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Policy and leadership discourses in Sweden's Art and Music Schools: the inclusion of refugee children

Adriana Di Lorenzo Tillborg [a] and Live Weider Ellefsen [b]

[a]Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Malmö, Sweden; [b]Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Hamar, Norway

ABSTRACT
Sweden's Art and Music Schools (SAMS) have assumed some responsibility for facilitating refugee children's social inclusion. This article investigates how the inclusion of refugee children in SAMS is introduced by leaders as well as how the theme is constructed and addressed as a topic in policy documents (related to the national policy process for SAMS). Two data sets constitute the empirical base: (1) conversations with leaders and (2) policy documents. Policy and discourse theories constitute the analytical and theoretical framework. The analyses expose how problematisations occur on an overarching level and how they construct subjects and topics. Furthermore, some significant consequences of different choices of terminology are emphasised; the problematisations have implications for agency capacity. The article concludes that as society changes, SAMS must change to accommodate new cultures while maintaining their own cultures. The results call for a multicentric view of inclusion.

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Introduction

In Nordic countries, as in other parts of the world, increased migration following conflicts, persecution and natural disasters has led to the arrival of cohorts of refugees and asylum seekers. The refugee crisis in 2015 led to the highest number ever of asylum seekers in Sweden; more than 160,000 refugees applied for asylum, of which around 70,000 were children (Swedish Migration Agency 2020a). These children rely on the policies and practices of their host nations to promote the development of competencies necessary to understand, live and work in their new societies. Moreover, they depend upon their host cultures to facilitate social inclusion while also providing the opportunity to maintain and to develop their own cultural identities. Through the United Nations (UN) convention related to the status of refugees (UNHCR 2020) as well as the UN convention on the rights of the child (OHCHR 2020), refugee children are ensured these rights: the right to elementary education, the right to practice and enjoy their own languages and cultures, and notably, the right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.

In Sweden, the established system of extracurricular municipally organised and publicly funded art and music programmes have assumed some of the responsibility for facilitating refugee children's social inclusion, learning and participation in and through music and art activities in recent years. Asserting that 'all children and youth should be offered equal opportunities for personal development through easily accessible arts-based activities of high quality' (Swedish Arts Schools

CONTACT Adriana Di Lorenzo Tillborg adriana.di_lorenzo_tillborg@mhm.lu.se

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Council 2020),[1] Sweden's Art and Music Schools (SAMS) have tentatively explored different ways to recruit and to engage refugee children and adolescents in cultural activities[2]; however, recent research suggests that participation in SAMS activities amongst refugee and immigrant children remains low compared to their peers (Jeppsson and Lindgren 2018). How to involve and thereby contribute to securing the cultural rights of refugee children remains a challenge and also a political priority for SAMS.

SAMS have recently been subjected to the public eye due to the process of creating a national political strategy for this school system for the first time in Swedish history. The commissioned inquiry *An inclusive art and music school on its own terms* (SOU 2016:69) has been a particularly important policy tool in this regard. Together with the many referral responses subsequently submitted on behalf of various political interest organisations, educational institutions and municipalities, the report has laid the groundwork for an approved government proposition (Prop. 2017/18:164) that presents guiding principles, if not mandatory regulations, for SAMS practices. The approved proposition marks the conclusion of the national policy process for SAMS, a process that is central to our research interest. During the years that followed, one example of a new event within the policy landscape connected to SAMS is that the UN convention on the rights of the child (OHCHR 2020) became legally binding in Sweden 2020. Regarding the policy practice of SAMS leaders, it is relevant to mention their increasing advocacy work for a legal framework for SAMS (Lorensson 2020), which is in line with the national inquiry (SOU 2016:69) and previous research (Holmberg 2010; Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2019). Therefore, there is a reason to expect a new policy process to take place on the national level in the near future.

In this article, we investigate how the inclusion of refugee children in SAMS is introduced as a theme by SAMS leaders when discussing national policy and local practices. The emerging theme requires tracing how the inclusion of refugee children is constructed and is addressed as a topic in a selection of policy documents related to the national policy process for SAMS.

Music education research and the inclusion of refugee children

Scholars such as Burnard et al. (2008) have pointed out that music education has traditionally been associated with exclusiveness and elitism but also that music has been promoted as an inclusion tool, or 'as a common ground between cultures' (Burnard et al. 2008, 19). Both research (Benedict et al. 2015; Björk et al. 2018; Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2019) and policy documents (SOU 2016:69) make use of the instrumental potential of music education in working for democratic and inclusive societies and critique how inclusion in and through music education is not always enacted in practice.

