

Atuarfitsialak: Greenland's Cultural Compatible Reform

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Abstract

This case study is an investigation into Greenland's initial implementation of a country-wide school reform. It analyzes the broader context and goals involved in the adoption of an externally developed model of pedagogy developed by U.S. researchers at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). Guiding the research were the following questions: (a) How was the Greenlandic school reform being implemented? (b) Why was the Greenlandic school reform being implemented? and (c) How was the reform received at the time of the study? Participants included 11 key informants who work for Inerisaavik, the institution responsible for Greenland's reform. Data were collected over an 11-month period using participant observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings suggest that reform leaders adopted the CREDE model to assist in a larger political and cultural agenda, namely to assist in further decolonizing Greenland from its previous status as a colony of Denmark.

Research indicates that some groups of students, such as indigenous and other minority students tend not to do as well when compared with their mainstream peers (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). In post-colonial contexts, these reasons seem to be compounded by social issues related to identity (Ashcroft, 2001; Loomba, 1998; Smith, 1999) and problems related to differences between the culture of home and school (Wilson, 1991). Many reform leaders working in indigenous contexts are now searching for “an anti-colonial approach to education” that draws on the strengths of individual communities (Ball, 2004, p. 456).

This case study is an investigation into Greenland's initial implementation of a country-wide school reform process. Atuarfitsialak, Greenland's educational reform, is an attempt to change the country's entire education system, grades 1-10, to better serve children from the Native Greenlandic population. To assist their efforts, reform leaders adopted an American model of effective pedagogy, the Standards for Effective Teaching and Learning, developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). Greenland represents the largest of all contexts to adopt the CREDE model and the largest known indigenous effort towards culturally compatible education.

This study examines the cultural, educational, and political goals of Greenland's reform. Specifically, I focus on the following questions: (a) How was the Greenlandic school reform being implemented? (b) Why was the Greenlandic school reform being implemented? and (c) How was the reform

received at the time of the study? Using ethnographic techniques I describe how one indigenous group is attempting to define itself in a post-colonial era through cultural compatible education.

Cultural Compatibility

Cultural incompatibility between minority students' culture and that of the school is one of the most cited reasons for minority school failure, especially for indigenous groups (Ledlow, 1992). Researchers have used cultural discontinuity hypothesis to explain why some groups succeed in formal school settings and others, especially indigenous and minority students, do not (Gallimore & Au, 1997; Garrett, 1995; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993). The hypothesis assumes that culturally-based differences between the home and school lead to "conflicts, misunderstandings, and ultimately failure for those students" (Ledlow, 1992, p. 23). This approach suggests that for some groups of students, transition to school is difficult because these differences are too overwhelming to overcome. Education is most effective when school values and expectations are compatible with students' home cultures (Tharp, 1989). Cultural compatibility theory suggests that if these differences were minimized, then all students would have an equal opportunity to achieve academic success (Baker, 1997; Tharp, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 1994).

Two research projects are often cited as providing the strongest evidence for the cultural discontinuity hypothesis (Ledlow, 1992). The first study was conducted by Phillips (1982) on Warm Springs Sahaptin, Wasco Chinook, and Paiute Native Americans at the Warm Springs Reservation in

Oregon. Her work focused on the differences in communication and interaction patterns in the school and Warm Springs community. Phillips found that some of these patterns hindered student-teacher relationships, such as teachers' interpretation of minimal eye contact as not paying attention. However, avoidance of eye contact was common in the Warm Springs community and signified respect for others. Further, Warm Springs' students favored certain participation structures. One-to-one contact with the teacher and small group formats were preferred to whole class instruction. One of the implications of this work was that classrooms needed to take into consideration the culture of the larger community and provide more culturally relevant pedagogy, materials, and participation structures (Ledlow, 1992).

The second often-cited project supporting the cultural discontinuity hypothesis is the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) located at Kamehameha Schools in Hawai'i. The purpose of the program was to investigate why so many Native Hawaiian students were failing in Hawai'i's public schools (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993). KEEP's overall goal for the language arts program was to attain a mean score at or near the 50th percentile on standardized tests (Jordan, 1985). When this goal was reached, KEEP transferred its program to the Navajo Nation and did not meet the same amount of success in the new context (Ledlow, 1992). Many of the pedagogical strategies used in the KEEP program were specifically developed for the Native Hawaiian community, and when the program was transferred to the Navajo Nation, many aspects of the program were found to be ineffective

(Tharp et al., 1984). The inability to transfer the culturally compatible KEEP program to a Native American reservation supported the idea that classrooms need to be considered for their specific cultural differences. Demmert and Towner (2003) state that “The KEEP program is among the best-described educational programs in history . . . [and] probably the strongest evidence available for the efficacy of the culturally based education hypothesis” (p. 16).

