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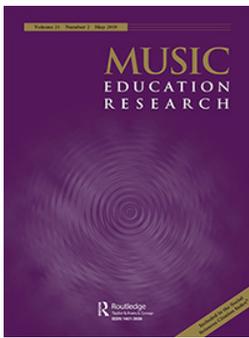
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# A toothless tiger? Capabilities for indigenous self-determination in and through Finland's extracurricular music education system

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## ABSTRACT

In this article, we report an instrumental case study of extracurricular music education as an arena and means for securing the capability for self-determination among Finland's Indigenous Sámi population. Finland's egalitarian approach to education is rooted in complex, and at times contradictory, colonial legacies, raising questions as to whether or not mainstream education systems afford the Sámi the capability to enact their human and constitutional rights to sustain and develop their own languages, cultures, and worldviews. Through a critical analysis of international and national policy documents, and interview data from four Sámi music educators in Finland, we consider the capability for Indigenous self-determination as essential criteria for enacting social justice in, and through, music education.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Capabilities; indigenous peoples; music education; Sámi; self-determination; social justice

## Introduction

Sami rights are fairly easy to comprehend  
Only three rights are in question  
The right to a past  
The right to a present  
The right to a future. (Somy 2000)

On the 5th of May 2017, the State of Finland and the Sámi Parliament officially agreed to launch a Reconciliation<sup>1</sup> process, a considerable step forward in countering a long history of injustices and repairing political and social relations between the nation's Finnish majority and Indigenous groups. This same year saw a letter of intent signed by the Finnish National Museum and the Sámi Museum *Siida* to repatriate a collection of 2600 Sámi artefacts. However, State-Sámi relations have not always been harmonious, with assumptions of already-established equality (Nyyssönen 2011) fuelling the persistent belief that 'there are currently no issues that would require an apology' (as the Finnish Minister of Justice Jussi Järvenpää stated in 1998). Furthermore, Finland has thus far failed to ratify the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention No. 169, which would grant the Sámi the same rights as other citizens, despite drawing considerable criticism from the United Nations. As a small Indigenous population, the Sámi often look to international law and larger socio-political frameworks such as the Saami Council (an NGO with member organisations in Finland, Russia, Norway and Sweden), for cultural and political support (Seurujärvi-Kari and Kantasalmi 2017). Although the

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Sámi have been granted constitutional rights in Finland to ‘maintain and develop their own language and culture’ (Constitution § 17.3) a recent report on the realisation of these rights by Heinämäki et al. (2017) argues that these constitutional rights are a ‘toothless tiger’.<sup>2</sup> As such, whilst Sámi rights may sound good on paper, it is argued that the Sámi government institutions or broader national systems do not, or cannot, implement these International or Constitutional rights in practice (Västilä 2017, 11–12).

Taking into account that music has been one of the primary tools for cultural revival amongst the Sámi in recent decades (Hilder 2015) and that education has been identified by Sámi researchers as one of the most important arenas for cultural preservation and development (Keskitalo, Uusiautti, and Määttä 2012), music education may hold enormous potentials for realising Sámi rights, both within national education frameworks and in broader society. Whilst equality in, and through, Finnish state schooling has been subject to scholarly critique, also from the perspective of Indigenous rights (Keskitalo, Uusiautti, and Määttä 2012; Seurujärvi-Kari and Kantasalmi 2017), ‘[o]nly part of educational communication is focused directly on pedagogical interaction in schools’ (Seurujärvi-Kari and Kantasalmi 2017, 111). As an important arena for music education, Finland’s *Basic Education in the Arts* system assumes the form of a network of extracurricular music schools throughout the country. This system is one predicated on a principle of social justice, whereby any child would have the opportunity to learn music regardless of geographical location, socio-economic background, race, or gender (Jakku-Sihvonen and Kuusela 2002). However, whilst this principle is articulated and expanded upon in policy documents pertaining to teaching and learning music within this system, questions may be raised as to whether this principle is also a loudly roaring but largely ineffective toothless tiger. Are the rights afforded to the Sámi within Finnish extracurricular music education simply nominal prerogatives for participation and self-determination? Or does this system afford the Sámi the capabilities to enact these rights in practice?

