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CHAPTER 12

SÁMI TEACHER EDUCATION EMPHASISING LAND-BASED APPROACHES FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

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Introduction

This chapter describes how Sámi teacher education might work to advance Indigenous rights in education. The context is pre-service teacher education at *Sámi allaskuvla*, the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, Northern Norway. *Sámi allaskuvla*'s institutional responsibility is capacity building and educating competent Sámi-speaking teachers for all Sámi needs, in the countries where the Sámi traditionally live, in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

International human rights instruments are of importance to Sámi teacher education. According to article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, as well as providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UNDRIP, 2007). International Labour Organization Convention no. 169 regarding Indigenous and Tribal Peoples states that education programmes shall be developed and implemented in co-operation with Indigenous and tribal peoples to address their special needs, and shall incorporate their histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations. In addition, measures shall be taken to safeguard the right of the peoples concerned to use lands which they have traditionally had access to for their subsistence and traditional activities (International Labour Organization, 1989).

These themes are also supported by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989). Article 29 concerns the aims of education and emphasises the issue of respect for diversity and that all children must learn to understand Indigenous peoples, and

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article 30 states that children of Indigenous origin shall not be denied the right to their culture, language, and religion. CRC is given an especially strong status, that in cases of conflict, the Convention shall take precedence over other laws (Lile, 2009).

Consequently, this affects Sámi teacher education, by constantly striving to transform and rethink educational practices, not only as a teacher education institution, but also as a path to future teachers working with children in the field. Teacher education in the Indigenous context works in the complex field of effects, such as those of school histories, the threat of Indigenous peoples continuously losing their cultural and linguistic features, and the need to critically renew educational practices.

This chapter describes how teacher education might apply these principles in practice by providing reflections on our experiences as teacher educators in the Sámi region. We discuss and reflect upon how to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary competence to function in their future profession, according to the principles of sustainable development and human rights in the Sámi context.

Methods

Our methodological point of departure is inspired by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) work on decolonising methodology. By doing so, we bring to the fore the voices of scholars working with maintaining Sámi languages and culture. Decolonising methodologies refers to eliminating and undoing colonial components in research, whereas indigenisation can be understood as the inclusion or redoing of Indigenous components in education. Beyond meaningless acts of inclusion or recognition, Indigenousness transforms systems and behaviours in significant ways (Tuck & Yang, 2012). We, as the authors of this chapter, and as teacher educators, describe how these starting points and premises have been conducted, understood, placed, and emphasised in educational actions in Sámi teacher education. This chapter's case was undertaken with the two initial writers, who had previously worked together at the *Sámi allaskuvla*, the third author contributing to an academic publication on land education, as their colleague, and the fourth author contributing as a collaborator.

The first author is a teacher educator at the *Sámi allaskuvla*, where she has been working for over 30 years. She has focused on the fundamentals of Sámi traditional environment knowledge, and as well as teacher education, she has held language courses on the land, and has worked on projects strengthening the intergenerational knowledge transmission. One of her main research interests is land as a source of learning, where she cooperates with others in Indigenous education networks. The second author is a Professor in Education, specifically Arctic perspectives in education, at the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland. Previously, she worked as a teacher educator at the *Sámi allaskuvla* for 20 years, looking at 'indigenising education', which is the act of

incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating into educational actions in teacher preparation (see also Mudaly, 2018). She has worked on international research projects, and published on Indigenous research and Sámi education themes. The third author is an educator from the University of Lapland, with a particular expertise in technology-mediated teaching and learning, and has also worked in *Sámi allaskuvla* teacher education for several years. She has extensive experience in projects that concern education in the Arctic and in intercultural contexts. The fourth author is an Associate Professor in Indigenous Education at the School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies, Memorial University, in Labrador. She was a faculty lead on the Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) programme for Inuit pre-service teachers from Nunatsiavut, Canada (Moore & IBED students, 2016). She has collaborated with colleagues at the *Sámi allaskuvla* on centering land-based learning in Indigenous teacher education. Her research is in Indigenous self-determination through education and land-based learning.

Sámi allaskuvla has provided teacher education for over 30 years, in early childhood, primary, and lower secondary teacher education programmes. Sámi teacher education ensures that the students gain pan-Sámi and Indigenous perspectives while attending teacher education at *Sámi allaskuvla*. In addition to general teacher education goals, the curriculum of the Sámi teacher education is founded on Sámi culture and society. The Sámi teacher education is taught in the Sámi language, and qualifies the students to provide instruction in a culturally responsive way, with an emphasis on the status and rights of Indigenous peoples. Despite all the strengths in our Sámi higher education institution, located in an Indigenous-speaking community with a living heritage, we are obliged to constantly be conscious of our teaching methods, because of the legacies of history, skewed power relations, and colonial practices.

