Representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Education Curriculum in Norway and Alberta, Canada

A Postcolonial Analysis

MA degree in Inter-American Studies

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Abstract

Native Peoples have historically populated several regions in the Arctic. Besides their similar lifestyles, these communities have experienced different situations that have shaped the divergent socio-cultural features that define their status nowadays. This way, the interaction with different civilisations has shaped their present agency. Indigenous Peoples in Norway are known as Sami. They live as well in Sweden, Finland and the peninsula of Kola in Russia. In Alberta, Canada, Aboriginal Peoples constitute three main groups: Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. The aim of this paper is to report how these Indigenous groups are represented in the current national curriculum for education in Norway and in the provincial curriculum for education in Alberta. The competence aims defined for both official documents were searched and the topics that address Indigenous Peoples’ issues were classified and analysed within the theoretical framework of decolonisation. The results obtained may serve as a source for reference in future reforms of the education curricula in the task of turning the education system into an inclusive space that promotes equal opportunities for all children.

*Keywords*: Indigenous Peoples, Aboriginal Peoples, Sami Peoples, curriculum for education, Norway, Alberta, postcolonialism, decolonisation
Table of contents

1. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

2. Contextualisation .................................................................................................. 3
   2.1. Norway ............................................................................................................... 3
   2.2. Alberta ............................................................................................................... 6

3. Theoretical Framework: Decolonisation ................................................................. 12

4. Method .................................................................................................................... 14
   4.1. Compulsory education and required courses .................................................... 14
   4.2. Data collection .................................................................................................. 16

5. Results ................................................................................................................... 19
   5.1. Norway ............................................................................................................. 20
   5.2. Alberta .............................................................................................................. 21

6. Analysis .................................................................................................................. 23
   6.1. Indigenous content coverage across grades and courses .................................. 23
   6.2. Breadth and depth of Indigenous content in the curricula ................................. 26
       6.2.1. National curriculum for Norway ................................................................. 27
       6.2.2. Provincial curriculum for Alberta ............................................................... 39

7. Discussion .............................................................................................................. 55

8. Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 60

9. Reference List ....................................................................................................... 62
1. Introduction

The curriculum for education constitutes a bridge between governmental regulations and practice in schools. In other words, it connects the regulatory framework regarding education and its practical application in schools and other educational institutions. Moreover, the curriculum serves as a homogeneous tool to assure equality in all schools and avoid inconsistent outcomes among different regions, schools, and even classrooms. Most curricular guidelines are established at a national or regional level. In them, there are exposed the competence aims, which establish what students are expected to be competent in the end of a given period of time, usually a school year.

Given the relevance of the curriculum for education, its development demands not only professionals in the field of education or pedagogy, but also experts in other topics that contribute to the provision of unbiased knowledge and perspectives. This fosters education of quality, which is one of the main goals of educational institutions worldwide. Among the experts, the committee for curriculum development needs to include professionals who confront and challenge topics, beliefs and perspectives that have been biased by hegemonic powers. This way, content which has been partially or inappropriately presented, which lacks certain perspectives that contribute to a complete understanding, can be challenged and reconstructed. Thereby, education becomes a process of questioning and debating issues which allow students to develop critical thinking among other skills that contribute to the formation of a more just world.

An example of a topic that is underrepresented in school concerns issues pertaining to Indigenous Peoples around the world. Many of these groups have suffered from rejection, exclusion and oppression from hegemonic power and practices, causing not only contempt for their people, but also for their cultures and languages, identities, knowledge systems and ways of being. This is ratified in the preamble of the report of the International Labour Organisation, *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, No. 169* (1989), which points to the inability of Indigenous Peoples “to enjoy their fundamental human rights”, as “their laws, values, customs and perspectives have often been eroded”. In sum, history has been told and written from the point of view of the colonisers, a situation that, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2010), “has effectively denied other views of what happened and what the significance of historical ‘facts’ may be to the colonized” (p. 61).

Recently, governments of several countries worldwide have pointed to the need to offer an education for all. In order to do that, they first have to acknowledge, rethink and
reestablish their regulations about those minority groups that have been wronged by hegemonic powers. This means that curricula for education need to depict inclusiveness and represent all the students in the school system. Some governments have already included minority and Indigenous languages in their education plans, or adapted the curricular guidelines to specific population groups living in the region. While this entails a step forward towards quality and inclusive education, there are several aspects that need to be reassessed, for instance, the way in which Indigenous Peoples are portrayed in official guidelines for education and addressed in the classroom, for it has an impact upon the way that students perceive and understand them.

The interest of this paper rests on the ways in which two curricular guidelines for education include and address content that concerns Indigenous Peoples. The first of them is the national curriculum for education in Norway and the other is the provincial curriculum for education in Alberta. These two regions have the privilege of being host to some groups of Indigenous Peoples that have inhabited the territories of current Norway and Alberta since long before other civilisations settled and borders were established.

The aim is to evaluate the content concerning Indigenous Peoples in the official guidelines of both Norway and Alberta. In order to accomplish that purpose, I seek to answer the following research questions: How do the competence aims described in the curricula for education in Norway and Alberta address content that concerns Indigenous Peoples? How does it affect the perception and understanding of Indigenous Peoples among non-Indigenous students in both regions? Does the content regarding Indigenous Peoples include both knowledge about (from a non-Indigenous perspective) and the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples (from an Indigenous perspective)? To what extent does that contribute to and guarantee equality and social justice?

For that purpose, I open with a contextualisation of Norway and Alberta concerning Indigenous Peoples, multiculturality and the curriculum for education. Subsequently, I present the theoretical framework for the analysis of the two curricula, namely, a decolonisation paradigm. Explanations of the method of analysis precede the presentation of the results: analysis and discussion leading to the argumentation of this research paper in favor of inclusive aims in education.

I consider relevant to mention that, despite the focus of this paper upon the education curriculum, I am aware of the fact that more factors contribute in the process of learning. Some of them are intrinsic to education, like the preference of some textbooks over others, the use of diverse materials and methodologies, etc. Others are intrinsic to the students, like
their personality, their previous education, etc. Some others are extrinsic aspects to education, such as the students’ receptivity, their situation at home or in their country, their background and former experiences in life, etc. Therefore, while there is a myriad of combinations that determine each student’s education and formation, curriculum development plays an essential role in the quality of the education of every student and the future choices that he or she takes in life.

2. Contextualisation

2.1. Norway

Norway is home to several ethnic groups that contribute to the enrichment of a multicultural society. Besides the majority group of ethnic Norwegians, there are groups that have lived in Norwegian territory since long before its borders were established. Such is the case of the Sami Peoples. Other groups arrived in Norway a long time ago, like the Kvenns/ Norwegian Finns, who are “mentioned in written records from the 16th century” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 25), the Jews, the Forest Finns, the Roma, and the Romani people/ Tater. These five ethnic groups conform the five national minorities of Norway. In addition, there are other groups of people who settled in Norway within more contemporary times, groups of workers and other immigrants.

Indigenous populations in Norway: the Sami Peoples

Different from all ethnic minorities residing in Norway are the Sami Peoples. The Norwegian Government grants them, according to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2015), a “more robust protection as an indigenous people” (p. 7). In fact, The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway (1814), in its Article 108 establishes, “The authorities of the state shall create conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life”. Article 108 recognises the right of self-determination of Sami Peoples in the Constitution of Norway since the amendment of 1988 (Øyvind Ravna, 2012). This followed the proposal within the Sami Act (Government of Norway, 1987) to

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1 In Norwegian, Utdanningsdirektoratet. It is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. See https://www.udir.no/

2 A national minority in Norway is defined by the Norwegian Government as a group having “a long-standing attachment to the country” (Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/indigenous-peoples-and-minorities/national-minorities/id1404/).
establish a Sami Parliament (Sámediggi) as a means to assure the status of Sami Peoples and their right of self-determination. The Sami Parliament was eventually founded in 1989.

Norway, in its never-ending and dedicated path towards an equal society, does not keep records of the ethnicity of its residents (Anders Sønstebo, 2018). Zsuzsanna Szilvási (2016) reports the difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing the number of the Sami population, “because census data concerning the ethnic descent is not available” (p. 81). Nevertheless, Statistics Norway (2018) collects information concerning Sami Peoples in those areas with relevant Sami settlements, as well as regions where the Sami Parliament exerts significant activity.

Therefore, to what concerns this paper, the Store Norske Leksikon provides a general overview of the Sami population in Norway, reporting that “in 2017, there were 16,958 people registered in the electoral census of the Sami Parliament in Norway” (Mikkel Berg-Nordlie & Harald Gaski, 2018). Additionally, a UN-Report from 2011 mentions that there were between 40,000 and 60,000 Sami living in Norwegian territory (in Szilvási, 2016, p. 81). It is pertinent to keep in mind that these are estimations and that the number might vary depending on the source.

Sami people in Norway hold a Norwegian citizenship. Besides the Norwegian language, some speak as well one of the three prevalent dialects of the Sami language.\(^3\) Traditionally, Sami Peoples have engaged in activities of reindeer herding, fishing and hunting, and/or farming, amongst others, within the borderless area of Sápmi.\(^4\) Today, a high number of the Sami population lives out of Sápmi, mostly around the area of the capital city, Oslo. Therefore, Sami Peoples today have abandoned the traditional lifestyles indigenous to the Sami culture, even though cultural manifestations are kept and celebrated.

Regarding education, those students with Sami ancestry have the right to receive tuition of and in their Sami language, besides Norwegian. Nevertheless, the curriculum for education is the same document across Norway. This implies that the national curriculum in Norway should include a fair representation of the indigenous ethnic minority of the Sami. Below I provide an overview of the education system in Norway and the guidelines for education in force.

*The national curriculum for education in Norway*

In Norway, the competence for education and curriculum development takes place at a national level. This means that there is one official document used across the country. The current national curriculum in Norway dates from 2006. The official name is *Kunnskaploftet*; in English, The Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006. The education system is organised into the following stages, from lower to higher degree: kindergarten, *barneskole* (the elementary level), *ungdomsskole* (the lower secondary level), and *videregående skole* (the higher secondary level). The elementary and lower secondary levels correspond to ten years of compulsory schooling in Norway, starting at the age of six and up to sixteen years. This way, formal compulsory education covers from grade 1 to grade 10.

The Ministry of Education and Research of the Government of Norway (1998) emphasises in *The Education Act* the need to comprise content “concerning the Sami Peoples and language, culture and civic life in conjunction with other subjects” (section 6–4). Content that concerns the Sami Peoples is relevant in a diversity of courses, such as social studies, arts and crafts, music, food and health, etc. However, despite the fact that the national curriculum

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\(^3\) The prevalent Sami languages spoken in Norway are North Sami, Lule Sami and South Sami (Szilvási, 2016).

\(^4\) Sápmi is the name of the borderless region where Sami Peoples have traditionally established their settlements. It extends through the North of Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as along the Kola peninsula in North-West Russia (Berg-Nordlie & Gaski, 2018).
in Norway might include a fair amount of contents regarding Sami topics, the quality of education is not necessarily measured by breadth of content as much as it is by depth.

Additionally, it is relevant to mention that the national curriculum in Norway is currently undergoing updates, which are expected to come into effect in 2020. Such changes are part of the school reform referred to as Renewal and Improvement Reform in Chanwoong Baek et al. (2018). The Ministry of Education and Research of the Government of Norway explains that the Renewal and Improvement Reform “aims at improving the content of the school subjects based on evidence, formative evaluation and the differentiation of learning” (in Baek et al., 2018, p. 26).

2.2. Alberta

The province of Alberta forms, together with nine other provinces and three territories, the country of Canada. Despite the fact that the Dominion of Canada dates from 1867, the year when a few territories joined in the Confederation, the total territory and the inland borders of Canada were not completely established until decades later. The province of Alberta was a former part of the Northwest Territories that joined the Canadian Confederation in 1870, but became a province in 1905. Canada is part of the British Commonwealth, under the rule of Queen Elisabeth II, since its establishment in the 20th century.

Canada’s colonial background shapes the multicultural nature of its society. The presence of different nations that either inhabited the country before European contact or have settled in Canada since then contribute to a linguistically and culturally varied society. Contemporary Canadian identity is forged on the idea of multiculturalism. This idea is expressed by Paul Robert Magocsi, editor of the Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples (1999) as he points out that in Canada the “individual ethnicity does not replace Canadian identity, rather it defines Canadians and their position in the world” (as cited in Jean Burnet & Leo Driedger, 2014). Additionally, the Constitution of Canada (Act of 1982) accounts for the importance of multiculturalism in Canada as Section 24 fosters “the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians”. In short, immigration in Canada has been and still is crucial to the formation of its characteristically multicultural society.

Concretely, the territory of Alberta has historically been inhabited by diverse groups of Indigenous Peoples who have lived reliant upon natural resources available in the region.

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5 The 1867 Confederation joined the province of Canada (formed by today’s Ontario and Québec) and the British colonies of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.
According to Alberta Government (2013), “Indigenous history is etched into the Alberta landscape going back 11,000 years and 500 generations” (p. 4). Today, Alberta is home to 258,145 people who identify as Aboriginal, mostly Métis and First Nations (Statistics Canada, 2018). This represents 6.5% of the total population of Alberta, which is around 4 million people.

The role of Alberta

The province of Alberta plays an interesting role in this paper for a number of reasons. First, the number of Aboriginal Peoples residing in Alberta, 6.5%, depicts a rate rather similar to the national Canadian percentage, which is 4.86%. Thus, while the 4 million inhabitants of Alberta are far from representing the almost 37 million people in Canada, the rate of Aboriginal Peoples becomes representative in this paper on the presentation of Indigenous communities in official curricula.

Territories like Nunavut, where a large part of the population has Aboriginal background, could emerge as interesting in the present analysis. As Heather Elizabeth McGregor (2012) points out, “Without a substantial non-Inuit student population or substantial public expectation that schooling be ‘multicultural’ or ‘culture neutral’, public schools in the Arctic could move in the direction of respecting and recognizing Indigenous language and culture with fewer constraints” (p. 290). For the larger context, and for comparison, however, it is important to establish how the curriculum is managed in two regions that do not have a majority representation of Indigenous Peoples among the population, and the need to be aware of the relevance of Indigenous knowledge not only within Indigenous settlements and relevant areas, but also anywhere else.

Another reason that supports the relevance of Alberta in this paper is the role of the government of Alberta and its extension, “Alberta Education”, in raising awareness of the importance of including and giving credit to the Inuit, Métis and First Nations and their knowledge systems. For instance, the government of Alberta has made available a curriculum development tool, “Guiding Voices”, that curriculum developers are required to use in order to assure an actual and fair transmission of information and knowledge.

Moreover, according to Michelle Daveluy (2010), “Alberta also happens to be the only province that has passed legislation specifically for Métis people” (p. 176). This means that in the debate whether the Métis and non-status Indians are a federal or a provincial responsibility, the province of Alberta, together with the Métis Nation of Alberta, passed in 1938 the Betterment Act, a provincial legislation enhancing the right of the Métis to express,
conserve and develop their culture in temporary assigned land. Moreover, in 1990, the *Métis Settlements Act*, passed by the government of Alberta, gave rights to the Métis to own land. According to the Government of Alberta (n.d.), “Alberta is home to the only recognized Métis land base in Canada”, consisting of eight settlements that occupy 528,000 hectares of the northern regions of Alberta.