Research suggests that programs for linguistically and culturally diverse students should allow for the development of students' native language (Cummins, 1989), and provide instructional activities that support language development (Tharp, 1997). New knowledge should be contextualized with what students know from their home and communities (Tharp, 1997) and promote higher order thinking by employing a challenging curriculum (Banks, 1995). Finally, students should be engaged in cooperative learning where a high level of teacher and peer assistance is available (Tharp, 1997). The Standards for Effective Teaching and Learning developed by CREDE incorporate these elements.

CREDE Pedagogy

The CREDE Standards for Effective Teaching and Learning are principles of effective teaching designed to help teachers maximize classroom interactions in ways that promote learning of concepts and higher-level skills (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). They were developed through a synthesis of 30 years of research on effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000).

Although the Standards represent good practices for all students, researchers developed the principles to work with diverse students who often do not fare as well as majority group peers in classrooms that are organized for more passive learning (Tharp et al., 1999).

The Standards for Effective Teaching and Learning are: (a) *Joint Productive Activity*, emphasizing teacher and student collaboration on the achievement of a common goal, (b) *Language and Literacy Development*, emphasizing language development across the curriculum; (c) *Contextualization*, emphasizing an integrated connection between school subjects and students' lives, (d) *Complex Thinking*, emphasizing the advancement of student understanding to more complex levels by addressing the "why," not just merely the "what" or "how to;" (e) *Instructional Conversation*, emphasizes teacher and a small group of students engaging in a sustained dialogue on a single topic; (f) *Observational Learning*, focuses on traditional ways of learning that include modeling and observation; (g) *Promotion of Student Initiative and Choice*, student responsibility for decision making in educational activities.

The CREDE Standards derive from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Vygotsky suggested that all higher psychological functioning has its roots in social interaction. By engaging in joint activity with more experienced others through symbols, such as language, children eventually appropriate those symbols. More proficient community members assist novices in performing the tasks and roles of their culture. Over time, less assistance is

needed until eventually learners can perform the behaviors independently. Thus teaching requires skillful assistance in joint activity (Joint Productive Activity), through the mediation of language (Language and Literacy Development and Instructional Conversation). Learning from this perspective, is highly contextualized (Contextualization), and complex thinking should be emphasized (Complex Thinking).

Research indicates that higher enactment of the Standards is related to greater student achievement (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). For example, in a study of bilingual elementary classrooms, Estrada (2004) found that student achievement in English and Spanish was strongest among students whose teachers who implemented the Standards to a higher degree. Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal and Tharp (2003) found that compared to another school matched on student characteristics, achievement was higher at an elementary school implementing the Standards. With the latter school, achievement was highest for students whose teachers were more successful in enacting the Standards.

Greenland is the largest context in which the CREDE Standards have been adopted and one of the largest indigenous reform efforts known. Previous research on the Standards focused on implementation at the classroom level, programs within a school and whole school efforts. A short overview of Greenland will be provided in the next section.

Greenland

Greenland is the largest island in the world covering an area of approximately 840,000 sq. miles (Darnell & Hoem, 1996). The island extends from 83°39'N to 59°46' N and sits in the North Atlantic Ocean between northern Canada and Iceland. The climate is arctic to sub-arctic with cold winters and cool summers. About one half of the total land area is locked into the glacial icecap; the rest is comprised of coastal waters that are defined by deeply indented fjords and mountains. The non-glacial areas support the majority of the population with sustenance and attract a variety of sea mammals, fish, birds, and big game. Plant life includes low-growing mountain and tundra plants such as, mosses, lichens, heather, and berry plants. For many Greenlandic families, deep sea fishing and hunting of large game are favorite pastimes.

Although Greenland is considered a county within the kingdom of Denmark, it has its own government, and is therefore, characterized as a parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy. Greenland's Home Rule government, *Kultureqarnermut, Ilinniartitaanermut, Ilisimausarnermut Ilageeqarnerullu Pisortaqarfik (KIIP)* is responsible for all decision making regarding issues of culture, education, research and church. *Inerisaavik*, the institution responsible for Greenland's educational reform, is responsible for carrying out all of KIIP's legislative decisions pertaining to education.

