Inuit Voices on Quality Education in Nunavut: Policy Implications

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Abstract: This paper is based on a research that explored how Inuit community members in Nunavut Territory, Canada, conceptualized quality education in the socio-cultural context of the territory. Data were collected through telephone interviews of 13 Inuit community members in Nunavut and document reviews both of which were conducted in 2010. The data analysis showed that Inuit community members are r gravely concerned with:(1) the low grade twelve graduation rates and high dropout rates in the territory schools;(2) School improvement planning that engages Inuit communities; (3) Integration of school with the larger community; (4) Communicative engagement with parents and other community stakeholders; (5) Culturally relevant school programming and pedagogy; and (6) Culturally appropriate disciplinary methods. In the conclusion, the paper spells out the policy implications of the findings.

Keywords: *Quality education, culture, culturally relevant schooling, policy, Inuit perspectives, colonization.*

Introduction

From the 1880s well into the 1970s, the Canadian Federal government established residential schooling system for the purpose of civilizing and christianizing indigenous Canadian[1] children and youth (Lafrance and Collins, 2003). The churches[2] were the active operators of those schools. By this policy, more than 150,000 Aboriginal children throughout Canada were forcibly removed from their homes and isolated from the cultural influences of their families, homes, communities and traditions for the purpose of assimilating into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture. After the Federal government disbanded the residential schooling system, it pursued simultaneously two new policy prongs for indigenous education in Canada: integration and accessibility. The former is concerned with allowing indigenous children and youth to attend the same schooling system as non-indigenous Canadians. With regard to the latter policy, the Federal government through increased funding made schooling accessible to indigenous children living in rural and remote communities across Canada. In Nunavut, for instance, by the end of the 1990s all of its 25 communities that make-up the territory had access to k-12 schooling. While this is a remarkable policy achievement, little attention has been given to the quality dimension. That is, are Nunavut school programs and institutional practices responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of Inuit students, parents and community members? To what extent are Nunavut schools sensitive to and reflection of Inuit culture? Owing to the fact that the schooling system[3] in Nunavut is

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[1] This term is used for culturally diverse groups of non-Europeans categorized into First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FMI). In Canada, the terms "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" are used synonymously to refer to the original inhabitants of this part of the world. However, the United Nations and its agencies and other international organizations prefer the term Indigenous owing to their belief that it has no negative connotations politically and ideologically. In Australia and New Zealand, unlike Canada, the term indigenous is preferred to Aboriginal because the latter is believed to be associated with people who practice primitive cultures and traditions.

[2] The churches included Anglican, Presbyterian, United Church and Roman Catholic,

[3] Schooling and education are used interchangeably.

historically an external, colonialist imposition, Inuit have had little or no voice in defining its purpose, organization, curriculum, pedagogy and outcomes. Nevertheless, a relevant current issue for Inuit in Nunavut Territory is not the right to education but the right to quality education.

Generally, Aboriginal schooling or education in Canada is regarded inferior, less rigorous, with low academic achievement, chronically underfunded and suffers from accountability and governance problems (Sniderman, 2012). In fact, Aboriginal students' attendance at school program is not only sporadic they show perfunctory engagement with academic activities. The schooling system in Nunavut is no exception to these negative characterizations of Aboriginal schooling in Canada. More specifically, poor attendance rate at school programs has been identified as a major problem in Nunavut. Average school attendance rates for the 2009-10 academic year were identified as follows: k-6 (elementary) 80%, 7-9 (middle school) 68%, and 10-12 (high school) 57% (Auditor General of Canada, 2013). The report asserts that given the attendance trend students in the territory miss three full academic year of schooling before they graduate. News papers' headlines such as "the system is failing these kids" (O'Connor, 2003) is also common to read about Nunavut schooling system.

Research Purpose and Literature Review

The main purpose of this research was to explore how Inuit community members[4] (CM) in Nunavut conceptualized quality education within the socio-cultural context of their communities. This exploration is considered significant from a social justice point of view: to give opportunities to Inuit parents, Elders and others to articulate their perspectives on quality education and to give visibility to their voices on such a serious matter that recently has been the focus of public policy makers and researchers. Moreover, this exploration also aims at contributing to the diversity of perspectives on quality education and consequently enriching the international literature on education in diverse contexts.

Quality education is a multi-dimensional, value-laden concept. For this reason, it is impossible to identify one universally accepted definition in the international literature. In fact, any definition or interpretation of quality education reflects the ideological, social and political values of the individual or group offering the definition (Adam, 1993; Sayed 1997). This suggests that any definition of quality education cannot be ideologically, socially or politically neutral. It may reflect the values of parents/guardians, teacher union, school board, the ministry/department of education or other education stakeholders. As Adam (1993) has rightly pointed out "quality (education) is grounded in values, outcomes, and traditions; it may be specific to a given nation, province, community, school, parents or individual student" (p.2). As a result, it is not surprising that the international literature is littered with numerous definitions and conceptualizations of quality education.