## The Sámi and state education in Finland

The Sámi are the only recognised Indigenous peoples of the European Union with homelands (Sápmi) spanning across the imposed national borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Kola peninsula. There are approximately 10,000 Sámi living in Finland, comprising numerous traditional cultures, livelihoods and languages, compounded by ‘escalating diversity due to the contemporary forces of globalization’ (Lindgren et al. 2016, 58). In Finland, three Sámi languages are spoken, each of which has been recognised by UNESCO (Moseley 2010) as endangered or seriously endangered. These languages include *Davvisámegiella* (Northern Sámi), *Anarâškielâ* (Inari Sámi) and *Nuõrttsää’mkïöll*, (Skolt Sámi) (Keskitalo et al. 2018). Each Sámi culture in Finland has their own unique vocal tradition (often broadly referred to as *joik* in English), including the Northern Sámi vocal tradition of *luohti*, the Aanaar Sámi tradition of *livde* and the Skolt Sámi tradition of *leu’dd*. Each of these is recognised by many artists and educators as highly endangered, requiring significant attention to preserve and pass on these ancient traditions. As artists and educators participate in global cultural movements, contemporary Sámi music includes everything from hip hop, to folk, pop, classical, heavy metal and everything in between, with artists often crossing genre and cultural boundaries through drawing upon both traditional and modern Sámi cultures.

The Finnish education system is ‘rooted in complex contradictory legacies of indigenous and cultural assimilation that entangle with the history of place, shaping everyday practices and experiences for Sámi people’ (Huuki and Juutilainen 2016, 7). Although a detailed overview of Sámi history in Finland is beyond the scope of this article, we here outline just a few significant events in history that serve as a backdrop to Sámi education in contemporary Finland (see also Keskitalo et al. 2018): processes of Christianisation, nation-building projects, war, and Finland’s boarding school system.

Although Christianisation efforts were evident already in the Middle Ages, these intensified during the seventeenth century. Attempts to dismantle Sámi spirituality and worldviews saw the persecution of the *Noadis* (Shamans), the destruction of musical instruments often incorporated in

spiritual rituals, such as Sámi drums, and the banning of joik. Education was seen as the main means of salvation, with schools established by Lutheran missionaries to ‘educate Sami men in the ways of Christianity so that they could then return to their homes as missionaries’ (Smith 2009, 19). Educational materials, predominantly religious, were also published in Sámi languages, and although not intended as a form of mass, public schooling, such religious education served as the precursors of broader state education in Sápmi.

The 1900s saw a systematic repression of Sámi identities and languages by the Finnish State, as a newly independent Finland strove to establish a national identity. Education was a primary means for shaping the constructed homogeneous ideal of *Finnishness* as ‘the educated classes took on the task of educating the common people, so that the latter would be worthy of constituting a nation’ (Ollila 1998, 130–131). So successful was this nation-building project that even today Finland is seen (by both residents and foreigners alike) as a homogenous society, and cultural diversity a recent phenomenon resulting from increasing migration.

