



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

Module 5

Education in the North

Developed by Vappu Sunnari and Niina Kuorikoski, University of Oulu, Finland

Key Terms and Concepts

- globalization
- citizenship
- curriculum
- hidden curriculum
- educational equity
- special educational needs of the northern people

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, students should have attained:

1. Basic knowledge of education in the Circumpolar World
2. Understanding of some current key issues of education in the Circumpolar World
3. Understanding of issues that maintain and reproduce inequality in the schools of the Far North
4. A self-reflected vision of what to do to support the development of full citizenship, equity, dignity and agency in education in the North.

Module Readings

Read the Overview and Lecture for Module 5, then read the assigned readings from the *Reading File* given below.

Reading 13: Leon Tikly, “Globalisation and Education in the Postcolonial World: Towards a Conceptual Framework”

Reading 14: Frank Darnell and Anton Hoëm, “Historical Development in Schooling”



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Overview

The aim of this module is to promote understanding of education and some of the current key issues in education the Circumpolar World. After a short introduction, the key terms of the module will be introduced and explained keeping the context as well as the nature and role of the module in mind.

The third part of the module is a discussion of the educational and curricular policies, particularly in the context of Finland. The fourth part deals with the solutions to the problem of long distances in the Far North, more particularly the use of boarding schools and information technology. The conclusions will be drawn in the fifth and final part of the module. This part also includes final remarks. Lastly there is a list of resources used and a supplementary reading and materials list.

Lecture

Introduction

In this module the term North refers to territories intersected by or close to the Arctic Circle: Alaska, Greenland and Iceland, and the northern parts of Canada, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Russia. The populations of the areas consist of both Indigenous and other people. In Northern Europe, for example, the major Indigenous people, the Saami, live in the most northern parts of Norway, Finland, Sweden, and in the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The estimated number of all Saami people varies between 50,000 and 70,000. About 180,000 people live north of the Arctic Circle in Finland, 7,000 of them Saami. The Finnish people form the majority of the population in all municipalities in Finland except Utsjoki. Both the Finnish and the Saami population have lived for a long time in the Northern Finland. There are several municipalities in Norway that have a Saami majority: Karasjok, Kautokeino, Tana, and Nesseby (Aikio Puoskari 2001a).

For many reasons, education in the far North is a complex and challenging matter.

1. Most of the regions have a long history of being administered from outside
2. Most of the regions are not independent, even today
3. The regions are characterized by cultural diversity
4. The distances are long and the environment is harsh
5. Globalization, as a present-day characteristic of life, is a special source of problems and challenges in education

The above themes will be discussed in more detail in this module. It is important to note that they are all linked, related, and—to some extent—



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overlapping. The aim here is not to present an exhaustive account of the themes, but rather to take an introductory look and to bring out in more detail some of the main issues of concern and conflict.

Key Terms

The key terms of this module are globalization, citizenship, curriculum, hidden curriculum, and educational equity. Also, the term “special educational needs of the northern people” will be used in this module.

In this module, the term “globalization” is used to signify changes in economics, in state politics, in local and more general cultures, and in individual identifications and orientations. The changes are partly transformations in relations: in relations between politics and economics, between capital and labour, between states and markets, and between international and state politics. Globalization has produced a shift from social rights to competition, productivity, and efficiency, and a shift from public to private and from social responsibility to individual (or family) responsibility. As a process, globalization is not linear, but contradictory and contested. Its impacts are unequal and differ on the bases of regions, classes, and people (see e.g., Bauman 1998; Pettman 1999; Beck 1999; Tikly 2001).

The centrality of the terms *citizen(ship)* and *equity/equality* lay in the fact that, quite commonly, one of the core aims of public education is to produce complete citizens and to promote equity. Both of these aims can be found, for example, in the documents of the United Nations. On the abstract level, these ideas are largely agreed upon, but on a practical level, they are not. Things such as one’s social positioning,¹ cultural and institutional values and practices, and also a sense of belonging seem to inflect the content of citizenship and the level of the realization of equity (Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999).

