

Reorienting Education and Training Systems to Improve the Education Outcomes of Indigenous Youth (#IndigenousESD)

A global research project coordinated by the UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards
Sustainability,
York University Toronto, Canada

Perception of Quality Education and Good Practices Using Education for Sustainable
Development (ESD) with Implications for a COVID-19 Recovery and Indigenous Peoples

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Executive summary

This global research project aims to identify ways to improve education outcomes for Indigenous youth, in or from traditional communities. The research follows a community-based participatory approach. Unique about this research on how education outcomes for Indigenous youth can be improved is its engagement with the concept of *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)*. ESD as a lifelong learning process can empower learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to contribute to sustainable development.

The *UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability* at York University (Canada) coordinates the project that involves more than 120 institutions and communities having schools with Indigenous youth in approximately 40 countries/territories. The research was awarded with patronage by *UNESCO-UNEVOC* and the *Canadian Commission for UNESCO*. It was designed to serve the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* with the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, in particular SDG 4 on *Quality Education*. It is aligned with the *Global Education 2030 Agenda*, the framework for implementation of SDG 4. It also considers specific UNESCO programmes on ESD, i.e. the *Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019)* and the *ESD for 2030 Framework (2020-2030)*.

This research provides evidence-based guidance to support Indigenous Peoples for their pandemic recovery. The findings and recommendations could be used to support a sustainable COVID-19 recovery with equitable access to quality education at all levels at its core. Focusing on education and further embedding ESD in recovery efforts for Indigenous Peoples would also allow stakeholders to remain within the framework of the 2030 Agenda towards the overall aspiration of a sustainable future. Claiming their human right to education would strengthen them as People.

In close collaboration with research institutions, schools and Indigenous communities, two research initiatives have already been conducted and a third one is currently being coordinated:

Research initiative No. 1 on conducting a dialogue on quality education (2018/19)

Researchers explored the various perceptions of quality education and its desired outcomes as seen by ministries of education, Indigenous community leaders, principals and teaching staff, parents, students and other stakeholders in 54 settings covering 29 countries. A full research report with ten global policy recommendations was launched during the *Okayama Conference on Teacher Education for ESD* in 2019¹, then shared with project stakeholders in culturally appropriate ways and published in 2020/2021². The **ten global recommendations** can help building education systems back better and support a COVID-19 recovery while also addressing the overall sustainability quest in the SDGs.

Research initiative No. 2 on good practices using ESD (2019/20 during pandemic)

In 2019/2020, mostly during the height of the pandemic, researchers collected 32 examples covering 21 countries of 'Good Practice using ESD' in delivering quality education for Indigenous youth. Very concrete and transferrable examples of good practice allowed the development of elements for successful education partnerships with Indigenous Peoples to work within existing education systems, also suitable to support the recovery of Indigenous Peoples from this pandemic.

Preparing for research initiative No. 3 to perform action research

Selected research institutions will be invited to perform action research in exploring ESD through concrete changes in content and/or pedagogy in Indigenous communities and will measure the impact on education outcomes. This last phase is also hoped to contribute to the COVID-19 recovery with education at the core. The schedule for 2021/22 will be finalized when the pandemic lifts.

¹ Full research report. Research Report No. 1 on Quality Education Outcomes. Available at: <https://unescochair.info.yorku.ca/indigenouseed-research-report-no-1-on-quality-education-outcomes/> [Accessed 27 Feb. 2021]

² More details on the first research initiative can be found here: Kohl/Hopkins (2020). ESD for All: Learnings from the #IndigenousESD Global Research in: *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 105-120, 2019, DOI: 10.2478/jtes-2020-0018. Kohl/ Hopkins (2021). Learnings from the #IndigenousESD Global Research: Twenty-First Century Competencies for All Learners in: *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 90-103, 2020 DOI: 10.2478/jtes-2019-0020.

