

Article

Knowledge versus Education in the Margins: An Indigenous and Feminist Critique of Education

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Abstract: This article highlights the perceptions and expectations of knowledge that many people, including educators and policy makers, take for granted. Our focus of understanding is Indigenous studies and gender studies. Our aim is to show how modern education undermines these fields of studies. We use an autoethnographic method, reflecting more than 75 years as pupils/students and more than 90 years as educators. We have carefully chosen narratives of exposure to knowledge outside the educational system, as well as narratives of limitations posed upon us by the educational system. This narrative approach makes it possible for us to investigate and discuss our grief about areas of knowledge that society cries for, but the educational system continuously finds ways to resist. Our conclusion is that crucial knowledge is located outside the educational system, where individuals, groups, and communities cherish, protect, and guard knowledge that the educational system marginalises or excludes. As this knowledge is fundamental for life, our message is that the educational system needs to re-evaluate its strategies to stay relevant.

Keywords: Indigenous studies and education; education and colonialism; Sámi studies; gender inequality; sexism and education; epistemology and education; autoethnography; critical theory and reflexivity; narrative ethics and education



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1. Introduction

In this article, we explore our relationship with Knowledge and our grief over the changing nature of this relationship. From autoethnographic accounts of our upbringing through to our present work in academia, we expose how the education system has attempted the epistemicide of subjective and contextual Knowledge in its quest to objectify and make universal truth. We grieve over the loss of Knowledge as an agent, and how it is changed into knowledge that is static and dead.

Where does a story start, and at what point in time does any story end? Context and time framing are essential to all storytelling. Working on this article, we soon realised that the time frame implied in the call for this Special Issue, in response to new public management (NPM), was too narrow for our grief. Indigenous studies and gender studies insist on a longer time line. Remembering and glorifying past times in education, that is, pre-NPM, would hide our stories. Whose grief and whose education is remembered? The history of education is not a pretty sight, as it is intertwined with the history of colonialism, racism, and sexism, as expressed through religious and state educational institutions. This is our story and our grief. Our story is viewed through the lenses of Indigenous studies and gender studies. With a theoretical positioning in critical theory, we analyse the relations between the individual, societal and institutional contexts where Knowledge lives. Living Knowledge can be a social and academic practice. Our hope is that individuals, groups, and

communities re-learn to cherish and protect the Knowledge that the educational system does not recognize, as this Knowledge is fundamental for life. Our story does not really end, but rather transitions into our hopes for the future.

2. Autoethnography, Narrative Ethics and Hermeneutics

What is Knowledge, and which conditions set her in motion? Our narratives highlight some of the perceptions and expectations of Knowledge that most people are unaware of, yet take for granted. We draw examples from the Knowledge we were exposed to by our parents, grandparents, and the communities that raised us, and explore the limitations imposed upon this Knowledge by the educational systems we now work within. We express our grief that Knowledge seems to be moving out of the educational system.

Working with an autoethnographic methodology, we use our own experiences with Knowledge, learning, and teaching to analyse how Knowledge fits within society and the education system [1,2]. Our analysis is also an exercise of group reflexivity, as we strive to merge the cultural context into our insights [3]. As we started to talk together about our past and present experiences, we responded to each other's narratives, and pinpointed parts we identified with and wanted to be further explained. The initial work of identifying narratives is parallel to most qualitative methods, strategically choosing those that bring in experiences from the areas we are investigating—in this case, the promise of education and our grief over the loss of Knowledge. Thus, we were able to create a group approach to auto-ethnography. A parallel process took place when analysing the stories, and is included in our discussion of the narratives (see below). The stories we tell here are not necessarily the stories we, ourselves, would have chosen to present, but they have been chosen because they also gave meaning to the other two 'listening' authors.

Grief is personal, and personal loss might not be understood to be as important to others as it is to oneself. In narrative ethics, it is the other way around. Feelings are understood as fundamental to ethics [4]. From a phenomenological point of view, based on Edith Stein's work on empathy, Sveneaus explains empathy as "a perceptual-imaginative feeling towards and with the other person's experiences made possible by affective bodily schemas and being enhanced by a personal concern for her". He underlines that, regarding empathy, it is not the feeling in itself that is the key point, but how feelings work as a vehicle for meaning, and how they make a person able to "walk alongside the feeling of the target in imagining and explicating a rich understanding of the experiences of the very person one is facing" [5] (p. 227). Our paper approaches the richness of personal narratives as a vehicle for feelings that transports meaning and, thus, makes it possible to walk alongside and understand others. The stories we have chosen have been chosen because we found them meaningful, enabling us to grasp layers of meaning concerning Knowledge and education. Transparency is ensured by two strategies. First, lengthy quotations ensure that the experiences we analyse are presented with sufficient context for the reader, who might interpret them differently to us. Second, we describe the interpretative process to make the path from narrative to conclusion visible for the reader. Our interpretative strategy is hermeneutical, as we intend contextual references that can illuminate and explain the layers of meaning in the chosen stories. This means that narratives, analyses, and discussions will not be separated, but will be presented in a continuum, as thematic analyses with an overall concluding remark at the end of the text.