Alberta is, thus, a crucial region to focus the comparative research with Norway, although the province does not represent Canada. Far from wanting to fall into trivial generalisations, I consider that the features of Alberta are a relevant starting point to understand and compare different education systems across borders. It should be noted that both Norway and Alberta are working on the development of an updated version of their respective curricula for education.

*Indigenous populations in Alberta: First Nations, the Métis and Inuit*

Three main groups of Indigenous Peoples have inhabited Canada “since time immemorial” (Zach Parrott, 2018): the First Nations, the Métis and the Inuit. First Nations include all the Indigenous groups that originally inhabited the subarctic regions of North America. The Inuit compose those groups that lived in the arctic areas within Canadian borders. The Métis⁶ are the descendants of Europeans and Aboriginal Peoples who lived on the prairies of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest territories.

The 2016 census of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018) shows that the proportion of the population that identified as Aboriginal was over 1.6 million, roughly constituting 5% of the total population of Canada. In Alberta, this percentage levelled up to 6.5%. From the almost 260,000 inhabitants with Aboriginal identity in Alberta, 136,585 identified as First Nations, 114,375 as Métis, and 2,500 as Inuit. Hence, the biggest indigenous population in Alberta is formed both by First Nations and Métis and, as Daveluy (2010) points out, “the terms ‘Aboriginal and/or Native peoples’ often refer to both First Nations and Métis in Alberta” (p. 176).

According to the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDP] (2014), there are 45 First Nations in Alberta distributed within three treaty⁷ areas, number 6, 7 and 8 (see Fig. 2). The major groups of First Nation Peoples are the Cree, whose different

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⁶ European and Indigenous descendants who do not reside in the prairies of Canada are considered métis as well, but this generic denomination is not capitalised.

⁷ The 11 Numbered Treaties of Canada were established between 1871 to 1921 to control the indigenous population.
groups (Bigstone Cree Nation, Driftpile Cree Nation, Little Red River Cree Nation, etc.) reside in treaties 6 and 8, and the Blood Tribe, in treaty 7.

![Map of Alberta showing the three numbered treaties](http://indigenous.alberta.ca/InteractiveMap.cfm)

In Alberta 31,000 persons reported as speaking an Aboriginal language at home in 2016, although the number of people who reported as having an Aboriginal mother tongue was 27,000 in the same year. As the report from Alberta Government (2017) suggests, “aboriginal languages are being learned as an additional language” (p. 4). The same document shows that Cree-Montagnais are the most common Aboriginal languages learned as mother tongue, followed by the Blackfoot language, whose majority of speakers within Canada (97.7%) reside in Alberta.

Aboriginal Peoples that reside in Alberta support themselves by a myriad of forms of living. However, they all share the oppression and assimilation processes to which they were subjected since European settlement in their territory until today. Perhaps the most significative event which had a direct effect on the situation of First Nations and Métis in Canada in general, but specifically to the communities in the West, is the brutal ending of the North-West Rebellion, as it is known. The uprising of Indigenous Peoples against the federal
government of Canada began as a way to resist changes that the government of John A. Mcdonald was exerting on the land where Métis and First Nations communities had been living before European settlement but also during the period when the Hudson’s Bay Company was operating. In any case, the resistance developed into a sequence of attacks that lasted for months, in which the federal government and some Indigenous groups protected their respective interests. Eventually, the leaders of Métis and First Nations groups surrendered and the federal government sentenced to prison and/or death “rebels” like Louis Riel, and used the opportunity to enforce Canadian law in the Western Territories (Bob Beal & Rob Macleod, 2019).

Even though Aboriginal Peoples in Canada have restored some of their rights, there are still many issues that add to the historical persecution that they have had to suffer. In fact, as Beal and Macleod (2019) assert: “It took the Indigenous peoples and communities of Western Canada many decades to recover politically and emotionally from the defeat of 1885” (para. 30). Today, a large part of the Inuit, First Nations and Métis of Alberta live in urban areas. Therefore, although their ethnic and cultural backgrounds differ and “are routinely understood to be different” (Daveluy, 2010, p. 176) in general, the situations and experiences that they might encounter in the cities of Alberta are, as Daveluy (2010) highlights, “undoubtedly” common (p. 177).

The provincial curriculum for education in Alberta

In Canada, curriculum development depends on each of the thirteen provinces and territories, meaning that there are several official documents used within the country. While most of the regions have similar education systems with an established K-12 grade school and the age range for compulsory school is 6 to 16 years old, some include a few nuances. For instance, Québec has set 11 grades of primary and secondary school, and New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Nunavut have compulsory schooling until the age of 18 years. In fact, the slight differences regarding the organisation of the school system between regions do not mean differences in outcome. Nevertheless, the content, methodology, competence, evaluation, and further variables do in fact establish relevant differences in outcome among the different provinces and territories. Such delegation of the education competence from a

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8 Louis Riel (1844-1885) was a Métis political leader who fought for the rights of Métis and First Nations communities over the land in the North-West Territories that the federal government of Canada took dominion over during the 19th century.
national to a provincial and territorial level allows every region to adapt education to its own specific characteristics.

The education system in the province of Alberta, as in most of the other regions, is a K-12 organisation. It starts with Kindergarten, through the Elementary level, Junior High School and Senior High School. Education is compulsory from the age of 6 up to 16 years. Hence, all students must join Elementary School, which covers 1st to 6th grade. The second stage is Junior High, from grade 7 to 9. From the 10th to the 12th grade the phase receives the name of Senior High School.

The current curriculum for education “ranges in age from eight to approximately 30 years old” (Alberta Education, 2019). Alberta Education (2019) itself points to the need to review the provincial education guide. As well as the Norwegian curriculum for education, the official document of Alberta is undergoing changes which are expected to be validated and implemented in the immediate future, although the government has not set specific dates. As a matter of fact, the latest update of a draft of the education guide for Kindergarten to the 4th grade dates from December 2018.

Alberta Education (2019) notes the importance and necessity to develop a curriculum that is “relevant, meaningful and engaging for all students”. The new education plan revolves around the idea of inclusion, not only of students with special education needs, but also multicultural, including newcomers as well as indigenous groups. In other words, the future reform takes a shift towards an “education for reconciliation” (Alberta Education, 2019). In the same line, the Education Act (Alberta Government, 2015) claims the duty of education to promote “the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta” (p. 26) and assure the absence of “doctrines of racial or ethnic superiority or persecution” (p. 27).

Already almost one decade ago, Daveluy (2010) reported the role of the Alberta government in stressing the importance of including First Nations, Métis and Inuit concerns in the education curriculum: “Inuit, First Nations and Métis are cooperating with that government to produce material that fosters a better understanding of Aboriginal issues” (p. 174). The same author later adds, “Over time, Métis and Inuit have gained prominence in Alberta’s education plans” (p. 178). Thus, the importance of including Indigenous issues and knowledge in the education system is not exclusive to the forthcoming reform, but has been in the works for some time. Such features are expected to be evident in the analysis of the current curriculum that takes place in this paper.
3. **Theoretical Framework: Decolonisation**

Decolonisation is a concept that can be explained and used in a myriad of ways and situations. In this paper, decolonisation is understood as the process by which historically oppressed groups under colonial forces empower themselves and claim their agency concerning knowledge and ways of knowing. Through decolonisation, education and the school system undergo a transformation that implies an inclusive form of pedagogy and redeems all sorts of oppression and inequality of opportunities inherited from colonial practices.

Since the beginning of the colonisation era, through the centuries, literature of and about the colonised subjects has been constructed from the point of view of the coloniser. This means that historical events have been missing “the other side of the coin”, validating only the mainstream stories. As Bagele Chilisa (2012) points out, traditionally the colonizers have shown resistance against “the recognition of indigenous knowledge as a rich source” (p. 50). This situation has, nonetheless, been changing during the last three decades, and new forms of narrating history are emerging. In this way, history is deconstructed and retold from a new perspective that includes acknowledging the fact that historically oppressed minorities have a lot to contribute to mainstream discourses. The norm is being challenged and questioned in order to build more complete knowledge systems.

One might argue, nevertheless, that the “other side of the story” has always existed within the context of the Other, the colonised. However, the fact that the colonised and the coloniser are not counterparties in this arena makes both discourses uneven. Here is where the concept of the Other becomes relevant (versus the notion of “Self”). The Other is understood as an opposed entity, which is objectified, homogenised, framed, and alienated by a hegemonic “Self”. It becomes, hence, disempowered, oppressed and marginalised in and by the dominant entity. And so do the values, practices and knowledge of the Other, as they lose credibility and sovereignty. Edward Wadie Said (1978/2003) sums this idea up in his work *Orientalism*: “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures” (p. 7).

Recently, a desire to explore the untold side of the stories has awakened amongst anticolonial scholars, as well as amongst the historically oppressed Indigenous groups. Sandy Grande (2009) claims that both “envision an anti-imperialist theory of subjectivity; one free of compulsions of global capitalism and the racism, classism, sexism, and xenophobia it engenders” (p. 199). However, despite the inarguable challenges that traditional research
methods and knowledge systems are facing, Chilisa (2012) argues that “the universalized research methods of the so-called first world […] continue to construct the world along binary opposites of Self / Other, colonizer / colonized, center / periphery, developed / developing, North / South, first world / third world” (p. 74). It is hard to detach knowledge and research from hegemonic approaches that have been prevalent in Western societies for long. I try in this paper to be aware of it at all times and to make use of practices appropriate to the framework approach of the work.

Therefore, a decolonisation paradigm defends the deconstruction of hegemonic practices and methods through the inclusion of integrating knowledge systems (versus a universalised knowledge). Thereby, the notion of cultural domination shall come to an end and formerly colonized people can be liberated. Recently, a number of scholars (Nina Asher, 2010; Bagele Chilisa, 2012; Sandy Grande, 2009) have centered their work in understanding as well as explaining or applying a decolonial approach to academia and research. Their work adds up to the classics like Audre Lorde or Edward W. Said, who contributed to the theorising of decolonisation in the past century.

Thus, according to Chilisa (2012), “decolonization is a process of centering the concerns and worldviews of the colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives” (p. 13). This process involves creating spaces in which the “captive mind” can be liberated at the same time that “cultural practices, thinking patterns, beliefs, and values” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 13) are rethought and restored. In this way, the contexts of the historically oppressed are taken into account in the construction of peripheral knowledge systems, which contribute to an integrated knowledge framework.

Asher (2010) sees decolonization in education as the process by which the curriculum becomes a “‘comprehensive’ and more meaningful [tool] to both students and teachers”, as it brings “theory, thought, and feeling to a self-reflexive engagement with the past and the present, towards envisioning a future in which colonization diminishes” (p. 399). Hence, decolonisation of the curriculum takes place within a process in which the formerly colonised are able to design, reshape and use their own education.

Moreover, Grande (2009) claims the need to include indigenous knowledge systems in education, and therefore proposes a “Red Pedagogy”. It comprises, besides a theoretical base, a set of precepts that challenge universal ways of thinking and trigger new ones. According to Grande (2009), the base for decolonisation articulates around values such as “equity, emancipation, sovereignty, and balance”, and she adds that “an education for decolonization makes no claim to political neutrality but, rather, engages a method of
analysis and social inquiry that troubles the capitalist-imperialist aims of unfettered competition, accumulation, and exploitation” (p. 201). Her proposal of a “Red Pedagogy” engages in the necessity to reform and redesign education and the curriculum worldwide. While it only covers a given specific context, the proposal serves as a model for reflection and further discussion on decolonisation of the curriculum. Once the theoretical frame has been set, the following section covers the method for research and presents the collected data.

4. **Method**

4.1. **Compulsory education and required courses**

The organisation of the education systems of the province of Alberta and Norway is relatively similar. Public formal education starts at kindergarten and ends at the higher secondary school. Students are 18 and 19 years old, respectively, when they finish the last stage, although they are not required to take secondary school unless they want to continue studying post-secondary programs. Thus, education is compulsory from the age of 6 until 16.

This phase corresponds to the levels of elementary and lower secondary school and, additionally, in Alberta, to the 10th grade (Senior High School). The curricula of elementary and lower secondary school of Norway and Alberta prepare the ground for all students’ future higher formation, these two stages providing compulsory education. Below, I present Table 1, a chart that compares the organisation of public primary and secondary education systems in Norway and in Alberta. The light zones represent the non-mandatory stages of education, while the dark sections show the compulsory levels, which are suit for the present paper:

Table 1

*Grade and Age Correspondence in the Education Systems in Norway and in Alberta*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>up to 5 years old</th>
<th>Alberta</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st – 10th grade</td>
<td>1st – 6th grade</td>
<td>6th – 12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6 – 16 years old)</td>
<td>(6 – 12 years old)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th – 9th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>10th – 12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13 – 15 years old)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(16 – 18 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>11th – 13th grade</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17 – 19 years old)</td>
<td>10th – 12th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(16 – 18 years old)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The universality of compulsory education, reaching every student in a region, explains the selection of the curricula for analysis. As mentioned above, however, compulsory education in Alberta extends from 1st to 10th grade, the last grade being included in Senior High School. To ease the comparison with Norway, the 10th grade remains excluded from the analysis in the present paper, meaning that only the curricula of Elementary and Junior High School in both regions are considered.

Furthermore, I consider it necessary to mention hereunder, before entering the analysis, that the curricula of Norway and Alberta present discrepancies regarding the subjects they include. On the one hand, the curriculum in Norway establishes a list of subjects that all students take from year 1 to 10. This means that there is no distinction between required and optional subjects, nor between the subjects studied in elementary and junior high school. On the other hand, the curriculum in Alberta makes a distinction between required and optional courses and, additionally, it defines different courses for the two distinct levels of Elementary and Junior High School. Therefore, in the case of the curriculum in Alberta, only the required subjects are chosen for analysis (and not the optional ones), since they reach all students. Table 2 below shows and compares the required subjects in the curricula of Norway and Alberta:

Table 2

| Required Courses for the Elementary and Secondary School in Norway and in Alberta |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Norway                                      | Alberta                                      |
| Elementary school                           | Art                                          |
| Norwegian Mathematics                      | English Language Arts                        |
| Mathematics                                | Health and Life Skills                       |
| Social Studies                             | Mathematics                                  |
| CREE (Christianity, Religion and Ethics Education) | Music                                        |
| Arts and Crafts\(^9\)                        | Physical Education                           |
| Natural Science                            | Science                                      |
| English                                     | Social Studies                               |
| Food and Health                             |                                              |
| Music                                       |                                              |
| Physical Education                          |                                              |
| Lowe secondary school                       |                                              |
| English Language Arts                       | English Language Arts                        |
| Health and Life Skills                      | Health and Life Skills                       |
| Mathematics                                | Mathematics                                  |
| Physical Education                          | Physical Education                           |
| Science                                     | Science                                      |
| Social Studies                              | Social Studies                               |

\(^9\) The part of the Norwegian curriculum for arts and crafts is only available in the Norwegian language.
4.2. Data collection

After having informed about the similarities and discrepancies between the curricular documents of Norway and Alberta, and the subjects included in them, I proceed now to define the steps of the analysis.