Greenland's present population is believed to have originated with the North Alaskan Inuit who migrated to Greenland about 1,000 years ago (Olsen,

n.d.). Vikings from Iceland had settled the land prior to the Inuit's arrival to Greenland; however, because of drastic climatic changes, only the Inuit survived. The current population in Greenland is around 57,000 with approximately 15,000 people residing in the capital city of Nuuk. The official language is Greenlandic which is an Inuit language, but Danish dominates the administration, media and education, and thus, is spoken as a second language. Most Danes living in Greenland also speak English fluently, as do some Native Greenlanders, though it is rare that English is used unless a visitor from another country is involved in conversation.

Greenland and Colonization

Danish colonization in Greenland began in 1721, beginning with the establishment of a Lutheran Protestant mission (Olsen, n.d.). Motivation for the Danish-Norwegian colonization was the Norwegian's hope of finding early Norse settlers alive and the hope of converting them to Christianity (Kleivan, 1984). However, the Norse population had disappeared by the time the missionaries arrived. The missionaries, therefore, began their work with the local indigenous population. The Evangelical Lutheran religion continues to have a strong presence in Greenland's communities. For example, all infants must register with the Lutheran church, even if the child is of another religion. Official names are documented and birth certificates are issued only after registration with the church.

The story of colonialism in Greenland differs from that of other indigenous people in two ways. The history of colonialism often includes

warfare through oppressive military force, motivated by economic expansion (Loomba, 1998). Greenland has had no military force used against them.

According to most accounts, colonialism in Greenland has been described as being rather peaceful (Petersen, 1995). This may have been due to the fact that prior to contact with the Danes, the Native Greenlandic community had no formal organization above the household level and thus “lacked anyone who might be interested in defending his power” (Petersen, 1995, p. 119).

However, Gramsci (1971) argues that most ruling classes, such as the Danes in the Greenlandic context, don't use force or coercion to achieve their status.

Rather, dominating groups create subjects who become willingly subservient.

The second way Greenland differs is that the language was maintained. The Greenlandic language was not threatened in the same way that many other indigenous groups experienced. This was due in part to written theological materials printed in a Greenlandic written orthography introduced by Kleinschmidt in 1871 (Kleivan, 1984). Greenland has been very fortunate in this sense. The loss of language has been particularly devastating for many indigenous peoples, and the struggle for recovery has had varying degrees of success (Kimura, 1983). Loss of language largely depends on the extent to which the colonized groups need the new language to function in society.

The effect of taking on another's language cannot be understated. According to Fanon (1952), “To take on a language is to take on a world” (p. 38). In other words, upon adoption of a new language, individuals assume new perspectives, thought processes, and cultural knowledge by acquiring a new

language. To take on another's language is to be indoctrinated into a new way of being socially and culturally. Ashcroft (2001) describes this process more concretely, "A colonial language gives access to authority and a perception of a certain form of social being. [This access is gained through] a process by which the speaker absorbs, unavoidably, the culture from which the language emerges" (p. 57).

After more than two centuries of colonial rule, Greenland is undergoing a process of decolonization. Like many other indigenous groups, the Native Greenlanders seek to self-represent by creating social institutions that best represent their values and definitions of success. Atuarfitsialak, Greenland's educational reform, marks one of the largest steps Greenland has taken towards decolonization. Reform leaders and the community at-large hope that if Atuarfitsialak's goals are achieved, Native Greenlandic culture and identity will permeate the school system.

Method

Ethnographic techniques (Fetterman, 1982) were employed in data collection including participant-observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Greenland's educational system is nearly inaccessible to the outside world because of geographic isolation, language differences, and complicated political environments. Data were collected on-site over an 11-month period from August, 2005 to June, 2006. Follow-up checks were made extending to February 2007.

Participants

Participants included 11 key informants (Fontana & Frey, 1997; Yin, 2003) who were selected based on their employment tenure at Inerisaavik, the institute responsible for implementation of the reform. All 11 participants were involved in the reform in its initial stages or shortly thereafter, apart from one participant who had been working for Inerisaavik for only a few months at the time of his interview. Four of the 11 participants worked as consultants for Inerisaavik, advising teachers on curricular issues. Three were a part of Inerisaavik's leadership group, responsible for making decisions for the organization and delegating tasks to subordinates. An additional two were politicians from the Ministry of Education and were responsible for writing new legislation for Greenland's schools. These nine participants were part of a highly educated and politically sophisticated group of Greenlanders who have been working for many years toward the goals of Greenland's independence from Denmark (R. Tharp, personal communication, May 8, 2007). In fact, a number of these participants were involved in the 1960s movement that resulted in the establishment of Greenland's Home Rule government. The final two participants were external consultants to Inerisaavik and had been involved in Greenland's reform for several decades.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a variety of participation techniques (Angrosino, 2005), including informal interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1997), and document analysis (Hodder, 2000). Participant observations were conducted on an on-going basis beginning in August, 2005 and were used to capture

