Sápmi in Finland that do not all extend outside of this area. This poses particular challenges with regards to language education. (Keskitalo 2020b)

2 Linguistically proficient teachers were needed in all three Sámi languages spoken in Finland: Aanaar (approximately 10 teachers), Skolt (approximately 10) and North Sámi (approximately 20 teachers).

3 For a detailed account of the project and its quantitative results see Mattanen et al. 2022 in this special issue on Ketterä Korkeakoulu in Dutkansearvi.

Culture (EDUFI 2022), which was one of the funding providers for this project.

A traditional triangulation of analysis includes inquiring for generalized, Individual and "objective" observations. This article includes, at this stage of the research, generalized and researcher observations. The research continues beyond this publication with interviewing participants of these groups on their perceptions of the same actions that have so far been discussed in this part of the research analysis.

This research could have benefitted from having audiovisual recordings of the discussions in order to analyze the social action in more detail and with different focus, with repeated analysis, than an in situ observation and analysis allowed for (Raudaskoski 2021, 255). Yet, the sensitive nature of the position of Indigenous people in research (see e.g. Smith 1998 and Tuck & Yang 2012) made it more favorable for the researcher to make written observations and preliminary notes of analysis during meetings of things that seemed significant at the time from a decolonial perspective.

Methodology

The aim of this article is to provide glimpses into the role of decoloniality in a Sámi teacher education program, and the objectives to reach that goal are enacted by analyzing data through Nexus Analysis (NA) (i.e. Scollon & Scollon 2004) and Thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei 2018). Rather than the meaning of things, thinking with theory is concerned with the what of the doing of things, theory and concepts. It renders meaning as unstable and offers multiple points of entry and exit for thinking. NA, based on discourse analysis (see e.g. Raudaskoski 2021; Scollon & Scollon 2004; Scollon 2013), and more specifically critical discourse analysis in this study, is applied to deepen the analysis of the social action in this research and put into practi-

cal terms the more abstract notions of decolonization work. NA enables a flexible examination of "concrete phenomena that are always enmeshed in political and social realities" (Raudaskoski 2021, 254), such as the Ketterä project, which is entangled in the educational and Sámi politics in Finland and social realities of the Sámi people, and it helps in tracing connections between places, people and practices.

In this article I read and plug into multiple texts/concepts/theories/data, as merely "data" is considered too narrow a concept to describe the many sources for building new understanding. The data in this research consists of interviews with Sámi education specialists, Faculty of Education course aims and syllabi, the Ketterä project report, meeting minutes and researcher observation notes, as well as decolonial, Indigenous, posthuman, feminist and poststructuralist theories.

Although "theory" is considered more broadly in this research in comparison to dominant western epistemologies, such as educational psychology, which is the dominant foundation for current euro-western teachers' education onto-epistemologies, in which the term theory often refers to "theoretical models of a specific phenomena" (Jackson & Mazzei 2018, 720). Here, theory is used (or uses us), as it is used in contemporary humanities-based disciplines, "to refer to more philosophical questions on what counts as knowledge, what counts as "real" in educational settings, and who has the authority to determine this." (ibid., 720), including what counts as data.

Päivi Naskali (2013, 22) asks in her discussion on the coloniality of knowledge, pointing at feminist research traditions and developments, where knowledge is constructed and by whom. What direction does it take and who is excluded or included in its coming-to-be? Echoing this, this research is concerned with where Sámi teacher education needs and content are

developed and by whom, what direction knowledge flows, and who is included and excluded. Which needs are listened to and which are excluded? Who listens and determines what a Sámi teacher education program is to include? These are some of the questions I have asked throughout the participatory research process. Indigenous and feminist research have for long shared common ontological and axiological interests. Kuokkanen (2004a) suggested two decades ago that the meeting of feminist and Indigenous discourses could be significant in analyzing Sámi issues as well as for the decolonization project of Sámi society.

Data-theory-oncept as well as ontology and epistemology are viewed as entangled and agential. Theory is put to work in qualitative inquiry by "reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory" (Mazzei 2014, 743), to awaken us from repetitive patterns and to disrupt and "unsettle [...] beyond an easy sense" that which is already known/seen/felt/heard (ibid., 720), in ways that resist onto-epistemic and cosmological assimilation (Valkonen 2018). We are beckoned by Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein (2019, 59) as well as Kuokkanen (2007a) in Indigenous-non-Indigenous partnerships and research to move out of our comfort zone of privileges and to embrace not knowing the outcomes. NA encourages the researcher to stay alert and flexible to notice possible emergences that can change the focus of the study at any time (Raudaskoski 2021, 251) and to pay attention to actions, objects and concepts undergoing changes in their function or meaning, to their resemiotization (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 18).

A *threshold* in thinking with theory is a site where past data, lived histories and (Indigenous) futurities mix (Jackson & Mazzei 2018). In NA this resembles a *nexus of practice/action*, where "historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas, and objects come together to enable some

action which in itself alters those historical trajectories in some way as those trajectories emanate from this moment of social action" (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 8). Change is often catalyzed in these nexuses and thresholds. The researcher stands in a threshold where things flow in and out, meet and affect each other, observing things becoming something else and actively sculpting that change (Jackson & Mazzei 2018, 720).