One of the core questions connected with the equity/equality discussion is whether equality/equity should be pursued through the postulation of people’s sameness or through that of their differences. This debate has especially characterized gender-based equity discussions. Inequity between the sexes is seen to be characterized by asymmetry that is assumed to be logo-centric. Logo-centrism can be illustrated with the symbols A and -A, so that A symbolizes the males and their actions that are seen as norms and as the screen through which -A, the females and their actions, are valued. -A is something less than A, as if “not yet A” (Reskin 1991). From the starting point of sameness, it is difficult to surpass the logo-centric asymmetry of A/not yet A, whereas the difference -starting-point can lead to the everlasting question of how to find real equity between different entities and, at the same time, how to surpass the rhetoric level of discussions on equity (See e.g., Holli 1995; Evans 1995; Lynch 1996). Even the terms

¹ Matters that influence one’s position are, for example, one’s group membership, gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, “race”, ability, age, and life-cycle stage.



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sameness/difference and equity/equality are bound with each other in that the term equality refers to the sameness postulation, and the term equity to the difference postulation.

Anne-Maija Holli has an interesting solution to the question of sameness/difference. She thinks that equity can be defined on the basis of neither sameness nor difference but rather only in a space between these two phenomena. This means that equity considerations must simultaneously take into account both difference and sameness and that they must be analyzed as changing entities. It also presupposes context-specific approach to equality/equity policy (Holli 1995).

Equity policy means actions taken to achieve equity. According to the Irish researcher Kathleen Lynch, the essential limitation of the common equity approaches is that they are based on the liberal model of equity. The liberal model focuses on individuals as individuals rather than as group members, and it is based, in part, on the assumption that education itself is implicitly good. Because of the individualistic starting point, the liberal model of equity is blind to the discrimination that lies within institutions, and the discrimination that is structured within them (Lynch 1996; see also Evans 1995).

Lynch identified a four-category framework of equity objectives:

1. Minimalist conception of equality: equality defined as equal formal rights and opportunities centrally focusing on equality of access
2. Equality of participation: The focus is on enabling and encouraging equal participation
3. Equality of success or outcome: Ensuring equal rates of success or outcome for particular marginalized and excluded groups
4. Equality in conditions (Lynch 1996)

Lynch thinks that the four equality objectives form a continuum. According to her, this continuum helps to illustrate how the various stages are interrelated and interdependent. This means that, for example, objective two cannot operate without objective one, objective three without objective two, and so on. In other words, Lynch thinks that transforming education cannot occur without simultaneous transformation in many levels: in curriculum structures, management structures, organizational systems, teacher education, the state and educational mediators, to mention a few (Lynch 1996).

On the policy level, the concepts of citizenship and equity are strongly connected with each other. The speciality of the term citizenship comes from its future and agency orientations (Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999). As such, the term citizenship dates back to the beginning of modernity and the construction of modern states in the sixteenth century. The agents in those



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discussions were men of the upper social classes, and they also comprised the part of the population that became authorized as citizens. All women, and men outside the upper social classes, did not have these rights (Nousiainen 1998).

In theory, women today have equal position and citizenship rights with men. The case is quite generally the same with children. In practice, however, one's sex (Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999) and sexual identity (Epstein & Johnson 1998) influence the quality of the rights, and so does one's economic status (Yuval-Davis 1997, Ålund 1999, Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999), marital status, age, "race" (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992), ethnicity (Knocke 1995, Ålund 1999, Bano 1999), and nationality (Collins 1999, Lentin 1999). Also the worldview can have similar influence, especially in the case of being compatible with the values of the hegemonic group or groups.

The most fundamental level of citizenship involves respecting the right to life. But although the fulfillment of even this level is a problem for millions of human beings, it only offers the starting point (Assiter 1999). It is usual to involve the components of freedom, autonomy, and the right to difference with the concept of citizenship. If the issue is looked at in more detail, one can see that citizenship is deeply connected with power, and it is characterized by different complementary tensions such as

- universalism and speciality
- freedom and control
- identity and difference
- nation and individual (Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999)

Curriculum is a term connected with institutional education. It refers to the values, organizing principles and contents of school life. Before the Enlightenment, and before the increase of industry, the western concept of curriculum was characterized by the main aim of promoting spiritual deliverance. Bible study formed the basis of knowledge, and entrance to the state-financed educational institutions was mainly possible only for a very small elite of male population. Later, in the formal discourses of intelligence, "science" started to replace "belief," and as, for example, Gaby Weiner (1994) found, the following four features: selection, differentiation, functionality, and social advancement became a part of discourses of and in institutional education. *Hidden curriculum* (Lynch 1989; Jackson 1968; Willis 1977; Broady 1986) can be seen as one component in curriculum. The term is used when discussing the unwritten purposes and goals of school life that produce and maintain special hierarchies in educational institutions, and influence the production of otherness in them. On an individual level, hidden curriculum means the various social, cultural, and economical norms, demands or selection mechanisms that students have to adapt themselves to in order to cope with their studies and school life.



