



## ARTICLE

### **Discursive gaps as spaces for Sami educational self-governance: A Bernsteinian analysis of classification and framing**

Katarina Parfa Koskinen, [Katarina.parfa.koskinen@umu.se](mailto:Katarina.parfa.koskinen@umu.se)  
Umeå University, Sweden

**DOI Number:** <https://doi.org/10.26203/ka9m-5d57>

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**To cite this article:** Koskinen, K. P. (2020). Discursive gaps as spaces for Sami educational self-governance: A Bernsteinian analysis of classification and framing. *Education in the North*, 27(2) pp. 136-151.



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## **Discursive gaps as spaces for Sami educational self-governance: A Bernsteinian analysis of classification and framing**

Katarina Parfa Koskinen, [Katarina.parfa.koskinen@umu.se](mailto:Katarina.parfa.koskinen@umu.se)

Umeå University, Sweden

### **Abstract**

The current COVID-19 crisis has made digitally mediated education the centre of attention. Even before, in 2015, changes in the Swedish Educational Act opened up remote education within the compulsory school system, i.e. pupils aged 6–15. Remote, in this paper, signifies synchronous online education where students and teachers are separated in space but not in time. This paper aims at bringing about an understanding of the mechanisms and practices of cultural reproduction and transformation contributing to the construction of remote Sámi language education organised and offered by the Sámi Education Board in Sweden. To investigate if and how digital technologies influence the access to culturally and linguistically relevant education, a theory driven, thematic document analysis has been conducted. Through the Bernsteinian concepts of classification and framing, discursive gaps/spaces are identified and described. Especially where framing is weak, self-governing gaps/spaces are located, though not fully utilised as such due to lack of financial resources. Remote education can play a vital role in counteracting historical assimilative politics responsible for today's situation regarding e.g. lack of licensed Sámi language teachers and teaching aids. These issues can only be resolved by allocating more financial resources from state level.

**Keywords:** Remote Sámi language education, Bernstein, classification, framing, Indigenous educational self-governing

## Introduction

I set out on my PhD journey before the COVID-19 crisis and could not have anticipated how relevant my research topic would be today. The object of study for the thesis is remote K-9 Sámi language education, here understood as synchronous, online education where teachers and pupils are separated in space but not in time, mediated through digital technologies. Educational providers, teachers and pupils with COVID-prior experiences and competence in this mode of teaching have become important knowledge holders from others to learn from. I concur with Lund and Vestøl: 'the interplay between humans and digital resources offers extended possibilities for transforming situations and practices' (2020, p.1), which is interesting in relation to fuzzy or wicked problems. This leads to an understanding of remote education as a practice holding power to transform a problematic situation, such as mainstream schooling having a history of failing to serve the interests of particular groups (Mills, McGregor et al., 2016).

The Sámi educational conditions differ in Sápmi, the traditional area inhabited by Sámi people before the establishment of today's borders (Nutti, 2018), as the area is divided between four national states: Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia. The Sámi Education Board (Sameskolstyrelsen) is a national Swedish agency responsible for Sámi education. Since 2015, they offer remote Sámi language education. This instance of remote education, thoroughly explained later on, provides a prism of intersecting learning opportunities regarding Indigenous education, technology, literacy and policy research. My research is located within educational studies where the use of digital technology in education is the main research interest alongside educational equity. I want to study if and how digital technologies influence access to culturally and linguistically relevant education for Indigenous peoples. This paper investigates the official discourse as a possible arena for increased Indigenous educational self-governing.

From a Bernsteinian perspective, pedagogical processes 'distribute, shape, position and opposition forms of consciousness' (Bernstein, 2000, p.xiii), where there are tensions between the past and possible futures. An indigenous research paradigm provides philosophical underpinnings in the study where emancipatory self-governing and empowering of indigenous groups are key features (Smith, 2012; Kuokkanen, 2000; Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2019). This aligns well with the Bernsteinian lens used as an analytical tool in this study.

After this brief introductory setting of the scene, the article proceeds as follows. The next section presents *Aim and research questions*. This is followed by a *Background* section where equal access to education is introduced as a challenging issue in relation to Indigenous peoples with examples from Nordic and international contexts. It also provides a brief review of relevant, current discussions on digital technologies in education and recent research on remote education in Sweden. The *Theory* section presents the rights based perspective adopted in this study and the analytical framework informed by the concepts of classification and framing by Basil Bernstein, which simply put capture "general principles underlying the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication" (Bernstein, 2000, p.25). The *Context* provides a further description of the Sámi Education Board followed by *Method*, with procedural information and identified limitations, together with a presentation

of selected documents included in the analysis. In the *Analysis*, both the process and findings are presented. The final section contains a *Discussion* with conclusions and suggestions for further research.