Thinking then, in this process methodology, is "an onto-epistemological creation of the new from within" (Jackson & Mazzei 2018, 722). By within it is meant from within the process of the intra-action⁴ of agential, inseparable and relational, theory/data/analysis/histories. In Rauna Kuokkanen's interpretation of the Indigenous logic of the gift, as she explains Indigenous knowledge systems, "concepts do not stand alone but are constituted of "the elements of other ideas to which they are related" (Deloria, 1999)" (2004a, 61). In the practice of thinking with theory new angles are formed in the relationality of concepts.

The role of the researcher in this research being participatory as well as activist assumes agency in "constructing new courses of action" (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 2). The researcher is not merely interested in the research process but in the social issue – build social justice through decolonizing/Indigenizing the given teacher education program framework with culturally responsive Sámi pedagogy, onto-epistemological content and structure – as well as the community of participants and the communities their agency affects. The researcher's responsibilities of relational accountability and care(-)fullness become highlighted in non-Indigenous-Indigenous research relationship (Wilson 2008). The researcher's agenda is clear from the beginning – to engage with other participants in a social action in order to achieve so-

4 For elaborations on intra-action, see e.g. Barad (2003).

cial change. Transparency is increased by making the researcher a visible participant, therefore also enabling reflection on data in situ rather than only post data-collection (Raudaskoski 2021, 254).

The three main activities of NA, engaging, navigating and changing, enable examining the complexities of social action through considering key actors (historical bodies), relationship order and discourses that intersect in a nexus of action. NA suggests critical realism as a way to get close to people's lived experiences and situated knowledges, critically examining the assumptions that structure epistemes⁵ and their appearance in action (Raudaskoski 2021, 251). In this way, I attempt to get closer to what decoloniality has done in the planning of the pedagogical study unit of the Ketterä Sámi teacher education pilot program, and what it could potentially do. In addition to how an action, discourses or participation enable something, NA also pays attention to what is being inhibited. Research, like discourse and words, is performative. It contributes to how the world is seen, as well as how it is not seen, as well as to its becoming (Raudaskoski 2021, 255). A nexus of action happens at a time and place, a threshold, where personal and collective histories, trajectories and futurities, and the discourses connected to them flow through and are transformed, resemiotized and/or internalized through the action (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 14). Though an action is observed in the here and now, the historical bodies exist in a multiplicity of entangled relations, times and places (Barad 2010, 264; SES3).

This study is situated in the overlapping intersection of Sámi cultural studies, posthuman feminist and decolonial thought, Indigenous humanities, compar-

ative education, and teacher education and curriculum research.

Re-worlding foundations of education

To move towards culturally and linguistically responsive education for the Sámi, there are several foundational aspects of education that need to be interrogated. In the context of this study and from a decolonial perspective, it is important to consider the colonial context in which education in Finland operates and the decolonial discourses around it.

While Sámi perspectives and lived histories are gradually being re(ma)patriated and translated into research publications (e.g. Harlin 2019; Lehtola 2015; 2019; Ranta & Kanninen 2019, Spangen et al. 2015), and that more or less implicitly attribute the forceful assimilation of Sámi people into Finnish society to coloniality and logics of racism, explicit discussions on the colonial nature of Finnish education and governance are very new and few (e.g. Alemanji 2017; Huuki & Kyrölä 2022; Keskinen, Seikkula & Mkwasha 2021; Keskinen et al. 2016; Merivirta, Koivunen & Särkkä 2021).

Finland makes a strong case of innocence for itself by means upholding narratives of Nordic exceptionalism (Loftsdottir & Jensen 2016), this includes settler innocence and being the white savior (Keskinen, Seikkula & Mkwasha 2021). "Finns see themselves as a nonimperialistic democracy, which did not subjugate or mistreat others, the Sámi included" (Spangen et al. 2015, 23), and democratic, having themselves been subjected to the rule of

⁵ My use of the concept *episteme* stems from Rauna Kuokkanen's discussions on how epistemology in Indigenous contexts tends to include knowledge systems, world-view, cosmology and ontology, as they are all inseparable, whereas a traditional academic understanding of epistemology is usually limited to being the study of knowledge (Kuokkanen 2004b, 123–124). I use the terms interchangeably, and when relevant, I also use the form *onto-epistemologies*.

superpowers (Nyyssönen 2000, 169–170 in Spangen et al. 2015, 23). In the midst of such claimed innocence Finns have practiced race-biological anthropological research on the Sámi until the 1970's to prove their racial superiority over the Sámi (Ranta & Kanninen 2019). By constructing the other as different, Finland constructs itself (Said 2003), markedly as superior to the Sámi and belonging to the rest of Europe, legitimizing its position of power in relation to the Sámi. Finland presents itself as a civilized democratic nation with its education system as its pride (Pietikäinen and Leppänen 2007, 180). Sari Pietikäinen and Sirpa Leppänen explain that while colonialism constructed overseas colonies it also constructed Europe and Finland, making Finland "a product of colonialism" (2007, 181), that reproduces colonial logics.

In Nelson Maldonado-Torres' (2007, 242) interpretation of Annibal Quijano's works coloniality refers to "longstanding patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspiration of self". Language matters - it is performative and commands us through its onto-epistemological assumptions (Raudaskoski 2021, 255). We reproduce coloniality every day.

