



Seaibi

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Reaching the end of a research project that saw daylight in 2014, we acknowledge that there are still matters to discuss, tendencies to recognise, and observations to be made. Doing research in the time of a global pandemic created quite a few challenges. Doing educational research while a new national curriculum was launched created opportunities. Add to this, both the field of Sámi education and the more general field of education and pedagogy are constantly growing and evolving. Finally, as these bigger fields and tendencies are important, we cannot forget people and places. In these final words of the book, we point out some topics for further research, we pose questions that have appeared or that are unanswered, and we present some dilemmas.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

One thing that springs to mind is something that has become visible during the period of the research project: A global pandemic creates challenges on many levels. The Covid-19 pandemic created challenges for us as scholars, forcing some to cancel planned fieldwork or at least to change the choice of methods, and making collaboration and meetings more complicated. More importantly than this, however, is of course the impact of the pandemic on communities all over the world. In many parts of the Indigenous world, Indigenous communities were hit harder than the majority population. Such a situation and insight forces scholars to reflect on the importance of research and of the need to put another burden on people and communities.

In the Norwegian and Sámi context, the years of our project have coincided with the period of implementation of new national curricula. The early childhood education curriculum was launched in 2017. The national school curriculum was launched in 2020. From before, we know that implementation is a very complicated process. Implementation gaps are common and seem to be the rule rather than the exception. This is a general observation that is repeated many times about the

challenges and complexities relating to putting new policies into practice. Many of this project's scholars have written about different parts of the Norwegian educational system. Those who visited kindergartens or schools and talked to teachers or educational leaders have all experienced the challenges of implementation. These have been multiplied because of the pandemic as other, more urgent matters need to be solved first. Beforehand, in many parts of Norway, Sámi, Indigenous, and minority topics have been considered complicated to deal with in educational practices. The new curricula included an increased emphasis and mandate on such matters. Instead of having more resources or time to put into working with this, however, the pandemic led to a decrease – in time and resources – allocated to these complicated matters.

Even though we perhaps see the challenges first, the pandemic has highlighted the important role of education in our time and societies. Politicians tend to focus on education as a place for learning, asking how to fill the gaps created and enlarged by the pandemic. Stories from students beg for more attention towards education as a space for sharing and caring, the more dialogical and reciprocal values of education. We are now better prepared for new and creative ways of doing and researching Indigenous education, and we do see a need for more space to the students' voices in the process of Indigenising education.

DILEMMAS

Working with the project, and especially through a number of conversations between the scholars on the project, we recognised the existence of several dilemmas in the field of Indigenous education. The most pressing one is also related to the most concrete one: There is an often experienced and observed discrepancy between ambitions, ideals, aspirations, and even requirements on one hand, and the resources – both human, financial, and timely – available. This tends to lead to a lack of structural and institutional development and to Indigenous education being kept alive and practiced either through a minimum of resources or through the work of enthusiasts. Praise must be given to the extraordinary individuals. Hopefully, though, we may see the growth and making of educational structure and systems where the enthusiasts can work on top of a proper system of Indigenous education.

This is connected to the relationship between policy and pedagogy. Acknowledging this, we also recognise the dilemma of taking part in what may be seen as another intellectual contribution dwelling in and coming from the corridors of Academia. In this sense, the critical questions posed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith remain important reflexive reminders for us. Whose interests does the

research serve? Who will benefit from our book and project? Hence, how can we work to ensure that our academic work is relevant to what goes on in the practical field of Indigenous education in classrooms, other spaces of learning, and communities of different kinds? What we have done and continue to do is to keep up activities beyond the scope and realms of peer-reviewed and peer-related writing.

Perhaps the most complicated theme that we have worked with is the connected to citizenship. It is a theoretical concept with many meanings and conceptualisations. At the same time, it is a practical concept that emerges in discussions and decisions about the future. As we see it, citizenship is strongly connected both to emotions and to formal descriptions or articulations related to belonging and community. Indigenous education, on different levels of the nexus, touches upon issues of belonging, and of inclusion and exclusion. Adding the complexities of the cultural interface paints a picture wherein there are intertwined relations both within Indigenous communities and with majority society.