### **Aim and research questions**

On 1 July in 2015, changes in the Educational Act in Sweden (SFS 2010:800, chapter 21) opened up opportunities for some actors, in particular state agencies, to offer remote education to students within the compulsory school years K-9, i.e. pupils aged 6-15. Among other subjects in the curriculum, the legislation included the Sámi languages, which allowed for the Sámi Education Board to offer this mode of language education (SFS 2011:131, §3a). Since then, the demand for remote Sámi language education has increased faster than the supply, probably as all Sámi languages are now on the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger list (<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>). The North Sámi language is definitely endangered, the Lule and South Sámi languages are severely endangered and the Pite and Ume Sámi languages are critically endangered.

However, how, if at all, can remote education contribute to solving the former unsolved educational issues regarding Sámi and other Indigenous/minority groups? Magga, Nicolaisen et al. (2005) talk about dominant-language medium education as subtractive education when minority and indigenous children learn a dominant language at the cost of their minority language, further claiming that these children are transferred to the linguistically and culturally dominant groups. They paint a depressing picture regarding the disappearance of today's spoken languages, of which most are indigenous. Outakoski, Cocq et al. (2018) confirm the image, adding that a lack of sustainability offers some of the largest challenges in many indigenous projects. They underscore that 'efforts for revitalization need to be implemented in a culturally sensitive manner if we want to meet the goals of promoting, strengthening and developing the Indigenous Sámi languages as a long-term objective' (2018, p.28). So, how can remote education contribute to the strengthening of Indigenous linguistic rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012) and a culturally enhancing education (Svonni, 2017). The present study thus aims at describing and bringing about an understanding of the mechanisms and practices of cultural reproduction and transformation (Bernstein and Salomon, 1999; Bernstein, 2000) contributing to the construction of a linguistically and culturally relevant remote Sámi language education programme organised and offered by The Sámi Education Board in Sweden.

RQ1: How can a Bernsteinian lens be adopted to identify discursive gaps/spaces allowing Sámi stakeholders to construct linguistically and culturally relevant remote (Sámi language) education?

RQ2: How are identified gaps/spaces contributing to Sámi educational self-governance?

## Background

### Equal access to education – a challenging issue

The loss of language is a typical wicked problem than can be explained and understood through a variety of lenses depending on perspective. From an Indigenous perspective one explanation refers to learning and being educated through a majority language, which have effectively transferred children linguistically and culturally from their inherited identities (Magga et al., 2005). From a minority, and perhaps especially an Indigenous perspective, equality has served as a key argument in assimilative policies throughout history. Education has been used as a way to assimilate indigenous groups into, or separate them from, society depending on the current majority agenda and similar stories are reported from all over the world (e.g. Ma Rhea, 2015; Nutti, 2018; Outakoski et al., 2018; Svonni, 2017; Smith, 2012). Smith (2012), among others, has elaborated on how education has colonised Indigenous peoples' minds. Regarding Aboriginal people in Australia, Ma Rhea (2015) offers an overview of the complicated historical relationship between Aboriginal people and European colonial administration (including educational) most of which was due to colliding philosophies combined with a derogatory attitude towards Aborigines among colonisers. Further, Ma Rhea (2015) claims that education was, and is still, done to and for rather than with Indigenous peoples. This reveals an infantilizing attitude, expecting Indigenous peoples to be grateful and supportive of the idea of progress through schooling, an attitude that can be recognized in most parts of the world.

In a Nordic context, aggressive assimilation politics in the 60s and 70s has led to a lot of Sámi having lost their language making teacher recruitment a particularly difficult task in addition to a lack of teaching aids (Outakoski et al., 2018). With funding shortages to maintain innovative initiatives there are also considerable challenges in producing up-to-date teaching aids, as reported both in a Sámi context (Outakoski *et al.*, 2018) and internationally (Wemigwams, 2018), which is essential in order to fight the effects of assimilation. Additionally, Sámi are practically invisible in the Swedish national curriculum (Svonni, 2015). Nutti (2018) reports culture-based education to be complicated due to a number of reasons even in Sámi schools, although action research initiatives have shown positive results. All of this has created a complex educational situation leading to high expectations of remote education to solve some of these issues. In this instance of remote Sámi language education, both teachers and pupils are scattered all over Sweden, which creates challenges in grouping students, leading to most of the teaching being one-to-one. In general, subjects, timetables, curricula and lack of time are reported to have resulted in a teacher-centred school organization (Keskitalo, 2019) and this seems to be amplified in remote education (annual reports from The Sámi Education Board years 2015-2019).