The colonial matrix of power has been interrogated by Quijano (2007) under three main domains, coloniality of power, of being and of knowledge, including education. The logic born out of the *ego conquiro* –

legitimizing treatment of people that were considered savage, in the most savage ways – a dualism called *the colonial difference* is the very foundation of modernity/coloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 255). Decolonially read "[m]odernity was built through coloniality, through concrete cognitive and material processes of production and suppression of alterity" (Vázquez 2017, 2). Coloniality enables the discourse and practice of modernity, which in turn produces coloniality. Modernity/coloniality signifies the loss of relationality and legitimates Finland's subjugation of the Sámi people and their homeland. Finland has practiced and practices both internal and external colonialism through its settler colonialism with regards to the Sámi (Tuck & Yang 2012). Being both structural and interpersonal and including both biopolitical and geopolitical control, schooling is central in delegitimizing knowledges and ways of being of the Other, the Indigenous/Sámi, and ensuring the futures of the white elite (Tuck & Yang 2012, 4).

Referring to Gayatri Spivak's notion of worlding⁶ where the colonial discourse is carved into the space of the colonized. Kuokkanen (2007a, 151) notes that schooling of the Sámi in Finland has been one of the most effective forms of carving – a kind of white washing of Sámi values. In the nation-building project of a settler society such as Finland and the Finnish nation, schoolbooks have not simply mirrored reality but have constructed it (Paasi 1998 in Kuokkanen 2007b). A reality that should be accepted unconditionally by all Finnish citizens. A reality of the Sámi as seen through settler colonial eyes – mythical, part of the past (Näkkäljärvi 2017) and non-threatening (Jimmy, Andreotti

6 In this article I use a kind of counter worlding or re-worlding by using terminology that is more often connected to euro-westernness rather than the Indigenous, such as the word 'society'. I find Sámi/Indigenous societies are often referred to as communities instead of societies. By using this often euro-western-connected term in the Indigenous context I hope to make an epistemological shift toward legitimizing Indigenous organization and knowledge systems. For more discussion on *writing* the Sámi differently, see Pietikäinen & Leppänen (2007, 175–189).

& Stein 2019). School books continue to regenerate active ignorance (Kuokkanen 2004a, 143) of Finnish society by misrepresenting (at best), or rendering non-existent, the Sámi in basic education teaching and teaching materials (Arola 2020; Miettunen 2020).

Teacher education prepares becoming teachers to implement the national curricula, including their onto-epistemic foundations. Operating within academia, it perpetuates and regenerates the same epistemic ignorance by upholding hegemony of knowledge, knowledge production and being (Kuokkanen 2004b): "Coloniality can be traced in education through the reproduction of knowledges that continue to justify European and white de facto supremacy and renders colonised peoples' knowledges and livelihoods backwards, inferior or non-existent" (Eriksen & Svendsen 2020, 2–3). Euro-western centric onto-epistemic foundations and educational traditions build on Cartesian rationality concluding that those who know – are, and those who don't – are not, and are therefore dispensable (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 252). The absence of rationality, in modern European terms, claims the absence of being. Epistemes such as of the Sámi society that build on relationality do not fit into the given framework and are thus seen as problematic from the point of view of those in power and are therefore preferably left out.

For these traditions to change, and for basic education to change, decolonial, Indigenous, posthuman and feminist thinkers, along with others, suggest decolonization of academy at large. It is a process that must take place simultaneously with the decolonization of all societal and educational sectors. Decolonization is not to be used, however, as a casual metaphor for social justice discourses and in tokenistic claims in academic vision statements

(Tuck & Yang 2012) as moves to innocence, that ultimately are mere attempts to solace settler guilt and seek redemption (Mawhinney 1998). True decolonization implies the unsettling self-reflective work of letting go of the control, predictability and privileges that come with holding onto one kind of knowledge and being (Jimmy & Andreotti 2019, 93), work that is affective and relational work, not only intellectual (Stein et al. 2021). Laura Junka-Aikio concludes that decolonizing academia requires much more than critical research and inclusion of Sámi voices and content in curricula, it requires "a genuine overturn of existing hierarchies." (2016, 225).

To decolonize means to take practical measures to dismantle racism and to fight for Indigenous sovereignty and land rights⁷ (Tuck & Yang 2012). Decoloniality is about ethical responsibility to our past, present and our future. An inclusion of histories and cosmologies from all over the world into our common narrative. *Pluriversity*, or epistemic pluralism, implies that these knowledges are not simply merged together as one utopia fitting everyone but are treated as equals – "to use the Zapatista dictum a 'world where many worlds can fit'" (Vázquez in Hernández & te Velde 2018, 101). It is a process of unlearning colonial logics by interrogation of the coloniality (of education) and simultaneous epistemological reconstruction in academia and education together with Indigenous, Other, subaltern epistemes and paradigms (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2012).