Historical and present-day struggles

Until the late 1960s, Sámi education maintained a legacy of assimilation and cultural colonisation by which the Sámi people, at least partly, changed their cultural features, based on ideologies and a variety of actions that state policies and practices enforced, due to European civilisation aims and the state's nationalism ideology (Minde, 2003). Distinct educational development is needed in the context of endangered Sámi languages, in order to promote Indigenous languages and education premises, build a bright future for Indigenous youth, and nurture the legacy of cultural colonisation and assimilation (Keskitalo et al., 2013; Vangsnes, 2022). Along these lines, Sámi pedagogical thinking needs to be applied to traditional knowledge and land education practices, to create learning that fits Sámi learners' needs. Assimilation policies and colonialism have weakened Sámi cultural knowledge of language and connection to the land. Sustainable development goals simultaneously seek to

make the world a better place for everyone, and regarding Indigenous peoples, this means being able to maintain their cultures, languages, and ecosystems (Tauli-Corpuz et al., 2010). Struggles related to the right to land, such as companies establishing windmills in Sámi territories, is based in the reality that establishing huge investments in Indigenous regions is related to violations of Sámi and Indigenous rights (Norges institusjon for menneskerettigheter, 2022). In 2021, the Norwegian Supreme Court's decision (Norges høyesterett, 2021) affirmed that the establishment of windmills on Sámi territory was a violation of Sámi rights.

Theoretical perspectives on ecocultural and land-based approaches to education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009) argue that a growing body of literature points to the fact that community- and culture-based education best meet the educational needs of Indigenous children. As the theoretical framework, we present Sámi education's key contents, and analyse our actions based on this framework as presented in Figure 12.1. This figure elucidates the core values of Sámi culture, incorporates Sámi language, and emphasises the importance of education for sustainable development in a Sámi context, with the help of a land pedagogy, which is the core contextual practice of Sámi traditional knowledge. Sámi traditional knowledge is connected to the Sámi theory of knowledge, worldview, and values (Keskitalo et al., 2013; Porsanger, 2011).

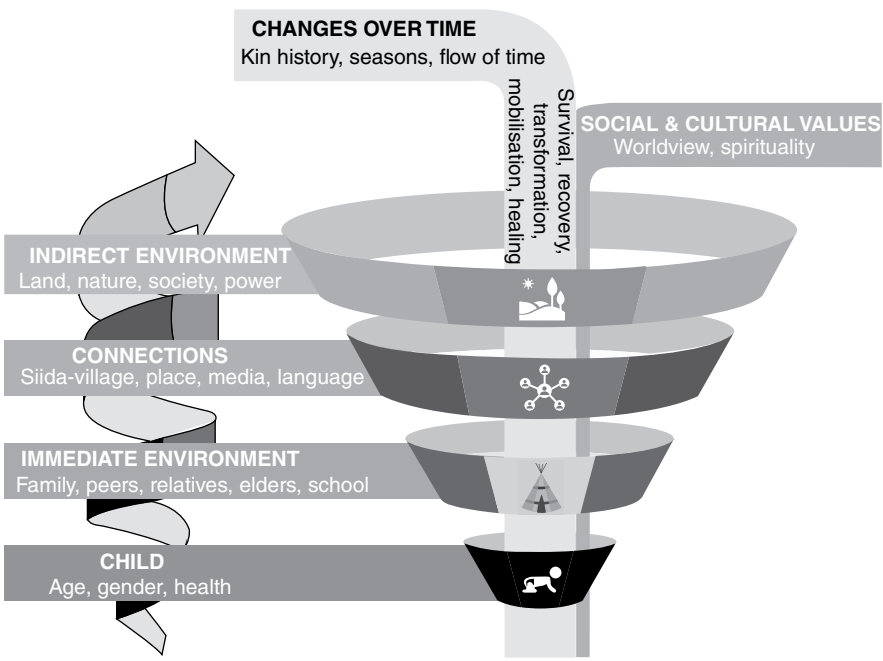

FIGURE 12.1 Ecocultural understanding of education in the Sámi context

Traditional knowledge is based on the traditional ecological thinking of Indigenous and local peoples, gained over hundreds of years of direct contact with the environment, including intimate contact with plants, animals, and natural phenomena (Bourque et al., 1993). A land education-based approach recognises the deep connection and relationship of Indigenous peoples to the land. It proposes education connected to the land that is grounded within Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy (Styres, 2017).

