

Johan Lövgren, Jonas Andreasen Lysgaard,  
Rasmus Kolby Rahbek, Anders Hallqvist (Eds.)

# **The Nordic Folk High School Teacher**

Identity, Work and Education

Folk High School Research

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LIT

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Rasmus Kolby Rahbek, Anders Hallqvist (Eds.)

The Nordic Folk High School Teacher

# Folk High School Research

Edited by

Johan Lövgren  
(University of South-Eastern Norway)

Volume 1

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# Chapter 1

## The Nordic Folk High School Teacher – an introduction

By Johan Lövgren

This anthology features thirteen research articles combined under three central themes: the identity, the work, and the education of the Nordic folk high school teacher. The chapters are written by a team of 21 authors presenting research from each of the five countries in the Nordic region. Although the folk high schools are described as playing a central role in the democratic development of the Nordic region (Gustavsson, 2013; Korsgaard, 2011) and as a major influence on adult education globally (Horton, 1990; Bhattacharya, 2010; Pierro & Haddad, 2021) there have been few Nordic research projects describing the schools (Lövgren & Nordvall, 2017; Pastuhov, Lövgren & Nordvall, 2019, p. 30).

The aim of this publication is to assemble articles by authors engaged in empirical research on each of the five national Nordic folk high schools. Among the authors published in this volume, there are scholars, leaders of national folk high school associations, lecturers connected to the education of folk high school teachers, as well as representatives of folk high school practitioners from the field. The inclusion of research covering all the five national folk high schools in a peer reviewed anthology makes this publication unique.

*Network for Research on the Nordic Folk High Schools* (NRNF) was established in 2019 as a community for active researchers with an empirical focus on folk high schools. Following a key motive behind the network, we decided to assemble an anthology introducing research articles from each of the five Nordic countries. In the process of evaluating themes for this first NRNF project, a central argument was that the network included the leaders of the folk high school teachers' training programmes in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

By assigning the folk high school teacher the central position in our first project, we focus on a representative and bearer of folk high school pedagogy. We see the educator's meeting with the students as the most important expression of the identity of the Nordic folk high school. It is also in the practice of teaching that pedagogy is confronted with new realities, and it is here that the 175-year traditions of folk high school pedagogy can evolve to meet new challenges. Research articles that describe teachers from each of the five Nordic national folk high schools would also project possible divergences and relatedness between the five national schools. A publication assembling national research projects on the identity, work and education of the teachers would therefore also indicate a possible common identity of the Nordic folk high schools.

## **Identity, work, and education**

The introductory chapter first presents the three central themes in the anthology, along with the outline of the project that was presented to the authors in their invitation to the project. Secondly, the introductory chapter outlines the development of the project since its inception in 2020 and how it generated two processes of overarching

analysis. The chapter ends with a short overview of the history of the Nordic folk high schools and their legal frameworks.

The book is divided into three main sections, representing the three themes of the identity, work, and education of the Nordic folk high school teacher. In each section, the national chapters are followed by two chapters presenting an analysis of the material presented in the chapters:

Theme 1. The identity of the folk high school teacher

Develops who the folk high school teachers are, their background, and self-understanding. The first theme also addresses the teachers' view of the folk high school movement, its aim and identity. We ask if there are values that are shared by the Nordic folk high school teachers. Iceland contributes one chapter on this theme.

Theme 2. The work of the folk high school teacher

Analyses the pedagogical practice of the folk high school teacher, what characteristics can be seen in the work of the folk high school teachers and how their self-understanding is implemented in their teaching.

Theme 3. The education of the folk high school teacher

The third theme focuses on the initial and continuing education and training that are offered the folk high school teachers in the different countries. How do these programmes mirror the identity of the national folk high school movement?

## **Authors' reflective online seminars**

When the Network for Research on the Nordic Folk High Schools started the process towards this anthology, the aim was to compile an overview of research on the folk high school teacher. The first year

our efforts were used in finding competent researchers from each of the Nordic countries addressing the three themes, and in the fall of 2020 we had found authors for each of the thirteen national chapters.

To meet the need for communication with the 21 authors we designed what we called an *Authors' reflective online seminar*. As a part of the editorial process, the authors submitted drafts for their chapter. In preparation for the seminar, these texts were sent so that the authors could prepare by reading each other's texts. In June 2021, fourteen of the authors met in our first online seminar that lasted for three hours. The main portion of the seminar was used in groups where the authors from each of the three subthemes discussed each other's drafts. The response we got from the authors was that the reflections shared at the seminar had been an important inspiration for their on-going work with the anthology. Based on this positive response, the editors arranged a second online seminar in September 2021.