3. Towards an Understanding of Our Stories

3.1. *First Narratives—Whose Grief? And Whose Education?*

A story depends on its starting point.

Over the past few months, the unmarked and mass graves of over 1000 Indigenous children have been uncovered at the sites of residential schools run by the Catholic Church under the authority of the Canadian government. The Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is working on their report on the impact of Norwegianization and injustice against the Sámi and Kven people, while the United Nations and World Health

Organisation continuously report on the dire educational situation for women and children throughout the world [6–11]. This Special Issue focuses on new public management (NPM), but this is not where our story about grief and education originates.

When Ann Lydia was asked to contribute to this Special Issue, she said the following:

When I read the call for papers, my initial thought was to write about recent changes in the western educational system. More precisely, the changes that have occurred over the last 30–35 years where key academic principles have been deconstructed and put under political and bureaucratic administration. It has led to a series of changes; the transition from a hierarchical system where professors were the rulers of educational content, to more democratic principles where the collegium of academic teachers made decisions together, to the present system where academic outsiders with lesser training and academic credentials (bureaucrats) are set the task of putting neo liberal concepts of efficiency into motion. I could chose this storyline, as the process reflects my own teaching assignments year by year; from my first assignment in 1992 until the 2021 experience of being fully set aside from the study program that relies on the professorship I have held for the last seven years. I discussed these recent changes with one of my cowriters, Shawn, and soon realised that the time frame and focus was too narrow. Glorifying the education system of 30 or 20 years ago would be a too simple a story. The real history of education is not a pretty sight. It's history of being intertwined with Christian institutions is neither. Ethnicity, gender and race have been the focus of all our research, and as co-writer Shawn said: education never brought any good to Indigenous peoples [12–15]. The history of education with regards to gender is also not pretty.

Shawn's comment was a timely reminder of the atrocities of residential schools, as their primary genocidal intention used education to erase language, history, and Knowledge, and, ultimately, the people themselves [16]. The impact of residential and assimilationist schooling is part of the truth (and reconciliation) work around the globe. To help understand our grief, we put Knowledge at the forefront of this discussion. We, as authors, share personal experiences and have investigated, in our research, the limitations imposed on our Knowledge by education [12,13,17–19].

This discussion makes a distinction between education and Knowledge. We present Knowledge as an active agent or subject (and thus use an uppercase "K"), rather than knowledge, a noun, which is the passive storage of bits of data. People and society expect Knowledge to be formative, to work on as well as through people, in order to make them engaged and productive members of society. The politics and policy on education also assume that Knowledge works in this way. Thus, it is easy to argue that Knowledge as an agent/subject is a common perception. At the same time, our stance on Knowledge, as an agent/subject, is grounded in Indigenous, feminist, action research, and critical theory. However, experiences with Knowledge and education are always context bound. The agency of Knowledge unfolds differently in each specific time and place. Education is deeply imbedded in culture, has conservative traits and gatekeepers, and can be both supportive and/or suppressive of individuals, groups, communities, and societies [15,20]. Teaching can be understood in terms of carrying out educational tradition, and should thus be kept alive. However, any educational tradition requires constant renewal and should engage in critical reflection in order to stay contextually relevant and in a living relationship with Knowledge. Education has performed an admirable job in the past, in fulfilling its hegemonic obligations in upholding White heteropatriarchy. A nostalgic romantization and singular view of education's history achieves the same goal, so we must ask ourselves, "whose education are we grieving?"

3.2. *Second Narratives—Education and the Loss of Memory*

A story elicits memories.

As the authors of this text, we are part of the present educational system. We do not aim to publicly criticise our institutions. Most of the time, we go about doing our business as teachers and researchers. We deliberately walked into the educational system of the west, and we are involved with education ourselves, in curriculum work, teaching, supervising, examining, researching, and evaluating. Therefore, we asked ourselves, “why?”

Mainly, we choose to engage with the education system for the oral and written conversations it facilitates within Knowledge seekers and Knowledge keepers; this includes students, old and new colleagues, the dead ones we find in the libraries and archives, as well as the live ones around the globe. Life is experienced in places with different conditions, histories, stories, and values. We thrive, get hurt and abused, recover, and carry on, with new lessons gained from our struggles. Who and what guides us in the lives we live? The memory of our lives is carried by Knowledge; the history of learning is as long as the history of mankind. The history of western education is not. As we accepted the invitation to write in this Special Issue on education and grief, we needed to clarify our experiences with education, grief, and Knowledge.

We were raised in different continents and conducted our training in different fields of research, so our relationships with each other are fairly recent. However, we have lived parallel lives in the sense that we were born in the same generation. Our parents have been involved and worked in our local communities, and actively engaged with Knowledge. All three of us have been involved in teaching and curriculum work since the 1990s, worked at different universities and colleges, thought and supervised at all academic levels, and aspired to be professors. As our teaching and research concerns Indigenous and critical studies in the fields of gender, sexuality, digital sociology, pedagogy, public health, and religion, there were always tensions between our involvement with Knowledge and the institutionalised organisation of academic research that met us at universities and colleges. From the perspective of Indigenous studies and gender studies, university academia was just as much of an obstacle as it was an opportunity to enable us to learn about and act on Knowledge.

