

# POSITION STATEMENT ON ARCTIC PEDAGOGY

## PREAMBLE

Education in the Arctic and other rural northern areas faces many challenges. Long distances, lack of resources and a shortage of committed teachers are all factors that pose obstacles for education. Teacher education and teacher educators are in a key position to reinvent education and develop sustainable solutions for arranging education. Attracting committed, high-performing teachers is one of the key issues in the Arctic.

This position statement was developed by the UArctic Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity in Education. The statement is an outcome of the project, Arctic Pedagogy in Teacher Education, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. It was composed together with the UArctic Thematic Network members, and it is based on both a literature review and a panel discussion held in Rovaniemi in December 2017.

This position statement aims to explain what Arctic pedagogy is and how it can be implemented. It seeks to help teachers, policy members and stakeholders to recognise the important aspects of education in the Arctic and in rural northern communities and to offer some examples of the implementation of Arctic pedagogy.



UARCTIC TN  
TEACHER EDUCATION FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY



Nordic  
Co-operation

*“This position statement was created as an aspirational document targeted to teachers, educators, policy makers and anyone else concerned with education in the Arctic and other rural northern areas.”*

## PURPOSES

In this position statement, Arctic pedagogy is depicted as policies and educational practices that take place in Arctic and other rural northern areas. Tightly associated with Arctic pedagogy are the concepts of language, cultures, digitalisation, communities and elders, all of which are layered and closely interlinked.

This position statement was created as an aspirational document targeted to teachers, educators, policy makers and anyone else concerned with education in the Arctic and other rural northern areas. In this position statement, Arctic pedagogy is understood as a concept that consists of several components constituting the educational practices characteristic of Arctic regions. The position statement seeks opportunities to include these characteristics in northern education.


The position statement was established based on scientific and empirical articles concerning education in Arctic and other rural northern regions. Furthermore, the statement is based on the Conclusions composed in the Arctic Council’s Sustainable Development Working Group project, Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic. The statement is grounded on the importance of offering everyone the same basis for education regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or place of residence. Through this statement, it is hoped that education can be adjusted to better correspond to the needs of those residing in the Arctic and other rural northern areas.

## COMMUNITY

Communities in northern localities are essential, and schools should aim towards accommodating community values and practices for the students. Education and teaching, in Arctic areas, should be offered in collaboration with local communities and be at least partly proximity-based, i.e., take place where the students live. A proximity-based approach is also used when educating teachers. In teacher education, teachers travel to the communities and learn from their local lifestyles and lifeways. The teachers have found this to be very useful for immersing themselves in the culture in which they will teach. Community and cultural immersion can also lessen the constant teacher turnover, which is a notable problem in rural areas. By visiting such communities, teachers can observe local needs and adjust their teaching accordingly.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the nature-centred lifestyle of the communities. Where and when possible, teaching should be adjusted to correspond with the seasonal rhythm of the community. In other words, teachers should synchronise their teaching with the traditional





season-based work the communities do as well as with the changes of nature. Communities should also be involved in the production of the learning materials they require and where they can see themselves. Teachers, parents and community members can all work together when planning curricula-related activities and adjusting the school environment.

In addition, when teachers are familiar with the communities in which their students live, they can promote sustainable ways of living in the north. Northern communities are located in a rich, albeit fragile, natural ecosystem, and preserving this ecosystem is important. Teacher education should aim to instruct teachers on how to become change agents for a sustainable future. In turn, they should educate their students on how to become conscious and responsible as active citizens in and for their surroundings.

## CULTURE

Arctic pedagogy's objective is to maintain and nurture the land-based way of living and Indigenous cultures in northern areas. Understanding local context provides resources and knowledge on which teachers can construct their education plans. The aim is to provide children with education that reflects, validates and enhances their ways of living and culture. Students need an educational experience in which they can feel, hear, taste and touch their cultural values, and therefore teachers must know how to transfer cultural knowledge into education. Training pre-service teachers within the cultural environment instead of inside university classrooms has proven to be an efficient means to accomplish this transfer, helping teachers to connect with the world in which their students live and understand specific aspects of their cultural context. Many students feel that school focuses on teaching them academic knowledge at the expense of knowledge needed in everyday life. By experiencing their students everyday lives, teachers can better grasp the cultural contexts to which their teaching and education should be tied.


Some indigenous communities have deemed school to be an extension of their homes. This association accords with the contemporary effort to 'Indigenise the academy', which means making universities and campuses more friendly towards and supportive of Indigenous cultures.

*"The aim is to provide children with education that reflects, validates and enhances their ways of living and culture."*

## LANGUAGE

Language is an important marker of cultural identity. Offering education in local languages helps students to connect with their cultural selves. Hence, local languages should be given an official place in schools, rather than being regarded as 'transition languages'. Connecting to Arctic communities is easier through local language proficiency, as there are words in local languages





that cannot be translated properly. Knowing the local language and its vocabulary can help one connect with the community and obtain a sense of belonging. Furthermore, language enhances place attachment. When one feels a sense of community belongingness, it increases their place attachment and willingness to stay in the community as well as be an active part of it. Through strengthening local language skills, future generations can become more valuable members of their communities.