The instrumental potential of music education have been explored in recent research with a focus on outreach activities and music facilitation with refugee children both within and outside formal teaching settings. Music can be a used as a tool in the complex processes of 'cultural maintenance' and acculturation when immigrants balance between preserving cultural traditions and adapting to new ones (Kenny 2018, 213). Musical activities for refugee and newly arrived children in Australia have showed to have a positive impact on integration, language development, agency and identity building (Marsh 2012, 2017). Similarly, outreach summer activities in southern Sweden have promoted language development and social inclusion (Danielson 2021). Positive effects on identity building as well as on other aspects such as health and motivation for school have been highlighted by Norwegian scholars Storsve, Westby, and Ruud (2010) as outcomes of a music educational project for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In Ireland, a singing project for asylum seekers (Kenny 2020) has brought people together, both adults and children, to sing and create a songbook. The project has promoted inclusion but Kenny (2020) has also shed light on a limitation of projects in general, namely the time limit, which needs to be overcome by building on them for long-term solutions for sustainable inclusion.

In the Swedish context, SAMS repeatedly have needed to legitimise their position in society (Holmberg 2010; Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2017). Recent studies connected to the first European Symposium on Music Schools in Vienna 2017 have explored the position of (art and) music schools in European society. It has been argued that such schools should have 'human flourishing' as their foundation (Björk and Heimonen 2019, 36), that they need to take ethical responsibility (Westerlund, Väkevä, and Ilmona-Sheppard 2019), that they are important to the formation of cultural identities (Theologos and Katsadoros 2019) and that participation is still highly connected to social background (Deloughry 2019; Westerlund, Väkevä, and Ilmona-Sheppard 2019).

In Sweden, as in Denmark, Finland and Norway, there is a growing body of research on the role of art and music schools for democratic and inclusive societies (Rønningen et al. 2019). The relation between SAMS and democracy/inclusion has been exposed as complex and multifaceted. Hofvander Trulsson (2010) has described how voluntary instrumental studies are used by immigrant parents as a key to the host culture, reconstructing social status and obtaining access to Swedish society; however, Jeppsson and Lindgren (2018, 205) have exposed the typical SAMS pupil as 'a Swedish-born girl with well-educated parents'. Despite this growing body of research, there is a lack of research on the inclusion of refugee children in the context of SAMS.

The meaning of the concept of inclusion has been problematised by previous research. Inclusion can refer to participation 'despite challenges stemming from poverty, class, race, religion, linguistic and cultural heritage or gender' (Burnard et al. 2008, 9). Finnish researchers Laes and Kallio (2015) have gone even further and have argued for the aim of inclusion within music education to be to welcome all individuals because of their differences and not despite them in what could be described as striving for polyphony rather than for a dominant melody. A non-reflective way of applying the concept can enforce an approach where there is a dominant centre to which the marginalised should be included, as problematised in previous research (Dei 1996; Hess 2015; Laes 2017; Bunar 2018), which is a reason for suggesting *multicentric inclusion* (Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2019), connecting to Laes and Kallio's (2015) polyphonic way of viewing inclusion.

Ballantyne and Mills (2008) have noted that different approaches to inclusion can have an impact on students' empowerment. Analysing the Norwegian art and music school curriculum, Ellefsen and Karlsen (2020) similarly have observed that user groups included in the schools' 'breadth programme', which largely consists of short-term projects and outreach-initiatives, effectively might result in being less empowered because their learning outcomes might be viewed as possessing a lower cultural value than what is taught in the schools' 'core programme' (Ellefsen and Karlsen 2020, 11). Schneider, Ingram, and Deleon (2014) have argued that the social construction of target groups in policies impacts both how the groups are viewed in society and how the policies are enacted. The argument is partly based on how the social construction of the specific group of 'immigrants' 'impacts the kinds of people favoured by immigration rules' (Schneider, Ingram, and Deleon 2014, 115).

Policy analysis and problematisation

In the present article, theoretical perspectives and concepts from educational policy theory and from discourse theory are applied. They align with the approaches advocated by Ball (1993) and Schmidt (2017), who agree that while policy can be, and has been, analysed as 'text(s)', 'process', and 'practice', comprehending policy as 'discourse' is even more productive. Inspired by Foucault (1981; 2010) and utilising his understanding of discourse as material practice (Foucault 2010, 99–105), Ball and Schmidt alike adopt a broad view of policy that includes not only the textual statements of policy documents and the strategies involved in producing some of them but also everyday operationalisations and negotiations of their meanings in various fields of political practice. Our approach to the analysis rests upon this premise: while government education policy regulates the various objects, subjects and activities of educational practice, the field of objects, subjects and activities also regulates policy in that it constitutes the site from which policy discourse