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The term *special educational needs of the northern people* refers, in this module, to all the special skills, knowledge, and information required for surviving and for living a meaningful life in the environmental, social, economic, spiritual, cultural, and other diverse characteristics of the Far North.

A Long Line from Elitism towards a New Elitism: Educational and Curricular Policies

For a variety of reasons, education in the Far North is a complex and challenging matter. The most fundamental questions in public education generally have been ones of who shall be educated, who can be educated, on what level, and why, with public funding. The questions of the special educational needs of certain periphery groups, like people in the Far North, and the questions connected with their cultural diversity have attained less attention from the side of the dominant nation-states.

Historically, there have been three main methods used by state-level governments to respond to the cultural specialities of northern people: that of adaptation, separation, and integrative assimilation. These different responses have given different answers to the following questions: What is the value-base of the education? Should the northern perspective influence the value base of public, elementary education? What forms of spirituality are accepted? What is seen as knowledge, and what knowledge will be accepted as important? What are the languages used in education, and what languages will be studied? What are the other subjects studied, and what are their contents? Who should be the teachers of the northern people? What is the position of teachers in relation to the state and the local adult people? What are the positions of school children, and their different ethnic, class, gender, and religious groups? Partly the problems seem to be the same throughout the Far North (See e.g., Sergejeva 1995; Darnell and Hoëm 1996; McKay n.d.; RAIPON 2000; Aikio-Puoskari 2001a).

Adaptation policies have meant attempts by the state to homogenize different cultures into the dominant culture and its norms; to change the core components of the northern cultures that differed from the dominant culture, such as spirituality-belief systems and language. Historically, this policy seems to have been central in Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Russia toward Saami people. The same can be said of the policy of the Norwegian state towards the Kweens, the Finnish-speaking population living in the North of Norway.

As to separation, there have been two different variants: separation based on the will of the dominant culture, and separation based on the will of certain northern cultures. The policies of Sweden towards Saami people during the first decades of the twentieth century seem to have represented the first: Saami people were considered Nomads, and Nomads were labelled “less



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civilized” than Swedish people. Furthermore, it was believed that Saami did not need as much public education as other Swedish people, nor that they needed education from the same curriculum. Because of these beliefs, separate schools were established for them (Aikio-Puoskari 2001a).

Integrative assimilation is an attempt by educational systems to take some special components of the northern cultures—for example teaching of northern skills—and integrate them into local curricula. This kind of progress can be found in many local curricula around the Circumpolar World. However, such integration has seldom affected the value base, organization, or content of the whole curriculum (Sergejeva 1995).

Respect and the right to more holistic self-determination are very new phenomena in educational institutions, and even nowadays these issues are only very partially realized in state policies towards the people of the Far North (Lipka et al. 1998; McKay). However, there are exceptions. In a particular educational system in Northern Canada, Inuit, in partnership with other Indigenous groups, introduced Indigenous curriculum more holistically into the mainstream educational system (Inuit Circumpolar Conference).

In addition to local, historical needs, globalization has produced new needs; needs to develop skills for trans-national, information-technology contacts, co-operation, and consumption. Inherent in globalization is the problem of how to combine socio-cultural and linguistic identity and self-determination with abilities to communicate with the world (Peters 2000).

We will use the Finnish educational policy and its history as a case-study to deal with the issues in more detail. Historically, on a rough level, the educational and curricular policies of the Finnish² government have moved from elitism, through the ideology of the sameness and the policies of monocultural assimilation, towards the ideology of difference, but in the context of the globalization.

The Finnish Case

The emergence of the state-financed school system included three stages of fundamental change in Finland, and a fourth period of change seems to be taking place now. The changes followed the resolution of social conflicts among powerful interest groups (Heikkinen 1989).