However, some researchers or authors prefer to use the word "dimension" instead of proffering a definition of quality education. Such authors specify a set of elements that constitutes quality education and use those as indicators for judging quality of education. Other authors give both definition and dimensions of quality education. As an illustration, Tikly and Barrett (2011) offered the following definition of quality education: it is" an education that provides all learners with the capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being" (p.9). Along with that, the authors suggested three dimensions of quality education: Inclusion, relevance and democratic. The inclusion dimension relates to how individuals and groups of students are able to meet their learning needs and develop the capabilities valued by their parents and communities. This perspective posits that different groups and individual students require different resource input and teaching approaches to fulfil their learning needs and capabilities development. The relevance dimension, according to the authors, is concerned with the degree to which the form and content of schooling recognize and reflect the cultural identities of different groups of students. The last one, the democratic dimension relates to participation and the voice of parents and communities in all decisions affecting the form and content of schooling they value and revere.

Nevertheless, Sadiman (2004) looked at quality from how the school as a system with components of input (teachers, principals, students, curriculum, facilities, and other resources), process, output (results, outcomes, achievements, etc.), and feedback mechanism function together to attain specific goals and objectives. From an input viewpoint, quality is related to investment and the characteristics of individuals that impact the education process (Pianta et al, 2007; Rice, 2003). Included in these characteristics are effective teaching, per student funding, class size, teacher credentials, educational level and professional experience. This system view of education quality has several implications. First, it suggests that all the components are interrelated and that a defect in one is more likely to have negative implications

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[4] Unless otherwise indicated, Inuit community members (ICM) refer to Inuit parents, leaders, Elders and others residing in Nunavut communities.

for the quality of others. Second, because education has multiple purposes it allows us to pose questions about any aspects of the system we consider important: administration, teaching, textbooks, school building, facilities or cognitive achievements. We may even target one element of the system as most crucial such as effective teaching to assist students to attain mastery of basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.

A number of other aspects of quality education should be noted. One issue is that any definition or dimension of quality education directly or indirectly suggests the purpose of schooling or education. Quality education is also associated with transformative changes. It is believed that quality education should engender positive changes in individual students and their communities (Kubow and Fossum, 2003). As well, quality is relative to a particular time and place and also to specific students and their circumstances. Indeed, in a changing world what is regarded quality schooling today may not be construed as such tomorrow (Fredriksson, 2004). Further, the notion of quality education is not only a matter of concern for developing societies in Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America. On the contrary, it is a global issue as quality is a desirable characteristic of every education system regardless of its location (Fredriksson, 2004). Furthermore, quality education presupposes standards (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001). Standards are explicit models, examples or fixed outcome indicators against which comparison is made. Outcome indicators include test scores, examination and other assessment results. Strands of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude which students are expected to demonstrate in each grade of schooling are part of standards. Ultimately, standards are used as benchmarks for measuring both teaching and student performance.

Finally, despite all the controversies about quality education there is a consensus among experts that three fundamental principles are crucial for assessing the quality of any system of schooling. The first point is the need for relevance which relates to the purpose (or goals) of schooling and the needs of students, giving consideration to their contextual and contingent circumstances (UNESCO, 2008). Scholars have always demanded that the goals of schooling for indigenousl people should be relevant to the socio-cultural environment of the students and sensitive to their cultural identity (Annahatak, 1994; First Nations Education Council, 2013). In fact, responsiveness to learner's minimum socio-cultural needs is grossly inadequate; for quality education is viewed as meeting and exceeding the needs and expectations of students and their parents and community (Wiboonuppatum, 2002). Analytically, the issue of relevance relates to "how learning is organized and managed; what the content of learning is; what level of learning is achieved; what it leads to in terms of outcomes; and what goes on in the learning environment" (UNESCO, 2002, p.8). This dimension approach to conceptualizing quality implies that quality education includes school administration and leadership, curriculum, standards of performance, goals of education, and pedagogy. This conceptualization of education frees the learner from externally defined needs, agendas, and programs that may be found irrelevant to a community's needs and expectations (Giroux, 1993).The second component is the need for greater equity of access and outcomes, and the last one is individual right to have his or her learning needs fulfilled in school (Barrett et al, 2006).

To achieve the purpose of this paper, it is organized as follows. The first section describes the research setting and its basic demographic, economic and educational features. The second section is a description of indigenous theoretical perspectives that undergird the entire research; while the next section outlines the research methodology. The fourth segment of the paper outlines the research findings. A discussion of the research findings follows. The conclusion discusses the policy implications of the findings in relation to Nunavut schooling system.