### Digital technologies in education

Through an increasing connectivity, digital modes of teaching such as remote/distance/online education are developing rapidly. A useful recent study in the field of K-12 education by Arnesen, Hveem et al. examined 'research literature in the field of K-12 online learning to identify the leading scholars, journals, top cited articles, research methods, and topics in this field of inquiry' (2019, p.32). The trend shows that more scholars are introduced to a rather tight research community of K-12 online education,

although most papers concerned training of teachers or the administration and organization of online education and fewer about learning or pedagogical issues. When navigating the field of digital technologies in education, different terminologies are used interchangeably regarding online schooling, such as distance education, e-learning, online education and virtual schooling (e.g. Moore, 2013; Clark and Mayer, 2016; Volery and Lord, 2000; Ferdig, Cavanaugh et al., 2009). When conceptualizing we need to bear in mind, as Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg point out: 'the language and terminology used to 'talk about' a phenomenon - for instance, bi/multilingualism - contributes to the creation of that very phenomenon' (2018, p.387). I have chosen to conceptualize this mode of education as remote education as this aligns with Swedish research on the topic. However, remote in relation to what? What is centre and what is periphery? Adding that this instance of remote education can be described as supplementary K-12 online learning (Arnesen et al., 2019), where students are enrolled in a bricks-and-mortar school taking an additional course as a supplement to curricular offerings, provides a more nuanced description.

Until 2015, it was not legal to provide online teaching in Sweden for pupils enrolled in the compulsory school years K-9 (ages 6-15). Since the legalization in 2015, some studies on remote education have been conducted focusing on e.g. teacher development of digital competences from a school leader perspective (Pettersson and Olofsson, 2019), remote education as a means of creating equal access to high quality education (Pettersson and From, 2018) or as a central part of school digitalization (From, Pettersson et al., 2020). However, remote K-9 Sámi language education is an example of a relatively new educational offer with largely unknown affordances and constraints (Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg, 2018).

## **Theory**

The methodology for this study is based on an Indigenous research paradigm where a relational ontology and epistemology (Koskinen, 2020) prefaces a collective perception on rights, rather than individual. However, as Nilsson states: 'Swedish national legislation has contributed to move Sámi society away from a relational and responsibility-based understanding of who is Sámi to a rights-based understanding' (2020, p.294). Embedded in a system emphasising individual rights has an impact on all state subjects. The individual focus in Swedish legislation can be exemplified through the law (SFS 2009:724) on national minorities and minority languages, which is a reinforced legal protection stipulating that a single pupil from the Sámi, Finns, Roma, Jews or Tornedalians is entitled to mother tongue tuition even though it might not be used as an active family language. Other English terms are used interchangeably in research such as heritage, home language or minority language education. Additionally, the Swedish Government has recently converted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law (SFS 2018:1197) further enhancing the basic rights of children to language, culture, and education.

An international outlook provides a collective rights-based perception through, for example, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008). Article 14 stipulates that Indigenous children be entitled to all levels of education as well as access to education in their own

culture in their own language. The responsibility lies on the state, but the same article also highlights the right for Indigenous peoples to both establish and control their educational systems (Ma Rhea, 2015). As the Sámi were recognized as Indigenous peoples by the Swedish government in 1977 (Svonni, 2015), a national minority in 2000 (SFS 2009:724; SÖ 2000:2) and a people in the Swedish constitution in 2010 (SFS 1974:152, chapter 1, §2) they also have a right to exercise self-determination.