Through language, culture can be transmitted from one generation to another. Storytelling is often seen as the most natural way of teaching among northern communities. In some Indigenous cultures, for example, mathematical exercises can be connected to the students' world and presented in the form of riddles.

*“Through strengthening local language skills, future generations can become more valuable members of their communities.”*

Language minorities in the Arctic and other northern areas have a high school dropout rate. This problem should be acknowledged, and ways to make schools more friendly to language minorities should be developed. Preserving and revitalising local languages are important, and schools should incorporate these goals into their agenda. Heritage language programmes could act as a bridge between youth and their ancestors, thereby transmitting ancestral values and traditions.

## ELDERS

In Arctic communities, elders have a very important role. Elders can act as mentors for both (pre-service) teachers and students. Elders possess valuable knowledge that they can pass on to future teachers. In pre-service teacher education, when teachers visit Arctic communities, they can observe and learn from elders. In their own teaching, teachers can collaborate with elders and invite them to classrooms.

Elders value both education and their culture, and they do not want to lose either one of them. With their help, combining education and culture is possible. In Arctic communities, elders pass on knowledge as well as cultural values. Children and youth observe what the elders do and learn through these observations and experiences. The elders do not believe in 'lecturing in a classroom', but rather in learning through observation and experience. Elders can help teachers to connect their teaching to local, everyday life.

Arctic pedagogy views elders as an asset and values the tacit knowledge they possess. Elders base their teaching on traditional knowledge, thereby passing on both cultural and tacit knowledge.



## DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation is the only way to organise education in some rural northern areas. In the Arctic and other rural northern areas, many students must travel far from their homes and families to attend school or higher education. Living far from home at such young ages makes these students more vulnerable to developmental problems and more susceptible to dropping out of school before completing their studies. To address this issue, online education should be offered, allowing more students to stay home and study under parental supervision.

Besides serving as a teaching tool, technology can serve as a learning tool. Students can learn about other cultures through, for example, videos, but they can also teach others about their own cultures, livelihoods and lives through video production. Hence, digitalisation provides the opportunity for dialogue between different cultures and their associated life worlds. Through technology, we can share our worlds with people anywhere. Learning and teaching with and through technology support education both inside and outside traditional classrooms, and therefore the competences needed to work with digital tools must be acquired by teachers.

## SUMMARY

This position statement regards Arctic pedagogy as a combination of several factors. Communities and cultures as well as the local knowledge of elders should constitute the premise of education. Arctic pedagogy seeks to preserve and revitalise local languages, which should be acknowledged in the curriculum and included in teaching. Arctic pedagogy views digitalisation as an opportunity for developing innovative solutions for arranging education, and teachers should be encouraged to devise creative ways to include digitalisation in their teaching. Arctic pedagogy is a comprehensive method of teaching and learning, and culture, language and communities enrich educational experiences and strengthen the learners' identities.

Defining Arctic pedagogy in this position statement encourage teachers to begin implementing the method in their own educational arrangements. Therefore, the UArctic Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity proposes the following:

## ENTITLEMENTS

### Children and young people in the north are entitled:

- to receive culturally appropriate education which supports their language skills and socio-cultural identity building
- to have committed teachers who support their sense of belonging and future aspirations
- to receive education that facilitates their development into active citizens, locally and globally

### Teachers are entitled:

- to have teacher education which prepares them to promote their students' active citizenship in local communities
- to have teacher education which promotes their understanding of the connection of culture, language and identity building as well as their skills to provide culturally sensitive education
- to have access to good quality digital means of instruction

### Teacher education institutions are entitled:


- to include northern socio-cultural themes in their programmes
- to provide future teachers with skills to offer culturally appropriate education
- to provide a northern experience for future teachers

### Local communities are entitled:

- to receive quality education for their children and young people
- to have teachers who are committed to the sustainable future of their community
- to have teachers and future citizens who respect local cultures and lifeways