Introduction

With the adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* in 2007, Indigenous Peoples were granted full human rights (United Nations, 2007). While the human right to education is deemed crucial for sustainable development, still today with few exceptions, youth, in or from traditional cultures, remain amongst the least-well served by their respective public education and training systems (UNESCO 2019a). Indigenous girls are even more likely to be affected (UNESCO, 2016). There is a significant lack of understanding of why Indigenous students often do not function well in most education systems. The social and economic disparities that arise from an inequitable education system are considerable (UNESCO, 2017b).

One of the recommendations in the *Millennium Development Goals Report* was to create more data on specific groups, such as Indigenous Peoples around the world to understand their challenges (United Nations, 2015a). With the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015b), Indigenous Peoples are explicitly mentioned for the first time in global UN goals. The indicators focus on education policies and recognizing traditional knowledge in the discussion of sustainability and climate change (UNESCO 2018a).

Since little research-based knowledge is available to effectively address the situation globally to improve education outcomes for Indigenous youth, this research aims to assist in closing some of the gaps.

Overview on the global research project

The *#IndigenousESD* research was established in 2016/2017 by the *UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability* at York University (Canada) in collaboration with 120 institutions and communities having schools with Indigenous youth in approximately 40 countries/territories. It aims to add research-based knowledge on how to improve the education outcomes for Indigenous youth, in or from traditional communities by enhancing the quality of their education and training through the inclusion of *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)*.

In order to agree on project goals, to develop an appropriate global research agenda and culturally acceptable terms of engagement for the Indigenous communities involved, regional meetings were held in Canada, Chile, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria with more than 150 participating stakeholders throughout the year 2017.

The research development followed the adoption of *the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* with Quality Education (SDG 4), stating ESD at the core of all efforts, and to enable the pursuit of a sustainable future. The *2030 Agenda* specifically addressed Indigenous Peoples in their pursuit of quality education as one of the identified vulnerable groups in need of equitable access to all levels of education and training (SDG 4.5).

The main goals of the research project were:

1. to develop policy recommendations for the international education community, to assist ministries of education in meeting their SDG 4 goals, and allow school systems and communities with their understanding of education quality for Indigenous youth, and
2. to create an international Indigenous education research network with a focus on SDG 4.5.

Three global research initiatives were the result of the five regional meetings, that were followed by numerous consultations on the national and regional level in the network:

1. What are desirable education outcomes as perceived by relevant stakeholders that define the quality of education for Indigenous youth? (2018-2019)
2. What successful *Good Practice using ESD* is already being incorporated into school systems in delivering quality education for Indigenous youth using *ESD* approaches and what can be incorporated into the education and training systems from Indigenous knowledge and traditions to further sustain the community? (2019-2020, delayed during the pandemic)

3. How can such desirable education outcomes as identified in research initiative 1 be achieved through engaging ESD in formal and non-formal education environments? (timelines tbc)

Overall, respecting and building trusted relationships were key underpinnings for collaboratively working *with* and learning *from* Indigenous communities.

From the findings in the first research initiatives, ten global policy recommendations were developed and shared with all stakeholders. The second research initiative brought forward learnings that suggested concrete elements to consider when building education partnerships with Indigenous Peoples. The research findings are applicable to the current pandemic as a global health-related sustainability challenge and could allow a recovery with quality education as a key enabler within the framework of the *2030 Agenda*. They could also guide future efforts on how to tackle other sustainability phenomena, yet unknown.

ESD as a guiding principle for this research

For this research, the concept of *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* was central. ESD is a means of engaging the world's education and training systems in creating a more sustainable future and can be seen as a purpose of education (UNESCO, 2014a, UNESCO, 2020b).

While the *2030 Agenda* identifies the world's most pressing sustainability issues and addresses Indigenous communities in particular in six places³, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed ESD "...as a vital means of implementation for sustainable development (...) and as an integral element of the Sustainable Development Goal on quality education and a key enabler of all the other Sustainable Development Goals" (United Nations, 2017, p. 3/2019 p. 4). The ESD concept entails four thrusts: (1) access to quality education, (2) reorienting curriculum, (3) public awareness, and (4) training (McKeown, 2002). ESD addressed the understandings and worldviews inherent within sustainable development to make the curriculum relevant (UNESCO, 2017a). This research acknowledges Indigenous worldviews that informed today's perspectives on sustainable development, such as *Enough, for all, forever* or *One dish, one spoon*.