**Keyword search**

During the first phase, I searched for a number of keywords through the two curricula. Taking into account the variance in the terminology used to refer to the Indigenous groups in Norway and Alberta, the keywords employed for each document are slightly different. Thus, for the curriculum in Norway I use the keywords ‘Sami’ and ‘Indigenous’. For the Alberta curriculum the keywords are ‘First Nations’, ‘Métis’, ‘Inuit’, ‘Aboriginal’, and ‘Indigenous’. The keywords correspond to the denomination of the Indigenous Peoples of each territory, namely ‘Sami’, ‘First Nations’, ‘Métis’ and ‘Inuit’, as well as the generic term(s) employed to refer to such groups in each territory, that is, ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’.

Hence, regarding the generic term ‘Aboriginal’, it is restricted to Canadian territory. On the other hand, the word ‘Indigenous’ is employed in both areas, as it represents a broader concept. This way, the United Nations (2007) make exclusive use of the term ‘Indigenous’ in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* [UNDRIP], to refer to all collectives worldwide. The United Nations (n.d.) states in one of its published factsheets that such term “has prevailed as generic for many years”. In any case, the words ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’ are used equally in the curriculum in Alberta.

**Content compilation**

The keyword search through the two documents resulted in a number of entries among which I identified two types: some entries are included in the competence aims for students, and some others are parts of the informative texts addressed to teachers and other educators. The entries that I consider suitable for analysis are those belonging to the competence aims, which describe the basic outcomes for students at the end of the school year.

Once the competence aims were selected, I organised the information into a model table used in the work carried out by Kevin Lowe and Tyson Yunkaporta (2013). The two authors propose and develop a tool for their research project, which focuses on the inclusion
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander\(^{10}\) content in the Australian national curriculum. In their analysis, they evaluate the breadth and the depth of content concerning Aboriginal Peoples’ culture. In order to do that, they assemble a matrix tool formed by two separate frameworks, one proposed by Ernie Grand in 1998 and the other by Tyson Yunkaporta in 2009 (as cited in Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013).

According to Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), the framework developed by Grand defines six elements: land, language, culture, time, place, and relationships. These describe the different areas in which content related to Indigenous Peoples manifests in the curriculum for education. The second framework, by Yunkaporta, comprises four elements that categorise various perspectives of and within Indigenous communities, namely, protocols, values, processes, and systems. Therefore, the newly composed tool intersects elements from two different areas that allow for the measure of the breadth of content and the depth of perspective conjointly. *Table 3* below shows the resulting intersections that organise and categorise the information from each curriculum. Note that the grid serves to illustrate how the results are integrated after the keyword search (and not the results themselves) and it is, therefore, presented blank in this section.

**Table 3**

*Matrix Tool Developed by Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocols</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that the contextualisation of the present paper greatly differs from the geographical location of the project by Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), the implementation of

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\(^{10}\) According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2019), the Torres Strait Islanders Peoples constitute, together with Aboriginal Peoples, the indigenous population in Australia. In 2010, the group represented less than 1% of the Australian population.
their matrix tool in the present analysis has the same relevance. Even though “the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country” (United Nations, 2007, p. 4), the similarity of the experiences lived in the past, but also in the present, by different groups of Indigenous Peoples around the globe, justifies the choice of the tool. For example, Heather Harris (2010) reports that Indigenous scholars have acknowledged the “surprising similarities in worldview” among Indigenous populations “in North America and beyond” (p. 63). Also, the United Nations (2007) recognise in the UNDRIP that Indigenous groups worldwide have historically suffered from injustices resulting from the misuse of colonial power.

Regarding the curriculum for education, Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) explain in their paper that the guidelines in Australia contain concrete matters concerning Aboriginal Peoples. In their words, “The presence of tangible items of Aboriginal culture and history in the Australian Curriculum is not in question” (p. 4). However, these authors claim that, besides the inclusion of knowledge about Indigenous Peoples, the curriculum for education must include Indigenous perspectives; that is, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples from an indigenised point of view (versus an Eurocentric perspective). The application of their matrix tool on the curricula of Norway and Alberta allows us to recognise the nature of the content and determine its tangibility.

According to Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), while tangible items are more common in the education curriculum in Australia, they do not offer a deep understanding of the Indigenous Peoples’ cultures and perspectives. Thus, a greater inclusion of perspectives from Indigenous groups contributes to a deeper decolonisation of the knowledge transmitted through formal education, as the ways of being, thinking and knowing of the Indigenous Peoples “cannot be represented by mere cultural and historical facts or items” (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013, p. 2).

Data discussion
Next, the items that address Indigenous Peoples’ content in the curricula of Norway and Alberta are organised into two tables like the model represented by Table 3. The classification is done according to the topic they cover (land, language, culture, time, place, or relationships) and to the level of tangibility implied (protocol, values, processes, and systems). My understanding of these terms is based on the work carried out by Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), exposing the meaning of the topics: ‘land’ encompasses content that deals with territory and border establishment and control. ‘Language’ refers to the questions
concerning learning, transmission and conflict with Indigenous languages and literature, and with other languages. The topic ‘culture’ represents a wide range of content, as Indigenous Peoples represent different ethnic and cultural groups; therefore, all the content dealing with traits from Indigenous Peoples that do not fall into any other category is included here. ‘Time’ includes all content dealing with measuring and understanding chronological events. ‘Place’ encompasses the content that concerns the cultural usage of a territory and its nature. By ‘relationships’ is understood the content that concerns connections and interactions within different groups.

As what concerns the markers of tangibility of the curricula content, ‘protocols’ refers to the rituals and ways of expressing the ways of being within reality. ‘Values’ represents the content that concerns the ways of understanding and viewing the world. The category ‘processes’ includes the content that regards practical aspects of Indigenous Peoples, how they think and act in the world. Last, in ‘systems’ is included the content that describes epistemological characteristics of Indigenous Peoples, their ways of knowing.

Once all the information retrieved from the curricula of education of Norway and Alberta was organised into the its corresponding table, I proceeded to the analysis. I start by presenting how Indigenous content is spread across the different grades and courses of the curricula separately, and argue the different topics in the resulting tables, adopting a theoretical framework appropriate to a paradigm of decolonisation. Afterwards, I discuss those aspects of the curriculum, and more generally of the education system that, in accordance to a decolonising approach, urge to change in order to attain an education of quality.

5. Results

The competence aims are written in rather dissimilar ways in the curricula for education of Norway and Alberta. Even if both documents pursue the same goal, that is, to serve as a pedagogical guide for teachers and educators, the way they present the competence aims for students differs greatly. While such differences are understandable, as each region adapts the curriculum to its own characteristics and needs, it is necessary to discuss the effects that some of the differences involve, as it becomes relevant for the comparative analysis.

The most significant disparity lies in the way in which the competence aims are written in the two curricula. While in the Norwegian curriculum, each competence aim is written in a sentence and connected to one topic or two topics, in the document of Alberta the
redaction becomes more complex, as some competence aims are written together with a group of questions, covering several topics at a time. In the following section, I show this and other relevant points of both curricula in detail and how it affects the analysis in the present paper.

5.1. Norway

On the one hand, the Norwegian curriculum presents the competence aims in a linear way and in a defined fashion, showing a very clear purpose. Thus, at the end of year 10 students are able to, for instance, “give a presentation of the Norwegian Church, Læstadianism and Sami church life” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015a). This aim deals with an aspect of culture and the task implies a description of a characteristic trait of the given culture, classifying, therefore, under the category of processes. Moreover, the fact that it presents the competence aims per stage instead of for each grade (it encompasses four stages: by the end of year 2, 4, 7 and 10) makes the analysis easier when it comes to providing an overview of the distribution of Indigenous content across the school grades span.

The keyword search of the Norwegian national curriculum resulted in 45 entries. From those, 36 correspond to competence aims and are, thus, fit for analysis (the other 9 are discarded in the present analysis, as they involve information outside the competence aim section). The 36 keywords are distributed across 30 competence aims (6 of the competence aims include two keywords). In the 30 aims, I identified a total of 35 topics suitable for analysis. The 30 competence aims are distributed along nine of the ten subjects of the Norwegian curricular guide, mathematics being the only subject that did not contain any entry. Table 4 below shows the distribution of the 35 topics identified in the competence aims in the curriculum for Norway:

---

11 Competence aims at the end of year 2 are only specified for some of the courses in the Norwegian curriculum.
Table 4

Matrix Tool for the Curriculum of Education in Norway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocols</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Systems</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Alberta

The curriculum in Alberta includes broad competence aims for every grade, which, additionally, in some cases, go together with a set of questions. The following example illustrates these compound competence aims:

Investigate the cultural and linguistic characteristics of an Inuit, an Acadian and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
- What are the cultural characteristics of the communities (e.g., special symbols, landmarks, languages spoken, shared stories or traditions, monuments, schools, churches)?
- What are the traditions and celebrations in the communities that connect the people to the past and to each other?
- How are the communities strengthened by their stories, traditions and events of the past?
- What are the linguistic roots and practices in the communities?
- What individuals and groups contributed to the development of the communities?
- How do these communities connect with one another (e.g., cultural exchanges, languages, traditions, music)?
- How do the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the communities studied contribute to Canada’s identity?

(Alberta Education, 2007a)
Thus, the extension and breadth of these competence aims in the curriculum for Alberta entail the coverage of more than one topic or task at a time. For instance, in the example given above, it is possible to identify at least three topics (‘culture’, ‘language’ and ‘relationships’) that fall into the two distinct categories of ‘processes’ and ‘values’. This way, as on several occasions, one sole aim might fit into more than one of the topic-boxes of the table; the number of competence aims identified as explicit Indigenous content thus greatly differs from the number of topics covered in the table.

The provincial curriculum for education in Alberta (grades 1 to 9) comprises a total of 162 entries after the keyword search. These are found in the courses of fine arts, social studies, mathematics and science. From the total, 65 appear within the competence aims addressed to students; the other 98 belong to texts that serve as guidelines and information for teachers (not affecting the students’ outcome). The 65 entries suitable for analysis are distributed across 33 competence aims in the subjects of fine arts, social studies, and science.

Table 5 below shows the distribution of the 65 topics\textsuperscript{12} identified across the 33 competence aims that cover explicit Indigenous content in the curriculum in Alberta:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcccc}
\hline
 & Protocols & Values & Processes & Systems & Total \\
\hline
Land & 1 & 9 & & & 10 \\
Language & 1 & 2 & 1 & & 4 \\
Culture & 6 & 15 & 2 & & 23 \\
Time & & 1 & & & 1 \\
Place & 1 & 4 & 3 & & 8 \\
Relationships & 1 & 18 & & & 19 \\
Total & 0 & 10 & 49 & 6 & 65 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{12} The 65 topics are not directly related to the 65 entries identified during the keyword search. The fact that both coincide is mere concurrence. While the entries play a significative role at the initial part of the analysis process, the topics are the actual object of analysis and, therefore, the focus of the present paper.
6. Analysis

Table 4 and Table 5 above organise the topics found among the competence aims that concern Indigenous content of the curricula of Norway and Alberta. The classification took place by topic and perspective, providing an overview of the breadth and the depth of the issues concerning Indigenous Peoples included in the curricular guidelines of both regions. The analysis is structured in two phases. In the first part, I offer insight into the distribution of the content across the grades and courses of both curricula. Obviously, the content taught varies across the different grades, and the arrangement of the Indigenous content through the curriculum span confirms it. I evaluated its distribution in the curriculum, both across grades and subjects.

In the second part of the analysis, I evaluated the diverse topics that correspond to the ten parameters which constitute the matrix tool, and I addressed how these are represented in the curriculum. I also identified potential deficiencies or failures to include Indigenous issues. With the support of the literature on decolonisation I first addressed the national curriculum in Norway, and afterwards the provincial curriculum for Alberta.

6.1. Indigenous content coverage across grades and courses

As I mentioned in the previous section, the curriculum in Norway presents the competence aims at the end of 4 different stages across the 10 grades of compulsory education, which the curriculum refers to as ‘after year 2’, ‘after year 4’, ‘after year 7’, and ‘after year 10’. From the total of 30 competence aims found in the Norwegian document that include Indigenous content, 2 correspond to the phase ‘after year 2’, 6 to ‘after year 4’, 12 to ‘after year 7’, and 10 to ‘after year 10’. The progressive increase can be explained by means of age and competence acquisition; that is, the higher the grade, the broader the coverage of topics and the skills learned.

However, in the last phase (‘after year 10’), the number of competence aims undergoes a descent, which contradicts the explanation provided in the previous paragraph. The drop off in the number of Indigenous topics in the last grades of compulsory education partially explains the findings of a study done by Hadi Khosravi Lile, professor at the University of Oslo, regarding the outcome of 9th grade students regarding Sami Peoples (Kari Oliv Vedvik, 2011). According to Vedvik (2011), Lile reports a low coverage and emphasis in the Indigenous issues taught in the 9th grade classroom, concluding that teachers do not have the knowledge to put in practice what the national curriculum requires.
Regarding the distribution of Indigenous content across the required courses of the Norwegian curriculum, I identified, in a descending order, 5 competence aims in each of the following subjects: social studies, natural sciences, Norwegian language, and Christianity, religion, and ethics education, 4 in music, 2 in food and health and in English language, 1 in physical education and in arts, and 0 in mathematics. In total, these result in 30 aims spread through nine of the ten required courses in compulsory education.

While the Norwegian document presents a consistency in the integration of Indigenous content, which is spread through the compulsory education plan, the frequency of Indigenous related competence aims in the classroom is rather low. As a matter of fact, there are 30 competence aims distributed along 10 grades and 10 subjects; the rate appears to be unquestionably poor. In addition to this under-representation of Indigenous topics in the official curriculum, Professor Lile identifies in the results of his study a lack of emphasis among teachers when addressing Indigenous issues (in Vedvik, 2011). According to Lile, teachers are unable to address content related to Indigenous Peoples’ in the classroom, resulting in a low level of knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, “even in Finnmark” (as cited in Vedvik, 2011).

The curriculum in Norway seems to ignore that Sami Peoples have been part of the society and culture of the country since the beginning of Norwegian history. The omission of historical events, together with the oblivion to cultural expressions, the denial of non-Western knowledge systems and the distortion of facts contribute to the prolongation of colonialism and the systematic marginalisation of Sami Peoples. Lile claims that “pupils aren’t taught the history of ‘Norwegianizing’ – a state-run racist educational policy that lasted 112 years” (as cited in Vedvik, 2011).

In sum, the curriculum in Norway presents Indigenous content at every school stage and in the majority of the curriculum subjects; therefore, it seems safe to assume that Indigenous content is fairly spread across the Norwegian official document. However, no matter how well spread the content is across the education span, the 30 competence aims offer insufficient representation of Indigenous Peoples, especially when the results in Lile’s study are considered, as it seems that the national curriculum presents remarkable gaps. Later in section 6.2, I explore the breadth and depth of the content, identifying the aforementioned gaps.

Similar to the Norwegian, the curriculum in Alberta includes 33 competence aims that deal with Indigenous content. Daveluy (2010) reports: “Over time, Métis and Inuit have gained prominence in Alberta’s education plans” (p. 178). From this statement, it is possible
to infer that previous versions of the curriculum might not have presented a remarkable presence of Aboriginal content, meaning that the current document represents the most inclusive one hitherto. In spite of how promising that might sound, the actual outcome gives no reason for celebration.