rises, which is what Foucault refers to as a material field of emergence (Foucault 2010, 91). This outlook, which is in line with Ball and colleagues (Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992; Ball 1993, 1994; Braun, Maguire, and Ball 2010) as well as with Schmidt (2017), is in contrast to the conceptions of policymaking as vertical processes following specific steps. Rather, we consider the discursive production of policy to be a complex situation where text, political procedure and everyday practice intertwine. Policy initiatives can be traced to actors in different contexts with policy continuously being shaped in a cyclical way. Policy *enactment*, then, 'is not a moment but a process framed by institutional factors involving a range of actors' (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Through such discursive processes, political and educational areas of interest and activity are established and upheld. Foucault, when wrapping up his six lectures at Berkeley in 1983, describes his own work as an analysis of 'the process of 'problematization' – which means: how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem' (Foucault 1999, 66). Ball (2013) correspondingly notes that: '[T]he history of education policies, is precisely, a history of problematizations of education, set within a broader social field' (Ball 2013, loc. 453). Bearing in mind Foucault's twofold take on discursive formation as both structure and process (Foucault 2010, 107), we consider a problematisation to be both a structured object of knowledge – that is, a specific problem in need of attention and political strategy – and the processes of knowledge formation that construct such a problem. In the following sections of this article, we examine how the inclusion of refugees in SAMS, as a structured field of knowledge (problematisation), is discussed and written into existence (problematised) within SAMS education policy contexts. Leaning on Foucault, our approach also entails investigating how the discursive production of policy produces specific subject positions, that is socially and culturally established positions in discourse to which every speaker, thinker and doer must subject if s/he is to speak, think and do (Foucault 2010, 50–55).

Data sets and strategies of analysis

Two data sets constitute the empirical base of the article's analyses: (1) three focus group conversations with a total of 16 SAMS leaders plus a music teacher[3] (conducted in 2016–2017) and (2) policy documents related to the national policy process (produced between 2014 and 2017). The focus of the group conversations was introduced as 'possible changes in SAMS as a consequence of the ongoing national policy process' by the moderator (author A). Including refugee children did not constitute a pre-defined topic for the focus group conversations but was mentioned by the leaders themselves when discussing recruitment and responsibilities. The participants were chosen from a database of 202 SAMS leaders[4] to represent (1) both publicly and privately administrated schools (all publicly funded), (2) schools offering music only as well as those offering several art activities and (3) schools in northern, central and southern Sweden. Following the principles for research ethics (Swedish Research Council, 2020), precautions were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Names, schools, places and projects have been anonymised, and statements have been revised to minimise risks of recognition.

The policy documents for the second data set are comprised of the SAMS inquiry (SOU 2016:69), the propositions preceding and commissioning the report (Prop. 2014/15:1; Dir. 2015, 46) and the proposition presenting the final national strategy for SAMS (Prop. 2017/18:164). The data set also includes the referral responses following the inquiry (SOU 2016:69 Referral Responses). All the government policy documents and 21 of 161 referral responses comprise statements that in our analysis contribute in a significant way to the discursive problematisation of including refugee children in SAMS. The 21 relevant referral responses represent government agencies, interest organisations, municipalities and city/region-councils, cultural institutions and higher education institutions. Interestingly, while the focus group conversations reflect that SAMS leaders are concerned with the inclusion of refugee children, none of the responses submitted by SAMS institutions express such concerns. The policy documents analysed in the study are publicly available at the Swedish Government's homepage. Acknowledging research ethics as

described by the Swedish Research Council (2020), we have chosen not to refer to any of the 21 relevant responses specifically.

The first round of the analytical mapping of the datasets was carried out by author A (group conversations) and author B (policy documents), respectively. We then made joint analyses of the two data sets. This entailed several stages of coding and categorising, during which we identified and discussed statements which encircle a specific group of (potential) SAMS participants as well as statements that describe strategies of recruitment, areas of responsibility, possible measures and actions and potential (learning) aims and objectives for this particular group. The results are presented in the two following sections. First, we address the problematisation of 'refugees' as a particular SAMS 'target group'. Thereafter, we examine the discursive construction of meaning related to 'including' this target group in SAMS practices. In the subsequent discussion, we discuss how problematisations occur on an overarching level and how they construct subjects and topics.

Identifying a target group: the 'refugees', the 'newly arrived' and the 'children with foreign backgrounds'

The right of everyone to culture is persistently reiterated across the policy contexts included in our research. This follows the Swedish cultural policy objectives (Prop. 2009/10:3). To promote everyone's rights, however, a strategy is employed that differentiates 'everyone' into 'someone'. For example, Prop. 2017/18:164 emphasises that governmental initiatives must contribute to children's possibility of participating in SAMS activities regardless of 'disability, gender, gender identity or expression, sexuality, ethnic affiliation, religion and beliefs or socioeconomic background' (Prop. 2017/18:164, 13). By sorting people into identity categories, what is believed to be shared interests can be promoted, despite differences within the group:

> The group 'children and youth with foreign background' probably shares more differences than similarities among themselves. Still, we choose to bring out this group, in order to call attention to the differences that seem to exist regarding art and music school participation. If we refuse to speak about children's origin as a factor in recruitment, we risk making invisible a large target group. (SOU 2016:69, 121)

Here, a group of children and youth is strategically demarcated to address inequalities in patterns of cultural participation: 'foreign background' is considered to be a factor that hinders access. Across the policy contexts, a variety of terms are put to use to subject this specific target group to cultural government. In addition to 'foreign background', the most frequent descriptions include 'refugees', 'unaccompanied minors' and 'newly arrived children'.