The non-Indigenous staff must carry their responsibility *to do their homework*, which Jimmy and Andreotti (2019) articulate as pre-braiding work – the work that the university as an institution and individuals need to commit to before entering into relationships with Indigenous parties. Kuokkanen (2004b, 2007a) and Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein (2019) point toward

7 Land rights from Indigenous perspectives differ considerably from a western notion of dominance and control (see e.g. Andersson, Cothran & Kekki 2021 and Simpson 2017).

the imperative of reconstructing Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships suggesting that planetary well-being depends on it. They ask, or warn, power- and space-holding institutions to consider how much the Indigenous perspective needs to be translated into their frameworks in order for them to be satisfied with what the Indigenous are offering in collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties. Concerns of the Indigenous may be heard when conforming to white knowledges and values and when communicating in non-threatening ways (Kuokkanen 2004b, 98). This describes selective listening (Fricker 2015) and leads to selective inclusion of non-threatening Indigenous content (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019, 44). Indigenous participants will "often feel pressures to conform to the expectations of those who enabled the 'inclusion'" (ibid. 2019, 46).

For Kuokkanen (2004b), in a traditional Sámi worldview (episteme), gift-giving is a symbol and act of gratitude for and reinforcement of relationships and recognition of kinship as well as responsibilities. Giving is practiced not for the purpose of receiving, but for the purpose of maintaining socio-cosmic balance and well-being, highlighting Vine Deloria's opposition to the Cartesian ego cognito, turning the focus of existence to being relational. The task of the academy is to recognize Indigenous epistemes as a gift in order to receive it and then to understand its logic and finally respond to it responsibly. In the euro-amero-western centered logics of modernity, Individualism and progress, applied in academia, gift-giving is practiced to ensure return, capitalization and to maintain or gain power. The gift of relationality could enable the academy to overcoming limits of current dominant modes of epistemological construct. Applying Kuokkanen's interpretation in academia translates into, e.g., honoring and equally including Indigenous and other non-white thinkers and epistemes and finding ways

of working that prioritizes the well-being of all.

Accepting the gift of Indigenous epistemes is, however, not merely about having more Indigenous representation in the academy but about developing a skill among academics socialized into the dominant epistemes to genuinely attempt to comprehend the Indigenous, the other, episteme. This is possible through preparing students and staff alike to stretch their abilities to comprehend different-than-the-dominant linearly and monocausally organized epistemes. This speaks of the need to include in basic education curricula and teacher education programs both decolonial understanding as well as Indigenous epistemes. Including Indigenous content together with decolonial thought ensures recognizing modern/colonial concepts and terminology that inhibits understanding Indigenous concepts, and enables unravelling, moving around and beyond modern/colonial interpretations. The burden of the ignorant learning about Indigenous epistemes cannot, however, be carried solely by the Indigenous, it should first and foremost be carried by the settlers, the privileged white curriculum designers. In suggesting that the complex task of integrating Sámi knowledges into basic education and teacher training requires deep dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education specialist, Torjer Olsen (2020, 35) expresses that rather than integrating a strictly Sámi perspective what is needed in Indigenous teacher education is a decolonial perspective. The decolonial perspective includes recognition of the colonial past and contemporary colonial legacies still alive – without a decolonial perspective, offering Sámi perspectives alone does not make a school a decolonizing agent.

While some (e.g. Dhillon 2021; Smith 1998) will argue that the academy cannot be dismantled using its own tools, as universities are money-making organizations relying cannibalistically on the productivi-

ty of their own subjects striving to maintain the status-quo, Kuokkanen (2004b, 2007a) challenges this idea by presenting benefits from engaging Indigenous and western knowledges in dialogue with one another. Decolonization can also be discussed as hospitality to the other, a philosophy of welcoming and responsibility for the other (Kuokkanen 2007a, xix-xx referring to Jacques Derrida 2002, 364). Kuokkanen's (2004b) interpretation of Emmanuel Levinas' hospitality implies that this communication that goes beyond the 'I' leads to learning, allowing to be taught by the other. True hospitality implies removing the burden of translating according to Derrida (2000 in Kuokkanen 2004b, 224). The academy has before it a humbling challenge – to welcome unconditionally that which is still unknown to it, even the *difficult* and *threatening* knowledges. Without their recognition the academy fails to fulfill its purpose of inquiring multiple truths.

A long call for Ketterä

The Ketterä Korkeakoulu project took upon itself the task of responding to the urgent calls for more and qualified teachers in Sámi contexts. This section gives an understanding of current Sámi-specific needs in education. I discuss them by plugging into multiple texts – research on Sámi education in Finland, 10 interviews with Sámi education specialists (SES) in Finland, PWG and FUG meeting discussions and Ketterä student feedback.

Teacher education that includes, not Sámi, but finno-western knowledges produces teachers equipped for socializing pupils into the dominant onto-epistemologi-

cal framework in Finland, and reproduces colonial relationship orders. Furthermore, teachers will not be equipped for appreciating the onto-epistemic reality of Sámi pupils. Being in this space demands Sámi individuals to either translate and transcode parts of themselves to the dominant paradigm or leave their Indigenous epistemes in the background, which Kuokkanen calls intellectual colonialism (2004b, 143).

During the past decades, Áillohašian⁸ efforts have been made in revitalizing Sámi languages and claiming space for them in Finnish formal education for the continuation of Sámi culture and society (e.g. Keskitalo et al. 2013a, 2013b; Pasanen 2018; Olthuis, Kivelä & Skutnab-Kangas 2013). Kuokkanen (2004b) writes about Sámi/Indigenous epistemes being an understanding of the world and being-in-it as unwritten rules that individuals are primarily socialized into from an early age. It is significant for the context of education and developing Sámi language and pedagogical teacher education, in specific, that "an episteme is implicit in language and reflected in knowledges, discourses, disciplines, institutions, rules and norms" that "denote certain common and shared ways of seeing [...] and relating to ourselves and the world within a society" (Kuokkanen 2004b, 125), and thus Sámi epistemes as well as languages should be the very starting point for such a training program and curriculum, including syllabi.