In fact, the competence aims are spread rather unevenly through the grades. The distribution across the nine grades occurs as follows: 2 for grade 1, 4 for grade 2, 3 for grade 4, 4 for grade 5, 2 for grade 6, 13 for grade 7, 1 for grade 8, and 3 for grade 9. In addition, grade 5 and 6 share one competence aim from the course fine arts, as the competence aims for this subject are described per level of two grades, instead of per each grade. The 3rd grade does not include any competence aim regarding Indigenous Peoples. Consequently, even though most of the grades include a certain degree of Indigenous content, teachers in 3rd grade in Alberta are not obliged by law to address any Indigenous issue and, as a result, students course one entire grade without learning about Indigenous Peoples.

To what concerns the presence of competence aims addressing Indigenous content in the different courses of the curriculum, the numbers are rather uneven. From the eight required courses of elementary school, only two include Indigenous related competence aims: fine arts (1 competence aim) and social studies (15 competence aims); in junior high school, two out of the six subjects this time present Indigenous content: science (8 competence aims) and social studies (9 competence aims). This way, more than a half of the required subjects in compulsory education are taught without necessarily having to address Indigenous topics. In fact, it is the course of social studies that concentrates the majority of aims that deal with Indigenous content.

The curricular document for the subject of mathematics does not specifically include any competence aim for students connected to Indigenous Peoples and knowledge. However, it does enclose a section in the introductory part that refers to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples of Canada. In that short text, the curriculum acknowledges, first, the diversity of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. It brings up the ‘holistic’ ways of learning and knowing that these cultures have traditionally employed, emphasising experience as a way of knowledge. Finally, it ends stating that connecting mathematical concepts to the real world can be ‘particularly’ useful for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Such mention in the curriculum is a mere informative note for teachers that does not contribute to students’ learning; therefore, it is not considered as suitable for the present analysis. The same way, the curriculum for social studies refers as well to the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in several cases within explanatory sections designed for teachers. Again, these references to
Indigenous Peoples do not directly interfere in the learners’ outcome, as they entail information for teachers and an overview of the topics that are presented later in the document.

Lastly, it is relevant to report that the curricular document for social studies includes a glossary of terms and concepts which includes definitions of the most noteworthy concepts addressed in every grade, amongst others Aboriginal Peoples, First Nations, Métis Nation, or Inuit. Such definitions are adapted to the level of each grade, forming quite generic descriptions in the lower grades, and increasing the level of accuracy with every grade. Once again, this type of curriculum content does not form part of the competence aim section designed for students. Consequently, it is not taken into account for the analysis.

Generally, both curricula integrate Indigenous content in some of the subjects, although not all. The content is spread throughout all grades of the curriculum, even though the distribution seems uneven, as some grades address Indigenous topics more than others.

### 6.2. Breadth and depth of Indigenous content in the curricula

In this section, I connected the different topics and perspectives included in the competence aims of the education curricula of Norway and Alberta with arguments from relevant literature on the theoretical framework of decolonisation. In order to do that, I focus on the redaction and word use of the competence aims in the curriculum, and on the content they cover. There is plenty of pertinent literature on decolonisation that provides a critical and challenging perspective on the task of curricula development. As Chilisa (2012) claims in her work, the institutions are forged on Western practices, and often Indigenous perspectives are left aside in the configuration and development of official documents, laws and further events within academic and political agenda. Nevertheless, researchers and scholars committed to the decolonisation cause of Indigenous Peoples provide a framework for questioning and overthrowing the imperialistic structures of the Western system.

For that reason, despite acknowledging hereby that changes in society take time to be reflected in the education curricula, and far from underestimating the effort that governments, institutions and other groups make to offer a quality education, it is the task of society to be critical of the hegemonic norm and question imperialist and colonialist practices that endure in society in old and new ways. That is one of the main aims of this paper, which relies upon decolonising literature to question normative forms of knowing in the education field.
6.2.1. National curriculum for Norway

Promoting stereotypical images

A quick look at Table 4 shows that it is possible to identify two markers that get most of the weight in the grid. From the six topic markers that configure the rows of the table, the one representing cultural matters counts 19 entries. This number entails more than half of the Indigenous topics identified across the Norwegian curriculum. Among the competence aims that address cultural topics, the curriculum includes lifestyle, religion, art and literature, food traditions, etc. Henceforth, a priori, the Norwegian curricular guidelines seem to focus on the cultural traits of Sami Peoples and other Indigenous groups.

One example of the sort of aims that the Norwegian curriculum establishes to cover cultural topics is the following, addressed to students after year 7 on the subject food and health: “prepare Sami food and explain some features of Sami food culture” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006a). Students are expected to be able to cook and talk about Sami culinary features. While the curriculum does not mandate the methodology that teachers use in accomplishing the competence aims, I believe that the extent to which students are able to perform such competence is rather superficial for several reasons.

First of all, as Professor Lile claims in his study, most teachers in Norway lack the knowledge and confidence to address Sami topics, and even “have negative attitudes toward the Samis” (in Vedvik, 2011). The fact alone that most teachers cannot provide adequate knowledge regarding Sami Peoples justifies the shortcomings of the competence aims in the curriculum. Also, the curriculum in Norway addresses other cultures different than the Norwegian, Sami, and other minorities living in the country. This means that, despite the fact that the number of competence aims that deal with Indigenous Peoples might seem acceptable, the time dedicated to them in the classroom can be, in fact, rather low. Students at the same level are expected to be able as well to, for instance, “prepare food from different cultures” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006a). Thus, the amount of time dedicated to one concrete aim becomes less extensive than would be ideal to accomplish the goal it promulgates. In other words, even though students might in some cases manipulate and work with actual Sami food and cook Sami plates, the potentially acquirable knowledge is mostly superficial.
Demeaning agency

In other cases, features of Sami culture are not the focus of a competence aim, but they are merged into a more generic approach to a topic, appearing merely as a remark or an exemplification. For instance, note the following competence aim addressed to students at the end of year 10 in the subject of Christianity, religion, and ethics education: “give an account of new religious movements and talk about the different forms of neo-religious and nature-religious practices, including indigenous nature religions” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015a).

Here, the focus lies on new forms of religious manifestation in general. On the one hand, it is remarkable that the curriculum leaves space to mention and address the fact that Sami Peoples have elaborated their own nature religion. On the other, the span of this competence aim is rather ambitious, as it covers not only Indigenous nature religions, but other new movements. Moreover, this competence aim does not mention the Sami Peoples, who are indigenous to Norway and had a religious system which has been erased through Christianisation.

The Norwegian curricular guideline includes this topic in another competence aim for the same subject addressed to students at the end of year 7: “describe the main features of pre-Christian Sami beliefs, and the subsequent transition to Christianity” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015a). Note the use of the word “transition” which, while in a literal sense it could be correct, it hides the imposition and enforcement that Sami Peoples suffered during missionary and assimilatory measures carried out in Norway since the 19th century until the late 1990s, the period known as the “Norwegianisation”. The use of euphemisms is a way of whitewashing colonial practices and softening the responsibilities that the oppressor needs to take. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird (2005) claim the standardisation of certain vocabulary in the discourse on Indigenous Peoples, and they write that the use of language to speak for oneself leads to the engagement “in a form of resistance to colonialism” (p. 3).

There is more beyond culture

About focusing on culture, Evelyn Legare argues that a “policy of multiculturalism reduces cultural groups to a common denominator of participating in activities involving food, dance, and song in annual folkfests whose form becomes decontextualized from political claims” (in Verna St. Denis, 2000, p. 44). Even though the previous statement applies to a Canadian context, it can as well be transferred to the Norwegian scenario. The curriculum in Norway
includes competence aims that address different cultures besides the Sami in one and the same competence aim.

In these cases, the Sami culture is juxtaposed to other cultures that do not share the indigenous status. Even though there is nothing repressive in including more than one culture at a time in the classroom, I agree with St. Denis (2011) when she claims that an agenda based on multiculturalism “erases the specific and unique location of Aboriginal peoples as indigenous to this land by equating them with multicultural and immigrant groups” (p. 311). For instance, the following aim for the subject of English language at the end of year 7 clearly illustrates this effect: “converse about the way people live and socialise in different cultures in English-speaking countries and in Norway, including the Sami culture” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013a).

It seems that this competence aim focuses on two main points, namely, that students become familiar with the culture and lifestyle in English-speaking countries, and that they are able to converse in English about cultural and lifestyle traits of different groups of people that habit Norway. One could claim that a third focal point lies in getting to know the culture and lifestyle of different cultures in Norway; however, such an aim would not make much sense when included in the subject of English language. Therefore, the same way that on some occasions Sami or Indigenous Peoples’ issues are or should be included, in other cases their inclusion is not coherent with the rest of the competence aim.

Thus, the two main points that this competence aim addresses are, although legitimate and educational, rather broad and time-consuming when applied in the classroom. This aim actually focuses on a huge range of different cultures: first, cultures of English-speaking countries (to which countries does it refer? Britain colonised many territories that are nowadays English-speaking countries; which, besides, are home to a myriad of cultural and ethnic groups), and second, cultures of Norway, which is home to many cultural communities as well. The subtle mention of Sami culture at the end of the competence aim suggests that the chances of addressing the way Sami Peoples live and socialise are low, and that the topic can easily be obviated.

In addition to the low chances that Sami topics have of being addressed in the classroom, one must take into account that the way colonised and oppressed people live and socialise is a consequence of the processes of colonisation and oppression themselves. Moreover, their lifestyle has an effect on the current situation that they experience due to former and endured ways of oppression. St. Denis (2000) notes: “Colonized and Indigenous people have been dealing for a long time with many of the current identified effects of
globalization, such as seizure of their lands and their resources, and their confinement into structures of cheap labor” (p. 37). Indeed, oppressive practices have influenced and still affect the lifestyle and way of socializing of Indigenous Peoples. Avoiding such nuances in the classroom hinders a greater understanding of the situation of Sami and other Indigenous Peoples today.

The other competence aim in the subject of English language informs that students at the end of year 10 are able to “describe and reflect on the situation of indigenous peoples in English-speaking countries” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013a). Here, contrary to the competence aim discussed above, the curriculum dictates a clear task and skill for students that focuses on Indigenous Peoples. On the one hand, it addresses the situation of Indigenous peoples and not the practical aspects of their cultures. By so doing, the causes and consequences of colonisation are prone to be met and discussed in the classroom. Also, students are able to reflect, not only converse or describe. Moreover, although Sami Peoples are not specifically mentioned, the fact that foreign Indigenous cultures are encouraged in the classroom can lead to the inclusion of Sami Peoples as well, as the history and current situation of all Indigenous groups are similar worldwide (United Nations, n.d.).

**Focusing on practical aspects**

Among the 19 entries of topics that address culture, 16 fall into the category of ‘processes’, 2 into ‘values’, ‘1’ into ‘systems’, and none for ‘protocols’. According to Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), the category ‘processes’ represents the ways of thinking among Indigenous Peoples, manifested through practical methodology. The fact that most of the topics concerning culture are included under the perspective description ‘processes’, leaving the elements that regard ‘protocols’, ‘values’ and ‘systems’ almost or completely empty, suggests that the official curricular document of Norway engages in the practical aspects of Indigenous Peoples’ customs more noticeably than in their ways of being and knowing.

St. Denis (2000) describes in her paper few situations through which she reports the dangers of multicultural policy and agenda centering only on visual and practical manifestations of a culture (dances, cuisine, etc.), as it contributes to the “depoliticization” of political claims made by Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, by focusing only on some aspects of a culture and omitting others, the cultural perspectives are controlled and subsumed into mainstream discourses. As a consequence, a holistic understanding of a culture becomes unattainable. Such a situation creates and promotes stereotypical views of these minority
and/or oppressed groups that lack the platforms and means to express their self-determination.

The reproduction of stereotyped images based on superficial and practical cultural traits is a manifestation of oppressive power relationships throughout which the oppressor decides and determines what is worth of among the ways of being and knowing of oppressed groups. Sherene Razack explains that the “culturalization of differences [can] mask relations of power and enable dominant groups to maintain their innocence, even while such [a] construct simultaneously empowers subordinate groups” (as cited in St. Denis, 2000, p. 47).

One positive point of participating in cultural events which include practical manifestations of different cultures is that they draw attention to groups that do not have mainstream forms of expression at their disposal. At the same time, however, these groups become exposed to an extent that they become exotic, rare and, therefore, vulnerable. In other words, such a way of trying to preserve or even empower Indigenous Peoples ignores the actual ways that Indigenous Peoples have of being, doing and thinking. St. Denis (2000) reports how a dance that belongs to a healing ritual showed at a school festival becomes decontextualised and even useless, as it no longer pursues its ultimate goal of healing (St. Denis, 2000). Furthermore, this can be considered cultural appropriation.

Ultimately, this kind of partial portrayal of practical aspects of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures is the cause of the invisibilisation of the current political claims and interests that these groups demand. Additionally, this has an effect on the homogenisation process which globalisation entails as, in Larry Kuehn’s words, globalisation “pushes to the side the social, cultural, and ethical goals of education” (in St. Denis, 2000, p. 46). Even as globalization has negative effects on the population on a worldwide scale, “Indigenous people seem particularly vulnerable because they are presently marginalized in the political and economic world order” (St. Denis, 2000, p. 46).

Sami values from a Westernised perspective

Despite the fact that most of the topics regarding culture fall into the category of ‘processes’, it is relevant to mention that there are two which are identified under the marker ‘values’. This category represents the ways of being and understanding worthiness. Both competence aims in the Norwegian curriculum emphasise the students’ ability to reflect on the values that are distinctive for the Sami Peoples, as well as to understand their position nowadays. However, both of them also present traces of superficiality and a lack of input and perspective coming from the Sami community itself.
For example, note the following competence aim addressed to students at the end of year 7 in the subject of Christianity, religion and ethics education: “discuss and elaborate on some questions about values that the indigenous Sami people are concerned with in modern times” (Ministry od Education and Research, 2015a). Here, the need to use the time marker “in modern times” entails the existence of a pre-modern time, and suggests that the values today, “in modern times”, differ from the values in pre-modern times. Jelena Porsanger (2011) claims that such “tradition-modernity dichotomy has a tendency to leave indigenous peoples outside the contemporary world, which is considered to be ‘modern’ as opposed to the ‘traditional’ world of the indigenous” (p. 245).

Even though the curriculum refers to the values that concern Sami Peoples in modern times, Norway has consistently ignored Sami Peoples’ claims and, as a consequence, the current concerns of Sami Peoples are not very different from those claimed since colonial times. Therefore, despite the fact that the Norwegian curriculum places Sami Peoples in a present time, it perpetuates the dichotomous idea of modernity as opposed to tradition by using the expression “in modern times”. Chilisa (2012) argues that the use of such dichotomies is a way to accentuate power relations and to “marginalize the voices of the colonized Other” (p. 49). This way, the curricular guidelines portray Indigenous Peoples as if they had “in a way been suddenly surprised by modernity, which has come from the outside world” (Porsanger, 2011, p. 245). Kuokkanen explains that, according to this view, “indigenous culture belongs to the pre-modern period and that culture therefore cannot be connected to modernity” (in Porsanger, 2011, p. 231).