various realities within the reform. Observations allowed for various complexities to emerge and informed further research questions (Alexander, 1982). Semi-structured interviews made use of probing and open-ended questioning techniques in order to elicit richness in responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Documents included 31 English translations of newspaper articles printed from 1999-2006 and governmental reports including legislation and minutes from key meetings leading up to the Home Rule government's decision. Finally, a master's thesis written by one of the key informants was used to provide an insider's perspective on the reform, often providing details that other participants could not comment on (Hindby, 2005).

Data Analysis

Constant-comparative methods were used to analyze the data. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000), constant comparison method of analysis has its roots in grounded theory in which the process of data collection and data analysis is interactive, iterative, and can be revised with new information. Using this technique, data are collected by comparing social phenomena across categories allowing new categories and dimensions to emerge. Because this study has its roots in grounded theory, these emergent themes shaped further lines of inquiry.

Validity was sought by triangulating the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Themes that emerged from interviews and observations were cross checked with newspaper articles and other historical documents. Researchers recommend at least 4-12 months of prolonged engagement in the field. At the

time this study was written, 18 months were spent living and working in Greenland (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, two peers were used for peer debriefing (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These peers challenged assumptions, ask difficult questions, and assisted in clarifying themes in the study. One peer was an outsider to the Greenlandic community and was used as a sounding board for broader issues of equity, access to education, and political development. The second peer was employed in the research department at Inerisaavik and had previously analyzed issues related to mental colonization in Greenland.

Results

The Greenlandic Educational Reform

History of Atuarfitsialak. In 1998, the Ministry of Education declared the need for a new educational system in Greenland. The new system would be based on the language, culture and history of its people and make a strong departure from the previous models imported from Scandinavia (Interview with P. Olsen, June 13, 2006). The project group was tasked with the creation of a system that was “holistic,” focusing on the full development of the child (Field Notes, September 2, 2005).

To guide their efforts, the project group used the traditional concept of “*sila*.” Sila is “an approach to how humans are conceptualized in the traditional Greenlandic way” (Interview with P. Olsen, June 13, 2006). In an ideal state, the human is in balance with his thoughts, spirit and emotions. Placed at the center of the universe, all activities revolve around the individual

and contribute to his/her development. In line with this way of thinking, reform leaders visualized a school system where the child is placed at the center of institutional and classroom activity (Olsen, 2005). Adult and child interaction would be designed to promote student's cultural, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development.

To ensure consensus and support for the reform, the project group sought the perspectives of the community (Hindby, 2005). A colloquium was organized and is considered the single most important event in the development of Atuarfitsialak. It provided a venue for diverse perspectives to be considered and discussed. Representatives from parent groups, teachers, school leaders and the community were invited to share their hopes for a new school in Greenland. In addition, leading experts on Native education from Norway to Canada were invited to present their views on how to change school systems to accommodate Native populations. The colloquium gave the project group insights into the current research on culturally compatible education and provided educators and law makers with public input that was later used to write the School Act in 2002 (Interview with F. Darnell, May 19, 2006).

Atuarfitsialak & CREDE. With the passing of the new legislation, reform leaders searched for a means to implement the provisions laid out in the School Act. They were careful not to choose a model based in Nordic traditions because of a pronounced difference between European and indigenous sociocultural traditions (Interview with P. Olsen, June 13, 2006).

Reform leaders considered many models before finally settling on CREDE's Effective Pedagogy. The educators made this decision, in large part, because they saw compatibility between the local context and the frames used by CREDE. The director of Inerisaavik explained that they wanted a model that focused on the "connection between education and the culture" that could be used to strengthen the students' academic experiences and one that focuses on language development (Interview with J. Jakobsen, September 26, 2005). He explains the deliberation process below.