ESD has a longstanding history within the United Nations system. First established in 1987 in the *Brundtland Report* (United Nations, 1987) and stated in *Chapter 36 of Agenda 21* at the Rio 'Earth Summit' Conference in 1992 (UNCED, 1992), an entire *United Nations Decade of ESD, 2005-2014* (UNESCO, 2005) was dedicated to promoting ESD worldwide. In parallel to the *2030 Agenda* negotiation process, an additional platform was established to promote ESD: the UNESCO Global Action Programme, 2015-2019 (UNESCO, 2014b). It was recently followed by the *Framework for the Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development for 2030* (UNESCO, 2020).{

Is there a connection between ESD and the ongoing pandemic, when aiming at delivering a quality education and planning for a worldwide recovery that equally includes Indigenous Peoples? The answer is yes! This pandemic is a sustainability phenomenon of highest importance. Sustainability phenomena are environmental, economic, social matters that are relevant for the current or further development within a certain community. Typically connected to sustainability are environmental topics, such as air quality and pollution, energy use, water quality, biodiversity, etc. In addition, inclusion and gender topics are examples of social sustainability. Responsible consumption and production or (un-)employment are economic exemplars of sustainability topics (United Nations, 2015b). For the pandemic, there are several theories related to unsustainable behaviour of humans on the planet that might have caused the pandemic. But even if the discussion about its origin is put aside, its impact and outcomes qualify COVID-19 as a major sustainability phenomenon: The virus has severely affected the world in all three dimensions of sustainable development. COVID-19 has had a global impact in 2020/21, with most nations only at the beginning on their path to economic and social recovery. If the world keeps aiming at a sustainable future as agreed upon in the *2030 Agenda*, quality education with ESD are an imperative for all.

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/focus-areas/post-2015-agenda/the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-indigenous.html> (Accessed 22 February 2021).

Summary of research initiative No. 1 (2018-2019): perspectives on quality education

During the first research initiative, 64 institutions covering 29 countries were involved. Researchers explored the various perceptions of quality education and its desired outcomes, as seen by ministries of education, Indigenous community leaders, principals and teaching staff, parents, students and other stakeholders. Mixed methods were used in order to obtain the results, such as dialogues, interviews, focus-group discussions, surveys, in culturally appropriate settings.

Researchers then submitted the results in a report template that was based on the '**Four Pillars of Learning: to know – to do – to be – to live together**' forming UNESCO's current humanistic approach to education (Delors et al., 1996, p. 37; UNESCO, 2015, p. 39). Results were also organized according to the three dimensions of sustainable development. They were further clustered based on the priorities in the *UNESCO Policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples* (UNESCO, 2018b):

- Human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 1 UNDRIP with further Articles 8, 9, 16, 24) including matters of physical, mental and spiritual health,
- Equality and non-discrimination (Article 2 UNDRIP with further Articles 15, 14, 11, 12, 17) including employability, employment,
- Self-determination, participation, and free, prior and informed consent (Article 3 UNDRIP) including leadership,
- Cultural heritage, knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and languages (Article 11 UNDRIP)
- Development with culture and identity (Article 23 UNDRIP),
- Conservation and protection of environment (Article 29 UNDRIP with further Articles 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 and 32), and
- Gender equality (Articles 21/22 UNDRIP).