Regarding Sami axiology, Harald Gaski argues that “tradition cannot be placed as a ‘forerunner’ of modernity that presupposes a linear placement in time and space” (in Porsanger, 2011, p. 235). Therefore, any attempt to understand an Indigenous value system from a Western perspective will result in failure. Chi’XapKaid (2005), Skokomish scholar also known as Michael Pavel, argues that “to integrate Native language and culture into the public education system, teachers must [...] recognize the incompatibility of Western mainstream public schooling and Native methods of education” (p. 131).

**Indigenous knowledge**

I have identified five entries concerning the ways of knowing of the Sami peoples in the national curriculum for education in Norway. In *Table 4*, they are classified under the marker ‘systems’. These five entries are distributed across four topics, namely, ‘language’, ‘culture’, ‘time’, and ‘place’. Moreover, two subjects contain these five competence aims: natural
science and Norwegian language. The main feature of these competence aims is that they integrate, in one way or another, the knowledge systems of the Sami Peoples to what concerns, for instance, topics in fields such as medicine, time management, astronomy, literature, etc.

Indigenous knowledge, like any other existing, extinct, or yet-to-be knowledge system, constitutes guidelines, rules and laws that act according to the ways of being, thinking and acting of a given society. Therefore, the production of knowledge goes hand-in-hand with the project a community pursues. Consequently, knowledge systems are, according to Francis Adyanga Akena (2012), “reflective of the society in which the individual is raised” (p. 602) and cannot suppose an objective and universal source of knowing. Despite this, Eurocentric knowledge systems have acted oppressively upon other ways of knowing, like Indigenous knowledges, claiming status as the Truth in an oppressive ruling system driven by hegemonic power forces.

This way, Indigenous knowledge systems differ from Eurocentric knowledge in the way they have “deliberately” been undermined and suppressed by hegemonic practices coming from the colonising forces of Eurocentric power (Akena, 2012). Angela C. Wilson (2013) agrees with this idea and she adds that the colonising institutions have “routinely” disregarded any sort of knowledge which is supposed to entail alternative ways of knowing. For that reason, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars are concerned about the dangers attached to the act of worshiping one sole knowledge system while erasing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and producing knowledge.

**Sami knowledge in the Norwegian curriculum**

The Norwegian curriculum reflects the effects described in the paragraph above through the competence aims that address the Sami ways of knowing. First, because a seventh part of thirty-five entries (which are not many considering 10 required subjects throughout 10 years of mandatory education) distributed across two subjects seems inadequate as the means to represent the complexity of Indigenous knowledge and to understand its entanglements and implications. Second, again, due to the insecurity among teachers and educators reported by Professor Lile (in Vedvik, 2011). Last, because the topics and the way they are addressed confirm the lack of interest from the institutions to shift the paradigm of addressing knowledge and ways of knowing.

For example, consider the following competence aim intended for students after year 10 in the subject natural science: “provide examples of folk medicine, including Sami folk
medicine, and discuss the difference between alternative medicine and academic medicine” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013b). This aim can be divided in two parts: first, it introduces the concept of folk medicine and includes the Sami medicinal knowledge system in it, and second, it presents the dichotomy of alternative-academic medicine. Thus, the focus does not necessarily lie on Sami medicine per se, but in the complete field of folk medicine. In other words, the topic of folk medicine can be dealt in the classroom without necessarily including the Sami folk medicine.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the first task is reduced to giving examples, without having to contextualise or understand the reasons, the situations and the effects of performing Sami folk medicine. Regarding this, Akena (2012) points out how important it is “to first seek to understand and appreciate other societies before making any judgment and imposing any form of knowledge” (p. 617). The intellectual and cultural property of a society or community has total validity, first, in that same society, and second in other communities which might benefit from it.

The relevance of the context
As a matter of fact, Åsa Nordin Jonsson (2011) states that the Sami cultural and intellectual systems are “a reflection of how knowledge is adapted to the distinct ecological niches or environments found in Sápmi (Samiland)” (p. 97). Accordingly, Harris (2010) agrees with this idea when she says that “Indigenous ways of knowing may not be valid from the narrowly scientific Western perspective but they are valid from the Indigenous perspective and continue to order Indigenous reality” (p. 66).

Furthermore, such property can serve other communities, which can benefit from it when it comes to understanding new contexts or classifying new elements not encountered before. In fact, that is what the colonisers did as soon as they stepped on unknown land. They stole not only people, land and objects, but also knowledge from the Indigenous Peoples that they were displacing. Goonatilake reports that knowledge “became as much commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources” (in Smith, 2010, p. 58).

Smith (2010) argues as well that the influence and contribution of Indigenous knowledge systems in the production of Western knowledge and research foundations are “rarely mentioned” in Western discourses. In any case, it seems like, as Bazin concludes, “Europeans could not even imagine that other people could ever have done things before or better than themselves” (as cited in Smith, 2010, p. 58). In summary, the process of colonisation involves on the one hand appropriation, and on the other, eradication.
Inconsistent dichotomies

Calling back the competence aim discussed above, the dichotomy of alternative-academic introduced in the second part recalls the binary tradition-modernity which Porsanger (2011) claims, in her own words, to be in fact “hostile to indigenous epistemologies” (p. 225). Rauna Kuokkanen agrees as she states that “the dichotomy of these concepts [tradition and modernity] has been a powerful tool to marginalize and suppress indigenous peoples and to place them outside ‘modern’ society” (as cited in Porsanger, 2011, p. 235).

Sami ways of thinking function, according to Harald Gaski with “the impossibility of an opposition between tradition and modernity” (in Porsanger, 2011, p. 234). They are based on experience, contrary to a Western system, that relies on scientific explanations to produce and understand knowledge. The approach of the discourse in the curriculum in Norway presents both systems as opposed. Such way of presenting both as a binary (alternative-academic) suggests having to accept one over the other. Taking into account that the Western knowledge system works as a hegemonic and universal power force, the Sami system becomes relegated and marginalised.

The binaries alternative-academic, traditional-modern, developed-undeveloped, etc. are part of a scheme entangled in “Western invention, a construction, as a philosophy and ideology” (Posanger, 2011, p. 245), which, albeit normalised in hegemonic ways of thinking, perpetuate the perception of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous systems as the Other (Said, 1978/2003). Consequently, “indigenous peoples seem to be stuck in the past, and have in a way been suddenly surprised by modernity, which has come from the outside world” (Porsanger, 2011, p. 245). Such portrayal of Indigenous Peoples prolongs colonisation at the same time that it continues to neglect Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

Using Sami sources is possible

As a result, on the one hand, the education system does not guarantee students meeting quality and real sources of information when dealing with Sami topics, and Sami students do not develop nor empower their identity and heritage.13 Porsanger (2011) claims that in such cases, “Indigenous Sami knowledge can and should be given priority as a source” (p. 237). The problem is that hegemonic forces have for long imposed their perspectives and ways of

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13 It is relevant to mention the last reform of the national curriculum of Norway (2006) implanted a specific education program intended to areas in which Sami population is majoritary. According to Szilvási (2016): “The Sami curriculum can be found in the following subjects: christianity, religion and life style, food and health, music, nature, society, duodji (Sami handicraft), Sami as a first language, Sami as a second language, religion and ethics, geography, history, reindeerkeeping and Norwegian for students who have Sami as a first language” (p. 85).
knowledge production as the only valid source. This situation has led to society being too used to ignore alternative systems at the same time that there has been a perpetuation of the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge. Indigenous Peoples’ cultural and intellectual property has been silenced and whitewashed for centuries, and, by obviating such Indigenous perspectives in the transmission of knowledge in schools, the system is perpetuating the repression.

Alternatively, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the colonised and the coloniser, at some point, as Wilson (2013) claims, “could have worked jointly towards conditions that would facilitate the return of Indigenous ways of being while appreciating the knowledge that supported those ways” (p. 20). Unfortunately, though, there has not been any motivation or interest to join forces and bring the colonial domination to an end, at least from the position of the coloniser. Pewardy (2005) affirms: “There has always been opposition to integration of Indigenous Peoples into the mainstream society” (p. 149). Consequently, Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are becoming weaker day by day and even extinct in certain cases. This process is fostered, additionally, through “the increasing influence of Western ways of life on Indigenous communities and the passing away of the older generation, taking with them a great deal of the knowledge” (Jonsson, 2011, p. 97).

But even in such pessimistic conditions, Jonsson (2011) notes that processes of documentation have become “increasingly common” within Sami communities. What is more, Philip Burgess reports that “Indigenous peoples themselves are today often in the forefront in demanding that traditional knowledge be collected, preserved and passed on to the younger generations” (in Jonsson, 2011, p. 97). He assures that “even now” it is a doable task, as society still has the means to access and preserve endangered Indigenous knowledge systems. As a matter of fact, Indigenous Peoples themselves claim the responsibility to perform such task themselves, Burgess points out (in Jonsson, 2011). After all, the process of “renewing and reconstructing” their knowledge, context and perspectives cannot be done without the participation of Indigenous Peoples themselves, as Marie Battiste notes (1998, p. 24).

Ending cognitive imperialism

Porsanger (2011) claims in her work that by overcoming the universality of a hegemonic knowledge system, society will be able to reach alternative systems that will allow it to access new dimensions of knowledge. In other words, “Sami epistemology provides the opportunity to move away from this dichotomy [of hegemonic-alternative], and start
argumentation from the standpoint of the Sami theory of knowledge” (p. 230). The employment of one unique knowledge system leaves the scope incomplete; on top of that, if that system has exerted oppressive forces over others, it provides an even more biased framework. This effect is known as “cognitive imperialism”, which, according to Battiste, “is a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education” (1998, p. 20).

In addition to accepting a unique source of knowledge and knowing, throughout cognitive imperialism a system discards and condemns alternative ways of knowing. Therefore, when the curriculum for education accepts and fosters such hegemonic way of knowing (entangled in a Eurocentric system), it is in fact prolonging the practices in which such system has grown and empowered, namely, colonisation. Hence, the fact that Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are still unaccepted and ostracised proves the claims that colonisation endures nowadays.

Porsanger (2011) argues that “both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars can contribute to knowledge building” (p. 228), instead of suppression, relegation and oblivion of one knowledge system in favor of another. After all, as Sami politician Klemetti Nåkkäläjärvi comments, “the hypothetical difference between traditional and modern might make no sense if traditional knowledge is taken seriously and if it is recognized as a knowledge system which is as valuable and as valid as Western ‘scientific’ knowledge” (in Porsanger, 2011, p. 234). In this statement, he implies that colonialism has imposed hegemonic knowledge and ways of knowing upon colonized subjects, and has mocked and aimed to suppress other valid existing systems for ages.

Different ways of knowing contribute to a greater understanding of the world. For instance, as Harris (2010) claims, “the holistic worldview of the Indigenous peoples” can provide broader perspective to “the dichotomous view of the West” (p. 64). In sum, education offers a platform for Sami and all Indigenous Peoples to access the knowledge framework in order to introduce oppressed and forgotten ways of knowing and, in that way, breaking with the idea that Western knowledge system is universal.

Land claims: a key factor toward self-determination
The subject of social studies includes five competence aims that regard Sami issues. Two of them deal with the topic of ‘land’, and both are addressed to students after year 7. Land claims is one of the central points that Sami Peoples and Indigenous Peoples worldwide
regard in their fight toward self-determination and decolonisation. Yet, the curriculum in Norway does not address current land issues and claims of Sami Peoples in Norway, strictly speaking. One could assume that land claims can be introduced in the classroom through more generic competence aims. However, as Lille finds out, teachers in Norway do not feel prepared nor confident to address Sami topics (in Vedvik, 2011).

A reason why the national curriculum in Norway does not contemplate any land claims may be due to the fact that “Saami have few legal claims to land and resources” (Janet E. Levy, 2010, p. 358), in comparison to Native Americans or Aboriginals from Australia, despite the fact that territorial rights are connected to typical traditional activities of some Sami groups, namely, reindeer herding. That does not mean, though, that Sami land claims do not take place or that they do not entail a form of self-determination. In any case, the two competence aims that do address land issues concentrate on former Sápmi features which are indeed relevant to form a complete understanding of the situation of Sami Peoples in Norway and in Scandinavia, although they do not suffice.

One of the competence aims reads as follows: “give an account of how the Nordic states and Russia established the borders between them along the Northern Cap until the first half of the 1800s and give an account of how this affected the culture and living conditions of the Sami peoples and their relationship at this time with these states” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013c). In this case, Sami Peoples are presented as a passive entity that has no capacity to decide or participate in political decisions. Obviously, the curriculum aims to rightfully describe the event of border partition. Nevertheless, it fails in acknowledging the fact that there were inhabitants in Sápmi that, despite not having established the borders the same way as Western countries do, they had and have been claiming the land “along the Northern Cap”. According to a Sami interviewee from a project carried out by Jan Åge Riseth, Jan Idar Solbakken and Heidi Kitti,

We Sami have never owned land in the way that people do in the West. We have not, as people have in the West, cultivated the land, put up fences around it. But that does not mean that we do not leave traces, tracks and marks. A practiced gaze can see where others have been; where grass has been cut, where people have rested… (as cited in Gro B. Ween & Marianne Lien, 2012, p. 99)

Furthermore, the curriculum does not include a potential debate on the way in which oppression operates the oppressed, and the consequent process that Loomba credits as “thingification of people” (as cited in Chilisa. 2012, p. 191). By omitting such discourses for
deconstruction, the oppression process is being perpetuated, as it ignores the concerns of the Sami Peoples (Chilisa, 2012).

The other competence aim concludes that students at the end of year 7 are capable of locating the traditional Sami areas in a map. Once again, the curriculum misses an opportunity to introduce the term “Sápmi” and to recognise the right of Sami Peoples to that territory. Additionally, there is no mention of the distribution of the Sami Peoples across Norway nowadays, while, according to Statistics Norway (2010), “it is widely known that many Sami now live outside the traditional settlement area” (p. 9).

Generally, despite the fact that Table 4 might seem containing a fair distribution of the 35 topics identified in a few competence aims of the national curriculum in Norway, in fact, as I have argued above, the Norwegian education system presents several gaps which contribute to an incomplete portrayal of Sami Peoples and other Indigenous Peoples.

The main points discussed in this section are (1) the inadequate way of addressing Sami culture, fostering a stereotyped portrayal, (2) the obviation of historico-political elements and effects: Lile states that, “the most important part of Sami history has not been included in the nationwide school reform dubbed the Knowledge Promotion” (in Vedvik, 2011). Another incoherence of the system is (3) the perpetuation of cognitive imperialism in a context in which equality and the rights of Indigenous Peoples have been publicly defended. Also, (4) the avoidance and oblivion of Sami knowledge systems in the national curriculum, (5) the use of dichotomies to explain and understand Sami axiology and ontology, (6) the exclusion of elements of the Sami society that would foster a more complete and contemporary portrayal, as land claims.

The combination of these factors, together with the teachers’ and educators’ insecurities when addressing topics related to Indigenous Peoples in the classroom promote to making Sami and all Indigenous Peoples’ legacy dispensable, by the curricular plan and the education system of Norway.