The analytical tools provided by Bernstein (2000) make possible a close analysis of the powers operating in society, as he was concerned with the fundamental democratic principles at work. He especially highlighted three interrelated rights in need of institutionalizing: the right to individual enhancement, the right to be included socially, intellectually, culturally and personally, and finally the right to participate. Bernstein (2000) points out that the right to inclusion might require the right to be autonomous/separate, of which the Sámi Education Board is an example. For the rights highlighted by Bernstein (2000) to be played out equally it is thus of interest to analyse what and whose discourse is at play shaping the educational offerings at hand, in this case remote Sámi language education. Understanding how inequalities are (re)produced in schooling was also a driving force in the research of Bernstein. Singh writes that he was: 'a passionate supporter of the rights of disadvantaged students' (2002, p.572). A Bernsteinian lens therefore makes possible an analysis on whether discursively expressed Sámi needs or the dominating majority discourses are governing remote Sámi language education. The following section will present the concepts of classification and framing (Bernstein, 2000), which are the elements of the analysis.

### **A Bernsteinian lens**

According to Bernstein (2000), in order to understand how pedagogic processes become a part of consciousness, something Smith (2012) would refer to as the colonization of mind, we need a descriptive language capturing the organizational, discursive and transmission practices where cultural production and reproduction in social contexts take place (Bernstein, 2000; Bernstein and Salomon, 1999; Singh, 2002; Vestergaard Louw and Højmark Jensen, 2013). Central to this type of analysis is the notion of boundaries, which in turn create categories where power circulates between and control within (Bergström, Mårell-Olsson et al., 2019). Bernstein explains: 'power establishes legitimate relations of order [...by creating...] legitimate forms of communication appropriate to the different categories' (2000, p.5). If power operates in between, control on the other hand works within different categories. To translate power and control, Bernstein uses the concepts of classification and framing.

### **Classification and framing**

Classification creates order, both externally and internally. The space creating a unique identity of a category is between that and something else. Bernstein explains:

“There are two basic rules that are sufficient to generate this whole section of the model. Where we have strong classification, the rule is: things must be kept apart. Where we have weak classification, the rule is: things must be brought together.” (2000, p.11)

If something is to be considered strongly classified, it needs to have a space to develop a unique identity; it must be insulated from other categories. As Bernstein theorises: 'If this insulation changes

its strength, then the principles of the social division of labour -that is, its classification – changes' (2000, p.6). Through classification, a voice is established, i.e. answering the question of who is limited to speak. Control is expressed through framing as it establishes the message (Bernstein, 2000). Exemplified through remote education it is classified by law as synchronous, online education mediated through digital technology where the students and teachers are separated in space but not in time (SFS 2010:800). Remote education can thus only exist if, as Bernstein expresses: 'it can effectively insulate itself from...' (2000, p.6) other forms of educational practices, not to say that this is always wanted. This also implies that the boundary, between remote education and other educational practices, is the object of analysis to determine the strength, strong or weak, of the classification principle. Others note that weak or strong boundaries are, in practice, a continuum (Vestergaard Louw and Højmark Jensen, 2013).

Through framing, a legitimate message is produced, i.e. answering the question of who is privileged to select content (Bernstein, 2000; Bergström, Mårell-Olsson et al., 2019). In this study, symbolic control is executed through specific characterisations in the communication between the Ministry of Education and the Sámi Education Board on a scale from strong to weak. To identify discursive gaps/spaces for self-governance, strong framing indicates strong governmental control, whereas a weakening of framing values signals a shift of control towards the Sámi Education Board. Bergström, Mårell-Olsson et al. (2019) have inspired this operationalisation of the model of classification and framing.

A hierarchical picture showing how the different state agencies relate to one another and to the overall governing structure is provided in figure 1 below. Actors where official documents are part of the analysis are marked in red.