The atrocities of the Second World War and consequent Finnish-Soviet wars in Lapland ‘left the Sámi without education in any language for several years, which negatively affected their literacy rates and ability to transfer their language to future generations’ (Keskitalo, Uusiautti, and Määttä 2012, 54–55). Furthermore, many Sámi communities (the Skolt Sámi in particular) were displaced from their homelands, had their reindeer livestocks taken from them (either as a consequence of them being seized on the Soviet side of the border, war taxes, or theft) and were unable to pursue traditional livelihoods (Lehtola 2015a). Following this accelerated and widespread decimation of culture and language, education policies aiming to provide better education services to children living in remote areas of Finland (regardless of ethnicity) saw many Sámi children educated in boarding schools, separated from their families, friends and their communities (Keskitalo et al. 2018). Whilst not explicitly assimilatory (in contrast to the residential schooling system in Norway or Sweden for example), this boarding school system furthered this ideal of *Finnishness* through enforcing ‘a strict daily time schedule and Finnish language, food, symbols and clothing, which also entailed punishment for those who did not conform to the new identity’ (Huuki and Juutilainen 2016, 7; see also Keskitalo et al. 2018). Through what is often termed the ‘colonization of mind’, colonial ‘ways of land use, social order, and knowledge systems’ replaced Indigenous traditions, and the Sámi were systematically ‘taught to approve this development as something natural’ (Lehtola 2015b, 26). Consequently, many young Sámi lost their native languages and cultural ties to their communities in a single generation (Aikio-Puoskari and Pentikäinen 2001). The Finnish boarding school system ended in the 1960s, though has only recently begun to be recognised by the Finnish authorities as the source of considerable personal and inherited trauma. Bastien et al. (2003) have even argued that although the Sámi have established ‘their own elected bodies, welfare system, and some control over their education’, the accumulative surrendering of Sámi worldviews to Christianisation, Finnishisation, and Education means that ‘none of these [Sámi structures are] based on Sámi culture’ (28).

### Self-determination and extracurricular music education in Finland

Whilst the structures of school policies and practices are increasingly identified in international education contexts, criticised, and countered, little attention has been paid to Indigenous rights in the context of music education *outside* of comprehensive schooling. In Finland, one of the primary arenas for music teaching and learning is the publicly funded, extracurricular *Basic Education in the Arts* (henceforth BEA) system. Comprising a network of music schools throughout the country, BEA offers goal-oriented, systematic instruction in music to children and adolescents through two syllabi streams: the general (*yleinen oppimäärä*) and the advanced (*laaja oppimäärä*). This system has been previously criticised for not affording equal opportunities for ‘different ethnic and language minorities to promote their own ... traditions’ (Moisala 2010, 211), and ethnomusicologist Pirkko Moisala (2010) has concluded that this system is fundamentally ‘irreconcilable’ with Sámi traditional musics and ways of teaching and learning (ibid.). More recently, Kallio and Länsman (2018) found

that although young Sámi learn in vastly improved environments from their parents or grandparents, exclusionary structures ‘continue to shape how we think, act, teach, and learn’ – within the BEA system (17). These criticisms raise questions as to whether or not Sámi are afforded the capabilities for self-determination within, or through, publicly funded extracurricular music education in Finland.

On the individual level, the *capability for self-determination* refers to ‘the freedom that a person has to lead one kind of a life or another’ (Nussbaum and Sen 1993, 3). In this sense, philosopher Amartya Sen describes capability not as an innate potential, or measure of achievement, but as ‘real opportunity’ – the ‘capability to do things he or she has reason to value’ (Sen 2009, 231). As such, capability is a useful concept with which to approach inequality, in comparing the advantages and disadvantages of different individuals or social groups in realising freedom (Sen 2009). Martha Nussbaum (2003) has linked capabilities to rights, arguing that ‘thinking in terms of capability gives us a benchmark as we think about what it is really to secure a right to someone. It makes clear that this involves affirmative material and institutional support, not simply a failure to impede’ (38). Both Sen (2009) and Nussbaum (2003) argue that political self-determination is a particularly important capability for an individual, with regards to securing one’s rights, social justice, and well-being. However, it is important to note that securing the capability, or right to self-determination equates with the compulsory celebration of a narrow conceptualisation of Sámi identity or culture, or ‘someone pursuing her ancestral lifestyle *whether or not* she finds reasons to choose to do this. The central issue ... is the freedom to *choose* how to live’ (Sen 2009, 238). Self-determination does not only pertain to an individual’s control over their own life path, but also to a ‘collective capability’ (Murphy 2014). Individual and collective rights to self-determination are ‘*mutually interactive* rather than in competition’ (Holder and Corntassel 2002, 129) and encompass some of the most basic human freedoms (Murphy 2014, 325).

