

Sámi traditional pedagogy - the process of “máhttihit” as base for transitional leadership and self-determination

Abstract

The article discusses the value of Sami traditional knowledge on learning and the transferring of this knowledge into new arenas. The main available source is Balto's study (1997) on learning is on the child-rearing practices and principles.

The goal for the model of learning is “máhttihit”, which means that traditional arrangements are settled for the learning processes to enable children and others to become independent and to be prepared to survive in their given environment.

Some practices uncover the traditional principles like use of direct experience, indirect guiding of social behavior and ethics, use of storytelling. According to the Sami traditional pedagogy failure is considered as learning, and that constraints are to trigger even more learning and learning potential, establishing good situations, positive expectations and inter-connectedness between humans and nature. “Gal dat oahppá go stuorra”, a traditional proverb reflects the background for these principles and it says that the child will learn little by little when he/she grows up. The proverb's main message is the positive expectations towards persons who are in the process. It also underlines the understanding for how the differences between each individuals set conditions for their learning.

The challenge is to attempt to create a path from this base of childrearing pedagogy to the principles for learning in contemporary Sami and Indigenous institutions and organizations. We Indigenous peoples don't disregard western theories on leadership, but we highlight interesting similarities between these two sets of perspectives. To discuss the possibility of combining Sami traditional epistemology and the theories for transitional leadership is a way of creating new leadership principles, that are based on our own cultural beliefs. Many institutions in Sápmi, also those establish to serve the Sami people have copied the western ways of leadership and administrations. In general our societies have not come far enough to discuss how these organizational structures influence on Sami and Indigenous autonomy and self-determination. The article will be an input to raise the interest for the importance of Sami and indigenous based leadership and organizational learning perspectives. And generally seen, as a step forward to the discourse on self-determination, from an intellectual starting point.