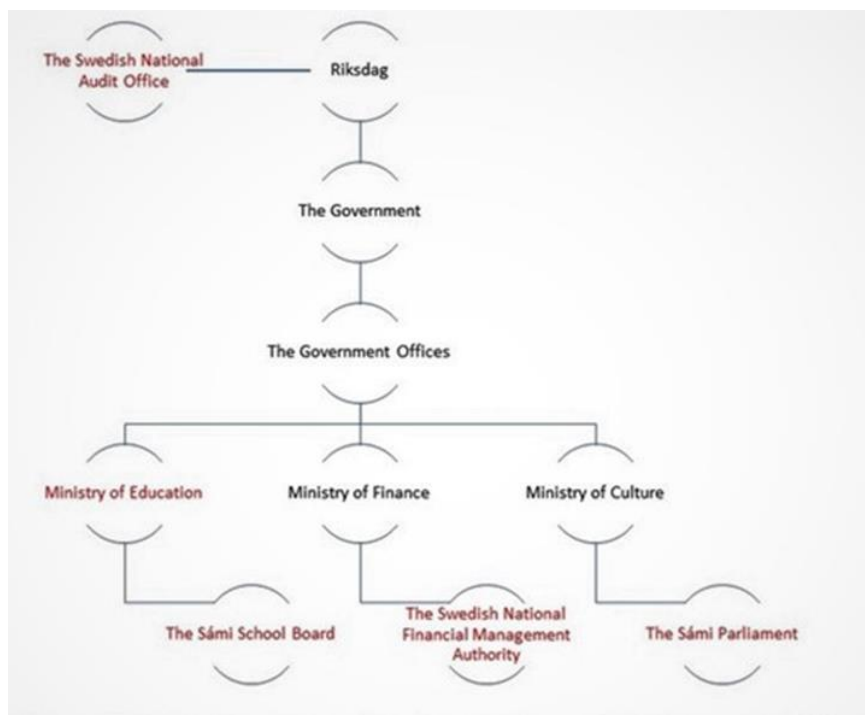


Figure 1. Presenting the structure of the state agencies included in this study (contributors in red).



## **Context**

Organized as a committee agency, the Sámi Education Board is a part of the governmental structure in Sweden under the Ministry of Education. It has a wide range of assignments. For example, they manage five pre-schools and five schools between years K-6 (pupils aged 6-12), integrated Sámi education in years 1-9 (pupils aged 7-15), production of teaching aids and remote Sámi language education (for further readings on the history see Svonni, 2017). Today the power to appoint the governing committee is assigned the Sámi Parliament and the Sámi Education Board appoints the head of authority. The government, through the Ministry of Education, provides the annual regulation letter with assignments and accompanying funding, and is responsible for auditing. This is a regime that has been criticized by the Swedish National Audit Office in a report presented in 2017, where they suggested incorporating the Sámi Education Board into the Sámi Parliament to get a clearer line of governance (RiR 2017:15). According to the report, as the Sámi Parliament does not audit educational issues there is a lack of accountability within the present system, where they only appoint the governing committee without being responsible for the annual reporting to the Ministry of Education. The Sámi Parliament already suggested this order in an Educational Action Program (The Sámi Parliament, 2012).

## **Method**

The adopted method is a theory driven, thematic document analysis (Bernstein, 2000; Bernstein and Salomon, 1999; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Bowen, 2009). The adoption of document analysis is particularly suitable to provide contextual data and in specialised forms of qualitative research, such as historical research. Further, it can inform research questions for further studies and say something about the social milieu in organisations. Through comparisons, conclusions can also be drawn about the development of a program. According to Bowen: 'documents provide a means of tracking change and development' (2009, p.30). In this instance, the major advantages in conducting a document analysis lie in the efficiency, availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness, stability and exactness (ibid, 2009). The texts are not produced with research in mind, i.e. the data is authentic, which also presents one of the possible disadvantages with the method. The content might have been produced with a certain agenda in mind, which is difficult to capture afterwards.

Bowen states that document analysis involves: 'finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data contained in documents' (2009, p.28). Holding the assumption that symbolic control is exercised in written discourse, that symbolic control contains the power to achieving self-governance, the selection of document analysis for this study seemed evident. The selection of documents was guided by four factors: time, visibility, relevance and availability. As the Sámi Education Board was assigned to provide remote Sámi language education for years K-9 in spring 2015, regulative letters and reports from that year until 2020 are included in the analysis. Other relevant reports mentioned in the regulative letters and annual reports are also included. From the initial selection, two documents were excluded (RiR 2017:15 and the regulative letter from 2015), as they did not contain any information on remote education. One identified document should have been included, a policy on distance work

produced by the Sámi Education Board, but it was not possible to obtain during the time frame of this study.

More precisely 12 documents are included.

- The annual regulative letters from the government executed by the Ministry of Education between years 2016-2020.
- The annual reports from the Sámi Education Board between years 2015-2019 (2020 has not yet been written).
- A report on remote Sámi language education from the Sámi Education Board on remote Sámi language education requested by the government in 2017.
- A report from the Swedish National Financial Management Authority published in 2017 (ESV 2018:53).