## REFERENCES

- Annahatak, Betsy. (1994). Quality education for Inuit today? Cultural strengths, new things and working out the unknowns: A story by an Inuik. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 69(2), 12–18.
- Aylward, Lynn M. (2007). Discourses of cultural relevance in Nunavut schooling. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 22, 1–9.
- Bania, Elisabeth Valmyr, Lydersen, Stian, & Kvernmo, Siv. (2016). Non-completion of upper secondary school among female and male young adults in an Arctic sociocultural context; the NAAHS study. *BMC Public Health*, 16(1), 1–11.
- Brasche, Inga, & Harrington, Ingrid. (2012). Promoting teacher quality and continuity: Tackling the disadvantages of remote Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory. *Australian Journal of Education (ACER Press)*, 56(2), 110–125.
- Canipe, Martha, & Tolbert, Sara. (2016). Many ways of knowing. A multilogical science lesson on climate change. *Science Teacher*, 83(4), 31–35.
- Cram, Jack. (1985). Northern teachers for Northern schools: An Inuit teacher-training program. *McGill Journal of Education*, 20(2), 113–131.
- Dion, Susan D. (2016). Mediating the space between: Voices of Indigenous youth and voices of educators in service of reconciliation. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53(4), 468–473.
- Fickel, Letitia, Abbiss, Jane, Brown, Liz, & Astall, Chris. (2018). The importance of community knowledge in learning to teach: Foregrounding Maori cultural knowledge to support preservice teachers' development of culturally responsive practise. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(3), 285–294.
- Healey, Gwen, Noah, Jennifer, & Mearns, Ceporah. (2016). The eight Ujarait (Rocks) model: Supporting Inuit adolescent mental health with and intervention model based on Inuit knowledge and ways of knowing. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 11(1), 92–110.
- Jannok Nutti, Ylva. (2017). Indigenous teachers' experiences of the implementation of culture-based mathematics activities in Sami school. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, (2013)25, 57–72.
- Jannok Nutti, Ylva. (2018). Decolonizing Indigenous teaching: Renewing actions through a Critical Utopian Action Research Framework. *Action Research*, 16(1), 82–104.
- Javo, Cecilie, Rønning, John A., Handegård, Bjørn Helge, & Rudmin, Floyd W. (2009). Social competence and emotional/behavioral problems in a birth cohort of Sami and Norwegian preadolescents in Arctic Norway as reported by mothers and teachers. *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry*, 63(2), 178–187.
- Kaspar, Violet. (2013). Mental health of Aboriginal children and adolescents in violent school environments: Protective mediators of violence and psychological/nervous disorders. *Social Science & Medicine*, 81, 70–78.
- Keskitalo, Pigga, Määttä, Kaarina, & Uusiautti, Satu. (2012). Sámi education in Finland. *Early Child Development & Care*, 182(3/4), 329–343.
- Kortekangas, Otso. (2017). Useful citizens, useful citizenship: Cultural contexts of Sámi education in early twentieth-century Norway, Sweden and Finland. *Paedagogica Historica*, 53(1/2), 80–92.
- Lewthwaite, Brian. (2007). From school in community to a community-based school: The influence of an Aboriginal principal on culture-based school development. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 64.
- Lie, Kari. (2003). Sámi heritage language program models. Balancing Indigenous traditions and Western ideologies within the Norwegian educational system. *Scandinavian Studies*, 75(2), 273–292.
- Malo-Juvera, Victor, Correl, Pamela, & Cantrell, Susan. (2018). A mixed methods investigation of teachers' self-efficacy for culturally responsive instruction. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 74, 146–156.
- Määttä, Kaarina, & Uusiautti, Satu. (2015). The basics of arctic pedagogy. *Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G Linguistics & Education*, 15(4), Version 1.0.



Nystad, Kristine, Spein, Anna Rita, Balto, Asta Mitkija, & Ingstad, Benedikte. (2017). Ethnic identity negotiation among Sami youth living in majority Sami community in Norway. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 76(1), 1–15.

Poirier, Louise. (2007). Teaching mathematics and the Inuit community. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics & Technology Education*, 7(1), 53–67.

Preston, Jane P. (2016). Situating educational issues in Nunavut: Perceptions of school leaders and teachers. *Northern Review*, 42, 109–129.

Stevenson, Blair. (2014). How much culture is enough? Inuit teachers' perceptions of the state of Inuit culture in Nunavik classrooms. *Intercultural Education*, 25(6), 468–483.

Todal, Jon. (2003). The Sámi school system in Norway and international cooperation. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 185–192.

Valtonen, Teemu, Kukkonen, Jari, Dillon, Patrick, & Väisänen, Pertti. (2009). Finnish high school students' readiness to adopt online learning: Questioning the assumptions. *Computers & Education*, 53, 742–748.

Veletsianos, George, Doering, Aaron, & Henrickson, Jeni. (2012). Field-based professional development of teachers engaged in distance education: Experiences from the Arctic. *Distance Education*, 33(1), 45–59.

Väyrynen, Sai, Kesälähti, Essi, Pynninen, Tanja, Siivola, Jenny, Flotskaya, Natalia, Bulanova, Svetlana ... Afonkina, Yulia. (2016). Finnish and Russian teachers supporting the development of social skills. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(4), 437–451.

Walker-Gibbs, Bernadette, Ludecke, Michelle, & Kline, Jodie. (2018). Pedagogy of the Rural as a lens for understanding beginning teachers' identity and positionings in rural schools. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 26(2), 301–314.