A returning topic in this book that relates to the matters of the cultural interface is diversity. Diversity proves to be a complicated matter within Indigenous education. We have seen how diversity, in the early stages of Indigenous education (and Indigenous methodologies), has to some extent been downplayed to articulate a more joint 'program' of Indigenous education. With the knowledge about cultural interfaces integral to understanding Indigenous communities, there is a need for diversity perspectives. This is mirrored in many of the chapters of the book. Still, the potential dilemma may be that of diversity as division. We do not see it as a primary threat to social cohesion, though, and will claim the need for an outspoken and reflexive diversity competence to be part of the process of Indigenising education. Part of understanding diversity is to acknowledge hierarchies (and even conflicts), not only between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, but also *within* Indigenous communities. As scholars, we need to address this.

There are many ways to proceed from this book. We are all connected to other projects that in different ways relate to this one. We do recognise the need for more stories to be told, lifted, and analysed from and about Indigenous communities. This goes in particular for stories from the margins and from different places within the cultural interface.

A part of this, potentially, is a set of perspectives that we admit have not been thoroughly treated in the book: issues related to gender, sexualities, Indigenous minorities, and the intersections connected to these. Gender in Indigenous education is an intersectional field that sorely needs more research.

THE VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

The international dimension is an important and integral part of the ICE project. Our work grew out of international contacts and of encounters between scholars from different Indigenous contexts. On a smaller scale, the field of Sámi education is in itself an international field as the Sámi live in four different states. This is reflected in this book with chapters covering different state contexts in Sápmi. On this level, we see that a cross-state perspective is interesting and has the potential for new knowledge. Still, we do acknowledge that our contributions are primarily based on state contexts. Thus, we also – at the end of this project – do acknowledge that an area in dire need of research is comparative education research on contemporary matters using a cross-state perspective as a starting point.

Further, the international dimension is part of the project also on the bigger scale. As part of our research journey, we had meetings in Norway/Sápmi, in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in Australia. An important part of these meetings was the chance to learn about and share experiences from our respective contexts, and to see them in relation to one another. A theme of our conversations across contexts is the relative simultaneousness of political events and educational changes. It is in many ways related to the global connectedness of Indigenous peoples. This is not a new observation, but the question that arises is what this connectedness means in terms of how educational policy, pedagogy, and practice travel across contexts.

Although the collective of researchers behind this book use the same concepts, like Indigenous, education, and citizenship, in our writings, we cannot assume that we understand the concepts in the same way. Differences between us relate to different fields of research, we have different relationships with Indigenous communities, we come from different places, and we use different languages. Typically, conversations across contexts take place in scientific journals or conferences that have a narrow audience. What we experience from the ICE project is that doing research across contexts, state borders, and continents requires an ongoing, open and respectful dialogue. This observation is perhaps banal, but underscores a central value of research collaboration, namely that we always have something to learn from each other. Our experience is that research gains from talking and sharing across contexts and positions. Although it might be challenging, we have in the ICE project seen this as an opportunity and quality. In addition to researching Indigenous education from single research fields, we therefore argue for more interdisciplinary research collaborations in this field.

At the tail of this book, we look back on a rewarding time as scholars, authors, educators, colleagues, friends, and storytellers. It is the encounters on different places that stick out: Discussing energetically what we mean by terms like ‘Indigenous’ and ‘citizenship’ early on in the project, while looking out on the coast of Northern Norway and Sápmi at Sommarøya. Visiting a marae in Auckland to talk about the role of Indigenous matters in higher education. Listening to PhD fellows from many parts of Australia in Canberra talking about their respective Indigenous research. Further, of course, the individual encounters the authors have had with communities in Namibia, with teachers and kids in different parts of Sápmi, with Māori students in Aotearoa, and with remote communities in Australia. We see that these encounters are connected to policy, philosophy, and academic writing. May the encounters and conversations about Indigenising education continue.