The documents have been skimmed and read several times to identify discursive patterns (Bowen, 2009). All content mentioning remote education was copied into a separate document to provide an overview, followed by an initial analogue thematic coding using post-its (Clarke and Braun, 2013). For a better overview, and to improve the robustness of the coding procedure, an additional thematic coding was conducted through the computer program NVivo. This step allowed for printouts with a thematically collected set of references for a closer re-reading. Grouped into aspects regarding benefits/positives and challenges/negatives, the themes concerned mainly teacher working conditions, organisation, supply and demand, and pedagogical issues. As my objective was to locate discursive gaps opening for self-governance, I then used the strong and weak classification and framing as the tool for analysis, presenting the results below.

## **Analysis**

When taking into account all the documents, remote education is portrayed as 'something else', with separate teachers and separate sections in the report structure. Additionally, remote education is restricted by law to certain subjects in the school curriculum, which has the effect of further insulating remote Sámi language education from other subjects in school. This makes remotely distributed Sámi language education an extreme singular, suggesting a strong classification leading to a regionalisation of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000). In the last annual report, however, a slight move towards a weakening of the boundary between remote education and the other educational practices within the Sámi Education Board is discerned. This is manifested in the report from 2019 by renaming remote education 'the sixth school', referring to the five-primary brick-and-mortar schools. Classification can operate both between e.g. departments and within it (Bernstein, 2000). Apart from the trend described above, the classificatory principles are suggested strong between both the Ministry of Education and the Sámi Education Board, as well as within the latter.

In more detail, from 2016 the annual regulative letter has had the same content regarding remote education. Here follows a translation from year 2016:

“The Sámi Education Board will make an overall assessment of the development of remote Sámi language education. In this account, conducted and planned measures are to be included. The Sámi Education Board is further to show the interest for remote education by providing number of school organisers and pupils. Further, The Sámi Education Board will show a calculation of costs regarding both the current as well as planned remote education within the agency’s schools.”

Above, the message is established as both weakly and strongly framed. Regarding the development of remote Sámi language education together with conducted and planned measures, the Ministry of Education does not specify the content. This creates a weak framing, which theoretically allows for self-governance. Regarding finance and quantitative measures on school organisers and pupils, the framing is strong. Although no exact details are provided in the regulative letter regarding how to report costs on remote education, the Sámi Education Board uses the same model as when reporting costs from the brick-and-mortar schools. Through this practice the boundary between the two is weakening, slightly changing the classificatory principles in the area of finance. This is also illustrated through joint financial tables in the report structure moving the two educational modes closer together.

Looking at the first two sentences in the quote above, they represent an example of weak framing as no details are provided from the state level as what to include in the evaluation. This leaves room for the Sámi Education Board to frame the message of these areas of remote education, i.e. exercise self-governance. Thematically summarized, the message contains benefits/positive aspects, and challenges/negative aspects with remote Sámi language education mainly regarding teacher working conditions, organisation, supply and demand, and pedagogical issues.

### **Benefits/positive aspects**

Remote education is an important language arena for pupils who have no access to a Sámi speaking context. The reach of this mode of education is highlighted as an affordance. An increasing demand indicates a positive attitude towards this mode of education, and three of the Sámi languages have had pupils since the start in 2015. To assure a high educational quality, the agency works according to a 'take it slow'-principle, with an on-going dialogue between the teachers and the administration. An internal organisation has been developed now allowing for regular meetings between the teachers to counteract the lonely character of the work. The agency has also taken action to provide an increased level of teacher competence, as some are not licenced teachers, and to produce teaching aids.

### **Challenges/negative aspects**

There are however several reported challenges. Finding licenced Sámi speaking teachers, lack of teaching aids, arranging other than one-to-one tuition, i.e. creating groups of pupils at the same level and/or age, and different amounts of time allocated for the different pupils are common themes in the reports. Several of these challenges are reported to be due to lack of funding. Problems with technology requires the teachers to double plan their lessons. The power to decide how much teaching time/week a pupil gets lies on the head of the pupil's school and the Sámi Education Board can only provide recommendations. Consequently, there are difficulties in creating schedules leading to mainly one-to-

one tuition. This example of weak framing has pedagogical and financial consequences, which seem to take up time and effort to solve, if possible at all. Finally, when appointed as a mother tongue teacher the demand for a teacher's licence is removed (SFS 2010:800, chapter 2, §18;20). However, the Sámi Education Board has decided not to offer long-term employment without it. When applying the same conditions for teacher recruitment they move towards a weakening of classificatory principles. This example is further elaborated on in the discussion.