### 6.2.2. Provincial curriculum for Alberta

**Historical focus**

Table 5 shows the distribution of the 65 topics identified within the 33 competence aims that the provincial curriculum in Alberta includes concerning issues related to Indigenous Peoples from grade 1 to 9. The perspective marker that scores the highest number of entries is ‘processes’. This means that 49 of the 65 topics represent the ways of thinking and doing of
First Nations, Métis, Inuit and/or other Indigenous groups which, according to Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013), “are regarded as cognition and practical methodology” (p. 4).

An example of the ways of thinking and doing of Indigenous Peoples included in the provincial curriculum in Alberta is the following competence aim, addressed to students in grade 5 for the subject of social studies: “How are the stories of the Métis people, their culture and heritage rooted in the fur trade?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The historical period dedicated to the fur trade is used as a means to introduce and explain the culture and heritage of the Métis. This effect connects a ‘traditional’ practical aspect of the Métis culture and heritage with their identity. The role of the Métis in the fur trade and the events that occurred in that period have had an effect on their status today. This justifies the historical focus of this competence aim; nevertheless, the curricular guideline needs to include current aspects of the Métis as well, in order to contribute to a complete portrayal.

Another example concerning Métis Peoples is the following competence aim addressed to students in grade 7 for the subject of social studies: “Assess, critically, the role, contributions and influence of the Red River Métis on the development of western Canada” (Alberta Education, 2007b). This competence aim includes as a continuation some questions for students to explore, which address historical events such as the Red River Resistance in 1869, the second Métis uprising, the creation of Manitoba, etc. The curriculum in Alberta offers a highly detailed scope of historical events in which the Métis have been involved, and that has partially had an influence on their current situation. However, by merely placing the focus on “remarkable” elements of the past, the curricular guideline is avoiding a complete actual and current portrayal of Métis Peoples, as well as an accurate image emerging from Métis sources. Moreover, an attempt to understand the culture, heritage and stories of the Métis Peoples in Canada without explicitly mentioning the repression by Canadian laws fosters its prolongation.

Despite the fact that, according to the Government of Alberta, “The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Services of the Department of Education overview matters of interest for all concerned” (as cited in Daveluy, 2010, p. 176), curriculum development remains a provincial competence. This means that the way of addressing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues does not necessarily meet the ground gained at a national level. Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) state in their paper that the entries classified under the marker ‘processes’ “were given the benefit of the doubt in terms of their potential to deliver on actual ways of thinking or doing, rather than just the transmission and recall of basic cultural or historical facts” (p. 5).
Similarly, the competence aims included in the curriculum in Alberta seem to undergo the same effect.

Another example that illustrates the focus on historical events is the following competence aim for students at grade 5 within the subject of social studies: “Why were Aboriginal peoples excluded from the negotiations surrounding Confederation?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). Once again, the event of the formation of the Confederation is used in the portrayal of Aboriginal Peoples. In this case, in addition to the effects described in the previous paragraph, the curriculum in Alberta represents Aboriginal Peoples as passive. The curriculum in Alberta seems to agree with the effects that Anne Godlewska, John Rose, Laura Schaeflí, Sheila Freake & Jennifer Massey (2017) report regarding the guidelines from Newfoundland and Labrador, as they offer competence aims “with no attention to Indigenous autonomy” (p. 448).

**Discourse on multiculturalism**

This lack of acknowledgement of the agency of Indigenous Peoples contrasts with the inclusion in the curriculum of other competence aims that present Aboriginal Peoples as active, such as in the following: “Appreciate the influence of diverse Aboriginal, French and British peoples on events leading to Confederation” (Alberta Education, 2007b), addressed to students in grade 7 in the subject of social studies. Nevertheless, this competence aim proves to be incomplete as the focus is no longer utterly on Aboriginal Peoples, but on the different groups that lived in Canadian territory before Confederation.

Therefore, the capacity of emphasising Aboriginal Peoples’ influence on Confederation is actually scattered by the incorporation of other groups which, far from being comparable to First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit, represent the coloniser and the oppressor in colonial times. This implies a hindrance in two senses: first, a discourse on multiculturalism trivialises the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and second, it likens Aboriginal Peoples’ influence to the power exerted by the British and the French, which is a way to minimise the effects and responsibilities of the parts implied in the colonisation process.

St. Denis (2011) claims that policies on multiculturalism in Canada represent the nation’s “attempts to collapse Aboriginal rights into ethnic and minority issues” (p. 315). Such effect is clearly visible in the following competence aim, addressed to students in grade 1 in the subject of social studies: “Recognise how diverse Aboriginal and Francophone communities are integral to Canada’s character” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The inclusion of Aboriginal and Francophone issues in the same competence aim acts as an extension of the
Multicultural Act of 1988\textsuperscript{14} which, according to St. Denis (2011), came after the 1971 multicultural policy, which implied “an attempt to respond to the demands of French-language speakers, an increasing culturally diverse citizenry, and Aboriginal people” (p. 307). As a matter of fact, St. Denis (2011) further claims that “public schools effectively limit meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspectives into public schools” through a discourse and policies that foster multiculturalism (p. 307).

\textit{My colonialism is better than yours}

As seen, the previous competence aim pursues to acknowledge the role of Francophone and Aboriginal Peoples of Canada in the formation of the country’s character. These two groups, besides having gained different degrees of recognition and rights during the last decades, have been and still are being deflected and marginalised by national institutions of Canada. Therefore, the extent to which these oppressed groups might contribute to the character of the whole country of Canada partly depends on the national policies that Canada itself adopts. However, the institutional responsibility of Canada is often neglected through discourses that portray Canada as harmless. St. Denis (2011) points out, “Normative Canadian history produces Canada as a nation that is ‘tolerant’ and ‘innocent’” (p. 310), not only through the curriculum for education, but also in the public arena.

Regarding this, Laura Moss (2003) claims that discourses on the postcolonial paradigm often divide “the ‘invader-settler’ nations of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, where the process of colonization was predominantly one of immigration and settlement, and those parts of the world where colonization was more predominantly a process of displacement, impoverishment, sublimation, and even annihilation” (p. 2). This means that the discourse on Canada being innocent is not only widely used, but also thought to be legitimate at the expense of other situations of oppression and colonisation, which leads to the conclusion that Canada “is still actively engaging in colonial practices” (Moss, 2003, p. 10).

\textit{The limits of ‘diversity’}

Alberta Education (2007a, 2007b) states that the social studies program of the curriculum “provides learning opportunities for students to … appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal ..., shape Canada’s political, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural realities” (as cited in Jacqueline Ottmann & Lori Pritchard, 2010, p. 14).

\textsuperscript{14} Approved by the Mulroney government, following the policy on multiculturalism proposed by Prime Minister Trudeau in 1971.
30). However, among the 33 competence aims in the curriculum that deal with Indigenous topics, I have merely identified one that addresses such cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta. In the other cases that a competence aim refers to ‘diversity’, it limits to the diversity of Aboriginal Peoples. Hence, the curricular guideline of Alberta does not include the importance of cultural diversity of Canada among the competence aims claimed as relevant in other parts of the document.

The curriculum in Alberta could avoid its limited scope formed by to two groups (Aboriginal Peoples and Francophones) by referring to the diversity of identities, cultures and languages that integrate the province of Alberta into Canada. By so doing, the provincial guideline could adapt to the situation of each region, school and even student in the same classroom. In that case, teachers and educators would need to be aware of the heritage and cultural aspects of their students and the community they are teaching. As a matter of fact, the actual role of the teacher already involves decision making regarding methodology and teaching perspectives. Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) claim that teachers should be confident in their teaching and since their responsibilities include addressing ‘attributes’, they should be aware of their own basic assumptions, values, and beliefs and the influence that their perspectives has on learning and values development of students. (p. 31)

A successful outcome greatly depends on the performance of the teacher in the classroom. Hence, without suitable teacher education on topics related to Indigenous Peoples, teachers and educators are not able to rightfully address diversity in the classroom. Cornel Pewewardy (2002) argues that a teacher “who fails to recognize that many students in their class value their ethnic cultures and languages promotes the idea of a ‘color-blind’ society” (p. 30). This contributes to the creation of what this author refers to as the “illusion of inclusion” (p. 25). Through it, the consequences of addressing diversity wrongly (racism, exclusion, oppression, bigotry, etc.) are ignored instead of solved and, as a result, diversity is invisibilised. Omowale Akintunde asserts that through avoidance of the aspects that conform diversity, “white people ensure that group’s supremacy and subsequent degradation of ‘others’” (as cited in Pewewardy, 2002, p. 25).

**Biased values**

As previously argued, the role of the teacher in the classroom turns out to be highly relevant. Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) state: “How Aboriginal perspectives is taught and delivered in
the classroom should matter to all educators because the ‘how’ of teaching influences student beliefs systems and consequently relationships” (p. 31). This affects the way teachers address competence aims in the classroom differently. Pewewardy (2002) contends that “one’s culture is one’s grounding”, meaning that everybody is “rooted in systems of beliefs, ways of knowing, ways of behaving, acquisition of language, and ways of making meaning” (p. 29).

It is for that reason that teachers need to be especially aware of the responsibility that rests on them as mediators toward social justice and equality.

Note the following competence aim addressed to students in grades 4 and 5 in the subject of social studies: “What do stories of Aboriginal peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). There are many ways to approach a competence aim that deals with value systems. The knowledge, interest and attitude that a teacher has towards Indigenous belief systems has an effect in the way of addressing the topic. In compliance with this, Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) claim that teaching methodology “influences student beliefs systems and consequently relationships” and it “is largely determined by a teacher’s level of knowledge, skill, attitude and belief of Aboriginal perspectives, of Aboriginal people” (p. 31).

Linda T. Smith asserts that researchers working with Indigenous Peoples need to “interrogate questions on ownership of research, the interests it serves, the benefits to the researched, and the role of the researched” (as cited in Chilisa, 2012, p. 118). The same way, teachers that meet Indigenous topics in the classroom need to be aware and reflect on the approach and methodology they use to address a diversity of cross-cultural issues. This can be done, for instance, by “respectfully” involving the subjects of research or study as “co-participants” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 118).

As a matter of fact, Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) argue that teachers should be at all times aware that their “understanding of individual, organizational and societal culture directly influences teaching practices and the quality of teaching” (p. 33). This is due to the fact that all kinds of behavior are “culturally based” (Gwendolyn Cartledge & Scott A. Loe, as cited in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 33). Thus, teaching processes should involve reflective practices instead of being a “habit”, as Judith Lloyd Yero claims (as cited in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 32). In other words, teachers need to provide a culturally responsive pedagogy in order to avoid cultural subversion or, what Cartledge and Loe label as “cultural discontinuities” (as cited in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 34).
Culturally responsive pedagogy

To try to understand Indigenous values and beliefs from a Western point of view can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings that result in a continuation of practices and ways of thinking typical of colonialism. This can even drive to “a breakdown of relationships at multiple levels, and a disruption of learning, or refusal to learn, and disengagement by students” (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, pp. 33-34). Hence, because education systems cannot afford dealing with more “misinterpretations, misconceptions and stereotypes that have led to discrimination and racism in every realm, including education” (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 24), educational institutions and the teachers themselves must engage in culturally responsive pedagogies.

Regarding culturally responsive teaching, Heraldo V. Richards, Ayanna F. Brown and Timothy B. Forde identify three separate but interrelated dimensions in which it must take place: institutional (related to the school administration), personal (connected to the teacher), and instructional (regarding material and methodology) (in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010). They argue: “While all three dimensions are important […], the two most relevant for teachers’ work [are] the personal and instructional dimensions” (as cited in Ottmann and Pritchard, 2010, p. 34). At this point of the paper, I have made quite clear the relevance of the teacher role and performance in the classroom to transmit the competence aims that form the curriculum.

Nevertheless, Gilchrist asserts that “many teachers have not had the appropriate educational background to prepare them for diverse classrooms, and specifically they were not prepared to integrate Aboriginal culture and perspectives” (in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 32). This indicates a need for a change in teacher education faculties, but also in society and at an institutional level. Indeed, Porsanger (2011) asserts that, when dealing with Indigenous methodological thinking, “there is one important dimension over and above epistemology and ontology, i.e. that Indigenous scholars have been insisting on the inclusion of their respective axiologies (values systems) in research” (p. 233) as well as in curriculum development. Equally, Battiste (1998) claims that the greater part of the discourses and research at university is involved in “a political and institutional stake in Eurocentric diffusion and knowledge, that is, perpetuating colonization” (p. 23).

Recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems

It is equally important to integrate Indigenous epistemologies in the education system in order for Indigenous Peoples and other historically oppressed groups to attain self-
determination. In the provincial curriculum for Alberta, I have identified 6 competence aims dedicated to Aboriginal knowledge systems. Five of them are included in the subject of science and, as a result, they acknowledge the limitations of using a single system, namely, scientific knowledge, in providing answers and solutions towards an understanding of the world and the universe. The science program in the curriculum in Alberta mentions that Aboriginal knowledge is “based on long-term observation, that it provides an alternative source of understanding”, that it has a role “in identifying useful herbs and medicines”, that it contributes “to knowledge of the environment”, etc. (Alberta Education, 2014).

Despite the fact that Eurocentric knowledge still works as an imperialistic system in the approach and ways of “knowing” and thinking in the classrooms of Alberta, it is necessary to appreciate and value those few cases in which the curricular guideline acknowledges the legitimacy and significance of Indigenous knowledge. It is not often that mainstream knowledge systems get questioned or reconsidered (Battiste, 1998), but it is an essential practice for education and society in order to build an equal and sustainable world. Indigenous epistemologies are, according to Trevor W. Purcell, “the body of historically constituted knowledge that is instrumental in the long-term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (in Akena, 2012, p. 601). It entails a source of inestimable information that has been collected and built through experience and in a holistic way. After all, as Porsanger (2011) points out, “indigenous peoples have waited a long time to experience recognition of their traditional skills and knowledge” (p. 228).

Besides the five competence aims concerning knowledge systems that are included in the subject of science, there is one that belongs to the subject of social studies, and it is addressed to students in grade 5; it reads as follows: “Acknowledge oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land and diverse Aboriginal cultures and history” (Alberta Education, 2007a). In here, the official document of Alberta is in fact legitimasing the nature of Indigenous traditional knowledge which, according to Jonsson (2011), “is adaptive knowledge, transmitted orally, containing both abstract and practical elements” (p. 98), and entails a valid source of knowledge.

Even though the provincial curriculum in Alberta dedicates some space to the legitimization of the epistemologies of Indigenous Peoples, it seems that, according to Battiste (1998), “Aboriginal languages and knowledge are still excluded in most Canadian educational systems” (p. 17). As a consequence, such imperialistic universality of Eurocentrism “leads to racism, which allows Europeans and colonialist to assert their privileges while exploiting Indigenous people and their knowledge” (Battiste, 1998, p. 22).
Indigenous knowledge can contribute to non-Indigenous societies with different perspectives that have been formed through observation and understanding the environment holistically. Furthermore, and according to Battiste (1998), “Aboriginal languages provide a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge. They provide the deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Aboriginal life” (p. 18). In sum, Aboriginal knowledge systems must become integrated in all the subjects and transversely across the curriculum.