Yes, we looked after the Danish way and the Nordic way too. But, they are not so [focused] on the language because they . . . have one and we have two. They also have a very democratic way to build the classroom. Their understanding of democratic [participation] . . . is that the students have possibility to do what they want in the classroom. I think it is important that the student[s] have possibility, but the teacher needs to be more specific about the instruction. I think it is very important how to instruct student[s] when the students have different culture's (sic) backgrounds and different language backgrounds . . . [Also,] the connection with the . . . parent's home and the school . . . the distance has to be as short as possible. (Interview with J. Jakobsen, September 26, 2005)

Reform leaders adopted CREDE pedagogy viewing it as a shell for the Greenlanders to mold and fill with Greenlandic values and culture (personal communication, R. Tharp, May 8, 2007). The model would serve two

purposes in Greenland, to strengthen pedagogical practices in Greenland's public schools and promote Greenlandic culture and identity.

Reform Goals

At its start, Greenland's educational reform focused on changing institutional and classroom practice. The aim was to develop better frames to assist teachers in the education of Greenlandic children. In time, Atuarfitsialak became of symbol of cultural and political change as the country began to develop its own identity. The educational and emergent cultural and political goals of Atuarfitsialak are discussed in the next section.

Educational Goals. Proficiency in the Danish language is one of the goals set forth by the new School Act. The official language of instruction is Greenlandic but shifts to Danish when students transition into higher education. The incongruity of languages has caused many barriers for students to achieve academic success and has contributed greatly to the dropout rate of young Greenlanders (Gunther, 1972). The statistics on the number of Greenlandic speaking students who finish their postsecondary education seem consistent with these statements. In 1994, 43 percent of citizens who only spoke Greenlandic had less than seven years of schooling, 56 percent had completed Grades 1-10, and only 1 percent had pursued and graduated beyond compulsory educational requirements ("Dyrere uddannelser - men færre studerende", 2000).

At least three possible reasons were cited for Native Greenlandic students' low proficiency in Danish. First, Greenland lacks a high number of

formally educated teachers. In the school year 2005-2006, one third of the teaching force lacked teaching qualifications (Directoratet for Kulture, 2006). Of the 377 uncertified teachers in the school system, some had the equivalent of a high school or associate's level of education. Many of these less-prepared educators taught in settlements where access to Danish speakers was rare. One Greenlandic participant explained that "Maybe in your village, there are only one or two Danes if there are any at all, and you are not in contact with them in your everyday life" (Interview with K. Olsen, March 3, 2006). In these situations, Danish is typically taught as a school subject and not an every day language.

A second possibility was related to socio-cultural issues. One participant pointed to the issue of sociolinguistic patterns in traditional Greenlandic homes where academic discussions were not common. Lone Hindby suggested that because many teachers were not accustomed to a lot of dialogue at home, they might not have been able to create dynamic language-rich classrooms (Interview with Lone Hindby, February 10, 2006).

The third possibility is the undetected use of traditional Nordic teaching methods in Greenland's classrooms. An early reform leader, Kunuunnguaq Fleischer attributed the low graduation rate to the Danish way of teaching and ways of viewing Greenlanders still deeply entrenched with in the school system (Interview with K. Fleischer, May 26, 2006). In his view, there continues to be a strong colonial presence in and out of Greenland's

educational system. He believes that Danes view some Greenlanders as good Greenlanders because “We have been able to learn Danish, speak Danish, read Danish and act Danish. That is why we, in some ways, we succeeded in the Danish system” (Interview with K. Fleischer, May 26, 2006).

Cultural Goals. Greenland has experienced profound changes in its culture and identity with the arrival of Danish authorities. Kleivan (1984) believes that the presence and activities of the Danish colonial power greatly contributed to the emergence of a new Greenlandic identity. This shift began very early in Greenland's contact with Europeans, beginning with the arrival of the Norwegian priest Hans Egede in 1721. He wrote:

It was a culture that clearly included many European features yet remained Greenlandic to such an extent that it served as the origins of the emerging national culture of Greenland. This new colonial culture grew to fill the vacuum left by intensive missionary work that had obliterated traditional Eskimo intellectual culture or, for a time at least, had driven it underground. (p. 524-525)

Besides the church and educational systems, the intermixing of indigenous Greenlandic women with Danish and Norwegian men gave rise to significant social shifts in Greenland's population (Kleivan, 1984). The men in these families held top positions in the country such as ministers, tradesmen managers, interpreters, and subsequently their families became known as “the Great Greenlandic families.” Kleivan (1984) writes that “First and foremost

these marriages gave rise to a social differentiation that has not had many parallels in the colonial history of other parts of the Eskimo world” (p. 525).