All research reports were summarized in a global overview and the results then aggregated to specific policy recommendations:

1. **Teaching twenty-first century competencies in locally relevant and culturally aligned contexts** means to prepare all learners for a changing world dealing with major challenges in climate and environment, digitalization and artificial intelligence, globalization, migration and urbanization will allow all Indigenous children and youth to thrive in the mainstream school system and to succeed in both worlds.
2. **Including Indigenous elders and the local community in the learning process** will be of mutual benefit as Indigenous knowledge and traditions as well as striving for current media/information literacy are crucial elements of teaching for a sustainable future. Students need access to all forms of knowledge and perspectives.
3. **Systematically strengthening technical and vocational training on all levels of education** will create opportunity to revitalize Indigenous crafts and skills and to make appropriate economic use of the environment. Entrepreneurial education can create additional opportunity outside regular employment bolstering aspects of self-determination.
4. **Intensifying engagement of Indigenous students in youth-appropriate settings** could establish active participation and student leadership. Focal points in schools for Indigenous matters and Indigenous involvement in school leadership will support the learning and school development process.
5. **Communicating on online platforms with other students, schools and communities** will further media literacy and joint learning for all learners. Sharing education success stories of Indigenous students and schools with high Indigenous populations will further engagement and foster leadership amongst students.
6. **Engaging teacher education institutions to work closely with local Indigenous communities** in addressing locally relevant sustainability issues and appropriately include them in the learning process. Collaboration in creating and delivering professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers will provide professional development and could be offered with online material and online learning circles.

7. **Addressing teaching certification** will respectfully allow Indigenous knowledge keepers to create and teach Indigenous perspectives.
8. **Providing information on and fostering access to (inter)national school networks** (e.g. ASPnet) and other networks (e.g. world heritage sites, biosphere reserves and geoparks, cities, etc.) will create or enhance relevant learning and network opportunities.
9. **Strengthening cooperation of ministries of education with Indigenous Leaders** and with other key stakeholders to co-develop mutual initiatives in revitalizing rural/remote areas with economy and transportation services will create employment opportunities for Indigenous youth. Providing online access where necessary in coordination with local school programmes will help youth bridge successful adaptation to living in two worlds. Processes for meaningful Indigenous participation in regional development could be used to enhance learning for self-determination.
10. **Ensuring participation of stakeholders as an element in all steps of the learning and education management process** will sustain their ownership of local issues and foster mutual understanding of responsibilities.

The global research report was launched during the *Okayama Conference on Teacher Education for ESD* in 2019⁴, published and shared with all participating institutions, Indigenous communities, UN agencies, etc. (Kohl & Hopkins, 2020/2021). Some research institutions used this project to strengthen their engagement with local Indigenous communities beyond the research mandate, e.g. to support in health questions and assist with economic challenges before and during the pandemic.

Outcomes from research initiative No. 2 (2019-2020): collecting examples of good practices using ESD in content or pedagogy

For the second research initiative, researchers looked into existing good practices that put aspects of ESD into practice to improve education outcomes for Indigenous youth, i.e. addressing local social, economic and environmental sustainability issues and designing appropriate pedagogies (UNESCO, 2020a).

Methodology

Researchers documented the situation, intervention and shared an understanding why a certain activity had worked, was effective in a particular and finally evaluated the potential transferability to other regions. They also identified barriers and challenges in implementing the practice. In designing the global report, the methodology of the first research initiative was replicated. The practices shared by researchers and communities were again systematically analyzed by clustering according to the three dimensions of sustainable development addressed in the practice, the *Delors' Four Pillars of Education* and lastly categorized based on the *UNESCO Policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples*. The impact of the pandemic was highlighted in many reports, as were concrete references to the SDGs.

Sustainability issues addressed by good practices, types of interventions

Repeated sustainability issues addressed by the ESD-infused practices were: children and youth were not succeeding in formal schooling; Indigenous knowledge, heritage, traditions, arts and languages were seen at risk; Indigenous communities were suffering from health issues or food insecurities, did face economic challenges; and often did not have a voice in developments in their regions. These initial challenges were exacerbated during the pandemic, especially the health problems and starvation. In consequence, they sometimes interrupted relationships with outsiders

⁴ The full research report version is available here: <https://unescochair.info.yorku.ca/indigenousesd-research-report-no-1-on-quality-education-outcomes/> (Accessed 27 February 2021)

in fear of the virus. Moving education online was possible in some of the settings, but largely limited. The types of successful interventions reported from the *#IndigenousESD* network were:

- four approaches for whole-community partnerships with the school or a cultural centre at the heart of the trusted relationship (Chile, Malaysia, Philippines),
- two visions for a new school or curriculum concept (Malaysia, Nicaragua),
- two new teaching centres (Malaysia),
- a master's programme in Central Asia on integrated water resources management,
- a TVET programme in reindeer management for herders (Finland),
- an outreach program to enhance literacy and achieve Indigenous participation in policy processes (Mongolia),
- an intercultural exchange between the Maldives and Australia with a focus on school gardening,
- twelve stories of successful practices in reorienting curriculum and addressing local needs in culturally appropriate ways (Finland, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Taiwan, United States, Venezuela), partially as a whole-community learning process beyond school-age youth,
- four specific concepts to enhance learning about languages and traditions, some of them with a focus on events for the community to celebrate their heritage (Russia, Venezuela), and
- two leadership programmes (Central Asia, Peru) as well as two in-depth mentoring and counseling opportunities (Canada).

Quantitative overview

The practices covered 32 examples from 21 countries. 97 % of the institutions had also participated in the first phase of the research and had built a trusted relationship with their Indigenous community. Some of the participating 24 research institutions shared multiple practices covering:

- Asia-Pacific region: 13 practices from Australia and Maldives, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Taiwan,
- Central Asian region: 2 practices from Kazakhstan in conjunction with their partners in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and 2 from Russia and Mongolia,
- Central/North American region: 6 practices from Canada, Nicaragua and the United States,
- Europe: 1 practice from Finland, and
- South American region: 8 practices from Chile, Peru and Venezuela.

Unfortunately, none of the African partners were able to finalize their good practice reports due to the pandemic circumstances, such as access to Indigenous groups often being nearly impossible, the prolonged university and school closures, lay-offs and lack of resources to coordinate the reporting.

The reported research settings equally covered rural and (sub-)urban areas with 19 solely Indigenous and 13 blended communities. Two of the setting were (semi-)nomadic. 26 of the practices showed the results of at least one to multiple years of ongoing partnerships between researchers and Indigenous groups.

The majority of practices holistically addressed sustainability in its three dimensions and also aligned with Delors' education model though, with the latter there was a slight downward trend in addressing more comprehensive aspects: to know (32), to do (30), to be (24), and to live together sustainably (19). The most important stakeholders identified were teachers/faculty (29), community elders (24) and students (24) as well as ministries (19) and not-for profit organizations (17).

When it comes to addressing the SDGs as such, all of the practices evolved around SDG 4 Quality Education but in addition addressed SDG 3 Health (11), SDG 8 Decent Work (13), SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities (16) SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities (14), and SDG 15 Life on Land (17). In many cases, the good practices using ESD were put to use to address health and pandemic issues.

Regarding the categories of *UNESCO's Policy on engagement with Indigenous Peoples*, the findings from the first research initiative were nearly confirmed. Education and training practices often focused on access to quality education and addressing twenty-first century skills (28) as well as equality/non-discrimination and employment/employability (20). Aspects of self-determination and

leadership (21) were found more at focus in the good practices than they had been prioritized by stakeholders in research initiative 1. Including cultural heritage in learnings (21) and the strong connection to development with culture and identity (22) were again found important in the practices. The conservation and protections of the environment (20) was more relevant to the practices than determined in the dialogue settings before. Finally, matters of gender seemed to once more play a rather subordinate role (2). Overall, the good practices confirmed the thematic priorities of the community stakeholders, found during the quality education dialogue.

Barriers and challenges were mostly focused on economic concerns, such as funding (23) as well as necessary training of facilitators or engagement of parents and the community (20). But also, conflict or fear of crimes hindered some practices. The overall potential for transferability was high, even if some approaches were rather complex, e.g. whole-community partnerships.

Qualitative and repeated themes, barriers

The good practices showed that successful interventions addressed manifold themes that were of local concern for the Indigenous community: from nutrition and food insecurities, health problems, housing, parenting skills, several reports on trauma and bullying experience, continuous loss of traditional knowledge and traditions, arts and crafts, languages, as well as dealing with polluted environments, little knowledge and skills for employability, lack of local employment opportunity.