Research Context

The Canadian federal government created Nunavut as Canada's newly territory out of the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories (NWT) on April 1, 1999. The Nunavut Act and Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA), though separate documents, were jointly negotiated between the federal government and Inuit leaders. Inuit leaders believed that the creation of Nunavut would provide Inuit some degrees of protection of their language and culture against the colonialist encroachment of Euro-Canadian culture (Sallouon, 1999). This explains the adoption of the name "Nunavut" which in Inuktitut, the language of Inuit, means our land.

In terms of demography, Nunavut population is almost 35000 of which more than 85% are of Inuit extraction. Inuit population is relatively young with about 40% of the population under the age of 15 years of age, compared to 20% for the rest of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2001). Nunavut's landmass is approximately 1.9 million kilometres which is one-fifth of Canada's landmass. Nunavut is divided into three unequal regions for administrative purposes. The Qkiqtani Region (also called the Baffin Region) contains 13 communities, including Iqaluit which is the capital of Nunavut. The Kivalliq Region (also known as Keewatin Region) has seven communities, while the Kitikimeot Region comprises only five communities. However, the twenty-five Nunavut communities are extremely scattered and physically isolated from each other but they are well-connected to each other, to Canada and to the rest of the world by satellite phone system, internet services and air transportation. As there are no connective road networks between Nunavut communities, air

transportation is a major means of moving people and physical goods over long distances within the territory. Nunavut has four official languages – two Inuit official languages, English and French[5]. The Inuit official languages consist of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtum. Inuktitut is spoken in the Qkiqtani and Kivalliq Regions and also the Eastern portion of Kitikmeot Region, while Inuinnaqtum is spoken in the Western part of the Kitikmeot Region. The Slavic orthography is used as a system of writing for Inuktitut but Inuinnaqtum uses the Roman orthography. These contextual features add to the uniqueness of Nunavut as a Canadian territory.

Upon its creation, Nunavut Department of Education inherited the NWT English language Arts (ELA) curriculum for k-9, the standard pedagogical practices, and models of school administration and leadership orientations. As well, the English language Art courses offered in Nunavut secondary schools are adopted from the Alberta provincial curriculum. Besides those courses, there are other supplementary Nunavut-created courses designed to support high school student success. These courses are referred to as knowledge and employability courses and are structured to prepare students for trades and apprenticeship, world of work, and for post-secondary progression. The English language is the main medium of teaching after grade 3 and then students are immersed into bilingualism, where they are taught core subjects in English and Inuktitut becomes a language of study.

Indigenous Theoretical Perspectives

In the literature two major discourses dominate education quality: Human capital and human right-based theories (Barrett et al. 2006; Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Walker, 2006). Both discourses are so bonded up together that in some cases it is difficult to draw a fine line of distinction between them (Richards et al, 2008). The human capital approach, which is mainly the economist view, uses quantitative measurement to assess or determine quality education. The quantitative measures include cognitive achievements on standardized provincial/state, national or international tests/examinations; rates of return on investment in terms of wage/salary earnings for individuals and economic growth for society as a whole; enrolment and retention ratios, dropout and graduation rates, and teacher-student ratios. For example, Caselli (2005), Hanushek and Kimko (2000); Hanushek and Woessmann (2009) assert that education quality should be measured on the basis of student test scores. The proponents of the economist view also argue that there is a positive correlation between economic growth and test score achievements than the number of years spent in school (Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Schoellman, 2012).

However, the economist concept of quality as a quantitative measurement of school-related variables cannot accommodate issues of diversity, multiple perspectives, contextual specificity and subjectivity. In fact, it reduces a value-laden, philosophical concept of quality to purely technical and managerial issue, requiring expert knowledge and mathematical sophistication outside of the intellectual capacity of ordinary folks. Further, the economist view makes quality exclusively calculable and for this reason it adores rigorous tests, computation, objectivity and impersonal rules. That way, it dismisses elements of judgement such as local and tacit knowledge, cultural tastes, personal preferences and human subjectivity as grossly insignificant for measuring quality (Pflueger, 2014).

The human right-based or humanist perspective focuses on schooling processes such as curriculum content, classroom conditions, language of instruction, teacher-student interactions, school-community relations, and student participation in classroom-based learning activities (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). The core perspective of this approach focuses on how schools and classrooms are organized to meet the needs of all learners rather than the overconcentration on quantitative measurement of schooling outcomes. This is not to suggest that quantitative measurement of schooling outcomes are inconsequential, but that the schooling processes and qualitative outcomes are as important as the quantitative outcomes. Quality schooling is thus a composite of qualitative and quantitative aspects.