The SAMS leaders quickly establish 'refugee' as a descriptive node around which the focus group discussion organises itself, and use the concept interchangeably with other terms. Even so, 'refugee children' and 'unaccompanied minors' engender in the conversation a particular discourse of care and concern by recounting the children's previous exposure to war, conflict and scarcity. Indeed, the concepts enable SAMS leaders to differentiate within the demarcated target group on the grounds of experienced traumas: 'We should bear in mind the huge difference between the Syrian child who has run away from the bombs and the child born [in Sweden by parents with foreign backgrounds]', Samuel holds, implicating that the two might have diverging needs and that educational aims and objectives should reflect this difference. Regarding unaccompanied minors, Iris advises: 'It is uncertain for how long they are going to stay in Sweden. So, it demands a special way of working. To try to strengthen them, so that whatever happens they will carry this with them'. Including the unaccompanied children in SAMS requires, according to Iris, a special way of working that focuses on the therapeutic motif of strengthening them. Not yet privileged with permanent national residence, these students are temporary members available for schooling only for a limited amount of time. The time allotted must be used in a special therapeutic way, with care and concern for their particular needs, Iris holds. Following an alternative but overlapping discursive trace, Samuel suggests that what refugee children need is the opportunity to make music: 'Those who

are unaccompanied minors or refugee children, they usually don't have this tradition from where they come from that there are opportunities to play or sing or make music. It's first when they arrive here; it's like a new world is opening to them that we can offer!'. Choosing not to dwell on the children's traumatic experiences when considering his educational responsibilities, Samuel's statement implies that SAMS may serve refugee children's needs best by providing for them the same activities as for Swedish children at large. In this regard, and even while upholding the demarcation of a group based on assumptions of their shared lack of musical experiences, he challenges the essentialisation of the group with reference to its members' particular therapeutic needs. Thus, the statement repositions the 'unaccompanied' within the larger group of 'every child', a category that in today's Nordic societies carries with it an understanding of the diversity amongst its members.

Rather than 'refugees', what strategically encircles a related target group in the policy documents are the concepts of 'newly arrived' and children/parents with 'foreign backgrounds'. 'Newly arrived' is a status you receive when having been granted a residence permit and assigned to a municipality (Swedish Migration Agency 2020b). SOU 2016:69 and the referral responses use the term recurrently with reference to 'extensive changes' in society due to 'increased migration' and when pointing out challenges following from such change. The 'great number' of new arrivals is thought to constitute a new premise for SAMS practices, which should contribute to updating what Swedish culture is to better harmonise with today's Sweden (SOU 2016:69, 170-171). 'Priorities' will have to be made at the risk of setting different target groups against each other: 'the needs of pupils with disabilities should not be underestimated, but in some municipalities, large cohorts of the newly arrived means one must prioritise differently' (SOU 2016:69 Referral Responses).

When using the description 'foreign background' or referring to 'ethnicity' or students' 'cultural background', the documents typically address a group already established in Swedish society. This subsequently explains why they are under-represented in SAMS. Lower participation is coupled with an intersection of ethno-cultural affiliation and economy and occurs in segregated living areas with high immigrant density in comparison to villa districts with high living standards (SOU 2016:69, 121; Prop. 2017/18:164, 10; SOU 2016:69 Referral Responses). Parents with 'foreign background' come to be viewed as obstacles to participation, differing from the Swedish norm in their culture, interests, economy and knowledge of SAMS. Hence, bypassing the problem of parents and living area is necessary. Through pedagogically adapted cultural outreach programmes and programmes overlapping with school-based activities, children and youth with foreign backgrounds can be accessed directly. Some of the referral responses in particular hold that cooperation with the arenas of ordinary schooling is crucial to the recruitment: 'you only need to change two things to reach all children: 1) no fee and 2) school based tuition'; 'when children meet in a school setting, socioeconomic situation and parents' background are of less importance' (SOU 2016:69 Referral Responses).

