

Chapter 1

Introduction: Education, Equity and Inclusion for a Sustainable North



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Abstract While many texts address issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity, they are almost all focused on the global South, and miss the lessons that can be learned from Northern regions. This book begins to fill the gap in understanding how to create an education system that allows students to grow up grounded in their own cultures and languages, regardless of whether they are newcomers or Indigenous, and also to be able to navigate the broader world. It is structured around two main themes: (1) supporting teachers in addressing diversity and inclusion in the classroom, including consideration of language and identity issues; and, (2) engendering solutions to structural and geographical challenges in education in the circumpolar north. Each of the book's chapters touches on at least one of these themes, and many of them both, from a geographically and culturally diverse set of perspectives. While each can be read as a standalone piece, the collection as a whole gives a robust and unique set of insights into equity and inclusion issues in education across the circumpolar north. In this introduction, we provide a brief overview of the chapters.

Keywords Equity · Inclusion · Diversity · Circumpolar · Education

The goal of this book is to provide a current view on education, equity, and inclusion within the lens of education for a sustainable North. It is a follow-up to the first book published by the University of the Arctic (UArctic) Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity, *Including the North: A comparative study of the policies on inclusion and equity in the circumpolar North, 2019*, which highlighted policies of inclusion and equity in education in national and regional contexts. We now explore in more depth the provision of education across the north, focusing on challenges and innovations in meeting the needs of diverse learners in remote and rapidly changing contexts.

This book is the result of the joint activity of 34 researchers from 17 universities or other organizations, a collaboration fostered by the aforementioned UArctic thematic network. The Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity was established in 2015 and has since grown in both size and activity. The Network started with six universities from five countries, and today has 27 member organizations across the Arctic and beyond. As a collaborative network of teacher educators and researchers, we are interested in teacher education for all levels of education. Our activities focus on varying aspects of social justice and diversity in education, such as the inclusion of pupils with diverse needs and cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, Indigenous education and

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traditional knowledge, and education in rural areas and with long distances. These themes are also reflected in this book.

While many texts address issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity, they are almost all focused on the global South, and miss the lessons that can be learned from Northern regions. Indeed, other than the aforementioned book by our thematic network, in the past decade, there have been few comprehensive looks at education across the circumpolar north. The education chapter of the *Arctic Human Development Report II* (Hirshberg & Petrov, 2015) provided an overview of some of the common challenges facing K-12 and post-secondary education in the North, such as instability in the teacher workforce and the difficulties of providing a comprehensive education in small and remote communities, but the breadth and depth were limited by constraints on the length of the chapter and the need to focus only on a few key themes. The education chapter in the first *Arctic Human Development Report* (Johansson et al., 2004) only addressed four Arctic states directly, in an even briefer description of common issues facing schools in the north. The last book to focus on primary and secondary circumpolar education, *Taken to Extremes: Education in the Far North*, was published in 1996 (Darnell & Hoem, 1996). Much has changed in education, including the change brought about by growing access to technology and increasing globalization in the education enterprise, and simultaneously recognition that education needs to be grounded in place, and the local cultures, languages, and histories of the children and young people served in our schools.

This book begins to fill the gap in understanding how to create an education system that allows students to grow up grounded in their own cultures and languages, regardless of whether they are newcomers or Indigenous, and also to be able to navigate the broader world. The tension between local and global runs throughout education structures and policies across the North, and issues of identity, diversity, and inclusion are front and center in these. We ourselves have tried to be inclusive in how we define the north, not being constrained by traditional definitions of the Arctic or circumpolar North, but instead including places that have strong northern identities as they themselves define them. We also did not pre-define equity and inclusion for our authors, but rather welcome a broad array of approaches to these topics. We believe the sum of the whole will give us a more complete picture of what it means to achieve education for a sustainable North without having narrowly defined these concepts upfront.