The first period of transition took place in the thirteenth century. At that time, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church had conflicting interests in Finland. The Roman Catholic Church became

² In aim to abbreviate, we use here the term Finnish. It would, however, be more correct to use the terms Swedish-Finnish, Russian-Finish, and Finnish depending on the historical period that will be discussed. The reason for it is that Finland was a part of Sweden and later of Russia, before achieving independence.



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dominant and began constructing the educational system. One grammar school was opened. It was aimed at educating men, especially for religious posts, and offered entrance to the university. The languages of education were Latin and Swedish and the subjects studied almost exclusively served the interests of the church.

The second period of transition occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at the time of the emergence of the Swedish nation-state, of which Finland was then a part. Some new schools were opened: some grammar schools and some mid-level secondary schools. The languages used in these schools remained Latin and Swedish and only boys, mostly from the upper social classes, were given entrance. The question arose as to whether the interests of the state should be taken into account in the contents of the school curricula. In spite of the debates, the subjects taught continued to serve the interests of the church almost without exception.

At that time, and during the following period, some elementary education for ordinary boys, and for some girls, was organized. These schools were partly organized by the church and partly by some other groups. The objectives of these schools was to teach literacy, and in the schools organized by the church, to teach Christian doctrine. This education was often discontinuous. For political reasons, it was organized to be more continuous among Saami population.

In 1723, Finland was under the rule of the king of Sweden. He ruled that schools be built in Saamiland to improve the state of Christianity. Practically, the new regulation meant that the belief system of Saami people be homogenized with the belief system of the dominant culture. Shamanism had historically been the belief system of Saami people; Christianity came later, in Catholic, Lutheran, and Orthodox³ forms. Beginning in the mid-1750s, a system of elementary education called *catechist schools* was started; first in the municipality Utsjoki, and later in other Saami municipalities. The system continued until mid 1900s.

Catechist schools formed a special, elementary-level, touring teaching system that was state financed, but that operated under the church (Lassila 2002). In other parts of Finland, the church financed corresponding schools. The language used in catechist schools was Saami. In Finnish-speaking Northern Finland, a corresponding Finnish elementary education system started a little more than one hundred years later. That system was not financed by the state, but by local Christian churches, as was the case in the more southern parts of Finland.

Besides the above system, some private education was organized as both home education and boarding schools for girls and boys of the upper classes.

³ Orthodox Christianity became a belief system of Skolt Saami people, who did not live in Finland at that time, but later, after the Second World War.



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In the mid-nineteenth century, the interests of the economy and emerging industry, in conflict with the interests of the church, caused the third period of transition to take place. Industry required workers educated in literacy, mathematics, and science and arts. Additionally, the emerging Finnish nationalist movement influenced the changes.

The curricula of secondary education changed: subjects that were not of interest to the church were introduced and some girls' schools were established. The girls' schools represented the lower level of secondary schools and did not offer university entrance. The curricula of the girls' and boys' secondary schools differed considerably. This difference was a result of the then-current discussion of the "division of work" between institutional education and education conducted at home. The question was whether institutional education should serve only the so-called public life or whether it should also serve the so-called private life.⁴ The public area of life remained the responsibility of the educational institutions. Education needed in private life remained basically the responsibility of families. This division was especially important from the point of view of girls, because of the coexisting, strong legislative and ideological tradition in which girls' "natural" sphere of life and "call of life" was in the so-called private sphere. To educate girls was regarded as much less important than to educate boys, although they received, in different ways, limited entrance to secondary education. Still, in the mid-nineteenth century, secondary schools used Swedish language. Step by step, Finnish secondary schools also emerged. The first co-educational Finnish secondary school dates back to the 1880s (See Sunnari 1997).

Parallel to secondary education, a system of state-financed elementary education was introduced, aimed at both boys and girls. The curriculum included Christian education, but several other subjects, like those taught in secondary schools, were added. The language used was Finnish to strengthen Finnish cultural identity. Swedish, however, was used among the part of Finnish population that spoke Swedish.

To fulfill the needs of emerging industry and development, a new system of elementary education was established. It closely reflected middle-class lifestyle and industry, and the knowledge and skills needed for that. The division between the public life and the private life was partly blurred in elementary education. The public-private division, and its gender-specific interpretation, brought gender-based differences to the curricula of boys and girls in elementary education.