The Indigenous perspective of quality schooling is located within the human right-based or humanist theoretical framework. It is discursive covering issues of relevance, curriculum, colonialism, administrative/leadership styles, participation, knowledge, teaching and learning. It takes the conditions and circumstances of the student as its central focus and challenges legacies of colonialism that marginalize indigenous knowledge and culture; participation in decisions affecting them, and dehumanization of their cultural aspirations. The Indigenous perspectives are summarized below:

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[5] French and Inuit languages became part of Nunavut official languages recently. The English language had previously enjoyed an absolute dominance both as a language of instruction in schools and colleges and as a language of government. In the case of French, as the French-speaking emigrant population in Iqaluit increased in the 2005, the French residents asserted their constitutional right for language and educational services in French. This led to the establishment and funding of a French school board in Iqaluit

- The dominant approaches to teaching, learning and assessment practices imported from Europe are not necessarily relevant for culturally and linguistically diverse societies (Adams, 1995; Lomawaima and, 2006; Reyhner and Eder, 2004; UNESCO, 2005).
- The curriculum, pedagogical and assessment principles and methods for Aboriginal schools must be developed with the participation of Aboriginal parents, Elders, leaders and other community members (King and Schielman, 2004; UNESCO, 2005).
- Learning must not be entirely school or classroom-based. It must move beyond the boundaries of the school/classroom setting and incorporate a variety of life-long activities within the student community (UNESCO, 2005).
- Indigenous students come to school with a variety of rich knowledge and interests from their communities. Teachers must validate these sources of prior knowledge by drawing them out and nourishing them in all school/classroom learning activities (UNESCO, 2005).
- Student experiences of school/classroom are critically important to their subjective evaluation of the importance of schooling. These experiences should be linked to other aspects of the student life such as health, nutrition, safe water and the natural environment (King and Schielman, 2004).
- Schooling must be holistic in its orientation, by developing the whole student intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically. Thus, schooling outcomes should include values and attitudes, not only cognitive-based skills and knowledge (CBC, 2011; Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; UNICEF, 2000).
- In the field of school administrative and leadership styles, indigenous people have a strong preference for alternative styles (Barhardt, 1986; 1977). For examples, informal relationships contrast with formal relationships; personal relationships compare to impersonal relationships; Facilitating role as opposed to managing roles; Variable generating differentiated from variable reducing; loose organizational structure in contradistinction to tight organizational structure.

Research Methodology

The research was designed as a qualitative study with three fundamental characteristics: Descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical (Clissett, 2008; Schram, 2001). The descriptive aspect had to do with interviewing and collecting narratives from participants and documents. The narratives consist of the experiences, observations, beliefs, and expectations of the respondents expressed in words and phrases. The interpretive component relates to the process of analyzing and making sense of the data collected in the form of interviews and document reviews. The theoretical characteristic of the study seeks to understand how the respondents constructed quality education within Nunavut specific context.

The data was collected through telephone interviews and document review. Given the disperse Nunavut population spread over a huge geographical area without any road networks linking between the communities, telephone interview was considered financially prudent. A total of 13 Inuit community members in Arviat, Cambridge Bay, Cape Dorset, Iqaluit, Pangnirtang, Pond Inlet and Rankin Inlet were purposively selected and interviewed (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The selection criteria were that participants must be 18 years of age, Inuit by extraction, a resident of Nunavut community, knowledgeable or experience with the schooling system in Nunavut and a commitment to 30-45minutes of interview. In accordance with the advice of qualitative researchers, I kept a reflexive journal to record my preliminary feelings, thoughts, interpretations and decisions during and after the interview process (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Maxwell, 2005; Goodman and O'Connor, 2006). Every interview was audio recorded with the consent of the respondents and transcribed immediately it was finished.

I utilized convergent technique in the interviews (Dick, 1990; Rao and Perry, 2003). This involves refining and developing a set of questions after each interview. This aimed at converging on issues raised in the precious interviews and to find out agreements and disagreements among the respondents on those issues that emerged during the interviews. Documents published about Nunavut education between 2000 and 2012 on the phenomenon of interest were collected and reviewed. Its primary purpose was to corroborate the interview data. The documents included committee reports, news releases, research reports, submissions, reports on annual meetings, conference presentations, briefing notes, and reports on Inuit culture and society. The authors are Nunuvut Tunngavuk Incorporated (NTI)[6], Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK),[7] and Iqaluit District Education Authority[8]. The documents were

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[6] NTI is an Inuit organization that ensures that both the Federal and Nunavut governments fulfil their obligations under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

[7] ITK is an organization(formerly known as Inuit Tapirisat of Canada) represents the political, cultural and economic interests of more than 55,000 Inuit in Settlement Region in Northwest Territories, Nunavut Nunavik in Northern Quebec, and Nunaatsiavut of Northern Labrador, Newfoundland..

selected using criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaningfulness (Mogalakwe, 2006). Authenticity refers to the genuineness of the sources and this was determined by looking for direct and indirect corroboration by other documentary sources. Credibility implies the relationship between the evidence presented in the documents and the research context; while representativeness deals with how typical a document was given the context and the school system in Nunavut. Finally meaningfulness relates to precision of language used in the documents. Documents written in a language judged as inconsistent and contradictory in meanings were excluded.