Accessibility, inclusion, representation and integration

When commissioning a SAMS inquiry, the Swedish Ministry of Culture also requested a draft for a national strategy to secure 'an equal and easily accessible art and music school of high quality for all children and youth in Sweden' (Dir. 2015, 46, 6). Indeed, a most significant initiative can be found already in the report's title, where the concept of an 'inclusive' SAMS is launched. While the state of being 'accessible' leaves the responsibility for action up to potential users, being 'inclusive' implies action on the part of the educational institutions. The nine-paragraph strategy proposed by the report emphasises SAMS' obligations in this regard by suggesting that SAMS engage with society at large, such as in the form of outreach projects, to inform children and young people about activities and to encourage them to participate (SOU 2016:69, 23, 283). The state of being 'inclusive' also requests an attentiveness towards students' own experiences and interests and giving students influence over the structure and content of lessons (SOU 2016:69). The government proposition following the inquiry advocates a revised strategy. Here, the discourse of 'accessibility' reclaims its

hegemony, most prominently as one of four overarching objectives: 'governmental efforts pertaining to SAMS should contribute to promoting accessibility and equality' (Prop 2017/18:164, 10).

At the policy practice level of SAMS leadership, 'inclusion' constitutes a significant topic of discussion. Early on in the interviews the leaders express concerns with inclusion and democratic rights, explaining how economy and geography govern students' possibilities of participation in their districts. The fact that SAMS are tax-funded and the existence of state grants earmarked for projects that target particular groups of students is taken to imply that SAMS are obliged to carry out governmental inclusion politics. The grants also support the leaders' stance that a successful operationalisation of inclusion politics hinges on additional economic support. Even so, obstacles are encountered on municipal levels of policy: 'We want to welcome refugee children in our school', Bo says, 'but our [local] politicians are putting the brakes on'. Otto feels that the municipal authorities no longer can 'manage it all'. When referring to municipalities 'not managing', Otto most likely also engage with the discourse of 'care and concern'. Selma, however, positions the topic of 'inclusion' solidly within a discourse of economy when suggesting the possibility of seeking external financial support: 'No one can say that we are not allowed as long as the project is [financed externally]. I think: if we can achieve some media coverage, the politicians might begin to understand. Typically, they don't understand until they can see it, for real'. Projects such as Selma's tend to attract the interest of local politicians and might even spark new investments in inclusion policy practices. According to the SAMS leaders, subsidised projects in which pupils can participate for free is needed to achieve 'inclusive' SAMS. As a general rule, refugee children and unaccompanied minors pay the same fee as any other pupil in the regular, week-to-week educational practices of SAMS. 'In this regard', Selma says, 'it's like with any other child. But they might have legal guardians that have been provident'. Providence, in this context, means 'signing them up as soon as they cross the bridge' (Selma) and preparing to finance their participation.

Prop. 2017/18:164 advises that SAMS, 'to sustain their legitimacy, […] must venture to broaden their activity and seek to recruit children and youth from yet more groups in society' (Prop. 2017/18:164, 14). It follows that SAMS must endeavour to present themselves as attractive and accessible to potential students across established patterns of cultural participation. Thus, a measure of SAMS quality is whether the school has succeeded in achieving a certain degree of social representation. With the SAMS leaders in the focus group conversations, the representation of refugees and children with disabilities give evidence of increased 'accessibility'. Recruitment, however, is a problem. Lisa's job responsibility encompasses adolescents who live in treatment homes, she tells the group. Thus, the job provides her with privileged access to a 'target group that we usually have difficulty in reaching', and with the opportunity to draw on SAMS resources to organise 'creative meeting places'. Selma similarly explains how to obtain access to certain target groups by cooperating with other institutions and social services. Her externally funded project comprises all pupils who are connected to the mother tongue education centre: 'You could be child to a diplomat or an unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan', she says, 'but you end up there […] And there we will have music lessons with them'.

In the focus group conversations, contact with and recruitment of important target groups are prominent topics, more so than the musical activities in themselves. However, a few considerations regarding educational content and relevance are also made, notably in relation to teachers' competence and backgrounds. Telling a story about a refugee youth wanting to learn an Arabic song, Simon, a music teacher present in one of the group conversations, explains the difficulties involved in trying to 'meet them [the students] in their music'. Lisa and Britta respond that 'we need a broader diversity of competence in our staff; it [Simon's example] shows that we still haven't sufficient diversity'. There are lots of 'teachers, fantastic musicians' from other cultures around to recruit, they argue, Simon later adding that he knows 'third-generation immigrants who would gladly transfer this culture'. When discussing refugees' participation in the context of learning a piece of music rather than inclusion, the group conversation participants construct positions

for the refugee child within discourses of musicianship and musical learning rather than of inclusion.

Central to the discourse of inclusion governing the focus group conversations is an assumption of difference between ordinary and special activities. Petter remarks that while everyone is welcome in his school's ordinary activities, they mainly attract young majority children. The newly arrived and others need to be 'invited in a more special way'. His view is in line with the inquiry in which collaborative outreach projects are suggested as a means of recruiting more broadly. Iris provides an example of such a strategy.