Assimilative strategies aimed at Indigenous Peoples

Harris (2010) writes about Indigenous knowledge that it “is holistic, rather than reductionist, seeing the universe as a living entity; [and that] it is experiential, rather than positivist, contending that experiences which cannot be measured are no less real than those that can be measured” (p. 66). Despite the fact that Indigenous epistemologies have proved to be a legitimate source of knowledge in Indigenous groups, they have still suffered from Eurocentric mitigation. Akena (2012) elaborates that dominant groups have often imposed their knowledge system, which has been used as “a tool of domination, oppression, and exploitation due to unequal power relations” (p. 616).

As a matter of fact, such cognitive imperialism has been empowered and prolonged throughout public education (Battiste, 1998, p. 20). Moreover, Akena (2012) adds that, “in the contemporary education system, Western knowledge does not give indigenous knowledge any considerable credibility, thus intellectually marginalizing it” (p. 606). Indigenous Peoples are not taken seriously nor is their knowledge or ways of knowing regarded as valid and useful. Wilson (2013) contends that recognising their agency and contribution in knowledge formation would entail “acknowledging the contribution of a variety of plant, a shard of pottery or a ‘preserved head of a native’” (p. 58).

Boarding schools were perhaps one of the most extended practices of exerting assimilation. Between 1831 and 1996, the government of Canada used approved religious institutions to whitewash the culture, language, beliefs, knowledge and ways of knowing of different groups of Aboriginal Peoples, which were to be assimilated into Euro-Canadian mainstream aspects (Jim R. Miller, 2012). Children were placed in schools away from home, so they would lose contact with their families and communities. That way, they would distance from all aspects of their identity; in some cases, they would even lose their mother tongue. About Christian institutions and missionaries, and boarding schools, St. Denis (2000)
states that they exerted assimilation by “robbing the people of their language and culture and forever changing their lives” (p. 42).

Culture prevailing
From the topic markers comprised in the rows of the matrix table, the one including elements related to culture is the most predominant, with 23 entries. Indeed, Indigenous Peoples in Canada constitute a diversity of groups with distinctive cultural traits that have served to standardise a profile of Aboriginality from a Eurocentric point of view. However, to represent a community merely through the emphasis of the elements that makes it distinctive entails some dangers like segregation, alienation and, eventually, that might lead to racism. Butler (2000) claims that such features of a culture should be “understood as subjective representations which may be typical of some aspects of the Aboriginal experience, but certainly not all” (p. 96).

For instance, note the following competence aim addressed to students in grade 5 for the subject of social studies: “How are the Aboriginal cultures and ways of life unique in each of the western, northern, central and eastern regions of Canada?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The approach of the aim can lead teachers and educators to different interpretations and forms of addressing it in the classroom. As the aim is read, one can think that the focus is on the uniqueness of each of the diverse Aboriginal cultures present in Canada in comparison to each other, or that it relates to the ways in which Indigenous Peoples are different from non-Indigenous communities present in the same territory. Accordingly, Yero asserts that “variations in the way teachers perceive the task create huge differences in implementation” (as cited in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 32), and Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) add that teachers and educators “are also filtering their own actions through a specific cultural lens” (p. 33).

Therefore, it is a part of the teacher’s role to perform a reflective job and become aware that his or her previous education, background and context might be embedded in a Eurocentric system, needing to reconsider every assumption, thought and action. Ottmann & Pritchard (2010) claim that “the affective domain (i.e. teacher attitudes, norms, values, basic assumptions) directly influences the quality and degree of inclusion, infusion and embedding of Aboriginal perspectives in the Social Studies Program” (p. 42). On top of that, Battiste (1998) elaborates that “most teachers in public schools have neither taken courses about and from Indigenous peoples nor developed awareness of cross-cultural realities” (p. 22). Hence, since a significant part of the educative success depends on the ‘praxis’, teachers and
educators need to be comfortable in “knowing how to bridge theory to practice” (Ottmann & Pritchard, p. 40).

According to Kathy Butler (2000), there is a tendency among teachers to engage in “the privileging of pre-contact forms of culture and the refusal or inability to engage in recognising contemporary forms of Aboriginality persist” (p. 98). This can be explained in terms of two situations. On one hand, the widely reported lack of confidence by teachers. Butler (2000) elaborates, “For a teacher, the confidence and comfort level decreases when there is an expectation to teach an unfamiliar concept, topic or subject” (in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 38), as in the case of teaching Aboriginal topics. For that reason, as Howard Groome (1994, pp. 4-5) reports, “many teachers [...] feel more comfortable engaging in Aboriginal content of the form, most commonly referred to as ‘traditional’ culture, rather than what are regarded as politically laden contemporary cultures” (in Butler, 2000, p. 98).

On the other hand, teachers and educators might, on the search of the right Aboriginality, fall into reductionist conclusions based on pre-contact aspects of a culture. Butler (2000) claims that such conceptions “occupy a privileged status within the hierarchy of Aboriginalities that has developed in the mainstream and indigenous domains” (p. 98). She adds that these forms of culture “often predicate the status of the ‘real Aborigine’, whose culture constitutes a definitive Aboriginality, whilst consigning others’ claims to positions of inferiority and illegitimacy” (p. 98). Teachers and institutions end up fostering a reductionist, stereotyped and synthesised idea of what a generic Aboriginal culture might entail. This idea is transmitted throughout the education system and might even end up becoming real, in a similar way in which Said (1978/2003) develops and explains that the term and the idea of “the Orient” is created and validated by and from a Western philosophy and context.

All in all, the sole representation of a cultural or ethnic group as an object of study instead of as a subject with agency, ignoring their perspectives contributes to the perpetuation of Eurocentric knowledge, avoiding the creation of a path towards truth, justice and decolonisation. The result of both situations is, eventually, the same: focusing on the past and resisting to accept that Aboriginal Peoples adapt to the passing of time. According to Butler (2000), Aboriginal Peoples are denied the agency to “normal processes of cultural change”, not being able to create and develop new ways of cultural manifestation (Battiste, 2000, p. 98).
Discourse on development

The construction of the idea of development entails the existence of an underdeveloped or even undeveloped party. The West’s “established linear perception of tradition and modernity” (Porsanger, 2011, p. 233) is connected to the idea of development, as what is closer in time to a present point is more developed (and, therefore, superior) than what is placed further in a timeline. This linear perception of development as a process evolving towards an improved state is characteristic to a Western system of thought and it “is alien to the Sami context”, relates Porsanger (2011, p. 232). In such state, Eurocentric societies perceive that the communities they portray as underdeveloped are in need of help, and it is not without it that they can experience development (understood as the ultimate goal of capitalist societies).

This situation is especially patent in territories where colonised people coexist with the coloniser (or the aftermath). It is the case of Indigenous Peoples from all over the world. They are ruled, portrayed and subjected to and by a system engraved in Western rules, assumptions and beliefs. This effect is visible in institutional documents such as the provincial curriculum in Alberta, which includes the following competence aim for students in grade 2 for the subject of social studies: “Investigate the physical geography of an Inuit, an Acadian, and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting the following questions for inquiry: [...] What individuals and groups contributed to the development of the communities?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). In it, the Inuit, Acadian and prairie communities are assumed to be subjected to the agency of a third party that contributes to their development. This idea is inaccurate in what concerns two aspects. First, the perception that Indigenous Peoples’ helplessness and lack of agency belong to a natural order in which, according to Lise Noël, the dominant party even believes “in all good faith” that it is “looking out for the good of the dominated” (as cited in Battiste, 1998, p. 23) perpetuates inequalities and xenophobic conceptions. This way, the “evolution and adaptive nature of a culture and a people is [are] ignored” (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010, p. 39).

Second, the concept of ‘development’ as an increasing improvement is created by and inculcated in a Western system. Development is understood as a linear process towards modernisation, which is assumed to bring Western standards worldwide (imperialism). The idea of development emerges from the premises found in modernisation theory, which considers economic growth and prosperity as the ultimate objective of any society (capitalism). In this sense, the provincial curriculum in Alberta fails to acknowledge the fact that, in their collective right to self-determination, Indigenous Peoples “determine and
develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development”, as Article 26 of the UNDRIP states (United Nations, 2007). The same article points out the significance of employing their own institutions to administer programs that foster the individual and well-being of the community. In short words, what I claim is that the meaning of development does not necessarily need to be the ultimate goal of a community, “as defined by the ‘developed world’” (Robert B. Anderson, Leo Paul Dana, and Teresa E. Dana, 2006, p. 47).

Contradiction and inconsistency in the curriculum
I discussed above the prevalence of cultural topics in the provincial curriculum for Alberta. Now, similarly, as shown in Table 5, the marker ‘relationships’ scores 19 entries. In this group I have identified competence aims that address issues such as the influence of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples upon the character of Canada, connections of Aboriginal, Francophone, and diverse communities in Canada and Alberta, negotiations regarding Confederation and other historical events, the recognition of Aboriginal Peoples in provincial and federal legislation, the increase of Aboriginal population in Canada, the effects of immigration on Indigenous communities, etc. Among this myriad of topics addressed in the curricular guideline, I identify a couple that regard and lead to discussion.

First, I consider that the curriculum in Alberta assumes that Aboriginal Peoples are an object of study whose culture and heritage has benefited from scientific practices embedded in an Eurocentric knowledge system. For example, consider the following competence aim addressed to students in grade 5 for the subject of social studies: “In what ways do anthropology and archaeology contribute to our understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The curriculum in Alberta acknowledges through this competence aim the universality of knowledge produced by and for the West.

Chilisa (2012) claims that throughout decolonisation, disciplines such as anthropology, history, science, etc. are questioned in order to understand the negative effects of the theorising they have exerted “about the colonized Other” (p. 14). This way, Western societies “do not think of Aboriginal Peoples as having anything more than anthropological ‘culture’ in its limited sense of concrete objects like beads, buffalo, and bannock” (Battiste, 1998, p. 22). These practices are particularly diminishing because, as Chilisa (2012) notes, the knowledge about the colonised, produced by the coloniser, is “accumulated” and transmitted throughout generations. Eventually, the perception on Indigenous Peoples becomes normalised (as they have been denied any chance to construct their own knowledge)
and, legitimated by and through education. Said’s 1978 text, *Orientalism*, is dedicated to understanding and explaining this effect rooted in Eurocentric systems.

Additionally, the competence aim above uses the pronoun “our” in contrast to “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples”. This is a clear manifestation of the Other seen as an object of study. However, the study of anthropology and archaeology on Indigenous cultures should be reconsidered in order to stop being able to take credit for knowledge that either does not belong to the discipline, or that has been created through misinterpretations and misunderstandings. David W. Gegeo and Karen A. Watson-Gegeo argue: “Anthropologists’ accounts of other people’s cultures are not indigenous accounts of those cultures” (as cited in Chilisa, 2012, p. 14). They add that such “activities [...] are imagined, conceptualised, and carried out within the theoretical and methodological frameworks of Anglo-European forms of research, reasoning, and interpreting” (in Chilisa, 2012, p. 15).

At the same time, though, the provincial curriculum in Alberta acknowledges the existence of a Eurocentric imperialist system that has an effect on Indigenous Peoples. Note the following competence aim, addressed to students in grade 7 for the subject of social studies: “In what ways did European imperialism impact the social and economic structures of Aboriginal societies?” (Alberta Education, 2007b). There seems to be a contradiction and inconsistency patent in the competence aims of the curriculum in Alberta. On the one hand, Aboriginal Peoples are presented as research objects who “do not have a voice and do not contribute to research or science” (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2010, p. 58), although in the same subject (but two grades of difference in between) there is space for condemning the impacts of European imperialism in the lives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples. Such incongruency in the institutions of Canada confirms that, although “many assume that the situation has changed significantly with the current trend of encouraging First Nation bands to take control of their schools”, as Battiste (1998, p. 19) reports, as a matter of fact, the ‘colonial siege’, as she refers to as, is still very alive.

**Exclusion of land claims**

The curriculum in Alberta addresses land issues from a perspective of location, geographic and climatic characteristics, etc. Despite the fact that the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007) establishes the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, in which land rights plays an essential role, the provincial guideline does not specifically refer to them. In order to exercise self-determination, Indigenous Peoples require and claim the returning of the lands that their ancestors inhabited.
before colonial times. Anderson, Dana, and Dana (2006) affirm the relevance of land claims in the process of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples:

Land is important in two respects. First, traditional lands are the ‘place’ of the nation and are inseparable from the people, their culture, and their identity as a nation. Second, land and resources are the foundation upon which indigenous communities intend to rebuild the economies of their nations and so improve the socioeconomic circumstance of their people. (p. 46)

Institutions of Canada as well as of other countries currently “occupying” Indigenous lands, need to be aware of the relevance of land retrieval for Indigenous Peoples. Thus, making hereby patent this gap in the curriculum, I proceed to focus on what the provincial document includes, rather than on what it lacks.

Referring to an Inuit, an Acadian, and a prairie community in Canada, one of the competence aims addressed to students in grade 2 for the subject of social studies reads as follows: “How are the geographic regions different from where we live?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The Othering strategy employed in the provincial curriculum through the use of the personal pronoun “we” establishes the assumption that there is a Self versus an Other constructed in a world of binary opposites sustained on differences. For that reason, the competence aim above focuses on differentiating the regions of Inuit, Acadian and prairie communities in contrast to a region of the Self. Ewa Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison (1998) argue: “Biological racism […] has been replaced by private conversations about the cultural differences between groups” (p. 30). As a consequence, differentiation allows and promotes opposition which, through the use of dichotomies, the voices of the Other remain marginalised.

**Diversity of Indigenous languages**

I have identified 4 competence aims that cover the topic ‘language’ in the provincial curriculum in Alberta. While one of them addresses the diversity of languages of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, the other three are rather culture-oriented. This nuance is appreciated, for instance, in the following competence aim addressed to students in grade 2 for the course of social studies: “How are these communities strengthened by their stories, traditions and events of the past?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). The competence aim shows a prominent

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15 Gayatri Spivak coined the term Othering to refer to a process of differentiation created by an imperialistic discourse established between itself, seen as the norm, and other ways of thinking, knowing and being (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin, 2000).
focus on a static past, instead of highlighting the current situation of Indigenous languages. Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) claim that “pre-contact and traditional forms of Aboriginal history are fixed” (p. 38), what makes these topics more “teachable”, according to the authors.

At the same time, however, this perception fosters the construction of the idea that Indigenous Peoples belong to a past time, because “‘traditional’ culture is perceived as static and unchanging” (Crewe & Harrison, 1998, p. 30). As a result, they are represented and seen as deficient, needy, dependent, incapable and, therefore, as useless in ‘modern times’. Butler (2000) writes that such portrayal is not “in any way positive” for Aboriginal Peoples; and it is also not adjusted to reality. Hence, as I have argued before in this text, the dichotomies typical of Western ways of thinking impede Indigenous Peoples’ self-determination and promote inaccurate assumptions that might lead to xenophobia and other situations created in and by imperialistic practices.