Our cumulative involvement with education spans nearly 140 years. As the history of education has been written and rewritten by many others, it should not be necessary to repeat what is already public knowledge, which is that: for Indigenous people, women, and anyone deemed ‘different’, the story of education is problematic and filled with exclusion, denial, bullying, and atrocities. This is common knowledge—novels have been written about the western educational system since the very early days of the modern democratic state. The following Norwegian authors are key examples: Aleksander Kjelland’s 1883 book *Gift* and Jens Bjørneboe’s 1955 book *Jonas* [21,22]. A similar expression of unease is observed in Hollywood films such as *The Dead Poets Society* (1989), *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), and *Saami Blood* (2016) [23–25]. Focusing on the recent neo-liberal framings of education, and the perceived loss of academic freedom, is others’ fight more than our own. None of us have tasted that privilege, so why should we grieve it?

Experiencing Knowledge and Education

ALS: From the very beginning, I wanted to engage with the world, its people, places, past and present beings. It intrigued me, called for me. One of my earliest memories is from a gathering, probably at my parents’ home. It was bright daylight. I was surrounded by adults. They were laughing and talking. They had nice clothes, and that is why I think it was a party. The adults were huge, so I had to lean my head backwards to see them. One of the women focused on me. She leaned towards me and talked to me. I did not know her. She talked, and I wanted to talk back. I was troubled, as I did not manage to formulate words. Though I had all the words, and directed them towards her, my body was not able to create sounds so that she could hear me. It was a moment that stayed with me, the inability to use my voice to transport my thoughts in a meaningful way. At the same time, the experience was that I had been approached, someone

had reached out for me, actively included and engaged with me, one to one. As I grew on, this was what I came to expect from adults, to be taken seriously, and that my thoughts, experiences and reflection mattered. That engaging is what people do, and thus our experience of being placed in this world is told, as well as its stories, events and agents. As I grew up, I continued to search for meaningful interaction, and to learn. I enjoyed being involved, being able, at home, at my grandparents' farm, in the kitchen, outside bicycling or skiing. In addition to family life, our next-door neighbour (a colleague of my father) and I had regular afternoon tea and conversations. With another family friend, who was a priest, I engaged in the big questions of life and death. My experience from school was quite different.

As I entered obligatory school and higher education, I again experienced situations where I could see and hear and understand, but not speak back. I did not have the words. I also came to understand that I had insufficient capacities, in one or several fields. My particular weakness was language, words, spelling, and grammar. It did not matter that I was really good at reading and had much experience of complex conversations. My self-awareness found some relief in the fact that I was quite good at handy craft. As I had been taught handy craft at home I solved the tasks we were given, and found some relief in these classes. My teachers also let me use sharp tools as well as electric tools, in wood classes, and I was allowed to produce my own design as an alternative to the predesigned school projects. Gardening was included too, and I even got a piece of paper for my home-grown squash. The reason I entered high school and later higher education was neither obligatory school nor my grades. It was due to my parents and other adults introducing me to Knowledge, and the constant presence of conversations with interesting people around my parents' dining table. My father always said that you need to learn from the best, to search for Knowledge and actively strive to get close to her. Find the locations that carry Knowledge. Always choose excellence, and for all kinds of Knowledge.

SW: My earliest memories of engaging with Knowledge include a mixed bag of experiences from different cultures and systems of education.

I can remember Elders coming to share stories in our house. Generally, we would be sitting around in the living room, they would be drinking tea and just talking for hours. When I think back I don't really remember many of the stories that they told—just a general impression of me sitting and listening. I've always enjoyed just listening to stories. I also carry a sense of grief that I wasn't paying more attention or made a greater effort to remember more of the stories and their details. But aspects of these stories must have sunk in, because bits and pieces return to my memory when I call on them.

I also remember hanging out with my grandfather at home, and him being full of Knowledge of the Land. Knowledge that was excluded by White society. His limited English and issues with addictions interfered with us talking much; mostly I remember the overall feel of him—his gentle calmness of being. I know that he didn't have much Western education, but he certainly had an extensive education in how to live on the land. From him, I learned how to listen, and how to be part of a conversation and engage with Knowledge through my attentive presence.

My memories of Western education are not so great. I suppose that I found the system of rote learning overly simplistic and not at all challenging. Although I made many friends, more of a challenge was dealing with racist teachers and administrators at the schools and universities that I attended. So, some of the Knowledge that I carry includes how to blend in and not be seen by the system,

and how to avoid the gaze of Western education. It makes me worried to expose myself through this article.