This work is structured around two main themes: (1) supporting teachers in addressing diversity and inclusion in the classroom, including consideration of language and identity issues; and, (2) engendering solutions to structural and geographical challenges in education in the circumpolar north. Each of the chapters touches on at least one of these themes, and many of them both, from a geographically and culturally diverse set of perspectives. While each can be read as a standalone piece, the collection as a whole gives a robust and unique set of insights into equity and inclusion issues in education across the circumpolar north. A brief overview of the chapters follows:

In their chapter ‘*Adaptation isn’t just for the tundra: Rethinking teaching and schooling in Alaska’s Arctic*,’ **Diane B. Hirshberg, Douglas Cost, and Edward**

Alexander challenge the narrative around the teacher crisis in Alaska and critique what is missing in the current discussion on how to improve school outcomes in rural Alaska. After exploring how the history of colonization and assimilation efforts in Alaska has created and propagated the current situation, they look at recent proposals to transfer more authority over rural schools to tribes and local communities and ask whether tribes should fully enact tribal control and self-determination in education.

Mitdlarak Lennert, in her chapter *'The role of evaluative thinking in generating, evaluating and scaling innovations in learning: A case study of the Greenland education system'* explores the policy instruments used for monitoring and evaluation in the Greenland education system. She looks at the types of objectives, what is monitored, and for what purpose. Lennert discusses how context shapes evaluation culture and conditions for development, and how reforms inspired by those from foreign countries do not make sense if the specific contexts of school systems, needs, stakeholder involvement, and capacity building are not considered.

Ylva Jannok Nutti, in her chapter, asks if there should be *'Sámi Teacher Education or Teacher Education for Sámi students?'* She explores the cornerstones of Sámi Teacher Education, especially in the context of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences located in Norway, which provides teacher education for Sámi students in the north Sámi language. She applied both text analysis and self-narration methods to understand syllabi in practice, and develops a metaphor of the lávvu (tipi) and the *caggi*, three basic poles supporting the structure of lávvu to identify heritage languages, indigenous knowledges and traditional pedagogies such as land-based approach as the cornerstones. Ylva Jannok Nutti underlines that to decolonise teacher education, these three basic poles have to lay the foundations for teaching and learning in Sámi Teacher Education.

In their chapter *'Education Provision for Indigenous and Minority Heritage Languages Revitalisation: A Study focusing on Sámi and Scottish Gaelic'*, **Mhairi C. Beaton, Pigga Keskitalo and Hanna Helander** provide a comparative study of education provision for the Indigenous language of Sámi and the minority heritage of Scottish Gaelic. Both languages are endangered according to UNESCO listings and the authors examine similarities and differences in how in recent years educational provision in Finland and Scotland have contributed to efforts to maintain and revitalise both languages concluding with some emerging recommendations for future practice.

In her chapter *'Policy equity contexts in inclusive education for immigrant children in The Faroe Islands'*, **Kalpana Vijayavarathan** highlights the need for educational policymakers to take account of the importance of the ethnic cultural identities of immigrant children, their use of home languages and inclusion through education to ensure their integration in The Faroe Islands.

In their chapter *'Does it Matter Where You Live? Young people's experiences of educational transitions from basic education to further education in Finnish Lapland'*, **Suvi Lakkala, Tuija Turunen, Merja Laitinen, Katja Norvapalo and Kaisa Thessler** highlight the challenges and opportunities, due to geography, for a smooth transition from basic to further education for young people living in far north of Finland, North-Lapland. While upper secondary education is provided in the

north, those who choose vocational education and training need to move hundreds of kilometres south to a bigger locality. The authors explore the differences between these two groups.

In their chapter, *'Personal and ethnic identity in representatives of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Far North – the Sámi and the Nenets'* **Natalia Flotskaya, Svetlana Bulanova** and **Maria Ponomareva** present findings from research undertaken with Saami and Nenets communities in Russia examining the identities adopted by young people in these Indigenous communities in comparison with their Russian counterparts noting the need for an educational environment that allows Indigenous youth to develop positive identities that maintain their cultural heritage.