Legislation on elementary education dates back to the year 1866, but it took almost 80 years before state-financed elementary education was realized in the whole country. Education became compulsory in Finland in 1921. The poorest and the most peripheral municipalities were the last to receive

⁴ In feminist discussion, the strict division between public and private lives is questioned as impossible.



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education for all. The circulating school system, whether called catechist or not, persisted in Northern Finland for a long time.

In state financed elementary schools, the Saami culture and the Saami population were subjects of policies of assimilation. The Finnish government hardly considered the Saami language, or other components of the Saami culture, worth preserving. Periodically, the government even prohibited the teaching of Saami at schools. With few exceptions, the Saami language was not taught in schools before the 1970s. Ulla Aikio-Puoskari, who has conducted research on the position of Saami language in Scandinavia, says that the Saami language and the teaching of Saami language had its darkest period in history during the time of elementary schools. The elementary school system operated as a powerful “Finnishier” of Saami children and youth, she continues (Aikio-Puoskari 2001a, 2001b; more generally, see Kaplan 1984).

In the 1970s, Finland moved from the old, parallel school system⁵ to the new comprehensive school system. A unified, nine-year, comprehensive school was introduced. The idea of educating each child based on their own capabilities, promoting equity, and supporting pupils with difficulties were included in educational policy. Also, the possibilities of making choices were emphasized. Although the unified system was introduced, the financial constraints after the first years of the 1970s, meant that the implementation of the ideas of special support systems, small pupil groups, and extensive optional choices remained limited.

Policies of curricular and financial centralism and coherence in the Finnish school system were predominant in the mid-1980s. In addition to comprehensive education, the system included vocational education. Curricula was also centralized; including the teaching and study material used and the hours spent studying each subject, for example. It was teacher misconduct to not conform to the rules. Centralism also specified how much each municipality received in financial resources for education, and how much each municipality had to use for comprehensive and vocational education, and for their different components.

After the mid-1980s, centralism started to be pulled down quite quickly. On the basis of the curriculum reforms and changes in educational legislation during the last years of 1980s and in the 1990s, schools:

- Acquired greater liberty and were able to provide more elective and optional courses, to offer special courses to enhance their distinct profiles, and to specialize
- Got a financial system that corresponded more to the so-called products.

Additionally:

⁵ Elementary and secondary schools had built separate school systems.



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- Parents could choose the school for their children;
- The rules of how much money a municipality should get for its schools became more flexible. Practically, this resulted in many municipalities using less than under the older rules;
- The rules as to when a municipality could close a school changed along the same line as the financial system. (Mainio 2002)

Municipalities and separate schools may now decide the issues connected with public education for themselves, but in the Far North, the possibilities are very limited because of financial problems. As to families, the new school legislation gives more choices for families that have the financial means to make personal choices. The municipalities, the schools, and the families that do not have enough resources will have more problems. Some problems already encountered:

1. Many northern municipalities encountered enormous financial problems during 1990s, and the problems are continuing
2. Migration from Northern Finland to Southern Finland and its cities increased radically, especially within the better-educated working population (Härkönen Leena HS 16.3.2002) and the working population generally (Width Terhi HS 11.4.2002)
3. The structure of the population in Northern Finland has changed so that the older population is over-represented as compared to Southern Finland
4. A large amount (30 per cent) of comprehensive level schools were closed, and the same line is continuing (Lassila 2001; Mainio 2002)
5. Some municipalities, and many schools, have difficulty fulfilling their duty to offer high-level, equity promoting education for their children. On the other hand, children are in different educational positions depending on where they were born and the financial situation of their parents (Vehkakoski 2002)

These changes in Saami education were partly in line with other people living in Northern Finland during the 1990s, and partly different. The status of Saami languages was strengthened, both as a medium of instruction and as a teaching subject, in the beginning of the 1990s. In the mid-1990s, however, a recession changed municipal financing, which very quickly reversed the favourable development. All the special resources used to secure education in the Saami language were taken away in 1995. A year after that the benefits came back under EU rules. Probably the most important benefit is the provision that requires the state to finance additional class teachers to make it possible for each Saami child to be educated in their own language in primary education (Aikio-Puoskari 2001a). The status of the Saami culture, and the self-consciousness and ethnic pride also increased among the Saami people in the 1990s. In spite of formal support, the status of Saami language is weak, even among the Saami people.