Concrete educational practices can be applied more deeply in order to develop these valuable connections and strategies. When creating new educational initiatives for schools, it is crucial to reconsider how schools operate, so that pedagogy can be applied to circumstances in daily life. For example, place and land should be central aspects when planning and conducting Indigenous education. Land-based learning was an integral part of the IBED programme in Labrador. This included activities on the land such as dogsledding, a completely land-based course, and a requirement in many other courses that there be a land-based component in the lesson-planning that the students developed (Moore et al., 2023). The Labrador describe land as central to their identity. 'We are part of the land. The land is a part of us. We simply can't survive without it… it's just so much a part of our identity' (Andersen in Cunsolo Willox et al., 2014, 11:14–11:41). Because of this connection between identity, land, and a way of life, the centering of land-based learning in the IBED was imperative. This approach not only increased the pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge but it also strengthened their own cultural identity.

At the same time, practice- and experience-bound learning must be implemented in a natural way, and efforts to revitalise language must be made. Many Indigenous languages are endangered at various levels, so special measures should be taken in order to preserve and revitalise them. Cultural values and philosophies must also be maintained, which cannot happen by itself or only through the efforts of individual teachers. Indigenous educational materials are the responsibility of the entire learning organisation. Pedagogical leaders should have a basic understanding of Indigenous pedagogies, and be trained to include culturally responsive learning contents. Literature has identified a paradigm shift in education in order for Indigenous educational context to be salient (Lipka et al., 1998). According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 117), Indigenous education and research emphasise Indigenous peoples' survival, recovery, transformation, mobilisation, and healing. To work effectively with children, families, and communities whose cultural settings are different from one's own, one must be able to recognise potential prejudices, understand cultural differences, and look past those disparities (Garran & Werkmeister Rozas, 2013).

Figure 12.1 presents how to work with children so that they will become active members of their societies, where their diverse backgrounds will be taken into account. We also bring forth the background, land and nature, or indirect environment, as a macro-level influence. These elements provide a theoretical point of framework for discussing our experiences. The spiral expresses the cross-cutting elements of the variables that influence Sámi education. These include the child, his/her immediate environment, connections, and indirect environment. The demographic, social, and economic factors (how and where Sámi education is supported); historical factors (assimilation, colonisation, the history of education, and local histories at the national, municipal, and individual levels); power structures (the distribution of power and the exercise of power); ethno-politics (the way the Sámi realise politics and its influences); and sociolinguistics are all interconnected and in sync with the sociocultural ecosystem (see Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Additionally, there are cultural considerations that speak to the relationship between enculturation and school culture. The Sámi worldview makes no distinction between nature and culture, nor are the two mutually exclusive. A landscape may look like a natural landscape, but nevertheless bears values and meanings associated with a cultural landscape (Buljo, 2002; Prosper, 2021). The school (grade, classroom, time allotted, instructional materials, and curriculum), parents (support, language ability, attitude, education, profession, family and relatives, community, and locality), students (motivation, emotions, and cognitive and psychological dimensions), and teachers are all included in the micro-level.

An integral part of a Sámi's cultural heritage is the special relationship to the land and nature, and the closely connected traditional ecological knowledge. Prosper (2007) encourages us to see cultural landscapes as a set of cultural relationships to places that are constituted and sustained through spatial practices. Returning to the location, year after year, provides insight into the interaction between culture and place that supports this cultural landscape. Place names and oral traditions are viewed as part of the intangible heritage (see UNESCO, 2003) that is connected to the land (Valkonen et al., 2017). Indigenous cultures develop in interaction with the land (Hoëm et al., 1979). Land education is about learning on, about and from the land. It is about seeing the land as our teacher and putting our relationships with the land at the centre of learning. The land itself is a prerequisite, and the diversity of landscapes means that Sámi ways of knowing vary by geographic region.