## Research task and approach

The research task of the instrumental case study (Stake 1995) reported in this article was to investigate how the capability for self-determination within Finland’s Basic Education in the Arts music education system is articulated in BEA policy documents, and also experienced by Sámi educators.

Data sources at the BEA policy level include:

- The current Act on Basic Education in the Arts (633/98)
- The current National Core Curriculum for music in Basic Education in the Arts that guides teaching and learning for the General (*yleinen*) (2005) and Advanced (*laaja*) (2002) syllabi.
- The most recent (2012) evaluation of BEA conducted by the Education Evaluation Council.
- The new National Core Curriculum for music in Basic Education in the Arts (2017), which will be implemented as of 31 July 2018.

Data sources at the level of policy implementation level include 1–2 h long interviews conducted in 2016 by the first author, Alexis, with four active Sámi music educators living and working in different Finnish cities, both within and outside of Sápmi. As a non-Sámi, first generation Australian, Alexis positioned herself as an outsider and learner in relation to the Finnish Basic Education in the Arts system and to Sámi onto-epistemologies and experiences. Participants were in their 20s to 30s and all represented Northern Sámi backgrounds. Whilst not all of the interview participants had completed formal music training or possessed teaching qualifications recognised by the Finnish National Agency for Education, each was actively engaged in the preservation, promotion, and development of traditional and modern Sámi musics and cultures through teaching both Sámi and non-Sámi children and adults. All participants were joikers as well as composers, recording artists, and teachers of a number of other musical forms including western art music; Finnish folk; popular musics such as pop, rap, punk, and rock; and others. Each of the music educators participated voluntarily in this research, and was aware that they could withdraw at any stage of the process.

Furthermore, all four participants were given the opportunity to comment on an earlier draft of this article, and offer suggestions, corrections, clarifications, or comments. For the purposes of this article, participants are referred to by the pseudonyms *Jovvna*, *Risten*, *Biret*, and *Sára*.

Data analyses of both policy documents and interview material were conducted by both authors of this article. The second author of this article, Marja is Finnish and works in mainstream higher music education in Finland. She had not met the interview participants, and approached the data as a researcher with considerable experience researching Finnish music education and cultural law, with a particular interest in matters of equality and social justice. Policy analysis followed a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) whereby texts were coded according to parameters of Indigenous self-determination that were constructed both according to existing theory and during the data analysis process. Interview data was approached through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) ‘identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (79).

### Challenges to indigenous self-determination in basic education in the arts

Our data analyses identified a number of discrepancies and/or tensions between the ways in which the capability for Indigenous self-determination is articulated in Basic Education in the Arts policy documents, and the ways in which it had been experienced by the Sámi musician-teachers. The two themes focused upon in this article are: Access to music education services; and curricular content and pedagogical approach.

#### Access to music education services

The law that governs BEA (Act on Basic Education in the Arts 633/98), mandates that municipalities are to receive state subsidies for establishing and implementing music education on the basis of population size of the region served (see also Act on State Subsidies for Basic Municipal Services 1704/2009), number of confirmed lessons taught (Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision 1705/2009), and the syllabus followed (Act on Basic Education in the Arts 633/98, § 11). This means that institutions with large, active student populations receive more financial support than smaller branch offices that serve fewer students. With the Sámi homelands spanning across the sparsely populated far North of Finland, it is perhaps unsurprising that in initial interviews, Alexis was often met with confusion as to what it was precisely that she was researching, as ‘those kinds of institutions just don’t exist in Sápmi’ (Sára). These findings confirm those by the Education Evaluation Council (Tiainen et al. 2012) that noted that urban municipalities are better equipped to establish institutions, implement curricula, partake in cooperation and development than in rural areas, and that ‘every willing child and young person *does not* have an equal opportunity ... to participate in ... basic arts education regardless of where they live’ (Tiainen et al. 2012, 16, emphasis added).