Sámi education, which Keskitalo (2020) defines as any education that deals with Sámi culture or people and is targeted for Sámi pupils or, where teaching is in a Sámi language, is strongly characterized by notions of place-based education, which includes an embodied experience of a place,

8 I refer here to the strength and impact of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's life work for Sámi rights. Valkeapää is commonly also referred to as Áillohaš. In the English literary tradition it could have been more common to use a term such as *herculean*. As a disturbance to this tradition and in an attempt to *reworld* foundations for respectful and responsible education in the Sámi/Indigenous context I chose a Sámi concept/historical persona to refer to.

its meanings and relations, and a love for it (Estola & Erkkilä 2019, 81–91). Sámi education within Sápmi is subject to specific conditions such as long distances, cold temperatures and local livelihoods shape the daily work of teachers (Peltola & Länsman 2019). Sámi heritage, interculturalism and diversity characterize social life (Keskitalo 2020). Sámi education and Sámi language teachers face challenges of generation gaps in language transmission, making class groups heterogenous in their language skills. Many parents do not know the Sámi language their children are learning at school and need support, which can be overwhelming for teachers. Many teachers are themselves in a position that requires them to keep enhancing their Sámi language skills, not having learnt it at home. In addition, because of scarcity of teaching materials, they often make teaching materials, participate in writing textbooks and translating material from other languages (Laiti 2019). The Sámi society is small, it is important to share learning [among teachers and educational workers] (SES 5).

All of these Sámi-specific conditions were considered in the planning and implementation work of the Ketterä program. Teacher students were, for example, given training in developing teaching materials and a possibility to share resources during their teacher training as well as after it. A reoccurring theme that emerged in the SES interviews were the importance of transmitting values and special characteristics of Sámi education, such as collective social and ecological responsibilities locally and globally. The current (Finnish) basic education curriculum was characterized by SESs as anthropocentric. According to the SESs, knowledge is considered as something collectively produced, in dialogue and interaction and transmitted through practical application as well as through stories as (SES 1, 2 and 3). "Learning happens all the time everywhere" - the school should learn to incorporate this notion

(SES 5). A pedagogy of stories, máidnasat (North Sámi=máidnasiid pedagogihkka, Fin=tarinoiden pedagogiikka), helps children to face challenges of daily life (SES 1) and enriches the imagination (SES 1 and 2).

Teaching requires individualization and cultural responsiveness and sensitivity for each pupil (SES 3, 4 and 6). Learning difficulties and neuropsychological challenges with Sámi pupils do not always correspond to the mainstream definitions of them (SES 2, 3, 4 and 6). Literacy learning challenges are very different for a Sámi speaking child than for a Finnish speaking child, yet language development is assessed according to Finnish language development criteria and might therefore go unnoticed with a Sámi speaking pupil (SES 1, 2 and 4). There are currently no qualified special education teachers with Sámi-specific knowledge (SES 4). This highlights the need for Sámi-specific special education teacher training programs (SES 1, 2 and 4) and speaks of the multitude of abilities teachers currently are working hard to acquire without support from formal teacher education. The other side of this issue is that pupils are often perceived as having learning difficulties, when in fact, the pedagogy or environment is not compatible with the pupil's episteme and can have a significant negative impact on their self-esteem and self-image (SES 1 and 2).

Teachers face difficulties of a slowly changing education culture and experience the burden of transcoding for and educating their colleagues (SES 2 and 3). A sense of defiance could be sensed among the interviewees, something of a silent resistance described by Veli-Pekka Lehtola (2019): "The school culture may be strong, but one doesn't have to abide by it." (SES 3). Teachers sometimes feel they are expected to carry the weight of revitalization and community well-being on their shoulders (Researcher PWG notes 2020; SES 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9). Still, teachers as well as students, find strength and empowerment

through Sámi pedagogy and multigenerational community (SES 1, 2 and 5). – ”A teacher must burn for the student to be set alight.” (SES3).

The focus is on building confidence in pupils by paying attention to and bringing to the students attention their many abilities and skills, such as knowing many different paths (SES 3): ”You yourself know” (Fin= Itse sinä tiedät) (SES 1). A Sámi upbringing builds on the notion of *birget* (Fin= pärjätä, En=to make it) (SES 2). To have strong self-confidence and to think independently is part of surviving in this world (SES 3).

Another principle of Sámi pedagogy is the principle of *bivdit* (Fin=pyytää, En=to ask), which is present in the relationship between human and more/other-than-human, for example in the form of ”conversation with nature” (SES 1). ”A pupil who has received a Sámi upbringing learns in a different way than a pupil who has received mainstream education/fostering, which results in that assumptions about learning often are not commensurable [...]. This can be seen for example in an ease of learning in practical and natural contexts and in learning difficulties in a classroom environment or in book-learning.” (SES 2). Children with a Sámi upbringing ”shine” in nature, whilst in a classroom setting they might seem uninterested (SES 1). Lesson structuring, classrooms and ways of working in schools need to be reorganized on the basis of Sámi spatio-temporal and epistemic conceptions (Keskitalo, Määttä & Uusiautti 2013a, 102).