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Language Nests

Language nests are a relatively new way to prevent minority languages from dying out. In language nests, small children learn their heritage language in a manner similar to the Canadian second language teaching method known as immersion. In Inari, in Northern Finland, such a language nest was established with the help of a five-year scholarship from the Finnish cultural fund. After five years, there were 10 children in the program, half of them full-time. Children who are either in pre-school or in the first-grade spend their afternoons in the nest. The nest acts as a kind of a day nursery in which the adults use only Inarinsaami (the dialect of the Saami language spoken in Inari) in all their interactions with the children. The adults use Finnish only in extreme cases. The children, however, use Finnish in the beginning because that is the only language they know. This changes as the children learn Inarinsaami. Eventually, all the children acquired sufficient competence to manage the daily basics in Inarinsaami. Because of the language nest, it seems that Inarinsaami has been rescued from dying out. The only people who spoke Inarinsaami as their mother tongue in the 1990s were middle-aged or older; now there are a few younger speakers of the language. At the end of the five years, there were approximately 50 students of the language in the schools of Inari (Sahavirta 2002; Vakkuri 2002).

Further Remarks

During the last decade of the twentieth century, changes similar to those that took place in the Finnish school system also took place in countries such as Russia. There, new opportunities for choices were emphasized, and competition became more central. Parents had more opportunities to choose which schools their children attended, and tried to send their children to the most popular and the best resourced schools. The well-being and prosperity of schools often depended on sponsors and influential parents. Also, many private primary schools were opened in Russia (Pavlotskij and Hramova 2001). In offering comprehensive education, Russia went even further than Finland in the ideology of globalization. In this kind of a system, all children do not have equal opportunities or equity in primary education.

Long Distances as a Challenge

Long distances are a special challenge to institutional education in the Far North. The following alternatives have been used as solutions: (1) teachers come to the villages and to homes, (2) school children go out of their own villages and live in the places where the schools are located during the school terms, (3) children go by school busses to the schools of the centres daily, (4) small village schools are built in the children's own environments, (5) information technology is used to allow children to stay in their own region and to study there. The solutions seems to have evolved from circulating village teachers, to boarding schools and school dorms, and



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finally to school busses or the use of computers, or both. We will discuss some of these issues next.

Boarding Schools

Because Indigenous people were often isolated in small groups, or lived nomadic lives, governments started boarding schools and school dorms to give children access to public education.⁶ In Norway, boarding schools were established in 1867 and were the norm for more than 100 years (Darnell and Hoëm 1996). This was also the case in Finland. An example is a little community of Muonio. In Muonio there have been school dorms since the beginning of the twentieth century. In the beginning, these school dorms were private institutions in the sense that individuals rather than the government financed them. Later on, after Finland gained its independence, the state financed the school dorms. In the case of Muonio, approximately one-third of all pupils lived in boarding schools during the school years. (For more on Muonio, see Vuollo 1999.)

Although boarding schools and school dorms played an important role in institutional education in the Far North, their impact has certainly not been solely positive (See e.g., Darnell 1999; Tuisku 1999; Aikio-Puoskari 2001). As Aikio-Puoskari points out, boarding schools and school dorms for Saami children that were located away from Saami regions weakened the cultural identity of Saami children (Aikio-Puoskari 2001). Traditional lifestyles suffered because the boarding schools taught the values, cultures, languages, and sciences of the dominant culture at the expense of the values and traditions of the Saami people (Darnell 1999; Aikio-Puoskari 2001a). Also, there is evidence that, because children in boarding schools are separated from their families, they develop as helpless personalities (RAIPON 2000).

Boarding schools and school dorms have also had an impact also on the language skills of children. As Kaplan describes it, boarding schools removed children from their home environment during the crucial years when they would traditionally become mature members of their own society and perfect the language skills they had learned as children. Many young people barely spoke their native language while they were away from home, but the language of the hegemonic culture. The generation of young people who lived in boarding schools remained, in their mother tongues, on the level of language skills that would traditionally have been appropriate only to children (Kaplan 1984).

The individual experiences and memories of boarding schools or school dorms are often negative. Raija Erkkilä describes the experiences of Anna, a little Finnish girl who had to live in a school dorm for years.

⁶ The concepts of boarding schools and school dorms refer to the institutions providing a home-like environment for school children.