Battiste (1998) notes that, in general, Canadian “provincial curricula continue to disinherit Aboriginal languages and knowledge by ignoring their value” (p. 17). Additionally, I consider that the curricular guideline of Alberta fails to include a complete representation of the Aboriginal linguistic diversity in the province itself and in Canada. It is relevant to mention that one of the competence aims for year 4 does address diversity: “How is the diversity of Aboriginal peoples reflected in the number of languages spoken?” (Alberta Education, 2007a). In this case, students might get a vague idea of the number of different languages, but do not necessarily gain depth on the subject with possibilities of dealing with origin of the languages, evolution throughout time, linguistic groups, characteristics of some Indigenous languages, etc.

In summary, the curriculum for Alberta includes some relevant and specific issues related to Indigenous Peoples. In some cases, though, the curricular document fails to provide an adequate and complete image of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada and Alberta. Some of the most prominent failures that I have detected from a post-colonial and decolonial perspective are: (1) the focus on the past and historical events in which different Aboriginal groups have been involved while leaving current issues out, (2) the lack and need for responsive pedagogy from the teachers since their performance in the classroom is essential to the representation of Indigenous Peoples, as they bring with themselves their epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies into school, (3) the prevalence of the use of assimilative strategies aimed at Indigenous Peoples, (4) a strong discourse on development in accordance with the use of elements that foster the Othering of Aboriginal Peoples, and the
(5) absence of topics that deal with the prominent and relevant land claims that Aboriginal Peoples of Canada have been involved with in the most recent years.

Indeed, all these aspects contribute to a continuation of the use of colonial powers through an extended context of imperialist Eurocentrism. St. Denis (2011) summarises this as she asserts that what happens to Aboriginal teachers in Canadian public schools as they attempt to include Aboriginal content and perspectives is a microcosm of what happens at the political and national levels in regard to Aboriginal peoples’ claims to land and sovereignty in Canada. (pp. 306-307)

7. Discussion

To synthesise the aspects addressed in this paper, I provide hereby a discussion of the main points derived from the analysis of the two education curricula of Norway and Alberta. In this section I assemble and connect the most relevant elements to the extent possible, conforming to a framework of post-colonial theory and decolonisation. I considered pertinent to include first a debate on the common aspects that both curricula systematically engage with, as a way to wrap up the analysis, and later address further aspects that have not been included in the analysis that I consider transcendental in the field of education within the context of postcolonialism and decolonisation.

Patterns in both curricula

The analysis included in this paper connects a part of the education systems of two separate geographic areas which, despite evident historical, social, cultural, politica, etc. differences, do share commonalities regarding the colonisation of the land and people indigenous to these territories. Hence, although the British, Spanish, Portuguese, French or Dutch empires did not reach Sami Peoples in Scandinavia, as a matter of fact these Indigenous communities have experienced the oppression and neglect from part of Nordic settlers establishing in ‘the wild North’ as a way to gain major territory domain.

In any case, although Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Scandinavia might experience very dissimilar situations, they share, at least, the fact that they are unfairly (under)represented in the education curricula of both regions. Some of the aspects that seem more obvious after the analysis process are the following: the focus on the past of Indigenous Peoples, which portrays their communities as frozen in time, the limited inclusion of the knowledge and belief systems originated and based in Indigenous ways of living and doing,
as well as the complete lack of inclusion of protocols and the importance of these in some Indigenous circles. In addition, I would like to highlight the little transversality of the issues related to Indigenous Peoples, meaning that in both cases, Indigenous topics are included in the subject of social studies (which reminds me of elemental anthropology in some aspects), and are, therefore, understood as an object of study. I claim that the inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies and axiologies could be integrated throughout all subjects of the curriculum.

In that way, when learning about geography, students would be fascinated, for instance, by the 3D maps that Sami people have been using to orient themselves, or the role that the sky plays in it. Students would open their mind and realise that reality can be understood in many other ways.

**Settler colonisation as innocent**

Indigenous Peoples in both Norway and Canada have been subjected to a settler-colonisation, versus other forms of colonisation which involve more “contentious” practices, as Moss (2003) notes. She also claims that this less violent or brutal form of colonialism has been used as an argument to include Canadian literature in the discourse of postcolonialism. However, several scholars have manifested the difficulties of agreeing on a definition for postcolonial, which has, in turn, partly contributed to the impossibility of answering the question that gives title to Moss’ text (2003): *Is Canada Postcolonial?*

Eventually, all sorts of colonisation result in detrimental situations which, in the case of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalised groups, are especially susceptible due to the continuous oppression that have been subjected to from imperialist and colonialist power forces (Chilisa, 2012). So, the employment of such nuances for whitewashing responsibilities of governments is, if not, hypocrite. As Moss (2003) states, “Canada as a colonizing power in relation to the First Nations must bear scrutiny” (p. 2), and so does Norway. The responsibility is the same, independently of the degree of blood involved in the process of colonising, as the consequences are equally detrimental. Through colonialism, Indigenous Peoples are impeded from attaining the ultimate goal of self-determination, which includes self-government or owning formerly removed lands, among other aspects.

The curricula of Norway and Alberta, albeit not claiming to be part of a postcolonial paradigm, they respond to topics related to Indigenous Peoples from a comfortable and safe position. By either hiding responsibilities and exerting a whitewash or by including elements that portray the regions of Norway and Alberta as innocent, the two curricular guidelines work as another tool to continue colonialism and silence the voices of the colonised Other.
Moss (2003) points to “the role of education as a tool of colonial rule” (p. 8) which, through the curriculum and further elements involved in education, blatantly establishes current hegemonic powers and omits potential and necessary changes in perspective.

*Culturally responsive pedagogy*

Another aspect that disguises the role of education as promoting equality and contributing to a better world is the preoccupation with historical and cultural aspects of Indigenous Peoples with a focus on the past. The curriculum for education seems to be latent to what concerns today’s lifestyles, interests and agency of Indigenous Peoples. The two curricular documents analysed offer an image of Indigenous Peoples as being, in Butler's words (2000, p. 98), “static, apolitical, ahistorical constructs”. Levy (2010) claims that such “timelessly frozen” portrayal of Indigenous Peoples understands them “without an ancient past and, indeed, without a future” (p. 354). This has a damaging effect on the representation of Indigenous Peoples, as it promotes stereotypation and xenophobia, but also on the self-image and identity of their own.

On many occasions, teachers and educators do feel unconfident and unprepared when addressing topics related to Indigenous Peoples (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010); in other cases, they seem to “search for the definitive Aboriginality”, like Butler (2000, p. 98) claims happens in Australia. In both cases, they “fall into the trap of synthesising” the cultural aspects that prove real indigeneity (Butler, 2000, p. 98). Thus, while Indigenous Peoples are denied agency over their own ways of adapting and transitioning over time, “the refusal or inability to engage in recognising contemporary forms of Aboriginality persist[s]” (Butler, 2000, p. 98). In few words, the fact that education is not being questioned and reviewed as a system, as the contents that it includes and transmits over generations are outdated, and the fact that the effect that they have in society is underestimated (otherwise, how do we explain the constant cuts on education?) contribute to the promotion of a mainstream education which favours the norm, often hegemonic and imperialistic, and puts minorities, amongst them Indigenous Peoples, at a disadvantage.

The education system fails to acknowledge the fact that Indigenous Peoples’ lifestyles are not the same as the ones described in anthropology books from past centuries, and fails, consequently, to allow Indigenous Peoples “create new cultural forms that are powerful and laden with meaning for those who experience them” (Butler, 2000, p. 98). Aspects like updated laws and current claims of Indigenous Peoples are topics of interest in the public arena, but not in the classroom. The interest for and understanding of such topics would
increase if they were integrated in the curriculum for education. The portrayal of Indigenous Peoples would change from being traditional to other adjectives that, in favor or against of the cause of Indigenous Peoples, namely, self-determination, would contribute to the reiteration of their agency and to an education system based on equality.

*The exclusion of protocols*

The category of ‘protocols’ does not score any entry in the curricula in Norway or in Alberta. This marker represents the ways of being of the Sami and/or other Indigenous Peoples. An example of an element that could be included in this group is the oral nature of knowledge transmission, and the use of certain factors (dance, aroma, performance, etc.) in storytelling. As I argumented above, the curriculum for Alberta acknowledges in one occasion the validity of oral narratives as a source of knowledge. However, the curricular guideline does not imply the use of any actual practice of storytelling in the classroom, which is what the marker of ‘protocols’ represents, the ways of being. That is why I consider that the curricula for Norway and Alberta do not include any entry pertaining to ‘protocols’. In any case, Chi’XapKaid (2005) describes the role and relevance of storytelling for Indigenous ways of being. He defends the role of storytelling in the path towards decolonisation; he states: “One of the many strategies to decolonize the Indigenous Peoples is to remember the ancestral teachings and master the art of storytelling” (p. 132).

The inclusion of Indigenous storytelling techniques such as gesticulation, body language, articulation, pauses, pace and repetition, etc. (Chi’XapKaid, 2005, p. 133) in the education curriculum would benefit, on the one hand Indigenous students, for they would realise who they are and where they come from, their history, their ways of behaving and how their worldview is, etc., and in the other hand students that do not belong to any group of Indigenous Peoples, for they would understand part of the history of the place they live in at the same time that they would avoid prejudice and stereotyping.

Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) argues that “engaging local protocols […] and observing rules pertaining to the telling of stories are important components of storywork” (in Brooke Madden, 2015, p. 5). She claims that storytelling fosters the understanding and transformation of “contemporary schooling challenges” while offering both students and teachers the possibility to engage in Indigenous knowledge systems. In short, Indigenous storywork is an opportunity for “educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit”, Archibald states (as cited in Madden, 2015, p. 5).
Chi’XapKaid (2005) confirms that the “applied oral skills associated with the oral tradition have nearly eroded with the sovereignty of the Native Peoples [...] under the oppressive weight of colonialism” (p. 137). Hence, claiming its inclusion in the education system is an act of decolonisation. After all, the ancestral oral Indigenous ways of knowledge transmission “promoted the same analytical, cognitive, and retentive skills that are necessary to succeed in the contemporary educational system”, Chi’XapKaid (2005, p. 132) assures.

Additionally, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and teachers can benefit from each other’s ways of being. Harris (2010) writes that the Indigenous worldview considers the universe as an alive entity which has “power, will and intelligence” (p. 63). This way, by incorporating non-mainstream systems into the hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge, dichotomies such as “between animate and inanimate held in the Western worldview usually has [have] little meaning in Indigenous ways of seeing” (Harris, 2010, pp. 63-64).

**Further thoughts**

Lastly, I would like to discuss the prudence that institutions and professionals involved in curricula development must exercise when deciding which contents and perspectives to include in the guidelines for education, and how to do it. I mention this because it has caught my attention how scantily they address Indigenous epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies in general, but also in further areas such as mathematics or arts, to mention a few. Gladys Sterenberg and Michelle Hogue (2011) conclude their study by saying: “Intertwining Aboriginal and Western knowledge systems holds generative possibilities for science and mathematics education” (p. 13). They observe that the term coined to describe the process of integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, that is, “cultural infusion”, does not represent the most adequate way to fill the gap between the two knowledge systems. Hence, they offer an “intertwined approach of dialogical interaction”, which aligns both epistemological systems instead of assuming that one is to be integrated into the other (Sterenberg & Hogue, 2011).

I agree with Sterenberg and Hogue (2011) when they say that Indigenous students need the means to adequately learn Indigenous epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies. One of the informants in their study who is a teacher, claims that ‘Aboriginal students needed to see themselves in the lessons’ (p. 9). Similarly, I believe that it is important that the representation of Indigenous Peoples in prevalently non-Indigenous spaces, where the normative mainstream curriculum is implemented, should be accurate and representative of
the diversity of Indigenous Peoples. I claim, hence, that curricula for education across the world should urge revision and rearrangement. Eurocentric knowledge and perspectives have invaded education systems and academia the same way that the coloniser set and extirpated other ways of being, thinking and knowing. For that reason, the claims for decolonising academia are becoming louder and will have an effect at some point. Only then education will offer a space for all and will be able to be called education of quality.

8. Conclusion

Lately, policies and regulations that concern Indigenous Peoples have undergone an increase of interest and attention in the public arena. For instance, education institutions have propagated and developed a deeper debate regarding the inclusion of content and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in the education system. As a matter of fact, curricula for education in several regions have started integrating content and even the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in that given area, like the cases in Norway and Alberta discussed in the present paper. Even though this pattern implies a beginning towards education for justice and equality, several scholars that defend decolonisation of academia claim that society must be actively aware that such changes are rather superficial and far from liberating the oppressive mind. Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005) state that decolonisation “is not about tweaking the existing colonial system to make it more Indigenous-friendly or a little less oppressive” (p. 4), but it requires structural and significative changes in the colonial system.

In reality, the inclusion of Indigenous content in the curricula for education does not ensure a quality teaching-learning required in an equality-based society. Eventually, each school and teacher decides the time spent to address the topics, as well as the methodology, as expressed above. Nevertheless, it is basic that the legal framework and guidelines for education provide opportunities for quality learning and make sure that there is time and space and to include topics related to Indigenous Peoples. That is why many Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers, educators and scholars call for a revision of the structures of the education system (curricula for education, teacher training programs, etc.) in order for education to offer a neutral space from which every student, no matter the background or the context, benefits from education. The associate professor from the University of Tromsø Bent Ove Andreassen assures that in Norway “there is no overall plan about how they [teachers] work on teaching about the Sami”, and that each individual teacher decides the emphasis placed into Sami content (as cited in Vedvik, 2011). As a result, more resources must be put
into teacher education programs, together with the need to require Indigenous input in the task of curriculum development.

As the present paper proves, both curricula and teachers (and therefore, teacher education programs) are incumbent on the assurance of an equal society. Pewewardy (2002) claims: “The challenge for teacher educators consists of engaging teacher education students in a learning process that emphasizes human diversity, particularly the learners’ potential to produce social change and justice” (p. 23). At the same time, curricula for education and further official documents have the responsibility to guarantee equal justice through the inclusion of a fair representation of different issues related to the diversity of groups. I acknowledge that it is not a simple task, and the portrayal can be “a double-edged sword” (Levy, 2010, p. 355). Hence, the inclusion of Indigenous ways of being, thinking and knowing surely contributes to a more fair image and, in turn, to a more equal society.

However, integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into an education system embedded in the Western structures does not contribute to universal education that provides equal opportunity to all students. Integrating one knowledge system into another does not result in outcomes that imply an education for all, for their relationship is not at equal terms. Moreover, Indigenous knowledge and perspectives do not end inside a classroom, as Jonsson (2011) asserts, it is “created out of local living conditions and passed on from generation to generation” (p. 98). Thus, including Indigenous ways of knowing, being and thinking into a system that requires classrooms and all students to fit in the same box does not contribute to an improvement of the education system.

I would like to conclude by pointing at the responsibility that the upcoming educational reforms in Norway and Alberta have on the contribution of education towards a equitable society. Education is a double-edged sword that, when misused, increases differences in society, which is the same as saying that it contributes to an unequal world. Education must involve neutral spaces which offer equity of opportunities for every student. In order to achieve this goal, society has the responsibility to use all the means that contribute to it. Only then it will be possible to establish a debate about colonialism and postcolonialism. Perhaps then, it might even be possible to answer the question whether territories such as Alberta, Canada, and Norway are postcolonial.
9. Reference List


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