## **Discussion**

Given that the content of official documents circulating in public inquiries used for policy purposes hold symbolic power to govern Sámi education in a long-term perspective, the annual reports represent an important self-governing practice. I set out to investigate two research questions: How can a Bernsteinian lens be adopted to identify discursive gaps/spaces allowing Sámi stakeholders to construct linguistically and culturally relevant remote (Sámi language) education? How are identified gaps/spaces contributing to Sámi educational self-governing?

In the last days of finishing this article, a letter from 115 Sámi parents throughout Sápmi has been sent to the Swedish government, the Sámi Parliament and the Sámi Education Board, amongst others, demanding increased efforts to enhance the language development of Sámi children (<https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7612957>, retrieved on 4 December 2020). The main question is: Should we have Sámi-speaking children? As an act of desperation, it illustrates the need for an increase of self-governing in the educational area to come to terms with the acute situation. As for the first research question, a Bernsteinian analysis reveals and conceptualises the production and reproduction of pedagogic discourse, leaving gaps where ideology can be played out. In these discursive gaps, spaces for self-governance exist if funding and other types of basic resources are allocated, answering the second question. The formal power to provide these resources is located on state level, where the discourse reveals a low interest in addressing problems and challenges related to remote Sámi language education. Why the government shows little commitment to remote Sámi language education in the investigated discourse might have several explanations. Bernstein writes: 'meanings which are context bound cannot unite anything other than themselves' (2000, p.31), which can be understood as the themes in the annual reports, which are not responded to by the government, might be too context bound. Nevertheless, national legislation and international agreements entered into as mentioned earlier identify the Swedish government as responsible for solving the situation.

What stands out as the most complicated situation to handle for the Sámi Education Board, but concurrently an area possible to solve for the government, is the time framing of Sámi mother tongue/heritage/home language education. In the brick-and-mortar schools of the Sámi Education Board, all pupils have access to more time/week of language education than the pupils attending remote Sámi language education. Although esoteric today, it might be mundane tomorrow (Bernstein, 2000) to offer the same amount of time for mother tongue/heritage language education to pupils enrolled in brick-and-mortar schools from other organisers. Additionally, what is thinkable in one culture or country, such as virtual schooling, is unthinkable somewhere else. Home schooling and virtual or online schooling in

primary levels are, in a Swedish context, unthinkable and only partially legalised, whereas in USA, home schooling is not only legal, but also managed through virtual school environments (see e.g. <https://lssdev.wordpress.com/academics/lower-school/>). For a culturally and linguistically threatened culture both home schooling and virtual/online schooling could provide a contemporary educational mode to address the on-going assimilation and language-death.

The Sámi Education Board demands teacher's licence to offer long-term employment for mother tongue teachers although not officially demanded. This might affect the status of the profession positively in a long-term perspective, but regrettably has the consequence that not all pupils get access to Sámi language education due to a reported lack of teachers. How many of the teachers without a licence apply year after year and how many look for more secure job conditions somewhere else? Would they have stayed and accepted to study for a teacher licence with secure, long-term working conditions? Bernstein (2000) suggests that when something challenges existing classificatory principles this triggers reactions regarding framing of these challenging discourses, forcing them to resemble something well known. In aiming for similar conditions for all teachers in the organisation, it might actually contribute to a deterioration of the possibility for Sámi pupils who have a right to language education, at least in a short-term perspective. Still, further research is needed to fully understand the practice of remote Sámi language education, where the voices of involved stakeholders hold important records.

The overall impression after conducting this study is the absence of detailed information and the absence of requesting it. What do the pupils say? How are they performing? Do they learn the language through this mode of education? All of these issues would seem important to ask for and to provide when communicating educational issues between these agencies. Regarding financial issues, though, there is a touch of the infantilizing attitude mentioned by Ma Rhea (2015), embedding the Sámi Education Board in a web of auditing activities. Despite the risk of sounding too political, I want to conclude with a reference from peace research. Contemporary conditions manifested through e.g. Sámi activism and music paint a picture of struggle and battle. The letter mentioned earlier amplifies this image. Within peace studies, one can find that conflicting environments can be other than actual war. Cohen and Arieli write: 'A cold peace is the stabilization of normalized relations...' (2011, p.425). There are still structures of domination underlying the relationship between the Swedish national state and the Sámi people, suggesting the investigated practice as a manifestation of cold peace.

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