In *"A lesson is most exciting [when] the teacher typically explains complex topics"* – *A student perspective on public schooling in Greenland,* **Lars Demant-Poort** and **Louise Pindstrup Andersen** set out to fill a gap in research on education in Greenland, specifically around students' perspectives on what happens inside classrooms. Using survey methodologies, they explore students' perceptions of schooling and lessons on the Greenlandic language and mathematics and use these to broaden understandings about schooling in Greenland.

Sally Windsor and **Karin Kers** talk about education for sustainable development in their chapter "Teaching Social Sustainability and About Sweden's Sami Peoples in Senior Secondary School". Through an action-research project they identified a lack of awareness about Sami culture and implemented a unit of lesson that increased students' knowledge of Sami life both historically and presently. Enhanced awareness of how prejudice and stereotyping are used to 'other' certain groups to justify exploitation and oppression will help create a more inclusive and sustainable society in South Sápmi, Sweden.

In their chapter, *'Collaborative Pedagogies: Seeking and Finding Truth within Indigenous Children's Literature through Multiliteracies'*, **Anne Burke, Benjamin Boison** and **Deborah Toope** provide an account of how two teachers responded to a lack of curricular content on Indigenous Peoples and histories in their Canadian context through the design of a curriculum that incorporated Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing through a multiliteracies pedagogical approach.

In their work: *Analysis of policies supporting teachers to tackle linguistic and cultural diversity and facilitate inclusion from the perspectives of Iceland and The Faroe Islands.*, **Kalpana Vijayarathan** and **Edda Óskarsdóttir** combine perspectives from two Nordic islands to explore the policy framework needed for preparing preservice teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They find that language is central in providing agency and a pathway to learning and knowledge, and conclude that teacher education must both prepare pre-service teachers to work inclusively and ensure they can deliver quality teaching in the official language to help ensure immigrant inclusion.

Benedikte Brincker and **Lene Holm Pedersen**, in *'A walk on the wild side – on the motivation of immigrant workers to provide public service in Greenland,'* study the recruitment and turnover of school teachers in Greenland, comparing differences between the West and East coast of Greenland. Their work explores whether there

are motivations that could be fostered in the system to mitigate some of the recruitment problems facing schools in Greenland.

In the chapter '*Multi-grade Teaching in a Small Rural School in Northern Norway*', **Anne-Mette Bjørn** investigates characteristics of teaching practices that enable inclusion and adapted education in a multi-grade school in a small rural community in Northern Norway. Findings highlight three didactical tools that are useful when conducting multi-grade teaching in a small school with a small number of pupils. Discussion also focuses on the importance of how the curriculum delivers social learning when working towards practice that is both inclusive and adapted to the individual pupil.

Edda Óskarsdóttir and Anna Katarzyna Wozniczka in '*Fostering professional development for inclusive education in rural Iceland: A collaborative action research project*' explore the ways of supporting teachers, who are located in rural areas without easy access to professional development courses, through a collaborative action research study of a course they taught on inclusive education. They found the course created a community of practice for nurturing inclusive practices in the school. The school's leaders played a key role during the course, by supporting the staff and providing insights to the teachers. In addition, participation by all employees was crucial, as they all contribute to inclusive practices, despite working with students in various areas and to different extents.

In the concluding chapter '*Southern Reflections on Education toward a Sustainable North*', **Sue Dockett and Bob Perry** set the stage from their 'not from north' perspective. They draw attention to things like language and culture, local communities, demographic changes, and educational policies affecting the provision of education in the north. However, they note that these are also global phenomena. Their interesting conclusion is the meaning of being 'in this place', a place that is created and re-created through social interaction and relationships. They bring us to a notion of culturally responsive pedagogies to acknowledge the role of place, regarding it as a dynamic resource for learning and teaching, and underline that place matters and should be taken into consideration in both initial and in-service teacher education as well as in the provision of education.

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