The interview and documentary review data were analyzed in two stages. The first was the writing of reflections in the researcher journal. The second stage involved reading each transcript and document carefully to identify and construct themes. I followed closely Ryan and Bernard's (2003) procedure in reading the transcripts and constructing the themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested that in looking for themes in qualitative data, researchers have to watch out for the following clues: (a) repetition of phrases or words; (b) words that sound unfamiliar or used in unfamiliar ways;(c) metaphors (or analogies) that people use to express their experiences, thoughts, values, perceptions and beliefs; (d) linguistic connectors such as because, since, as a result, and the reason is, which often show causal relations; (e) attributes, operational definitions, examples, comparisons; and (f) what is missing may indicate themes. Once a theme was identified it was defined and its characteristics were spelt out. Slices of data were assigned to the themes from the interview transcripts and documents. In the course of the analysis, some themes were modified, redefined or discarded. Ultimately, the themes retained were used as headings under which the findings were summarized. Also in the process of the analysis, disagreements, agreements, similarities and dissimilarities in both the interview transcripts and document reviews were identified.

Research Findings- Indicators of Quality Education

The research findings are summarized as follows: High grade 12 graduation rates and low dropout rates, school improvement planning, school-community separation, communication engagement with parents and other community stakeholders, culturally relevant school programming and pedagogy, and culturally appropriate disciplinary methods. These findings which indicate how Inuit community members conceptualize quality schooling are briefly described and interpreted below.

High grade 12 Graduation Rates and Low Dropout Rates

 Nunavut Territory grade 12 graduation rate is approximately 25% compared to the Canadian national average of 82% (Mendelson, 2006). For instance, in 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 academic years grade 12 graduates in Nunavut were 128, 136 and 139 respectively (Bouin and Courchesne, 2007). These figures give corresponding graduation rates of 25.4%, 26.5% and 25.6% or an average rate of 25% (Statistics Canada, 2005). Nunavut high school dropout rate is 50% for 2007-2010, which is the highest rate of all provinces and territories in Canada. The national average is 8.5% and the rates for other Canadian territories are Yukon 15.5% and Northwest Territories 30.1% (O'Gorman and Pandey, 2014).

The respondents expressed a grave concern about the low rates of grade 12 graduation and high dropout rates for secondary students. Some respondents deemed the low grade 12 graduation rate an education gap that must be closed as soon as possible (Iqaluit District Education Authority, 2005a). All the respondents shared the common belief that high schools in their communities should take a greater responsibility for the low graduation and high dropout rates instead of blaming it entirely on Inuit parents/guardians. They also stated that irrelevant school programs, pedagogies, and teachers' deficit view of Inuit children and youth are critical factors that cause Inuit students to drop-out of school or become truants.

According to the respondents, high graduation rate is crucial from a human resource standpoint, because it determines the number of youth that can access post-secondary programs, those available for apprenticeship training and job-training programs in the territory. The respondents further stated that a high graduation rate is an immense psychological booster to students who are yet to graduate from high school, filling them with hope and optimism that they can make it to the graduation point.

While the respondents placed high importance on grade 12 graduation rate, more than half of them argued that mere graduation rate is grossly inadequate for Inuit cultural and language survival in Canada. They stated that a demonstration of competence in Inuit language and culture should be mandatory part of the grade 12 graduation requirements. This requirement could well be that grade 12 students must either pass a course in Inuktitut/

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[8] Iqaluit District Education Authority (IDEA) is the most vociferous district education authority in Nunavut.

Inuinnaqtum or a grade 12 literacy test in Inuit language and culture. Unfortunately, the respondents did not provide any information about the form students could fulfil that graduation requirement.

School Improvement Planning

School improvement planning identifies educational issues and set goals for learning, teaching and assessment to improve student learning growth and achievement. School improvement planning has many benefits, including, but not limited to, providing a focus for teaching and learning (Sagor, 1992); accountability mechanism for holding educators accountable for student learning and criteria for measuring a school performance (Education Improvement Commission, 2000; Anfara et al, 2006).