The hopes expressed by the SESs are problematic from the point of maintaining the colonial status-quo as they challenge both the onto-epistemological foundations of finno-western education as well as the practical ideas of pedagogy. For the FoE these were *difficult* and *unsettling issues* that had no quick and easy solution. In contrast, storytelling, for example, was implemented as a form of Sámi literacy and lit-

erature in the Sámi Literature study unit of Ketterä. In addition, many of these issues were discussed in the seminars that were carried out in Sámi languages alongside the mainstream pedagogical studies. Ketterä students experienced empowerment through these intimate seminars (Ketterä Korkeakoulu Student Feedback 2021).

Implications of decoloniality in the planning and implementation of the Pedagogical study unit of Ketterä Korkeakoulu

This section presents an analysis of the social action of planning and implementing the Pedagogical study unit, giving examples of the practical implications of the doings of decoloniality as a part of a curriculum planning strategy. It also gives implications of possible improvements for the future, where decolonial principles have not been applied.

As a part of the task of engaging in NA, the researcher, I, entered into a zone of identification. This happened via invitation to the PWG, forming relationship in it and sharing the work with other participants, I was recognized and accepted as an (equal) participant by other participants of the social action under analysis (Raudaskoski 2021, 251) – the meetings and work of the PWG and FUG. In my participatory role, I brought into discussion decolonial perspectives to include in the pedagogical teaching unit content and structure. I also offered decolonial perspectives on approaches and suggestions made by other participants. My task also included observing the other participants and myself, which translated into studying relationality and decolonial dynamics.

The semiotic cycles of change and transformation were paced by monthly PWG and bimonthly FUG meetings. The main discourses that flowed through the nexus

of pedagogical planning action have been identified as follows. The discourses in the foreground that were expressive of anticipations and demanded problem solving attention are: Access to education in your own language; Sámi people's equal access to education; Sámi agency in developing Sámi education; Formal requirements for teacher proficiency; Invisibility, mystification and disinformation of Sámi in basic education curriculum and textbooks – taking measures to correct this; Revitalization of Aanaar, Skolt and North Sámi languages.

Other discourses, that informed these but flowed further in the background, yet arose on occasion when drawn attention to by participants, were: Equality and equity in education; Indigenizing western teacher education; The history of Sámi higher education; Truth and reconciliation process in Finland and other countries; Hidden policies of assimilation in Finnish education; Sámi pedagogy in Finland versus in Sweden and Norway; Sámi self-determination; Multigenerational language gap. Decolonization of basic, secondary and higher education.

Yet other discourses that connect to these discourses, but did not receive explicit attention, that however circulate in the nexus of action, were: Ethical principles of Indigenous-non-Indigenous collaboration; Colonial and racist biases and structures of the university; Decolonization of the academy; The burden of semiotic translation; and Anti-racism education in Finland, the Nordic countries and globally. Through this action other discourses were also inhibited, such as racist and neo-liberal capitalist aims of academia and education.

The place in which the social action, the planning and related negotiations, took place, held significance in the few yet significant material symbols in otherwise plain Nordic university corridors, signifying Indigeneity and being part of discourses and historical trajectories of acknowledgement and decolonization. Nonetheless,

the absence of such material signs of Sámi culture in meeting rooms spoke of lack of progress in these discourses in this place: There are specifically Indigenous spaces in other universities – why aren't there any at the University of Oulu? Is it up to the Sámi members of the academic community to arrange for this? Why? The absence of Indigenous reference in the space has given no incentive for non-Indigenous "guests" to take the role of guests and do their homework, and this has meant that the burden of onto-epistemic translation has remained mainly with the subaltern, the Other in the space, the other ideas trying to find space in the western teacher education curricular format (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019). This notion might be contested as indicating that western and academic is not also Indigenous or somehow out of reach for Indigenous people. Instead, what I am highlighting points at the responsibilities of western academic institutions toward Indigenous people.

The social identities that the different participants were producing or claiming through the mediated action were defined by the discourses they are most connected to and the positions they held in relation to one another (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 4). The social action was regulated by an agenda, shared social norms that were connected to discourses within academic culture as Sámi culture, and by a meeting Chair. The fact that Giellagas hosted and chaired the meetings, as Individuals and as a space, potentially altered the assumed epistemic hierarchy, shifting it towards acknowledgement of equal value of Indigenous knowledge to western conceptions of knowledge (Kuokkanen 2007a) and indicated movement towards ethical hosting: "collaboratively developing plans for meetings that include flexibility and adaptability to ensure respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Holders" (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019, 52).

Each participant, through their turns in meeting conversations or presentations,

was in the position of teaching the others, and called to attention objects, structures or processes to be discussed (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 11). The contributions of each were used by other participants in building the intelligibility of the ever-developing pedagogical teaching unit plans (Raudaskoski 2021, 250), first through internalizing and then in resemiotizing⁹. During the almost 3 years that passed in working in this project every participant increased their competences around the social action as well as the discourses and mediational tools flowing and changing through it. As western scientific or academic knowledge claims hegemonic validity as universal knowledge, holding Indigenous knowledge, the presentation thereof in a meeting that is set in an academic space, places Sámi academics and education specialists in an inferior position in terms of educational and social politics. This position, however, was not automatically assumed by each participant and they influence this through their own agency.