We learn differently when we are on the land. It creates opportunities for deep learning in a way the classroom cannot provide. The learning manifests in the physical environment and shapes us. Engaging all our senses, when looking at zoning in a landscape, cements the learning both mentally and

physically. Land education-based learning is the learning that takes place through a lens of understanding of who you are in relation to where you are, how you got there, and how interconnected you are to all of nature and to the place and community where you live. From an Indigenous perspective, land education can be understood as:

> The learning of deep, social, political, ethical and spiritual relationships on and with land. By extension, the approach of land-as-pedagogy applies the understanding that the primary and ultimate teacher is the very land itself. Land education offers scholars and students a nuanced, culturally responsive, and responsible critique of the notion of place and field of place-based education, particularly with regard to historically minoritized students and communities such as Indigenous peoples throughout the world.
>
> *(Cruz, 2020)*

Land education-based pedagogical approaches are closely connected to education for sustainable development, when they create more just, ethical, and decolonising ways of practising and researching education for sustainable development (Bengtson & Östman, 2016). Such land education advances decolonised approaches to sustainability (Smith, 1999). According to Calderon (2016), land education lays on the fact of a history of the land historically as Indigenous. The complex, moral, and historically informed process of Indigenous land repatriation begins as a logical consequence and obligation of such pedagogy, when land education and land-as-pedagogy are repositioned from a marginal to a central position, within formal and informal education (Cruz, 2020). Land education rethinks pedagogies from an Indigenous perspective, placing place and nature at the core in postcolonial and decolonial education (Tuck et al., 2016).

Land education as a case in Sámi teacher education

In the following section, we present examples of how we work with land education in Sámi teacher education. In the beginning of the 2000s, land education was recognised and subsequently emphasised in Sami teacher education by starting a teaching development project, *Luohkkálanjas várrečohkkii – Oahpaheamis oahppamii* (From classroom to the mountain peak – From teaching to learning) (Hirvonen, 2000). Inspiration for the title came from the Sámi author Johan Turi (2012), who, over one hundred years ago, criticised the school provided for Sámi children. He suggested that thoughts flow best when you are on the peak of a mountain, where the wind is touching your nose, meaning that school rooms are not always the best environments in which to learn. An open space in nature gives one a perspective of the surroundings, and an image of what the land has offered for its inhabitants in the old days, and how people have sustainably interacted with the land. The

teaching development project was conducted collaboratively, where all educators and students, regardless of which programme or course they were involved in, were challenged to explore extended learning arenas in an intensive period, and find themes which were relevant for the curricula in their programmes and courses.

The Sámi community has conditions and certain, sometimes tacit, knowledge and rules for the use of land. For example, the borders of the *siida*'s, each family group's traditional land, are not marked anywhere as immemorial heritage, but the inhabitants know them, as they are important winter pastures for the reindeer herds. When we want to take a group of students to a spot, we try to be humble, and get in touch with someone who has a relation to that place, and ask for guidance. In addition, certain families have fished and picked berries in certain places. Figure 12.1 depicts and explains how children, youth, or young students are involved in the processes and actions, and how the involvement in the processes will teach them cultural practices, bigger worldviews, and cosmologies.

The folk museum is walking distance from *Sámi allaskuvla*. For this land education practice, we visited the museum for several days. The pre-service teachers were taught collaboratively by the teacher educators, and they also made exercises to plan lessons using the environment of the local folk museum. The location is in the centre of the village, surrounded by the habitations and nearby hills, with a view of the mountains in the distance. It is located in an open landscape, close to the river, with a meadow encircled with a thicket of the most commonly used bushes for firewood and *duodji* material, and valued plants. There are different kinds of dwellings in the courtyard, and by studying each in detail, you can learn about the old building techniques using wood, branches, and birch bark growing in the surroundings.

The session started in the museum yard by gathering into a *goahti* (sod hut) to discuss forthcoming days, and to open the space as a learning arena. We discussed the *goahti* as a living place, and the concepts concerning this. We talked about the *goahti* and its possibilities to function as a learning space, and the possibility to transfer something from there to school life, such as sitting in a circle as a way of fostering community in a classroom. In the folk museum, we started by letting smaller groups explore the exhibition, which presents the Sámi livelihoods by introducing items used in, for example, duck hunting in the spring, fishing during the winter, or migrating with the reindeer herd. After the familiarisation, the pre-service teachers chose one item connected to the Sami livelihoods. We prompted the students to look at the learning experience from a long-term perspective, and imagine how people have adapted their lives and developed their skills, as well as reflect on the connection of living heritage and ecological knowledge. As a way of coming closer to the life of our ancestors, they were to imagine they were in that time when the item was used, and ask 'who am I as the owner of this item?', 'what kind of skills have I got?', 'where am I going to use it?'