KLH: I grew up in a coast town in Nordland county in the late 70's and 80's. Just like Anna Lydia and Shawn, I remember lots of meaningful interactions with family members, friends and people in my local community when I grew up. My upbringing was safe and good. I grew up in a Northern Norwegian context. Society consisted of Norwegian culture, traditions and values, yet my family was also something else. I grew up in a Sámi reindeer-herding family, which had strong roots in Indigenous values, religion and traditions. But due to a long Norwegianization process, with forced assimilation and boarding schools over many generations, the Sámi language, culture and values was something that was not part of my local community or the Norwegian society as a whole; they did not teach about the Sámi culture or way of living at obligatory schools in my upbringing. The Sámi culture and Knowledge were almost invisible in the society, and we lived as Sámi people like a parallel community to the official Norwegian community. The Norwegianization had led to a strong stigma associated with being Sámi in the public space. The result was that the Sámi culture, Knowledge and worldview were not talked/about nor taught in obligatory schools; there was silence about the Sámi culture, tradition, Knowledge and values. Although, Sámi Knowledge of reindeer husbandry, Sámi handicrafts (duodji), Læstadius religion and way of life was alive in my family. I remember well from my childhood that the use and protection of Sámi traditional Knowledge took place between generations within the siida system (the siida unit is understood as a family which, or an individual who, represents a unit within the district and are/is engaged in reindeer herding in a siida with leadership of an individual, a married couple or a couple living together), with practical education, training and storytelling. But it was something that belonged to our Siida and private sphere, and was not valued as usable Knowledge in the Norwegian society or the education system.

One of the results of this stigma of the Sámi was that I did not get Sámi as a mother tongue or that it was not possible to learn this at school. Therefore, I grew up without the Sámi language, even though my mother could speak Sámi, I never heard her use the Sámi language in my childhood. The traditional Knowledge of the Sámi had no place in the school environment when I was growing up. To the untrained eye, I was perceived as Norwegian, with Norwegian language, culture, tradition, clothes and values, but still I was bicultural, with Norwegian and Sámi identity, culture and Knowledge. The Sámi culture with me was silent, even though it was present in my everyday life. Everything that was connected to the Sámi had a silence hanging over it in my upbringing.

It was not until I came to the UiT The Arctic University of Norway and started studying culture education and got in touch with professors who worked on Sámi Indigenous issues that I started to learn and reflect on my own ethnic background and the Sámi culture and traditional Knowledge.

Telling these stories initiates a process of remembering. It also makes it clear that grief makes history slip away, as memory loss. What Shawn made Anna Lydia realise (first quote) was that in her private life as well as in her life as an educator and researcher, she had been insisting on a longer time line in all her work and thinking [15,17,18,26–28]. Why did she not remember her own take on time when she first took on the task of writing about her grief and education? Shawn describes the grief of not remembering the content of the stories told by Elders in his childhood, as this would have protected the Knowledge that his grandfather embodies about the Land and livelihood. This grief shadows what he knows, which is that stories are tied to culture, language, and location, and remembering is

closely tied to living. Knowledge is interwoven into the activities that embody the stories and the relationships that the stories are built into and around [19].

When Knowledge on language and living is fragmented or lost, the stories are hard to remember. Stories carrying experiences, skills, events, and relations are remembered as they are relived in our own experiences—whether this be as expressions of a Cree way of life on the Land, a scientist doing laboratory experiments, or an academic reviewing literature in the library. Ketil describes the Sámi culture with him as silent, but present [29]. The silence he experienced at school exposes an educational system that has tried to exclude his very presence. Both Shawn and Ketil provide examples of an experience of a double perspective, where one perspective or Knowledge is visible and the other is hidden [30,31]. The strongly guarded Sámi private sphere, regarding Sámi livelihood and community-based activities, has been separated from the public view in a wider society. However, the stories continue in a different form and forum.

Krister Stoor elaborates on the discussion of luthy and joik traditions in his PhD [32]. There have been different ways of understanding joik in academia, from early evolutionary explanations to newer Sámi and Sámi-influenced researcher's perspectives. Stoor mentions Jernsletten and Rydving, who approach joik as part of community memory that expresses life as a qualitative concept, as it is expressing an individual's subjective experiences [32] (p. 62). Thus, communal and personal experiences are closely interlinked, creating, expressing, and remembering Knowledge.

In the Cambridge Dictionary, knowledge is defined like a common noun. Knowledge is described as “understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally”, and as “the state of knowing about or being familiar with something” [33]. In the stories we told each other, certain understandings and information are systematically excluded. Society, at large, has now decided that Indigenous people and women are to be included, and that educational institutions are responsible for facilitating, including, and encouraging Knowledge in these areas. Indigenous Knowledge is performative as a verb. It is lived through cultural expression every day, in our everyday lives. Knowledge is something that we are in a constant relationship with. Feminist work and Knowledge resting on critical theory reflects the embodied experiences of injustice and violence, and works to give a voice to those who are marginalised, excluded, denied, and killed. It also seeks to replace the practices and theories that further this injustice.

A performance is located and unfolds at a particular time. Thus, Knowledge (as a proper noun) is always changing and alive, and unfolds itself locally, where it intervenes/supports/changes/undermines relations and processes. Knowledge that is taken out of its context loses its agency—it becomes ‘enslaved’. When we relate our stories of what is excluded, as Stoor does in his PhD thesis, it is life itself, and the relation between communal belonging and personal experiences of life that are excluded. Life and Knowledge are intertwined. As we discuss our stories, grief appears as the discrepancy between Knowledge and education. The harm caused by educational institutions, in the name of a universal, singular knowledge, instead enslaves Knowledge. The divide between life and Knowledge, and the enslavement of Knowledge, affects all and should concern us all.