> Iris: If papers and forms must be filled out beforehand, we lose them. So, we reach out to homes for unaccompanied minors, offering something else than one-on-one teaching. These guys, they have chosen themselves to do a musical about their journey! Pupils from upper secondary are in on the play, too; the SAMS are getting 'childified' (laughs), so we actively reach out to adolescents as well. Our music teacher also works at the youth club, and the unaccompanied boys go there with him and come in contact with other Swedish kids their age. We are making a difference, I think, for real![5]

Iris's outreach project, as narrated, provides access to relevant groups (for those who are recruiting), removes obstacles for participation (regarding, for example, cost, information and travel time) and enhances access to the activity itself by letting the participants decide its content and purpose. Furthermore, as described by Iris, the outreach strategy provides a starting point for partaking in 'ordinary activities', such as going to the youth club. Thus, the project is thought to increase access to 'other Swedish kids', and potentially facilitate social integration.

The inquiry reflects the opinion that SAMS constitute a unique cultural resource when it comes to improving 'integration', such as of the newly arrived (SOU 2016:69, English summary). Within the practices of inclusive SAMS, commitments to better integration entail not only securing representation of certain groups in SAMS but also improving the integration of these groups into society at large. The few referral responses that comment upon this aspect adhere themselves to the report's high hopes for SAMS' potential to facilitate integration. None of them expand upon what kind of activities may carry the potential of 'integrating' those who are, by such logic, 'segregated'; however, statements on the importance of collaborating with compulsory schools to recruit children and youth in general are frequent across the responses. With SAMS activities located in children's and youth's everyday school life, the argument goes, the threshold of participation is lowered considerably, even for groups of participants that are difficult to recruit.

Discussion: problematisations in policies and leadership practices

Following an interest similar to Foucault's in 'how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem' (Foucault 1999, 66; see also Ball 2013), the analyses in this article show how the inclusion of refugees in SAMS, as a structured field of knowledge (problematisation), is talked and written into existence (problematised) within selected contexts of SAMS policy practice. In this, they also reveal how policy is discursively produced and shaped (Ball 2013; Schmidt 2017). We have aimed to shed some light upon the processes of problematisation themselves by showing how the SAMS leader group conversations, conceptualised as policy practice (Ball 2013; Schmidt 2017) contribute to the ongoing discursive negotiation of meaning regarding the inclusion of refugees as an educational and political responsibility, or 'problem'. When statements concerning the inclusion of refugees are enacted in the conversations, they contribute to the overall problematisation process, as they do when applied and operationalised as a local SAMS policy in the single school context. Thus, the group conversations become part of the continuous cyclical process of policy enactment in the sense argued by Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012). The policy documents similarly take part in the problematisation process, such as by contributing to the construction of target groups for SAMS recruitment and activity. In this way, the leaders' discursive practices, as evidenced by the group conversations, and the policy documents analysed intertwine with

each other, and with similar practices (not analysed here) and as a result, subjects and objects of SAMS policy are constructed and/or reconstructed.

In contributing to problematising 'the inclusion of refugees' by operationalising the topic within SAMS contexts, the policy practices pursue overarching political interests in the government of the population to maintain social stability and security. Indeed, the SAMS system can be understood as a typical tool of modern governmentality (Foucault 2007); the everyday government of normality by prescribing and facilitating conduct to tend to the health, the morals, the productivity and the manageability of the population. In this, the workings of governmental power rely upon the self-management of the governed to follow prescriptions and utilise the facilities offered. Including refugees in SAMS practices relocates statistically and morally within the discursive 'norm' – normalises – (Foucault 2007) that and those who are operating at the discursive borders and potentially defuses a threat of difference and thus also instability/insecurity into that which can be known and handled. In this, discourses of care and health, family and parenting, culture and economy are put to use, simultaneously creating both the 'norm' and what is outside it.

As has been argued in the analyses, three main subject positions (Foucault 2010, 50–55) overlap to constitute a new target group for SAMS policy: 'the refugees', 'the newly arrived' and 'children with foreign backgrounds'. We find that the topics within which these three are articulated differ somewhat from each other, and they seemingly add two different strings of meanings to the problematisation of inclusion. Paradoxically, the 'newly arrived' are associated with the already present Swedes; they simply have not been in the country for as long. Thus, they have yet to establish themselves, and in the process, to 'update' the Swedishness of Sweden. Their backgrounds are played down, and their future in Sweden is emphasised. Regarding the children with foreign backgrounds, differences rather than similarities are enacted in the problematisation. The parent generation's successful establishment within Swedish society as foreigners with foreigners' outlooks and ways of life is implicitly presumed to hinder their children's access to SAMS activities. Overall, the condition of having newly arrived constitutes a new premise for SAMS policies and activities, while having a foreign background presents SAMS with an obstacle to reciprocal accessibility, that is, something SAMS must overcome to 'be accessible' and to 'get access to' specific target groups.