However, although BEA institutions or branch offices are far and few between in the North of Finland, this does not mean that music education is wholly absent. With Sámi self-determination in Finland ‘framed in terms of “cultural autonomy” ... [providing] a basis for Indigenous peoples to defend and advance their collective rights’ (Kuokkanen 2009, 103–104), separate funding schemes and projects have been developed to support Sámi arts and culture. Indeed, Jovvna noted that compared to previous years, ‘the funding has gone up quite a lot’, which is seen by some as expanding the capability for self-determination among the Sámi, entrusting Sámi institutions with the responsibility for Sámi musical life. However, funds set aside from mainstream services are not only intended to cover music education for children and young people, but also,

to support professional artists, funding studio time so that they can make their recordings as well as organising events and festivals for them to perform at. Also the funding should be used to spread knowledge and awareness about Sámi music and promote our music cultures in the larger Finnish and International music industries. (Jovvna)

As such, although the funding is allocated to Sámi organisations who are able to allocate funds based on Sámi criteria and needs (as opposed to mainstream funding organisations who may allocate funds according to western art music criteria),

it is at the point where there's nothing left for the artists, and if we don't support the artists we don't have anyone to teach students ... we need the people who can be there telling the stories and joking with kids, but we don't have them. (Sárá)

There just aren't so many people who are educated in [Sámi music and pedagogy] who could start the process. (Biret)

Consequently, teacher shortages not only limit students' access to music education, but also put a strain on the musician-educators who are working in Finland,

It is difficult to get Sámi music teachers because they all have other jobs. And once you've found one teacher, it is easy to exhaust them, asking them to teach all the time. (Jovnna)

With few, over-worked teachers available, Sámi music education primarily takes place through short-term, intensive workshops, held as part of Indigenous festivals or celebrations, or organised in collaboration with local schools. Although popular, the workshop-format presents a number of challenges for Sámi access to music education,

The difficulty with the workshops is of course that they last only one or two days – perhaps even a couple of hours ... if we have one band camp in spring, and one in autumn, it's not nearly enough to keep the young people interested. (Jovnna)

There is no continuous music teaching for students to learn regularly, achieve musical goals and develop their skills. (Sárá)

The experiences of students in more remote areas of Sápmi, who learn primarily through such workshops, may contrast with the experiences of students who study through the BEA system – with the 2005 syllabus emphasising that one aim of BEA is to 'guide the student towards concentrated, goal-oriented, and sustainable working', also recognising also that 'learning artistic skills takes time' (1–2). As a consequence of not having access to sustainable, regular tuition, Biret felt that the only option for young people who wish to pursue a career in music is to leave their cultural homelands and support networks, as she did, to attend a music school,

Far away from my friends and I felt like it was a completely different world. (Biret)

### ***Curricular content and pedagogical approach***

It is worth noting that the capability for Indigenous self-determination is not only a concern of Sámi students and teachers living and working in remote regions of Sápmi, or those who are focused on teaching and learning traditional joik in traditional ways. The capability for Indigenous self-determination is a freedom secured through collaborations between Indigenous peoples and all institutions – such as BEA music schools (Murphy 2014). As stated in the BEA Advanced syllabus (2017), teaching should take cultural heritage into account in ways that recognise the multiple values that may be in play, and not only preserves but renews traditions and practices.

According to the law (Act on Basic Education in the Arts 633/98, § 5), the aims and content of BEA teaching and learning are determined by the National Agency of Education in the Core Curriculum for the General (2005, 2017) and Advanced Syllabi (2002, 2017), from which the schools and municipalities develop their curricula on the local level (Tiainen et al. 2012, 15). In this sense, the National Core Curriculum does not prescribe certain repertoires or skills as obligatory learning material, but does outline key areas of study and values. Both the General and Advanced syllabi (2002, 2005) state that one of the primary tasks of music education is to develop and preserve a national music culture, without specifying exactly what is included, and excluded in such a construct.