3.3. *Third Narratives—Knowledge as Social Academic Practice*

Why is it only minority academics who are called identity politicians, while the arguments and claims of mainstream researchers are not viewed as including their identity, nor an exercise of political power? While it is easy to make accusations of White privilege, we believe it has more to do with colonization and cultural hegemony.

KLH: My university education, teaching, supervision of students, lived experience, Sámi background, traveling in the circumpolar areas, have given me the opportunity to learn more about my Sámi indigenous identity, background, traditional Knowledge, and about other Indigenous people in the Arctic. And more recently, experiences of being an Indigenous Sámi professor in public health.

I strive to use this traditional and scientific Knowledge that I have learned about my Indigenous Sámi people in ways that would benefit them. But after I became a professor with special expertise in Sámi health and living conditions, I have experienced that bringing forward and discussing Indigenous Knowledge in academia can create strong feelings and reactions from the established scientific research communities.

In a recent discourse on cultural appropriation in Norway related to the use of a drawing of a Sámi boy in Joika's meatballs logo and name, I was accused at my university of pursuing identity politics, and given the label of 'woke'. This criticism was the response to three newspaper articles I wrote in the debate about the Joika meatball packaging. The packaging and name of the meatballs reduces the Sámi to caricatures and mythical figures. I argue about respecting Sámi meat culture, traditional Knowledge and their right to define themselves and how they are portrayed.

Together with law professor Ande Somby, we argued that the meatballs should remove the mythical Sámi boy on the logo and change the name from Joika to something less stigmatizing. A professor of political science from our university proclaimed in the media that Prof Somby and I are disgusting scientists who "belong to the Identity-political clergy at the University of Tromsø" and, as 'Ayatollahs' of the cause, are too easily offended.

On social media and local newspapers in Northern Norway, he received a lot of support from other researchers and members of the public. Many in the public could not see any problem with Joika's meatballs logo and name, which had been on the market since the 1960s. We were portrayed and regarded as emotion-driven researchers who should concentrate on more important issues regarding Sámi society.

In this polarized debate in the media, it was questioned whether we abused our university titles as professors, and we were asked by the head of the university (in the media) to have good manners in the debate and to calm down. I admit that we had used rhetoric in suggesting that forced assimilation and Norwegianization might have influenced the view of one of our opponents., But neither all our research on the bullying faced by Sámi youth [34] and its impact on their health [35], nor our expert Knowledge in public health and law, were taken into account.

Joika meatballs must be seen in the context of a colonial history, where it was common to take things from Indigenous people without asking. Joika have been one of Norway's best-selling canned food and have been on store shelves for many years. The product was launched in a colonial era, where a caricature of a young Sámi boy is used on the packaging, and the meatballs, which contain some reindeer meat, are called Joika, which is associated with Sámi joik. Joik is a traditional form of song in Sámi music. Neither the meatballs nor the name are recognized in the original Sámi culture and tradition. According to reports of Sámi Ofelaččat (Samiske Veivisere) and teachers, "Joika meatball" is an insult aimed at Sámi youth in their schools (<https://www.sagat.no/blir-kalt-joikaboller/19.26340>, accessed on 13 July 2021).

Many Sámi children and young people experience prejudice and discrimination in Norway [34], that today can take the form of harassment on the streets and in regional newspapers. For a hundred years this discrimination was embedded in the state's Norwegianization policy against Indigenous Sámi and Kven (another national minority) [35]. When professors, scholars, political editors of regional newspapers and other public figures in Norway do not understand how Joika meatballs are cultural appropriation, and part of a colonial history of racism against Indigenous Sámi people, it is time to start talking about how racism against Sámi has been normalized and this Knowledge internalized in the consciousness of both Indigenous Sámi people and the majority population. Of course

ethnic bullying of Sámi children in public school affects Sámi negatively, but it is framed by several hundred years of forced assimilation and silencing of Sámi in Norway [36] (Note: the company that makes Joika meatballs, Nortura, announced that they should change the logo and name last year, but this has not happened yet. During the pandemic, sales of Joika meatballs have increased).

ALS: An evaluation of the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University pointed out its gender bias. Out of 14 professors, none were female. At the university as a whole, only 3% of the professors were women. In response, in 1989 the university introduced gender studies into the faculty by hiring a guest professor as well as an associate professor of gender studies. They were responsible for organising a series of public lectures, a seminar series for professors, as well as a research seminar in feminist studies. In the years to come, feminist theologians were given honorary doctorates. In 1992 I was a member of the feminist research seminar for PhD students. I was asked by my professor in the history of religion to develop a series of lectures and an obligatory work assignment for the second-year students. The aim was to introduce and secure a gender perspective within history of religion. The segment lasted for six semesters, then the curriculum was altered and the gender segment left out, eliminated.