Because social constructions of target groups have an impact on the possibilities for individuals to be empowered (Ballantyne and Mills 2008) and to develop forms of agency (Schneider, Ingram, and Deleon 2014; Kenny 2018), the construction of 'newly arrived' as (at least potentially) similar and of individuals with 'foreign backgrounds' as different could empower and strengthen the social agency of people considered newly arrived, while those considered to fall within the category of individuals with foreign backgrounds could experience less support and encouragement from society. For the 'refugees', their construction as objects for inclusion policies might not enforce empowerment at all but rather instigate in the context a necessity for acts of care and concern. In this sense, the subject position of refugees constructs them as mere objects rather than subjects of inclusion policies. In both data sets, constructions of the group of refugees are sometimes made in relation to the group of 'children with disabilities': both groups are considered to present a specific inclusion problem in need of attention; however, social constructions of target groups can lead to the benefit of certain groups at the expense of others (Schneider, Ingram, and Deleon 2014), which is a concern in a referral response that exposes how different groups are differently prioritised in policy discourses. As Ball notes regarding education policy in general, 'Class, race, disability and blood intertwine within education policy and practice, constantly re-emerging in different forms and contexts and guises, always in relation to power' (Ball 2013, loc.1367).

When analysing our selection of policy documents and the three group conversations in relation to our research questions, we find that the problematisation frequently returns to the topics of accessibility, inclusion, representation and integration as well as financial funding, political decisions, collaboration and teachers' competence. Amongst these, accessibility and inclusion constitute the most prominent nodal points of meaning making. Indeed, the concepts alternate to provide premises for SAMS policy. In the material, the premise of accessibility implies a stance in which

SAMS recruitment plans primarily entail 'being accessible', that is, ensuring that courses are for everyone and that information about this is provided; however, an ambition to include seems to imply that SAMS must take action by strategically reaching out to particular groups of students. This struggle for discursive hegemony is particularly visible when comparing the commissioned inquiry's use of 'inclusion' (SOU 2016:69) to the final government proposition's (Prop. 2017/18:164) use of 'accessibility', but the discourses of accessibility and inclusion also dominate in the group conversations with SAMS leaders: notions of enhancing accessibility are enacted in statements that emphasise that SAMS should be working collaboratively with other institutions in society to remove obstacles to participation as well as to obtain access to new target groups. Ambitions to include are enacted in arguments that implicate a certain form of care and concern for target groups that should be actively included in special programmes and in special ways. However, such inclusion strategies risk that 'difference is continuously verified and valorised and the individuals upon whom inclusion is to be practiced are marked out with a special status' as argued by Allan in the context of special education programmes in the UK (cited in Ball 2013, loc.1610). The consequence for refugee children, the newly arrived and the children and youth with foreign backgrounds alike is that their otherness is verified. The consequence – and benefit, one could argue – for the state is that normality and stability is verified in relation to discursively normalised, stabilised and manageable otherness. An alternative strategy is implied by the SAMS leaders when elaborating on the importance of the teachers: the possibility of the successful inclusion of new target groups hinges on the idea that much more needs to be done regarding the diversity and competence of SAMS teachers, including when recruiting new employees. At least potentially, one could imagine that a more diverse collegium, musically, pedagogically, socially and ethno-culturally, might be able to meet more diverse needs, recognise a more diverse range of musical interests and ultimately draw a more diverse crowd. From the field of gender studies, we know that relevant and legitimate role-models are important in recruitment processes (see for example Björck 2011). To lessen the risk of verifying and valorising otherness however, relevance and legitimacy are indeed of critical concern, in the sense that diversity should be at the discursive core of SAMS activities, and not referred to once-in-a-while interventions at its discursive outskirts.

In the policy documents and the group conversations alike, there are arguments for the potential of SAMS to improve the integration of new target groups into society at large, which is in line with previous research on outreach music activities with refugee children (Danielson 2021; Kenny 2020; Marsh 2012, 2017). The SAMS system provides society with the opportunity to challenge exclusiveness and elitism, bridge between cultures and contribute to democratic participation. The potential of music schools to function as a 'change agent' has also been argued in previous research (see Burnard et al. 2008; Karlsen and Westerlund 2010; Benedict et al. 2015; SOU 2016:69; Björk et al. 2018; Kenny 2018; Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2019); however, for SAMS, strategies to enhance accessibility and to include are also of utmost importance for the continued existence and legitimacy of the schools themselves. As has been argued, governmentally subsidised SAMS are required to be of relevance for all children and youth. Thus, the representation in SAMS of groups of students that for some reason or other are considered to be not only underrepresented in cultural activities but also at risk in society at large is considered a measure of accessibility and ultimately of quality. Therefore, the topics that constitute the problematisation of 'refugees' within SAMS contexts are central to the continued development of SAMS as educationally and culturally legitimate institutions.