Overall, there appeared to be a lack of confidence and self-esteem and a need for positive role models and leadership development. Certain barriers to communicate with mainstream society and to understand the implications regarding the spread and magnitude of the pandemic led to undue fear and hardships in Indigenous communities. COVID-19 also deeply affected all in-person interactions. For this research, the pandemic led to interruptions and sometimes ended the project.

The 32 good practices showed that holistic approaches and ongoing partnerships made a considerable difference for Indigenous communities, especially during the pandemic, while one-time project funding opportunities had limited impact. The whole-community partnerships between research institutions, Indigenous communities with their schools and other local authorities created active, transparent and equal engagement, resulting in change beyond specific education matters. The ESD-infused practices improved the overall economic, environmental and social situation of Indigenous Peoples in that particular community. Trusted relationships were built and learning *from, with and for* each other was established. Time and efforts were considerable to create these partnerships, especially those including other stakeholders, such as ministries, not-for profits and the private sector.

The most common interventions focused on revising and reorienting the curricula to create a specific project as well as pedagogy modification to include e.g. place-based and experiential learning. All interventions addressed local concerns. Some of the practices reported specific learning centers for Indigenous children and youth, but most of the interventions were carried out within mainstream education. None of the reports saw a further interest of Indigenous communities sharing their heritage or traditional knowledge beyond their own community. Indigenous knowledge was perceived only relevant within their own community.

Training of teachers and faculty was identified as a crucial success factor in creating change in 18 interventions. It was also mentioned as a perceived challenge for the future when asked about implementing Indigenous perspectives, understanding their culture and to take leadership in education change. In addition, mentoring, counseling and leadership programmes created positive impact for those who were able to participate and became multipliers for knowledge transfer. Yet only a limited number of stakeholders did have access to such resource-intensive opportunities.

Last but not least, some interventions showed that celebrating Indigenous heritage, traditions, arts and languages through specific events and acknowledging their importance did create positive impact and changed self-perceptions of communities.

Themes and approaches for creating trusted relationships in education with Indigenous communities

Comprehensive approaches addressing all dimensions of sustainable development with a 3-5 year mid-term partnership strategy had a very positive impact on Indigenous communities in education and beyond. They tended to address ESD in all of its four thrusts (1) access to quality education, (2) reorienting curriculum, (3) public awareness, and (4) training. Therefore, when addressing partnerships with Indigenous communities, it is suggested to use the ESD thrusts as a template to establish a relationship and assess the needs of the community. Such an approach would include the pandemic recovery as a communal need. Even when aiming at a particularly framed project/activity, using the thrusts would be suitable to position such fixed project within the overall community relationship for the future.

Addressing the four thrusts of ESD with locally relevant elements during a trust-building process between stakeholders could ensure that the relationship to improve education outcomes will be perceived respectful and can be sustainable in itself. Building the partnership bottom-up when adding activities into an overall community partnership was the approach in all communities in this research. When addressing the four thrusts, themes can be manifold, the following specific elements in each thrust are exemplars from the good practices in this research:

1. **Access to a quality education:** Being able to attend school in a physical building or participating in distance learning is deemed essential and has to be secured for all Indigenous youth. Adding locally relevant themes and teaching them in ways that are culturally accepted adds thematic relevance for students and can allow engagement of the community as a whole in the learning process.
2. **Reorienting curriculum:** Most of the practices in the study addressed successful curriculum and pedagogy changes combined with specific projects that were carried out in the community in co-leadership with the community. Connecting learning outcomes to career-based goals of individual students or the potential economic gain of the community as a whole has been successful to create engagement within the partnership. Including steps to honour and celebrate Indigenous heritage, traditions, arts and languages supports preserving and building pride for all members of the community.
3. **Public awareness:** Agreeing on jointly negotiated, accepted and transparent plans, working with multipliers to inform communities and actively reaching out to the community for dialogue have proven important. Receiving elder/community approval supports a successful partnership for education with active engagement towards further community concerns. School leaders and parents are key stakeholders repeatedly mentioned in the good practices. Elevating their leadership can create further positive impact. In some cases, neutral facilitators added value. When working towards a whole-community approach, activities are recommended to be built bottom-up and carefully accumulated within the pre-agreed overall partnership.
4. **Training in all sectors:** The training of teachers and learning process facilitators on how to respectfully address Indigenous perspectives in general and to address a specific intervention are crucial factors for success. Equally, TVET/specific trainings for Indigenous students of all ages can enhance their employability and all types of training can create new jobs in the community.