The respondents saw school improvement planning not only as an opportunity for improving teaching and learning in the schools but also for wider community participation in school development. As well, they saw school improving planning as an opportunity for incorporating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles and values for enhancing teaching, learning, assessment, and administration. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) has been defined as Inuit philosophical principles and values, cultural strategies for organizing tasks, resources and society into a cohesive system (Arnakak, 2002). The respondents expressed the optimism that application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in teaching, learning, assessment and administration in Nunavut schools would lead to a complete decolonization of the territory schools.

School-community Separation

The respondents regarded high schools in Nunavut communities as colonial institutions in that they are not an integral part of the language, customs and beliefs of the feeder Inuit communities. This suggests that the schools have minimum or no presence of Inuit language, cultural values or perspectives embedded in their curricula, pedagogy, and administrative practices (Barnhardt, 1999). The respondents related that the educators, especially the principals, being non-Inuit, lack the skills, knowledge and disposition to integrate the school into the community. They stated further that the educators believe that their responsibilities begin inside of the school and end inside of the school. Other educators, according to the respondents, take the stand that they were hired specifically to teach a curriculum or to administer a school and not melding the school and the community together.

The respondents further suggested that frequent invitation of Inuit Elders into the school to share their expertise with the students; educators attending community events such as feasts, funerals, and meetings; having students undertaking community projects as part of their learning; maintaining a visible presence of Inuktitut language in the school; and the school principals meeting periodically with parents and Elders are some of the strategies to integrate the school with the community. Other respondents also argued that integration is needed to reduce the frequent value conflict between the school and Inuit communities; for educators to develop an in-depth understanding of Inuit culture and perspectives on teaching and learning; nurture the knowledge and skills Inuit students bring to school; and develop culturally relevant pedagogical practices for literacy, numeracy and administration. Consequently, the respondents shared the consensus that the ineffective schooling system in Nunavut should partly be attributed to the educators' persistent intent to separate the schools from the Inuit communities and make them colonial monuments.

Communicative Engagement with Parents and other Community Stakeholders

Researchers are unanimous in their view that in effective schools, principals as school managers and leaders develop effective communication strategies and communicate frequently with stakeholders to share with them or solicit their opinions on school mission, goals, success stories, priorities and challenges (Pauley, 2010; Hallinger and Murphy, 1987). Other researchers note that communication channels and choices should be open and accessible to all stakeholders and effective in a specific cultural context (Grillo and Dance, 2006).

The respondents expressed a strong preference for face-to-face communication and interaction with school principals and other educators. They also stated that, in most cases, the only time they had personal interaction with the school principals was when their children got into trouble with the school's rules and regulations and are either suspended or expelled. They admitted that, from an Inuit cultural perspective, it is almost impossible for Inuit parents and Elders to cooperate with educators they hardly know personally.

One respondent offered two reasons for the lack of communicative engagement with Inuit parents and Elders, First, she believed that school principals are under false impression that Inuit parents, Elders and community members care less about Inuit youth education and achievement. Second, she also asserted that the school principals wrongly believed that they know better than Inuit communities regarding how Inuit children and youth learn and how best to teach

them. She attributed this situation to bloated pride the principals and other educators have about themselves, their university education and education expertise.

Culturally Relevant School Programming and Pedagogy

Culturally relevant school programs and pedagogies are those that incorporate fundamental elements of the culture of the feeder community in order to foster student learning growth and achievement. All the respondents related that much of what Inuit children and youth learn in Nunavut schools have little or no relevance to their lives, their communities and their physical environment. The respondents stated that they wanted to see curriculum materials that represent the realities of life in their communities, including Inuit culture, beliefs, values, cultural-skills development, and land-based programs.

Furthermore, the document review showed that the Nunuvut Tunngavuk Incorporated (2006) passed a resolution demanding that Nunavut education system be built on Inuit language and cultural values (principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit) instead of western values and perspectives. The Iqaluit District Education Authority (2005b) expressed a similar position, requiring that Nunavut education system be based on the anchors of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), including professional standards and evaluation for principals and teachers.

Culturally Appropriate Disciplinary Methods

Lastly, in Nunavut schools student offenders are customarily disciplined by expulsion, out-of-school suspension or denial of specific school-based privileges. From an Inuit philosophical perspective, an offending member of a group should not be ostracized or separated from the group and that strategies should be devised to rehabilitate that person within the group. According to this perspective, social ostracism and separation exact an untold psychological torture on offenders, their families and the entire community which they belong (Oosten and Laugrand 2002; Pautuutit Inuit Women Association of Canada, 2002). This perspective also requires that appropriate safety and security measures be put in place for protection of other students where these are needed (NTI, 2007).