This historical development in Greenlandic identity may be why Greenlandic participants consistently mentioned cultural reclamation as one of the goals of Atuarfitsialak, although this is not an expressed goal in the School Act. Strengthening Greenlandic identity has been a priority since the abolishment of Greenland's colonial status in 1953, but even more so with the establishment of Home Rule in 1979. Advocates for Home Rule saw education as a means to strengthen Greenlandic cultural and national identity (Goldbach & Winther-Jensen, 1988). One participant explained that it was a political value of the 1970s through the 1990s that the design of activities in Greenland had to be Greenlandic: “As a nation we had to improve our identity by working with our language and culture” (Interview with K. Olsen, March 3, 2006). This “Greenlandization” was carried forward into the development of the reform.

Some participants found CREDE pedagogy, in particular, the contextualization Standard to be useful in strengthening Greenlandic identity. This teaching practice encourages teachers to use what students know from home, school or community to couch new learning. Yamauchi, Wyatt, and Taum (2005) wrote that “Contextualization includes both teaching in ways that are consistent with familiar socialization patterns and using curriculum that integrates academic concepts with students' prior knowledge” (p. 4).

However, the contextualization Standard was misunderstood. Reform leaders disagreed on how to define “cultural background” or whether it should be defined at all. For example, one reform leader was adamantly opposed to using student’s culture to contextualize learning. In her opinion, culture is organic and alive and if defined, becomes static and outdated. Lone Hindby explained,

[A person] should never, never, never, never define what Greenlandic culture is, or Danish culture, or British culture . . . because then you sort of draw a line in the sand . . . [and] say, the way the majority is thinking on this date, on this year is what is defined as our culture so that you cannot change it because it will be un-Greenlandic or un-Danish. . . . Culture only lives when you are debating what culture is and what it means. (Interview with L. Hindby, February 10, 2006)

Disagreement on how to best use contextualization in teaching made it difficult for reform leaders to fully support teachers’ use of this method.

In a postcolonial context, reclaiming and defining Greenlandic culture is a high priority. In a system that is just beginning to embark on this process, Greenlandic reform leaders saw the school system as the best means to create and emergent Greenlandic identity. Even though cultural revitalization and identity were not true goals of Atuarfitsialak, reform leaders felt they could be attained through education.

Political & Economic Goals. Greenlandic reform leaders see Atuarfitsialak as central to the decolonization process. An improved school

system will produce highly qualified Greenlandic employees and reduce Greenland's reliance on Denmark to fulfil their labor needs, especially in education. Greenland looks to Danish teachers, in part because of their fluency in Danish (Tremel, 1998) but also for their ability to assist students in advancing to higher education (L. Hindy, personal communication, January 18, 2006). Today, Danish teachers comprise nearly one quarter of the teaching force in Greenland. Statistics show that of the 943 teachers employed through the school year 2005-2006, only 78 percent were Greenlandic speaking with the remaining 22 percent, purely Danish speaking (Directoratet for Kulture, 2006).

Typically, Danish teachers are placed in the upper high school grades (8-10), where Danish language development is emphasized and teaching activities focus on passing exit exams. Unfortunately, many of these "visiting" Danish teachers leave their positions before contracts are fulfilled. Their mid-year departures often leave schools without suitable replacements resulting in difficulty for school leaders and students. In one of the foundational reports used to support Atuarfitsialak, educational leaders reported that every year there were approximately the same number of teachers coming and leaving Greenland (KIIP, 1998).

Reform leaders hope that the implementation of Atuarfitsialak would result in more educated Greenlandic children who, in time, will fill these positions. This view was articulated in a local news article by Olga Poulsen,

the chair of the Cultural and Educational Committee of the Ministry of Education,

The vision is a Greenland for Greenlanders with Greenlandic speaking co-workers in all positions. It is a society where we ourselves are able to fill all jobs, and where we only use people from abroad when they themselves have wanted to move here. ("Undervisning med eleverne i centrum")¹

Reform Constraints

In the first few years of Atuarfitsialak's implementation, several constraints emerged. To begin, reform leaders were uncertain if the aims of Atuarfitsialak could be reached in all parts of the country, particularly in the settlements (Interview with E. Christiansen, February 10, 2006). Many of Greenland's settlements house a couple of hundred people. These communities have little infrastructure aside from a small grocery store. There are no roads, cars, running water, or organized pastime activities. One participant expressed that students living in these isolated communities lack the opportunity to broaden their horizons and expand their minds because of their limited access to a variety of activities (Interview with L. Hindby, February 10, 2006).

