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Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic

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CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable development of the Arctic requires teachers who are highly engaged and have a special relationship with the Arctic environment, its peoples and communities. Teachers are essential stakeholders for a sustainable circumpolar Arctic future since they have the ability to positively influence the younger generation and shape their potential. In particular, they can inspire students, build resilience in communities and open new perspectives on what it means to live in and work for the Arctic. It is crucial that teachers working with Arctic children and young people are committed to the region and its communities and that they regard their professional work as essential to their students' future. Consequently, one of the key teacher development issues in the Arctic territories is attracting committed, excellent and well-educated teachers from the North. When successful, teachers educate the next generation to be willing, able and proud to work for and in the Arctic.

Thus, based on the implementation of the 2017–2019 *Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic* project, we have prepared the five conclusions outlined below. Some are currently being developed, while others have already been implemented in different regions; however, they serve as a holistic set of best practices for teacher education in the Arctic.

Conclusion 1: *Student teachers aspiring to work in the Arctic and northern communities should have possibilities to develop their competences in recognizing and acknowledging the northern land-based living and cultural context in which they work and be prepared to teach from a culturally relevant position.*

Education can have a vital role in promoting and help sustaining Indigenous and Arctic cultures, endorsing local lifestyles that enhance psycho-social wellbeing and contributing to the vitality of local communities. Student teachers aspiring to work in the Arctic and northern communities should be able to gain an understanding of the localized nature of the teaching profession in order to prepare them to adapt their instruction to relevant cultural contexts by evaluating their materials, curricula and outcomes.

Conclusion 2: *During teacher education, student teachers should have opportunities to develop the values, attitudes and competences that will enable them to appreciate learner diversity, work in multidisciplinary environments and differentiate their teaching.*

Teachers need to value and consider each learner's potential and diversity as a resource, as well as have the competency to enhance the academic and social skills of all learners. Therefore, teacher education should promote student teachers' understanding of the teaching profession as an inclusive practice, one in which they should adapt their pedagogy to cater to all students. In order to accomplish this objective, teachers should work with diverse individuals and collaborate in teams with other teachers and professionals.

Conclusion 3: *Teacher education should support student teachers' skills to take advantage of digitalization in teaching and learning, as well as distance in education mediums as a means to share and promote local culture.*

Many communities in the Arctic are located in remote or rural areas separated by long distances, making travel difficult and time consuming. In education, digital tools are sometimes the only way to provide equal access to educational opportunities for children and young people in such communities; however, digitalization also poses new questions about linguistic access and identity. Therefore, it is important to provide student teachers with the skills to employ technology in innovative ways and develop pedagogies to organize education in remote and rural areas without compromising land-based pedagogies. It is also crucial to prepare teachers to mentor students whose access to digital resources might challenge ideas about community and identity.

Conclusion 4: *Teacher education should promote student teachers' understanding of their future roles as key players in sustainable development.*

The Arctic environment is vulnerable and currently under threat due to climate change. Thus, teacher education should educate teachers to become agents for change to ensure a sustainable future by making them aware of local sustainability practices and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Teachers can educate and empower the young to be conscious, responsible and active citizens focused on promoting biodiversity and environmental protection.

Conclusion 5: *Language skills of student teachers from Indigenous backgrounds are very important and there is a need to increase the overall awareness of Indigenous languages and strive to respect and honour them.*

The Arctic is inhabited by many Indigenous peoples with great linguistic diversity. As a result, it is important that student teachers have opportunities to gain knowledge of Indigenous languages and their connection to Indigenous students' identity. In this way, they will be properly prepared to support Indigenous language development and practice among students and communities. Student teachers should also understand it is possible to teach in Indigenous languages, which provides the chance to strengthen local communities.

The aforementioned will be pursued through the UArctic Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity together with teacher education institutions across the circumpolar North.