The respondents were overly worried about the frequency with which out-of-school suspension is applied in Nunavut schools and the petty offences for which it is meted out to Inuit students. They overwhelmingly endorsed school disciplinary methods that are both rehabilitative and restorative. According to them these rehabilitative strategies include counselling, support for individual behavioural and attitudinal modification and in-school-suspension. These are compared with expulsion and out-of-school suspension that ultimately inflict emotional pain on the offender, lead to repeat offending and the offender dropping out of school.

Discussion of Research Findings

Grade 12 graduation rate is not an absolute number of graduates per year. Rather, it is the number of grade 12 students in each year divided by the corresponding population of 17 or 18 year olds in the territory. This suggests that 17 or 18 year olds who drop out of high school and subsequently go back to adult school after say two or three years to earn their high school diplomas are not counted as part of the number grade 12 graduates. On the contrary, their withdrawal originally decreased the graduation rate in that year.

It should be noted that retention rate, school attendance rate and drop-out rate affect the grade 12 graduation rate. For example, retention rate is the proportion of students who continue attending high school programs until grade 12 affects positively or negatively the grade 12 graduation rates. A high grade 12 retention rate is suggestive of an increased graduation rate. This is based on the assumption that Inuit students who stay till grade 12 are most likely to graduate. Moreover, it could be hypothesized that Inuit students whose attendance record is sporadic is most likely to drop out of school; might not have acquired sufficient in-school knowledge and skills to complete their required credits for graduation or pass their exit school diploma examination.

However, the grade 12 drop-out rate is generally the proportion of students who permanently withdraw from attending school programs. Drop-out which is non-school factors-related is different from those who are pushed out. Pushed-outs are those who withdraw permanently from school program attendance because they find the programs and their corresponding pedagogies culturally irrelevant. The burden of biculturalism in which Inuit students have to walk in two cultural worlds, with one foot deeply submersed in Western culture of the school and the other in Inuit culture in the home/community may be too heavy a burden for some Inuit to bear; hence their early exit from the system(Maclver, 2012). This category of drop-outs, I believe, was what the respondents were referring. Finally, "internal drop-outs" are yet another category. These consist of Inuit students who continue to attend school programs but they have no passion for or are not emotionally attached to what they learn in school programs. Many reasons account for their refusal to withdraw physically from school programs. Among them are possible parental sanctions,

love of peer relationships or cancelation of social assistance provided by the Department of Social Services rather than the love of learning in school.

The above analysis suggests that the high number of Inuit students who drop out of Nunavut high schools is a joint responsibility of the schools (or educators) and Inuit parents. It speaks to teacher quality as differentiated from teaching quality (Kennedy, 2006). The former focuses on documentary evidence of completion of teacher preparation program, possession of or eligibility for teaching licence and teacher academic credentials. The latter relates to abilities for creativity, intuition, adaptation of teacher craft for the needs of different socio-cultural groups and tender-heartedness or ethic of caring.

Culturally relevant school programming and pedagogy influences Inuit students' motivation to achieve, remain in school rather than drop out; attend school programs enthusiastically; and engage in school learning activities (Kanu, 2002). However, the responsibility for ensuring that school programs and pedagogy are culturally relevant rests solely with Nunavut educators, including principals who are in the position of learning leaders. A majority of Nunavut educators come from Southern Canada and are proudly armed with the assumption that the learning theories, models and practices they acquired duration their professional preparation in teachers' college are universal and can be conveniently transplanted in Nunavut schools. While some of those theories and models of learning are aptly effective with Inuit children and youth, a good number of them may be practically ineffective. The reason is that those learning theories and models were developed based on research in psychology and sociology without any understanding of anthropology whose primary focus is culture.

Over the past thirty years, some researchers, scholars and educators have begun to understand the significant role that cultural values play in influencing student learning and achievement (Ansari, 2011; Goh and Park, 2009; Kennedy, 2013). In fact, Inuit students' experiences rooted in their culture shape what they consider to be worth learning; how they make sense of what they are learning, and how they communicate with others. In their review of the literature on Aboriginal learning styles and preference, Rasmussen et al (2004) found that Inuit demonstrate tremendous strengths in visual-spatial abilities relative to verbal abilities; perceive a phenomenon as a whole rather than breaking them into analytic parts; have a strong preference for learning facts and practical skills in a concrete, sequenced and structured manner; and the values of sharing, cooperation, group work and harmony considerably influence their learning behavior.