For example, one of the non-Sámi FoE representatives, at several occasions, pointed out their ignorance about Sámi issues and educational needs/contexts (Researcher PWG notes 2019–2021), therefore making changes to the given interaction order, a pulse in a semiotic cycle (Scollon & Scollon 2004, 8) – a minor decolonial gesture (Mignolo 2014) towards braiding and equity (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019). This ignorance, however, also implies absence of anticipations of this kind of information, which could have been apparent to these participants had they prepared, or been required to prepare, for the non-Indigenous-Indigenous collaboration according to such instructions as given by Kuokkanen (2004b, 2011) and Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein (2019). Other gestures, such as a non-Sámi participant

beckoning a Sámi participant to take a turn in speaking before themselves, impacted not only the hierarchy of the interaction order but the direction of the conversation to hold more time and space for issues that were important for Sámi participants.

There were gestures and verbalizations made by some Sámi participants about the improbability of their aims being met or heard, which speaks of the intellectual restriction that Kuokkanen (2004b) describes and systemic harm inflicted on Indigenous participants in academic collaborations described by Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein (2019) (Researcher PWG notes 2019–2020). It could signify distrust in the non-Indigenous party's ability or willingness to accommodate to Indigenous requests, or an internalized position of lesser importance as agents of knowledge production/holding. As a result, some ideas of Sámi pedagogical content that had been worked on and prepared for the PWG were not suggested but left out, and they were not discussed or included in the final teacher education program. It also speaks of the unquestioned authority by which formal Finnish teacher education operates and the norms of following rules set by national as well as academic authorities. The language of action in meetings and shared materials was mostly Finnish, sometimes English. This meant that any concepts tied to Sámi language had to be translated and transcoded into other languages and epistemes (Kuokkanen 2004b).

Teaching practices are principally carried out at designated schools in Oulu with trained teacher education teachers overseeing and guiding students throughout the practice, including evaluation work. With SES and PWG participants voicing the cultural, linguistic and practical importance of student teachers being able to carry out their teaching practices in their lo-

⁹ Scollon & Scollon (2004) take use of Iedema's concept of resemiotizing, which helps us understand how the meaning ascribed to a conceptual or cultural medium, for example, is transformed through an action – an approach also used in observing becomings (Raudaskoski 2021).

calities (in this case 4, all in Sápmi), and with an internalization of decolonial aspects of reaching social justice through education the FoE became flexible in its otherwise rigid principles. Discussions in the PWG and FUG about competent teacher training teachers and the shortage of competent teachers in Sámi education led to finding flexibility and functional compromises within the otherwise strict principles of the FoE of how to arrange teaching practices. Compromises were found after the internalization of Sámi education discourses circulating through the nexus of practice through the agency of Sámi participants and the non-Sámi researcher with a decolonial focus. Internalization was made possible through the agency of participants affiliated to Sámi education institutions and SESs from the field as well as the non-Sámi researcher, in onto-epistemic translation and transcoding for the FoE participants (Kuokkanen 2004b). Teaching practice as a concept became resemiotized to include the practical and semiotic (onto-epistemic) needs of Sámi education trainees and their specific contexts, and came to produce the completion of all the formally required, real-life, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices for the Ketterä students.

The Ketterä Korkeakoulu pedagogical study unit's curriculum-in-the-making and the existing subject teacher education curricula at the Faculty of Education are important to examine as mediational tools in the nexus of action. The pedagogical curriculum-in-the-making was the object of the agency of the participants and the focal emanation of the social action. It is the most visibly significant decolonial material outcome of the Ketterä Korkeakoulu project, along with the other study unit of Ketterä Korkeakoulu curricula and their implementation. Out of the three units the Ketterä teacher education program was comprised of, the other two being Sámi Language studies and Sámi Literature studies, the pedagogical study unit was the

unit within which the planning group had least impact on in terms of content and assigning Sámi education teachers in teaching. The already existing teacher education curricula were very impactful in defining learning (content) goals, assessment methods and criteria as well as order and size (in ECTS) of courses, all based on finno-western onto-epistemological assumptions.

Following the existing FoE subject teacher education curricular requirements, the Ketterä pedagogical unit curriculum came to comprise General Educational Science studies (25 ECTS), Subject Didactics studies (20 ECTS) and Teaching Practices (15 ECTS). The General Education Science studies consisted of five courses covering basic (western) themes of educational sciences: Education as the object of scientific study; Growth, development and learning; Teaching and educational interaction; Sociocultural contexts of education; and The Philosophical and ethical foundations and aims of education. Each of these courses lent themselves for reworlding through decolonization/indigenization of their onto-epistemic foundations as well as the histories they told as they corresponded directly to the themes that emerged in the hopes and identified needs expressed by the interviewed SESs. It became clear, however, from the learning requirements for acquiring teaching proficiency, that these courses must be completed as they are in the already existing subject teacher curriculum. Despite the many ideas presented in the PWG they were soon abandoned, for "practical reasons" as was concluded (Researcher notes 2020).

