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**Education for sustainable development beyond nature // culture**

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**“The Western mindset is not the only correct one” - Integrating Indigenous and Western views on nature through together-telling in Education for Sustainable Development**

Eva Ritter<sup>1</sup> and Jens Larsen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> corresponding author: [eva.ritter@nordicperspectives.com](mailto:eva.ritter@nordicperspectives.com)  
Institute Nordic Perspectives, Flensburg, Germany

<sup>2</sup>True Storytelling Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark

“When you meet people from other cultures, you have to remember that the Western mindset is not the only correct one. There are many more ways to see nature and be in it.” These words of a Sami doctoral student in Arctic Norway describe the challenge of ESD. Being widely recognized as a key concept to achieving a sustainable future, ESD needs to embrace different perspectives. This is particularly important with respect to Indigenous cultures, given that traditional Western views on nature and sustainability often differ significantly from Indigenous perspectives. Historically, Western educational frameworks have marginalized Indigenous knowledge. To overcome this, ESD must critically address the origin of its knowledge and include Indigenous voices.

Our research suggests together-telling, the sharing of personal stories and the reflection on common values, as a means in ESD to integrate the knowledge and views of Indigenous cultures in a respectful way.

#### Storytelling in ESD

Stories create emotions. Therefore, stories are well suited to convey knowledge and values. Personal stories are particularly credible. Together-telling, a method rooted in Indigenous storytelling traditions, is proposed to facilitate a more inclusive and respectful dialogue between diverse cultural perspectives in ESD. It aims at sharing personal stories within a group and reflecting collectively on the values embedded in these living stories. The method allows various voices to be heard and valued. It is a powerful tool for fostering mutual understanding and respect.

In the present project, the method was applied by collecting personal stories of people's view on nature and sharing the stories in an educational context. The results have shown that this way of working with living stories can integrate Indigenous and Western views on nature in ESD, even without a direct contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons.

#### The study

More than 40 persons from Greenland, Norway and Southern Denmark were interviewed on their views on nature. The narrative interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed to identify recurring themes. Coming from a variety of professions (educators, researchers, leaders, students,

artists, politicians, etc.) and Western and Indigenous cultures, respectively, the interviewees were asked to talk about the role of nature in their life.

They touched on topics such as: having trust, finding calm and energy, dealing with resistance, accepting changeability, taking responsibility, using one's intuition, and strengthening communities. This resulted in the definition of seven key topics that relate nature to i) community, ii) education, iii) connectedness, iv) intuition, v) sustainability, vi) mental health, and vii) identity.

#### The educational tool

Based on the stories and the topics that emerged from them, an educational tool was developed with the aim to encourage learners to gain understanding from the diverse perspectives, to reflect on their own relationship to nature and to feel interconnected with the world. Fragments of the living stories were selected for the learning material and grouped according to the seven key topics. They were shared orally or as texts in educational groups. In addition, learners were invited to share their own stories through together-telling and to discuss their reflections in the group.

During together-telling, no comments are allowed when stories are shared. After each story, there is a short break when everyone remains silent. This creates a safe space for sharing personal stories (no comments) and supports deep-listening (silence). Stories shared in this way form together a new and often more nuanced story about terms and concepts.

#### Applications

The stories and the method have since been used in different educational settings, among other in the ESD training of teachers for Elementary schools, Secondary schools, and Vocational schools, in sustainability trainings for companies and in sustainability studies at universities.

The approach not only enriches the educational experience but also aligns with the broader goal of ESD: Together-telling facilitates both individual and collective learning, promoting sustainable transformation through collaborative dialogue. It helps strengthening the understanding of Indigenous perspectives across cultural boundaries. It can foster a more inclusive and holistic understanding of nature and sustainability. By acknowledging that no single perspective holds all the answers, educational initiatives can develop more nuanced and effective solutions for sustainability.

#### Conclusions

The findings of this research have several implications for ESD practice and policy. Firstly, by adopting together-telling, educators and policymakers can create more inclusive and respectful learning environments that acknowledge and value different ways of knowing and communicating.

Secondly, the research advocates for a shift away from dominant global narratives towards a more pluralistic approach that recognizes the contributions of Indigenous cultures. This shift can lead to more holistic and contextually appropriate solutions to sustainability challenges.

Finally, the research suggests that further exploration of together-telling and its integration into ESD could provide additional insights and benefits. By continuing to engage with Indigenous perspectives and collaborative methods, ESD can evolve to better address the complexities of sustainability in a globalized world.

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