After going back in time, the students were to reflect on today's living conditions, and find out how items look and what kind of material is used today in the same livelihood. For example, one student had skiing as a hobby, and used the time to study a handmade birchwood ski, a *besso-datsabet*, a ski with a ski-binding made of a wound willow branch, comparing it with the plastic skis used today. It gave an opportunity to talk about article 8j – '[R]especting, preserving and maintaining knowledge innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles' – in the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). We were facilitating inquiry-based learning, posing thoughtful questions and scenarios, to help ourselves to think critically about the value of respecting our ancestor's knowledge, the traditional ecological knowledge.

The items the group of pre-service teachers presented to the others varied and led to a dialogue, making us more conscious about the innovations, the sustainability of the materials we use today and a discussion about how to reduce the use of plastic and disposable products. Through the process, the students were given the opportunity to collaboratively and individually reflect on the society we live in, see oneself as a nation builder, a member of the society, with the ability to take part in the development. We ended each day by gathering to experience the embodied connection to nature and land.

Suidnen – harvesting sedge for insoles in boots

We have had *suidnen*, harvesting sedge for using as an insole in boots, as a theme day for several successive years. The sedge absorbs moisture, and the feet feel fresh the whole day, in addition to having an insulating function. *Suidnen* is an activity that takes place in the autumn, when the sedge fibres have transformed to cellulose, and are not broken so easily, and in planning a suitable date we take into account the cycle of the moon. During the process, cutting, softening, and braiding the sedge bundles, hanging them on racks, we are conscious of using the particular terms, the well-developed vocabulary, for example *bonjaldat, šluvgit, bilgádit, dágget, dállastit*, and *liehppa*. We let all students take their braided bundles home, and hope that each one would get to use it in their boots in winter, or at least use it as decoration, reminding them of the use of *háisuoidni*, scented grass with a sweet fragrance, used as perfume when storing a braid of it among clothes (see also Alm, 2015). *Suidnen*, as a theme, works well for all ages; you have the tradition in all Sámi regions, and it isn't connected to a specific occupation; it is for the wellbeing of all. In carrying out that activity, we collaborate with the local educational resources. Such school–community collaborations, respecting traditional knowledge and valuing the circular economy using renewable resources that we found in our ecosystem, can make changes and empower living heritage.

Muohtamáilbmi – the world of snow

When we move further in the seasonal round to the winter, we arrange learning activities related to *Muohtamáilbmi* – the 'world of snow'. As snow is a phenomenon we interact with, we give an opportunity for each teacher education programme (early childhood, primary, and lower secondary) to plan in which way they would like to implement the *Muohtamáilbmi* theme in an early childhood day-care centre and in primary and lower secondary school. Sometimes we challenge ourselves by working with technical equipment outdoors in winter temperatures, and other times we focus on the snow itself, observe the quantity and quality of layers accumulating during the winter, and examine how it can affect the grazing conditions for reindeer herding. What has been important for us to meditate on is that we appreciate the snow in many ways. For example, it makes it easier to track the animals, which is practical and cultural knowledge of importance to the Sámi people, that we convey to our students. In order to develop our own skills about the snow, we have to use time to develop the habit of frequently observing the weather; changes in temperature and wind direction, signs and atmospheric phenomena and identifying locally significant patterns and relationships as animal behaviour, noticing sequences of events and in that way learning and applying this knowledge to our daily lives.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how Sámi teacher education might educate pre-service teachers through a land education-based approach to Sámi culture and traditions. Our approach has the potential to provide meaningful dialogues among educators, students, and the members of the community. Our impression is that this land-based approach to teaching practice has strengthened the relationship between the Sámi community and *Sámi allaskuvla* as well as increased pre-service teachers' knowledge about Sámi culture, customs, and language.

We believe that by using a land education-based approach in teacher education, the students establish a strong connection with the Sámi community that can foster commitment to teaching about their cultural heritage, sustainability, and Sámi values later on as in-service teachers, which in turn can ensure the realisation of children's rights to a culturally responsive education. Strategically, every teacher education institution needs to be aware of culture responsiveness, and incorporate this thinking in its plans and practical implementation, both theoretically and practically. All teachers should be enabled to offer education in accordance with children's rights, regardless of where the teacher education takes place, in Indigenous, multilingual, or the mainstream context.

Through our attempts to use the land as a source of learning, we give the pre-service teachers inspiration for their future work. The vision we have is of an education system organised as knowledge centres in the regions, where the developmental transmission of competence is in tandem with the seasonal

round, and in coordination with activities in the communities, so that the difference between teaching, working life, and society is reduced (Hoëm, 2001). Our starting point in Sámi teacher education is to rethink teaching and learning, so that pre-service teachers gain competency and training in culturally responsive education for ensuring Indigenous rights principles in their everyday practice as future teachers.

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