Arguing for and demanding inclusion of Sámi-specific content into the General (finno-western) Educational Science courses would have demanded considerable translational and transcoding efforts from the Sámi participants. As Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein (2019) suggest, non-Indigenous-Indigenous cooperation such as the Ketterä Korkeakoulu project would bene-

fit greatly from the preparatory *pre-braiding* work. Pre-braiding work enables parties to better understand each other's onto-epistemic foundations, the histories leading to the present imbalanced power relations and the prejudices internalized to uphold them, as well as to develop the necessary humility to process the uncomfortable feelings that arise when long-assumed privileges begin to crumble in the actual braiding work.

What decoloniality does and could do - Conclusions

This article has discussed what decoloniality does and could do in the context of developing Sámi/Indigenous teacher education in Finland. Interrogating the colonial context of Finnish teacher education and discussing how to dismantle those constructs are themselves decolonial activities. On that backdrop, I positioned myself among other participants in the nexuses of the planning work and its related discourses and historical trajectories, at thresholds. From there, it was possible to observe and analyze the social action of resemiotizing a finno-western teacher education framework into an Indigenous-centered teacher education curriculum.

What decoloniality does is that it sensitizes participants to consider their own positionality in relation to Indigenous people and furthering their agendas as well as their own colonially in-formed biases and agency. It makes participants aware of hidden and perceived hierarchies in relationship and interaction orders and catalyzes agency for changing them. Decoloniality orients participants to pay attention to questions of power and social justice: Who is recognized as a speaker, who has the power in the society to define the voices to be heard and who are the ones who hear them.

Who, in turn, is pushed to the margins - or even off the page, without a right to speak? What are the experiences and perspectives that go unrecognized in education? What are the wider educational and social discourses, practices, policies and structures that do the silencing?

Standing at the threshold, we attune ourselves decolonially, to decolonial thought and theories, to principles of braiding work. There we are able to catch/see/feel/be moved by currents and flows which elsewhere would go unnoticed. Adopting a decolonial mindset – Internalizing decolonial discourses and their suggestions for teacher education development in specific – can heighten the participants' awareness of powers active in upholding colonial dynamics and structures as well as strategies for unraveling and dismantling them in educational structures and strategies. Decoloniality can function as a gentle, or loud, inner voice, guiding actors to make ethical, response-able¹⁰ choices – to reflect upon before speaking or acting, to take into account one's position, power, privileges, representations when visioning, planning, suggesting, taking or making space, in the interaction among Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors.

What decoloniality did in the process of planning and implementing a Sámi/Indigenous teacher education program at a Finnish University in addition to the impactful results of a new Sámi/Indigenous teacher training program, it altered the relationship and interaction orders as well as discourses circulating in that academic institution towards more informed and respectful cooperation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous participants. It dismantled minor aspects of the culture of communication between non-Indigenous and Indigenous parties which shifts part of the burden of semiotic translation to those operating from a western onto-epistemic basis. Decoloniality informed actor agency re-

10 Ethical response-ability is a concept developed by Phematerialist thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti and Karen Barad.

sulting in realigned relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous individuals.

This article has provided practical examples of the doings of decoloniality, showing how decolonial considerations (or gestures) in space, discourses and relationship order (hospitality) enables the (attempt of) internalization of non-western epistemes, which leads to disrupting the status-quo and making more space for Sámi content and strategies in a teacher education curriculum. The Ketterä Korkeakoulu Sámi teacher education program pedagogical study unit succeeded in reworlding the finno-centered teaching practice arrangements of the Faculty of Education by including teaching practices in all three Sámi languages in locations in Sápmi and with tasks that were responsive to actual needs in terms of connection to location, language, culture and practical skills needed in the particular conditions that shape the practice of teaching in Sámi contexts.

In addition, hindrances to decolonization were observed. The absence of a space that would clearly signify shifting hosting positions from the university to the Sámi indicated absence of the university carrying respectful responsibility, which also includes preparing its subjects to do their homework when entering into collaborative relationships. Presupposing that strategies for the Sámi pedagogical content voiced by Sámi education specialists will face rejection and withdrawal of ideas already presented speak of the systemic harm inflicted on the Sámi through the academy as a knowledge producer with finno-western centered epistemic assumptions, as well as of an internalization of colonial power relations.

Being deocolonially oriented and being sensitive to other-than-western sensibilities and Sámi epistemes meant being mindful of ensuring Sámi agency and power in decision making with regards to curriculum and program structure. It also meant locating colonial structures, proce-

dures, relationship orders and content, in order to be able to discuss them and potentially shift or entirely remove them – in order to make space for Sámi/Indigenous approaches and content.

During the Ketterä project I was asked why decoloniality was needed in addition to the work that was already being done in the planning of a Sámi teacher education program. I do not see decoloniality as an addition to the already Sámi-centered teacher education program planning work, but as an enabler for beginning to recognize the underlying assumptions and structures that uphold and normalize rendering everything Other than euro-western as irrational and irrelevant, including Sámi-specific teacher education. Decoloniality asks the necessary questions to be able to build respectful and response-able relationships, to deal with and overcome the many difficulties included in such a process, to find spatio-temporally befitting strategies for creating culturally and linguistically responsive Sámi teacher education.

For a more determined commitment to decolonizing teacher education as well as power-structures upheld at the University of Oulu, and more particularly in the cooperation and relationships within Sámi teacher education development projects, I would recommend all parties to invest in pre-brading and braiding work as a decolonial strategy (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019).

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