Field Code Changed

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Field Code Changed

Anna's life story of her school and student years was characterized by departures. When she started primary school at the age of 7, she shared the experience of many other Saami children of having to move away from home to live in a school dorm. She could only go home during the school holidays. Anna says these experiences left their marks on her. (Erkkilä 2001)

Boarding schools and school dorms have affected children's relationships with their families and communities and interfered with the passing of traditional skills and knowledge. This has resulted in changes in the culture of northern peoples. Leona Okakok of Barrow, Alaska, in a presentation to the Bilingual Special Education Institute held in Fairbanks in August, 1983, spoke about the effects that boarding schools have had on the passing on of traditional skills and knowledge:

One of the young ladies I knew at the University said that she went home one summer, after having been away at school for what seemed like forever. She had all of this education and brought it back home and was confronted with having to butcher her first seal, and she didn't know one thing to do. She said, "What did I go to school for? I've come home and I don't know how to do a very elementary thing which young ladies know, how to prepare an animal for consumption." (Kaplan 1984)

Another, recent problem of boarding schools in the Far North of Russia is the spread of disease. It is estimated that one in three indigenous families are infected with tuberculosis, a rate that rises up to 70 per cent among children in boarding schools. (Canada-Evenki Programme on Rural Health in Siberia.

http://www.ualberta.ca/~ccinst/CIDA/Public/Short_Project_Description.htm.⁷

Despite the fact that the impact of boarding schools is often negative, some observers believe they are still needed in the Circumpolar World. Jelena Sergejeva, for example, emphasized the need of the boarding school of Lovozero for the Saami, Komi, and Nenets children whose parents cannot be with their children all year round because of reindeer herding (Sergejeva 1995).⁸

Information Technology—a Tool of Globalization and Localization

Within the scope of this module, the word technology does not refer to technology in the wider sense of the concept, but to information technology and the use of computers and tools such as the Internet.

⁷ Tuberculosis seems to be a problem within the Indigenous peoples of Russian North in particular. It is mentioned in the context of Russia more than once. See for example the article titled The Indigenous Peoples of Russian North and RAIPON, 1997-2001 at http://www.raipon.org/english/raipon/1997_2001.html.

⁸ An example of a modern boarding school is First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia, Canada. The place named Longhouse is described on its web site as a "home away from home" for First Nations students attending UBC" (First Nations House of Learning, <http://www.longhouse.ubc.ca/>).



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Technology offers one opportunity to resolve some of the problems connected with long distances, and difficult geographical circumstances in the Far North (Northern Women's Web Centre). The use of technology could bring education to many northern students who would otherwise have been forced to travel south to larger cities and centres in order to participate in education, particularly higher education. It gives students the option to stay in their own communities, if they wish to do so. This is undoubtedly of crucial importance not only for the students themselves but also for their local communities. On the other hand, large parts of the Circumpolar region are lagging behind because of the lack of resources needed (Peters 2000). Peters notes that one of the crucial problems of Circumpolar communities is the lack of ability to use information technology.

Despite the financial problems and the inability to use information technology, some people and educational institutions in the Circumpolar World seem to have adopted computers and the Internet as useful tools. An example is the web site of Headwaters Education Centre in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. (<http://school.kcdc.sk.ca/>) The centre has virtual classrooms that enable people's participation in distance education classes, all through the web site. Other services of the web site include a Student Help room, a Gymnasium and an Art Gallery.

Information technology is used most, in the whole of the Circumpolar World, where the differences between geographical areas are most enormous. In Northern Canada and Greenland, for example, Information technology is much used. In Northern Finland, and especially in Northern Russia, it is not. It should be noted, however, that information technology has not been developed for solving the education problems of the periphery as such. It has been developed for solving the problems of well-resourced regions and people in global markets (Kenway 1996; Tikly 2001). Technology thus creates inequality among people. Technological innovations also create tension between those favouring adaptation and those adhering to traditional ways of doing things (Darnell and Hoëm 1996). What is more, there is a real concern locally for smaller schools that do not have the resources to acquire computers and other equipment. There is some question as to whether small schools will survive this challenge (Darnell 1999). Will they now close, or be made a part of larger technological communities, or a part of IT-using school nets? The same question now concerns small high schools.