The topic of subsidy and financial funding is recurrently enacted in the group conversations, most notably as a lack of such. At this policy level, the problematisation of including refugees in SAMS practices centre on the importance of having external funding and local politicians' support when instigating new inclusion projects. The political decisions of local actors become of utmost importance, and leaders might initiate local SAMS micropolicies and inclusion projects to obtain the attention and support of their local politicians. Grants for new inclusion practices have the function of being policy tools. At both policy levels analysed in the material, 'financial funding', as a

concept, contributes to establishing SAMS policy for the inclusion of refugees in a cyclical process, or 'policy cycle' (Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992; Ball 1993, 1994; Braun, Maguire, and Ball 2010).

Concluding remarks

In this article, we have argued that investigating processes of problematisation in policy practices entails identifying and questioning how certain 'problems' are constituted and normalised; indeed, it entails problematising the problematisations (Foucault 1999, 66; Ball 2013). By analysing what policies and leadership discursive practices present as 'problems to be solved', alternative conceptions, acts and intentions could become possible to articulate, which is in line with policy researchers Popkewitz and Brennan (1998). This type of analysis might also contribute to constructions of the subject as capable of action, which is in line with Lindgren (2006).

By giving prominence to the discourse of accessibility, the obligation of society to 'act to include' is played down. The accessibility discourse does not have action on the part of the institution at its core but constructs accessibility as enough, which does not enforce an agency capacity for SAMS. While governmental financial support of these schools may contribute to agency for inclusion, as mentioned, the governmental construction of accessibility as a sufficient goal, on the contrary, may inhibit such agency, especially in combination with a monocentric construction of the cultural function of SAMS.

As mentioned, migration involves complex processes of cultural maintenance and acculturation for immigrants (Karlsen and Westerlund 2010; Kenny 2018). We would add that such processes are at play also for the SAMS themselves. As society changes, SAMS must change to accommodate new cultures while maintaining their own cultures. The results call for a multicentric view on inclusion (Di Lorenzo Tillborg 2019), where society and institutions have a responsibility to avoid enforcing one group of individuals as the culturally dominant to which all the others should be included. Rather, all different groups of individuals should be acknowledged as culturally relevant, and institutions must make changes on different levels to include all of them. The construction of SAMS as monocentric cultural institutions is then arguably counterproductive with regard to social inclusion.

Furthermore, as the results show, different social constructions of target groups have different implications concerning whether agency capacity is ascribed to a certain group of individuals or not: whether a specific construction of a group allows its members to be viewed as empowered subjects or merely as objects for inclusion. We have argued that the construction of 'newly arrived' may belong to the first category, while the construction of 'foreign background' and 'refugees' may belong to the second. In brief, our investigation shows that the choice of words in policy documents and leader discourses may be far from neutral concerning SAMS' potential to contribute to social inclusion.

Notes

1. All translations are the authors' unless otherwise specified.
2. Examples of the projects are 'The art and music school and refugee children – unaccompanied minors and newly arrived meet the art and music school' (*Kulturskolan och barn på flykt – ensamkommande och nyanlända möter Kulturskolan*) and the Nordic initiative 'The art and music school as an including force in the local communities' (*Kulturskolan som inkluderande kraft i lokalsamfunden*) (Swedish Arts Schools Council 2020).
3. SAMS leaders were invited to the conversations. One music teacher came along with the leader for the respective SAMS and participated in the conversation.
4. 59% of all SAMS leaders at the time.
5. The quotation from Iris is shortened and edited to preserve confidentiality. Details and facts are left out for the same reasons.

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Notes on contributors

Adriana Di Lorenzo Tillborg is a university lecturer at Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University. She defended her PhD dissertation about inclusion in Sweden's Art and Music Schools (SAMS) in 2021. Her research interests include: democratisation of music education, inclusion, (dis)abilities, migration, educational and cultural policies, and discourse and policy theories. She has presented and published her research internationally. Adriana is an experienced music educator at SAMS. Her current work as a university lecturer includes supervising master theses in music education and teaching in university courses within the new teacher training programme *Kulturskolepedagog* for future music, drama and visual arts teachers in SAMS.

Live Weider Ellefsen is associate professor at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, where she teaches courses in music education, qualitative research methods, cultural studies and performance on bachelor, master and PhD-degree levels. Her research interests include music education, music and subjectivity, discourse theory and analysis, and ethnographic research methods. In 2014 she completed her PhD dissertation *Negotiating musicianship. The constitution of student subjectivities in and through discursive practices of musicianship in 'Musikklinja'*. Currently, she works within the project *The social dynamics of musical upbringing and schooling in the Norwegian welfare state* (funded by the Research Council of Norway 2018-2022).

ORCID

Adriana Di Lorenzo Tillborg http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1124-046X

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