Reform leaders' understanding of Atuarfitsialak and CREDE pedagogy may have hindered implementation. One participant explained that for the most part, Inerisaavik's employees lack the necessary knowledge to

implement a reform. As one consultant said “It is not clear to the consultants or to anyone else who works at Inerisaavik what the goals for the reform actually are” (Field Notes, September 15, 2005). Interviews confirmed this statement with only four of 11 participants referencing statements made in the School Act. Additionally, reform leaders expressed they were “resistant to learn anything about [CREDE pedagogy]” except for a few consultants (Field Notes, August 27, 2005).

There also seemed to be broader issues related to colonialism that contributed to Atuarfitsialak's slow progress. Kaali explained that a by-product of colonization is “a waiting mentality” and seems to be contributing to the slow progress of Atuarfitsialak (Interview with K. Olsen, March 3, 2006). Kaali also pointed out that post colonialism affected Greenlanders' view of themselves. He described how some Greenlandic teachers have low expectations for Greenlandic students, “They have adopted the way of looking at their fellow Greenlanders. . . . [The teachers] don't think that kids can have good results” (Interview with K. Olsen, March 3, 2006). According to Kaali, Greenlanders have adopted a negative self-image, hence the need for identity development in the schools. He reflects on this situation, “That is another heritage from the Danish colonialist way of looking at Greenlanders. There are only some Greenlanders who can really develop to become real Europeans; to become [full of] pride and intelligent individuals” (Interview with K. Olsen, March 3, 2006).

Finally, school level constraints also hindered implementation.

Teachers in Greenland have the freedom to choose other teaching methods (KIIP, 2001). CREDE pedagogy has been adopted, but is not mandatory for teachers to use. Teachers can use other pedagogical methods as long as they fulfil the requirements of the new School Act. This made it nearly impossible for reform leaders to develop a single strategic plan for reform implementation. Subsequently, those using CREDE pedagogy felt that they didn't have enough support from their school leaders or Inerisaavik (Field Notes, April 24, 2006). Upon reflection, reform leaders felt they didn't prepare key groups in the initial implementation enough to ensure their collaboration and knowledge of how to support teachers (Hindby, 2005).

A lack of knowledge may explain why stakeholders argue about who is responsible for the low level of implementation. Teachers blame students for not doing better in school (Field Notes, January 16, 2006), the community blames parents for not assisting their children's education ("Kulturkløften mellem skole og hjem", 1999), and Inerisaavik blames itself for not including school leaders more in the process (Hindby, 2005). One participant even spoke to traditional Eskimo child rearing practices as cause for Atuarfitsialak's poor implementation (Interview with K. Fleischer, May 26, 2006).

Discussion

Cultural Compatibility & Indigenous School Reform

The results of this study indicate that Greenland's reform is similar to reform efforts initiated by other indigenous people. Rivera and Tharp (2006)

write that “Many . . . Native American communities are struggling for the right to guide the development of their children so they may become the community leaders of the future, as well as to preserve the survival of their culture” (p. 427). This statement accurately describes many of the reasons for Greenland's reform, especially as it relates to revitalizing Greenlandic culture.

However, Greenland's reform differs from other educational reforms in one marked way. Unlike reforms for indigenous groups elsewhere, Greenland's reform is not trying to revitalize or strengthen its indigenous language. The Greenlandic language seems to be safely entrenched in society in part because its use as the primary language for instruction in the public school (Hindby, 2005). Rather, one of the expressed goals of Atuarfitsialak is to strengthen students' ability in Danish to access institutions of higher education and to promote Greenlandic identity.

Although it is common to address issues of indigenous identity in culturally compatible education, the desire to strengthen the colonizer's language over the indigenous language marks a departure from other efforts. In my literature review, I found no instance where the indigenous language was already used as the primary language of instruction, yet reform leaders initiated broad change anyway. Many culturally compatible education programs are created to target indigenous language development (Demmert & Towner, 2003).

Although, reform leaders hope to strengthen Greenlandic identity, this is a complicated process and may not be achieved by changing the language

and curricular content (Stairs, 1994). Likewise, changing classroom organization and teaching practices to increase compatibility between the home and school culture may not be sufficient either (Stairs, 1994). Rather, some research indicates that the best approach to culture change is to shift the focus from behavior patterns and teaching techniques “to the level of cultural meaning systems” (p. 163). This entails integrating the values, beliefs and worldviews of indigenous groups into the classroom to bring about greater cultural meaning to academic concepts.