Summarizing the learnings from this collection of good practices, the four ESD thrusts can provide a flexible template for the elements to be addressed when developing the trusted relationship to improve education outcomes for Indigenous Youth and to create long-term positive impact for the community as a whole with education at the core.

As the pandemic is expected to lift later during 2021, selected research institutions will be invited to perform action research (initiative 3) to develop further knowledge, not only for a recovery from this pandemic but to be better prepared for future challenges and further aiming at sustainable development for all.

Concrete implications for the COVID-19 recovery of Indigenous Peoples from the research findings

How can the findings from this research support Indigenous Peoples in their recovery from this pandemic and contribute to their overall well-being as sought by the SDGs? How can the dialogues on quality education held in the *#IndigenousESD* research as well as the collection of good practices inform a way forward?

While governments currently focus on short-term impulses towards an economic recovery, education is not sufficiently at focus and even facing financial cuts (World Bank Group & UNESCO, 2021). Simply the return to the physical space of schools is publicly discussed (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2020). Yet, quality education as a key enabler to achieve the SDGs must be seen a fundamental element in the pursuit of a COVID-19 recovery for all. In order to keep focusing on the *2030 Agenda*, it is crucial to incorporate the new COVID-19 recovery efforts into existing activities towards the SDGs. Including these recovery efforts when measuring the indicators of relevance that mention Indigenous Peoples (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 and 16) would add further value. While focusing on quickly achieving a next normal post-COVID-19, staying with existing strategic frameworks and established reporting systems, a loss of focus towards the mid- to long-term implementation of the *2030 Agenda* can be avoided. Also, the status of Indigenous recovery can be included in regular reviews of progress at country level.

The current pandemic qualifies as a global sustainability phenomenon affecting all of the SDGs (United Nations, 2020). We do know how to embed sustainability concepts and practices in education. If we treat the COVID-19 pandemic as global sustainability challenge, we can benefit from the existing tools that are available to us from literature and practice for this this new and unprecedented situation. In consequence, the **ten global recommendations** from the quality education dialogue, ranging from ‘teaching twenty-first century skills’ to ‘including stakeholders throughout the entire process’, are relevant for planning the recovery of Indigenous Peoples.

In the same way, the **good practices of embedding sustainability** in the classroom are not only transferable between regions but are also transferable to the pandemic and towards future, yet unknown sustainability phenomena. Many of the good practices from this research had already taken the pandemic situation into account when learning *from and with* the Indigenous communities.

In summary, ‘Quality Education for all Indigenous Learners’ needs to be added to the specific areas of action for Indigenous Peoples’ COVID-19 global recovery efforts.

Only with equitable access to quality education at all levels in light of SDG 4, will Indigenous Peoples be able to move to a next normal, strive towards a better future in the long term, create their livelihoods and live a meaningful life that will embrace their heritage, traditions, arts and languages.

Putting education at the centre of the COVID-19 recovery would also strengthen the Indigenous Peoples’ position, as they claim access and control of their education as a human right granted to them.

Acknowledgement

This is the second report from the *#IndigenousESD* global research and published during a global pandemic. While many have been suffering, especially those from Indigenous and traditional communities, I would like to express my gratitude to the global network. Despite the current challenges, we were able to collect 32 examples of good practice. I sincerely thank all partnering research institutions and their Indigenous communities covering 21 countries that provided the information to establish this global report. This report can be shared as open resource to strengthen the voice of Indigenous communities in the discussion about quality education on all levels in a post-pandemic world.

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Annex

A summary of the 32 'good practices using ESD' is available for download.⁵

References

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