Several years later, I was asked to teach a Masters level course in the department of religious studies at Umeå University. At the end of the semester the job was extended for one year as a full-time senior lecturer. The study leader at the time said he wanted me to take on the assignment because of my thesis in gender studies, and that the development of courses in gender studies would be an option. I developed and posed concepts and content for a course, but it was never taken further.

My job was extended though. The faculty of humanities defined 'northern space' as an area of priority. I was the sole historian of religion in the staff at the department, and it was explained to me that it was my obligation to ensure that Sámi history was included in the program for history of religion. I collaborated with the department of archaeology and Sámi studies, altered curriculum in research history, theory and method, as well as developed new teaching material, lists of literature and compendiums. The courses I developed and established once again did not continue when I moved on.

I was later invited by the dean of the Faculty of Health and Welfare to visit Østfold University College, as they wanted me to apply for the full professorship in psychosocial work (PSW). This time I hesitated, but was convinced to come and meet the dean and the study leader. They knew my background and academic profile and persuaded me to apply, and I started this new job the following year. The Master of Arts in PSW program was developed as a response to professionals need for a transdisciplinary approach that could ensure that those entitled to help from health, welfare, school and correctional services were approached from a context-sensitive and ethical point of view. Professionals were to be trained to support the daily life and health from a salutogenetic point of view combined with critical perspectives and theory regarding public institutions and power as well as usage of diagnosis and the impact of social categories. Working with the personal narratives of the people being helped was to be a key strategy for developing individual and community health. All of this sounds terrific, as it fits well with my academic background and training. But now the department of health and welfare has systematically strived to reshape the MA program in the image of quantitative psychology and psychiatric therapy. I'm sure they will succeed.

The social and cultural framing of Knowledge, education, and research is well known. Concepts such as 'paradigmatic' and 'shift of paradigm' have moved on from Thomas

Kuhn into public discourse [37,38]. In Norway, we are raised in the spirit of (late) Arne Næss, Hans Skjervheim, and the critique of positivism, as philosophy became an obligatory gatekeeper for all academic education [39]. The social and cultural norms and values, categories and explanations have always impregnated academic work—it is insincere and inaccurate to claim that any knowledge is universal or purely objective. When acknowledging the complexity and power dynamics that are always present in any educational setting, the pretend neutral and reductionist stance is proven to be false. It should, therefore, be an academic task to ensure critical thinking in education and research, and to understand the hermeneutical processes, context, and politics behind when and where Knowledge emerges.

Our experience is that the Knowledge we searched for, and later wanted to pass on to students, comes from social and existential needs, experiences, dreams, and a longing for and insisting of its importance. Initially, it seemed that this Knowledge could, or would, be possible to find and be engaged with in academia, as these areas of knowledge have been specifically asked for. However, hegemonic forces fight back, as these areas of knowledge were only permitted for a limited time and in restricted arenas. The tension between continuity and change within education appears to follow the dynamics of social life in general.

Restrictions to Knowledge are not in the past, but are part of the present educational system. To open a space for the discussion of continuity and change, we suggest that education is approached as a social and cultural institution for Knowledge transmission, and that teaching is approached as a tradition. Such an approach would acknowledge Knowledge within institutional organisation and power. Understanding the research, and teaching history and its context within all fields of study should be keys to Knowledge for students, educators, and researchers alike. Thus, the reflexive self would embrace responsibility for how the tradition is upheld, and recognize where renewal is needed.

Conceptualised as the foundation for societal strength, as well as for necessary change, education is a key global strategy, and the key to fighting poverty, gender inequality, health inequity, climate change, political extremism, and terror. Education is assumed to be essential to bringing development to all nations. As educators, we are part of this political strategy. Education is also a key concept in policy documents and research politics, to ensure a research-based foundation for 'bridging the gap' strategies and bringing the disadvantaged up to the standards of the mainstream White society [30,31]. Statistics are used to show how national economies thrive from education, and how social and economic gaps are filled when a population is educated.

Though we encourage Knowledge and work as educators, the politics framing education have been a continuous challenge in our work. As investigating journalists, official terrorist risk assessments, and a variety of NGOs have repeatedly pointed out, education itself does not eliminate racism, marginalisation, social exclusion, or economic inequalities in society. In this respect, education fails, as it does not bring the promised change for all [40,41]; for example, the Norwegian zero-bullying educational program, initiated in 2002, is far from being realised [42–44]. If we assume that education is a key strategy for a better society, why does the educational system produce so many drop-outs, and allow the social and economic marginalization of whole groups of people? While the education system does produce societal resources and assets, at the same time, many people and their Knowledge are deemed unqualified for active participation in society.