Jovanna explained that Finnish music was often presented by teachers or teaching materials as a monolithic whole,

Finland is quite a young state and they have had to build this national identity, and mentioning that there are also other people in this nation [was not in line with the nation-building project] ... it would be good to have more knowledge [in and through music education] about different cultures. (Jovanna)

Understanding music education as an ‘important, powerful, and, ultimately, political’ process (Froehlich 2002), how Finnishness, or Indigeneity are construed through curricula and teaching may pose particular challenges for educators. For example, Risten explained the challenges of language, content, and politics that she faced as a music teacher working with students from different Sámi groups,

I always speak Sámi [language] with my Northern Sámi and Inari Sámi students, but for my Skolt Sámi students, [the language is so different that] they may not understand what I am saying, and I don’t understand what they are asking! The music traditions are also totally different! With Skolt Sámi being a minority group even among the Sámi, I really don’t want them to have the feeling that Northern Sámi culture is dominating. (Risten)

Thus, whilst the BEA syllabi highlight the importance of cultural diversity in selecting repertoire and teaching approaches, the politics of difference (both in positionality and cultural terms) may require something more than guiding students to *appreciate* different cultures (General Syllabus 2005, 1). In this way, as the General and Advanced syllabi (2017) note the importance of human rights, equality, equity and cultural diversity (8) as cornerstones of teaching and learning, this does not necessarily imply that treating everyone in the same way results in equality. As Sára described, her own musical identities and cultural worlds were both supported, but at some point, she felt forced to choose between a western art music career and her Sámi identity,

Of course I listened to Sámi music ... but it wasn’t possible to combine both [my musical worlds in the music school], and of course it took a lot of time learning to play my instrument. (Sára)

Thus, if BEA is to take into account the ‘former experiences and life worlds of students’ (General syllabus 2005, 2), and provide opportunities for students to set their own goals and find working methods that are appropriate for them as individuals (Advanced syllabus, 2002, 7), the capability for self-determination should not (only) be presented ‘within an institutionalized system of collective democratic decision-making whose formal architecture and guiding principles have largely been determined by others’ (Murphy 2014, 324). Forgetting her Indigenous culture through such processes is something that continues to trouble Sára now that she is teaching Sámi students,

That is something I am a little bit afraid of. That I have been through [the mainstream] education system. Did I learn too much from there? (Sára)

The capability for self-determination does not necessarily arise simply through non-interference, or inclusion, but requires ‘a host of positive state measures to ensure that individuals have access to the necessary resources, institutional supports, and physical and social environments’ (Murphy 2014, 322). However, providing such resources and support is not necessarily a challenge with straight-forward solutions, and identifying a ‘pedagogy that works’ (Tiainen et al. 2012, 72) requires more complex and critical considerations – such as pedagogy that works for whom? When? According to whose criteria?

### **The space of capabilities for self-determination in extracurricular music education**

The stories of Sámi music educators presented in the previous section illustrate the gap that exists between equality as articulated in policy, and equality in lived experience. Whereas legal and curricular documents stipulate the rights of individuals and social groups to access and participation in extracurricular music education, these rights were not necessarily realisable in practice. We

suggest that this is not due to policy makers, institutional leaders or teachers disagreeing with the guiding principles of equality for teaching and learning, nor a lack of concern. However, as stated by education and social justice scholar Paul Gorski (2008), ‘good intentions are not enough’ (515). Martha Nussbaum (2003), referring to the work of Amartya Sen, notes that ‘most states consider equality important ... and yet they often do not ask perspicuously enough what the right space is within which to make the relevant comparisons’ (35). What then is the ‘right space’? Focusing on the spaces of resources, funding, curricular content and pedagogical approach alone may not be sufficient. For instance, the equal allocation of resources does not result in equality of access; the establishment of separate funding schemes, even if construed as positive discrimination, fuels further exclusion from the ‘mainstream’; an additive approach to curricular content does not necessarily allow for an engagement with the meanings, values, and onto-epistemologies of that content; and the demand to teach through culturally and musically appropriate pedagogies jars against centralised, *equal* education systems and institutional requirements for standard professional qualifications. Even as matters of equality are placed high on the agenda for music education, without a consideration of the space of *capabilities* within such systems there is a risk that policy makers and educators are relieved of the responsibility to ensure that self-determination and equality can be, and are, enacted. Consequently, equality in the Basic Education in the Arts system may be rendered a toothless tiger.