Herein lies the importance of using the CREDE concept of contextualization to promote culturally compatible education. Most educational scholars have come to agree that all learning is situated in a particular context and cannot be extracted from the situations in which it was learned and used (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). “Situated cognition” posits that there is no separation between learning and doing and as such, activity is viewed as a powerful enculturation process. People learn to read, write, or take identities as a result of their participation in various activities. These activities must not be decontextualized, isolated learning that typically is found in many Western classrooms. Rather, activities need to be authentic, reflecting society (National Research Council, 1996).

It is for this reason that Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) advocate for educators' use of authentic classroom activity based on the surrounding culture in order to strengthen cultural knowledge. When ordinary daily

activities within a culture are used to teach new concepts, students take on the broader culture through their participation. They write,

Given the chance to observe and practice *in situ* the behavior of members of a culture, people pick up relevant jargon, imitate behavior, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms. These cultural practices are often recondite and extremely complex. Nonetheless, given the opportunity to observe and practice them, people adopt them with great success. (p. 34)

If the Greenlanders are interested in promoting and strengthening Greenlandic student identity, then the CREDE model of pedagogy is a good fit for this purpose. The Standards were developed to maximize opportunities for assistance and student participation. Stairs (1994) writes that “Through such increasing participation one becomes a member of the community . . . and thus establishes identity” (p. 168).

In addition, the CREDE model appears to be a good fit for strengthening Greenlandic students' abilities in Danish. The Standards for Effective Pedagogy promote authentic learning and language development couched in meaningful activity. They incorporate some of the best practices in promoting language development (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000).

Shared Representations of History

The lack of a shared social representation of history is perhaps one explanation for the cultural tensions between Greenlanders and Danes.

Participants seemed to view Greenlandic history through the lens of colonization, as evidenced by comments regarding the reason and goals for Atuarfitsialak. However, the cultural devastation that resulted from Greenland's colonization may not be shared by both groups. Greenlanders expressed in a variety of ways that Denmark's colonial legacy has left a lasting impression on Greenland and its people, and yet, Danish participants never mentioned colonization or the effect it has had on present day Greenland.

Liu and Hilton (2005) explain that a common representation of history is important because it allows cultural groups to establish a shared reality. Shared social constructions allow for everyday understandings to be taken for granted, and as such are "hardly ever the source of contention" (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 173). When cultural groups do not have shared representations, miscommunication and lack of coordination often result.

Further, shared representations of history can have a profound affect on identity formation (Liu & Hilton, 2005). The social identity of people can be constrained or supported through these representations in which certain ways of being and acting are restricted whereas others are encouraged. Liu and Hilton (2005) wrote, "A group's representation of its history will condition its sense of what it was, is, can and should be, and is thus central to the construction of its identity, norms, and values" (p. 537). A lack of shared representation of history may be one explanation for the reform in general and Greenlander's consistent reference to the legacy of colonialism in Greenland.

Implications

The findings in this article result in the following implications for policy and practice. First, with respect to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse groups, educational change needs to go beyond the level of pedagogy and address issues of race and language in order to provide improved educational opportunities for these groups (Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997). The creation of a culturally compatible school system is not enough to remedy centuries of damage caused by colonialism if the issues are not directly addressed. Further, Ledlow (1992) and Ogbu (1982) urge researchers and educators to look beyond the cultural discontinuity hypothesis when developing educational programs for minority and indigenous students to the macro-structural and historical forces regarding education. In Greenland, this focus should be on the effect colonialism has had on teachers and students in order to develop appropriate remedial efforts.

Second, Greenlanders and Danes need to begin a process of creating a shared representation of history, an endeavour that can have a profound affect on identity formation (Liu & Hilton, 2005). As teachers use the Contextualization Standard to couch their teaching, they should portray diverse perspectives that give a holistic picture of Greenland's past. Only then can Greenlandic and Danish students and teachers begin to think critically about who they are and how their current reality was formed.

Finally, Atuarfitsialak is a reminder of the importance of community understanding and buy-in to ensure reform support (Datnow, Lasky,

Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2005). Reform leaders made a concerted effort to secure stakeholders at the beginning of the reform process. However, a one-size-fits-all model of inclusion may not be the best approach in securing reform support. In keeping with sound educational practice, let this be a reminder that the role of a reform leader is not unlike that of a classroom teacher. Address the larger group, but simultaneously monitor individual participation and understanding.

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Footnotes

¹ Not all reference information was recoverable due to the nature of document selection. All known related information is included in the reference list.

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