3.4. Fourth Narratives—The Agency of Knowledge—Co-Listeners and Ethics

Knowledge is shaped and embodied by individuals and groups. The state of knowing brings familiarity to areas of life and being. Building relationships with Knowledge brings insights to Knowledge seekers, and brings them closer to what they seek to understand. Traditionally, Knowledge is protected and guarded. A person who embodies Knowledge (an elder) is surrounded by helpers—especially in situations where Knowledge unfolds itself. As Knowledge is potent when implemented, assistants help the elder to navigate the

situation, as it is filled with risks. The helpers have two main obligations. The first is to listen, interpret, and respond to the situation and physical needs of the elder. The second obligation is to assist and ensure that the Elder, while embodying Knowledge, remembers who they are (their humanity) and what the current task is, as both can be forgotten in the heady rush of power released in this process.

In politics, the US president has the nuclear bomb codes, but he is never alone when deciding how to proceed. When PhD students are involved with Knowledge, their supervisor and further research community are there to guide them and respond to them. They listen on behalf of the PhD student to ensure that the interpretations of Knowledge are sound and not twisted, and to ensure that the potency of the process is not doing harm. We expect all our research to have a high impact, whether this be in medicine, physics, or humanities. As highly potent areas of Knowledge, they must be guarded, and the researchers involved are expected to listen to helpers inside and outside of the research institution, and to help them to remember who they are and what their task is.

Knowledge unfolds when information and interpretation are closely linked. It demonstrates its agency through the listener, who understands its impact at the location where it acts. Research ethics boards, policies, and laws are all established as guardians and helpers, to make the interaction with Knowledge safe, and to avoid harm. While the contextuality of Knowledge is recognized in regulation, questions of “why?” and “for who?” need comprehensive answers. It is the agency of Knowledge, and the potency it brings to everyday life that makes Knowledge important, and the complexity of everyday life needs to be understood when Knowledge is put into action. In research and educational ethics policies, this is acknowledged. At the same time, our experience of ethical research and education is somewhat different.

SW: My father doesn't talk much about his experiences at residential school, but several times I have heard him tell a story about the time when a group of older boys stole a box full of bananas from the school kitchen. Of course bananas were quite rare back then and a valuable treasure. They were carefully packed in a box surrounded by bunched up strips of paper to protect them. Unfortunately, the nuns were easily able to find out who stole the bananas from following the dropped strips of paper through the school. So it is kind of a funny story about inept burglars.

My father also tells about always being hungry—not so unusual for a growing teenage boy I suppose.

Until you realize the context.

While searching through government archives in the late 1990's, a PhD student came across the stored records of earlier research projects. Those researchers were conducting experiments on the children at the Indigenous residential school he attended, trying to determine if feeding vitamins to the children could overcome the ill effects of an extreme low calorie diet. The children were given vitamin 'cookies' (both my parents remember these) instead of proper nutritious meals. Stealing bananas wasn't just teenage rebellion or proof that these Indians were incorrigible—it may have been their response to being slowly starved to death in the name of the policy to “Educate the child, kill the Indian”.

Unethical research was being conducted. That happens all the time. More importantly for me is the context of a government endorsed researcher, at a school run by the same government, physically starving children likely including my father (we may never know for sure, as one thing they did manage was to maintain the anonymity of the children). There was a specific, state-sanctioned researcher responsible for this, and individual children were his victims. So, you may understand why I have a very turbulent relationship with higher education and the research that is done in the name of advancing the education system. To

me it is a personal story, not merely an academic argument about policy, ethics or management styles.

Will it imply harm? If yes, to who, how and where? What is at stake? Is the risk of harm outweighed by the potential benefit? The infrastructure of this knowledge production is perceived as a story of heroes fighting for the common good and humankind. The location and economic profit and ownership of research are disciplining Knowledge, in all academic fields, to ensure products, patents. Production targets require that the bodies (workforce) and Knowledge from outside Europe and the west is recruited at the lowest possible price, for the success and perpetual growth of the western academy and economy.

Policy and politics that harm individuals or groups are often discussed as an expected side-effect, fundamentally a characteristic of modern life. As an analogy, one of the important things that was changed to address domestic violence in Sweden is the wording used by the police in their reports. Police had been trained to report “domestic conflict in the home”. This wording held no one responsible for the violence, and no legal strategy or solution available. On the other hand, when women’s shelters taught police to instead write the more specific “Xxx (a specific person) hit Yyy (the partner or child)”, legal strategies became an option that could initiate change in the situation to protect the partner or children. In academia, if conflicts are described as ‘academic disagreement’ or ‘conflict of interests’, the conflict is understood as reflecting two equal parties having different preferences in a sound debate that in itself helps to ensure a dynamic and healthy situation for Knowledge. This can sometimes be the case, but it is far from ensured. When discussions are not between equal parties having a disagreement, we should ensure that this is understood and reflected in our wording. Thus, the phrasing should change from ‘disagreement’ to ‘denial, exclusion, ridicule, marginalisation of contributions, silencing, etc’. Then we can initiate critical thinking and change.

How did it make you, the reader, feel as you read Shawn’s story? It makes him cry to write it. It also makes us angry, but what can we do about it?