As stated earlier in this article, Nussbaum and Sen (1993) describe the individual capability for self-determination as ‘the freedom that a person has to lead one kind of a life or another’ (3). This notion of freedom resonates strongly with research in music education that advocates for students’ musical agency as ‘*capacity for action* in relation to music or in a music-related setting’ (Karlsen 2011, 110). However, this capacity for action is easily translated into a capacity for *participation*, a capacity for *inclusion*, without necessarily considering what it is that students are participating in, what it is they are to be included in, and on whose terms. The politics of Indigeneity bring complex identities, cultures, onto-epistemologies, histories, narratives, memories, forgettings, and experiences to the proverbial student-centred table, that might remain invisible through a focus on the *capacity for action*. A capacity for action may be seen as a nomadic approach to different cultures and musics, a pedagogy ‘that is willing to travel – to follow the conversation, sometimes in the lead, sometimes from behind weaving through multiple perspectives on any given problem through the open-ended nature of the novel in a world where there is no “one right perspective”’ (Hess 2014, 246). We argue that through such a focus on *action*, music education policy makers and educators attend to the ‘symptoms of oppressive conditions ... [rather than to] the conditions themselves’ (Gorski 2008, 519). Furthermore, the image of a nomad here is perhaps overly romantic in its emancipation from ideological baggage – even nomads have habits, follow rituals, and may very well be settled in their identities, beliefs, values, and patterns of movement. Instead, through attending to *equality capabilities*, the work of music education policy and practice is refocused on the relational through an acknowledgement of ‘power imbalances, both individual and systemic’ (Gorski 2008, 523). In prioritising what dominant and minoritised groups can learn from and with each other, attention is drawn to the capabilities for doing so, and such an approach cannot succeed if it also ‘maintains the distribution of power and forms of control which perpetuate existing vertical hierarchical relations’ (Aikman 1997, 469). In other words, a focus on *capabilities* presents new opportunities for music educators and policymakers to put the principles of equality to work.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we return to Ánde Somby’s (2000) poem shared at the opening of this article. In ensuring the capability for Indigenous self-determination in Finland’s extracurricular Basic Education in the Arts system, perhaps only three rights are in question: *The right to a past, the right to a present, and the right to a future*. Capabilities for self-determination manifest as the right to a past, entails an awareness and acknowledgement of historical injustices in national educational

and cultural policy and practice. It requires listening and learning not from anthropological accounts or historical texts, but from the lived experiences of individuals who navigate these complex legacies of colonisation and minoritisation. The right to a present, requires a commitment to countering hierarchical power structures that result in inequity and injustice in a way that settles ‘for nothing less than social reconstruction’ (Gorski 2008, 519). Considerable literature and resources already exist to inform such reconstructive processes and actions that work together with Sámi peoples, cultures and knowledges in improving funding schemes, resource management, curricula and pedagogies. The right to a future requires not only a concern for ‘what kind of Sámi future we are building’ (Keskitalo et al. 2018, 32) for the Sámi themselves, but what kind of future we are building for *everyone*. A focus on securing the capability for self-determination at the systemic level, and also at the level of everyday teaching and learning, holds the potential to reinvigorate the principles of equality for *all* learners and communities. Through learning from and together with Indigenous peoples, musics, pedagogies, knowledges and worldviews, these ideals of social justice in and through music education may be realised as more than nice words on paper – as something we can really sink our teeth into, and deliver, in practice.

## Notes

1. It is noteworthy that even the name of this proposal in Finland has been the subject of considerable debate, i.e. whether this would be a *Reconciliation* process, or whether the title would include the word *Truth*.
2. Translations are the authors’ own.

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