Consequently, Nunavut educators, like other indigenous educators, should first engage in a critical examination and evaluation of their own professional and personal biases, perceptions, values and judgements in relation to teaching, learning, assessment, leadership and administration of schools located in Aboriginal communities (Cassidy and Marsden (2009). After that they should consider the following questions as precursor for culturally relevant programming and pedagogy in Nunavut schools:

1) What are the characteristics of Inuit culture that influence Inuit students' learning and achievement?
2) In what ways can I honour and respect the validity of Inuit epistemology in whatever I teach to support Inuit students to build on their cultural heritage and worldview?
3) How can I design learning-activities, conduct assessment, organize interaction and relationships in places of learning to reflect Inuit students' learning profile identified in questions 1 and 2?

Certainly, part of the answers to these questions could be found in critical observation of Inuit children and youth and their larger communities in a variety of settings. Another part of the answers could also be obtained from humble interactions with Inuit parents, Elders and other community leaders. Nevertheless, the search for answers to those questions and the development of culturally suitable curriculum and pedagogies based on the answers may represent formidable challenges to Nunavut educators. The fact is that most educators have deeply internalized the belief that their primary role, regardless of the context in which they work, is to deliver a fixed curriculum buttressed with pre-packaged, commercially produced textbooks and other teaching resources.

As a matter of effectiveness, the administration of the school system in Nunavut communities should be informed by a critical, historical analysis of the legacies of colonization, assimilation and marginalization associated with the residential schooling. Generally, the spectre of the residential schooling system has filled generations of Canadian Aborigines with suspicion that the ultimate intention of schools established in their communities is to destroy their language and culture and assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture. To stifle the growing and proliferating roots of this suspicion and mistrust, Nunavut school principals in conjunction with other educators should construct a practical plan to integrate schools into Inuit communities instead of allowing them to stand as separate institutions. School improvement planning as a community event and communicative engagement with Inuit parents and Elders, as the research respondents have suggested, are some of the practical ways of achieving that goal. As Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) have rightly argued, "with parent (or community) engagement possibilities are created for the structure of

schooling to be flattened, power and authority shared by educators and parents, and the agenda (goals of schooling) being seemed to be mutually determined and mutually beneficial" (p.13).

The success of Nunavut school principals in leading integration of schools with Inuit communities, communicative engagement with Inuit communities, and adoption of culturally appropriate disciplinary methods depends considerably on how they embrace and practice alternative approaches to school administration and leadership (Barnhardt1986).The alternative administrative style, as contrasted with the traditional administrative style, is made up of a series of relational behaviors and decision-making approaches, aimed at ensuring transformative or emancipative principal leadership at the community level. Its core characteristics comprise endorsing diversity or variable generating, personal or informal relationships with stakeholders, non-directive, diverging focus, loose organizational structure, receptive to change, downward responsive, open communicative channels and difference-oriented.

Variable generating has to do with creating opportunities for Nunavut communities to introduce a variety of programs into the school curriculum and programs in order to fulfill their educational needs and aspirations. Personal or informal relationships relate to efforts on the part of the school principal to cultivate direct relationships with Inuit parents, Elders and community members instead of hiding behind bureaucratic curtains and dictating direction of the school (Marshall et al. 1996). Downward-responsive style involves listening attentively to the educational needs of Inuit students, parents, Elders, and community members, drawing up concrete plans to meet those needs and being directly accountable to them for leadership of their schools.

In other words, the alternative administrative styles are transformative in nature or culturally responsive to the historical circumstances, educational needs and aspirations of Inuit communities. It starts with questions of democracy and social justice and links the practice of school leadership with the wider socio-cultural community in which it is practised (Shields, 2010). That is, it requires transformative leadership of the school, as Shields (2003) has emphasized, focusing on changing oppressive structures, norms, practices and relationships that have historically marginalized Aboriginal communities and uplifting the dignity of those communities. It is also a radical shift from traditional, bureaucratic administrative ethos that adores hierarchy and differentiation between top and bottom in respect to leadership practices at the school level (Marshall et al. 1996).

Policy Implications

The construction of an effective schooling system in Nunavut that is quintessentially Inuit requires the collective contributions of Inuit communities. The research findings represent Nunavut community members' contribution toward co-construction of quality education system in the territory. Accordingly, these findings clearly have implications for quality schooling policy in Nunavut. Since the research findings are specifically in the cultural domain, indicating the need for improvement in graduation rates, teaching effectiveness, community participation in school improvement planning, school-community integration and disciplinary methods, measures, targeting these particular aspects of quality are suitable. The research findings, along with other desirable elements of schooling will constitute components of a quality policy framework on school quality in the territory. The quality policy framework will provide a precise definition of each component, its objective, its indicator and its formula for measuring it. The framework could be used by school principals, supervisors of schools, district education authorities, senior education ministry officials and parents to assess and monitor the extent to which schools in their communities are achieving those quality indicators. In addition, the quality policy framework will provide a concrete, cohesive referent structure for any discussion of education quality in Nunavut and also as a foundation for school improvement.

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