According to Peters, "new technologies are often monopolized by men" (Peters 2000). In this sense, technology might not only create inequality within different groups of people according to how adaptive or wealthy they are, but also along gender lines. This idea is supported by Littleton who points out that "male and female students differ in terms of their expressed enthusiasm for, their access to, and participation in, computer-related activities" (Littleton et al 1993). According to her

IT shares with science a problem in terms of girls' restricted access to machines and equipment, both outside and inside the school. Girls have fewer



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opportunities than boys to learn about computers. It is hardly surprising, then, that they are often characterized as under-confident users of computer technology. (1993)

In light of this, it would be important to not only better the teaching of technology in the North in general but to do this with gender in mind.

In many of the major school-based reforms, the use of IT is being given priority in establishing a “community of learners.” Yet without attention to gender effects such reforms could work to the advantage of some children but to the disadvantage of many others. Technologies inevitably arise in the context of existing social relations and for this reason are highly likely to result in the reproduction of these forms of relationship. Nonetheless, the same technologies may open up possibilities for the transformation of these social relations. In the case of IT, it is imperative that we seek out and create the conditions for achieving such a transformation. (Littleton et al 1993)

Concluding Remarks

From a global perspective the Circumpolar North has a relatively high level of institutional education. There are and have been however, many problems. The problems are connected (1) with the entrance to schools, (2) with the language(s) used in education, (3) with treatment, (4) with values and the opportunities to maintain, and to learn to maintain, one’s own culture. One of the central reasons for the problems have been caused by the contradictions between the local peculiarities and needs in the Circumpolar North and the state-level, monocultural norms and aims of formal education. The issues have limited the educational opportunities of the periphery and other minority people, but also the development of self-confidence and identity of the people in the northern periphery. Recently, diversity has been given more value, but it happens in the ideological context of globalization emphasizing the individual choices and opportunities in the market-atmosphere.

Developing institutional education in the Circumpolar North is a complex and challenging matter. Test this assertion by answering these questions: Would it not be better from the point of view of educational resources and individual choices, to have big educational centres where people could come and to study the subjects and issues they want, and in the ways they want instead of small village schools? If so, how would the children of the periphery districts have access to these schools; through boarding schools, through the Internet and other forms of information technology, or should they sit for hours in school busses every day? Or are there some other possibilities? And, if information technology is the basic answer, should the children stay at home, and if so, who would care for them during the day if their parents do not work at home, as is very often the case? Or would it be more suitable to develop village schools? And if so, how would these village schools be financed, particularly if the tendency to base resources on global market ideology continues?



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The globalization process and the hegemonic, neo-liberal ideology around it makes it especially difficult, and at the same time especially important and challenging, to seek positive answers to the question of how to develop institutional education in the Circumpolar North so that it would support the development of full citizenship, dignity, equity, and agency among northern people. Furthermore, what should be changed in educational institutions so that equity development would be supported not only on the level of equal formal opportunities but also in interaction, and in realized human results in education; and what is more, in the more general conditions of everyone's meaningful life?

The Circumpolar North has a relatively high level of information technology, however, it is not evenly distributed. Information technology is in common use in some educational environments whereas in some others it is not. The question is about resources, but also about values. It is not self-evident that technology would serve basic education in an unquestionably positive way. It can even be asked—as it must be—what harm information technology can do to local education and cultures in the global context in which it is used. (See e.g., Forrest 1998 in Langlais and Snellman; Bauman 1998; Darnell 1999; Tikly 2001.)

As for the *special educational needs of the northern people*, it is reasonable to state that to some extent, needs seem to be disregarded in the official institutions that are responsible to deliver basic education to northern people. The situation changed partly during the last decades, thanks to the active input of local people and progressive state authorities. Some local components were included in the state-level curricula and in the local curricula. However, the changes were not enough and deeper changes are needed. (See e.g., Lipka et al 1998; Kenway et al 1998; Lesko 2000.)

An important item that should be included in the educational agenda is a framework to support the children and youth in the Far North in empowering them to take control of their lives and their futures. This question seems to be relevant not only in local ethnic groups but in the whole Circumpolar World.

Study Questions

1. Outline some of the unique elements of education in the Circumpolar World.
2. What are some current key issues of education in the Circumpolar World?
3. What are some of the issues that maintain and reproduce inequality in the schools of the Far North?
4. Briefly, what would you do to support the development of full citizenship, equity, dignity, and agency in education in the North?



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