4. The Potential of Treating Knowledge Respectfully and Hopes for the Future

The autoethnographic stories told in this article came along due to communal reflexive work. We know each other, in the sense that we have discussed with and learned from each other, disagreed and laughed. We know about each other’s research, and we have shared family stories around dinner tables and during coffee breaks. We have listened, remembered, and established trust and obligations towards each other. This made it possible to create a context where initial stories could be written in a state of vulnerability, and from an intention of telling, bringing forward, and giving away. The stories we shared were meant for the listener, to push the conversation forward, and to prepare a space for reflection and Knowledge on education to emerge. The story line of the article is a mutual responsibility, as the co-authors have elaborated on whichever stories that transported meaning to the others. No story is chosen by the teller herself/himself. Rather, as a story was adapted to the conversation of education, it was further developed as questions were asked and deeper memory was activated. From the perspective of the critical analysis of power and the disciplining of Knowledge, the value of the autoethnographic method conducted in a group is closely linked to the audience and performing with a group, which is in contrast to autoethnographic work as an individual endeavour for recollecting and restoring. Stories and narratives are terms used interchangeably in this text with purpose, deliberately reflecting Indigenous and folklorist takes on narratives as communal, contextual, developed when performed, understood, and given meaning when being listened to. In addition, stories are tied to culturally specific understandings of genre. They must be approached with an appreciation of multiple viewpoints, and variants of one and the same story. This appreciation will offer insights into how a story is elaborated on, or shortened or hidden, depending on the context in which it is performed.

If we combine the stories told above, our experiences of Knowledge outside the educational system differ from our experiences of Knowledge inside the educational

system. Growing up, it was assumed that Knowledge is a social practice that we have been invited to participate in. Our participation has been important, as we were co-responsible for and needed Knowledge, for necessary tasks in daily life, to fulfil our social obligations, and just for fun. We have been expected to embody Knowledge, in the sense that it enables and guides us. We have been expected to unfold Knowledge in relation to the complexity of life. As we approach obligations and individual life choices, we have been expected to be able to adapt Knowledge to complex situations, to make choices and to prioritize. Thus, Knowledge has walked with us all our lives.

In the educational system, Knowledge is understood in a different way. The modern education system was created to transmit information to support the industrial society's need for a skilled workforce. Knowledge was transformed into a targeted skill set, measured by specified learning outcomes and key performance indicators. The system enslaved Knowledge. It is no longer meant to unfold within its context of time and place, but is rather forcibly shaped in ways that reinforce contemporary societal organisation.

We hope that our autoethnographic stories demonstrate that the educational uniformity and disciplining of practice is not unique within the primary and secondary school system, but is well established in higher education as well. In many fields, such as gender studies and Indigenous studies, contextualized and expert Knowledge is still located and locked out of mainstream universities and colleges [14,19,45].

When Knowledge is compartmentalized, it undermines the individual's active interaction with Knowledge, and it restricts us from adapting and engaging with our local conditions and culture (our context). If the individual is not a vehicle for Knowledge, but an empty vessel to be moved around, filled, or emptied out whenever and wherever it is useful for the system, the challenge is not just the left overs, the outcasts, and the marginalised; it is a cultural crisis that concerns us all. Knowledge is fundamental to all societies. The discussion about the distortion of Knowledge should not focus on individuals or groups who are not succeeding in school or in society. The focus should be change, and should be directed to the educational system.

In our experience, the educational system has shown itself as a space with limited interest in those aspects of life, history, and society that we have felt an urgent need to gain knowledge about. Though gender studies and Indigenous studies have forced their way into universities, and, to a certain extent, have become visible, the Knowledge inhabiting these areas has not been allowed to unfold and act with agency. It has not been able to overcome the hegemonic system. Instead, it has been kept in the margins, only for those with special interests, or those playing with identity politics. Just remember the following:

First they came for the Communists
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a Communist
 Then they came for the trade unionists
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a trade unionist
 Then they came for the Jews
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a Jew
 Then they came for me
 And there was no one left
 To speak out for me
 (Martin Niemoller, as translated by SW)

We do not write our stories for you to feel sorry for us, nor expecting your sympathy. Women, minorities, and the marginalised already know what oppression feels like; we have been experiencing it for many years within the education system.

However, grief is grief, and oppression is not a competitive sport. Our grief is not new, so telling our stories re-contextualizes our relationship with Knowledge and helps to restore memories. We encourage you to tell your own stories, as this helps to build community among us, and, in turn, encourages others to tell their stories. In particular, listen to stories from those in the margins, as this helps to build the relevance of Knowledge and fights back against the silencing of the oppressed. Do not merely mirror feelings when they are presented to you, but use your empathy as a vehicle for understanding the other's point of view. Thus, acknowledging the life experiences of others will make it possible to understand how your lives and life conditions are intertwined with and co-dependent on each other.

In the end, we can grieve with you—not because we feel the same loss, but because we can empathize, and we know what it feels like to become silenced and have our Knowledge similarly enslaved.

Instead of grieving, we encourage you to take action and speak out against all oppression. We believe that NPM is merely a new expression of an old debate—have we forgotten why positivism was challenged 30 years ago? NPM is practiced by those who have forgotten their humanity, and is the current disguise of those who would oppress and enslave Knowledge.

This enslavement is something that we must all resist.

We welcome you to the resistance.

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