In the process of working with the writers' seminars, the editorial team found that the aim of the project could be broadened. If the analytical discussions that developed between the authors could be documented, this material would make a valuable contribution to the field of folk high school research. In the process that followed, the Nordic folk high school teacher project was redesigned into what was to become a research project in itself.

To facilitate the documentation of the dialogue between the authors, a third writers' seminar was held in January 2022. This reflective seminar was designed to be a part of the process of gathering material to enable a process of meta-analysis of the national chapters. The third reflective seminar and the three concluding reflective group sessions were recorded. Analyses of these recordings are found in chapter 8, 14 and 20. The three summary chapters give a sense of

the discussions that the authors shared and point towards some of the comparative deductions that were made.

## **Meta-analysis of national chapters**

The second process of abductive redesign was initiated through the editorial process. In their work with the revision and proofreading of the national chapters, the editorial staff found that they were discussing the texts as an empirical material. These thirteen research projects, covering all five of the Nordic countries, could be seen as a representation of the Nordic folk high school teacher (see McCormick, Rodney & Varcoe, 2003). We asked in what ways the national chapters reflect the divergences between the folk high school in the five Nordic countries and if the texts could outline a common identity that might be shared by their teachers.

The abductive revision of the project involved designing a process of meta-analysis of the 13 research projects in this publication (Leary & Walker, 2018). The text material from the national chapters were downloaded to the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The programme's auto coding and query functions (Tang, 2023) combined with a classic content analysis (Franzosi, 2009; Tunison, 2023) helped us to objectify the analytical process. The specific queries offered by the programme facilitated the identification of themes and central concepts in the thirteen texts.

The text material from the national chapters were finally taken through a process of condensation, connecting central concepts from the NVivo analysis with findings under each theme (Roulston, 2014). The purpose of textual condensation has been described as “discovering the essential elements and translating the results into an end product that transforms the original results into a new conceptualization” (Timulak, 2014, p. 482). The process of text analysis and condensa-

tion was designed to identify central concept and findings presented in the national chapters.

Chapters 7, 13 and 19 summarise this process of condensation under the three themes. The text in these three chapters follow the process where each national chapter is first condensed to a synopsis, after which the findings in each chapter are extracted to create an overview where the central concepts found in the chapters are connected. In the next stage, findings on the themes of identity, work and education are synthesised into one text, and lastly, the chapters outline the overarching themes that have been derived through the process.

## **Historical development of the Nordic folk high schools**

The next section presents a few notes on the history and national legal framework of the Nordic folk high schools. The limited space of the chapter allows us to trace only a few developments, sampled to provide a background for the thirteen research projects presented in this anthology.

The first Nordic folk high schools were established in Denmark in the mid-19th century. N.F.S. Grundtvig's (1783–1872) conceived a vision of “a school for life” in contrast to the Latin-based educational system of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Denmark (Rahbek, 2019, pp. 27–32). The transition of the Danish nation into a democratic form of government would, according to him, never be fully implemented unless the whole people (folk) could be a part of the democratic process (Johansson & Bergstedt, 2015).

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century folk high schools in Denmark were not only a people's education in theory, but the movement built on a strong pop-

ular engagement (Korsgaard, 2018, p. 53). An example of the rapid growth of the Danish folk high schools can be seen in the 1860s when the number of folk high school attendees expanded from 450 students in 1863 to 2000 in 1869 (Skovmand, 1983, p. 19).

In their initial phase, the folk high schools of Norway were closely connected to Grundtvig (Simon, 1989; Korsgaard, 2011; Lövgren 2018) and their primary establishment were realised in close communication with the Danish (Skovmand, 1983, p. 22). Gustavsson describes how the Danish and Norwegian folk high school were united by a national romantic orientation, while the Swedish schools had a more pragmatic and academic orientation, in which Gustavsson sees a Kantian influence (Gustavsson, 2013, pp. 22–23).

In Sweden and Finland, the folk high schools became connected to the field of popular education, described by combining the Swedish term for Bildung with the epithet “folk”, making up the term “folkbildning” (Tøsse, 2004; Gustavsson, 2013). This wider term is still used in the titles of the laws that govern the contemporary Swedish and Finnish folk high schools, where they are adjoined to national organisations for popular education, such as study circles, folk libraries, study centres and evening schools (Nylander & Östlund, 2018; Souranta, 2023; Pastuhov & Sivenius, 2020).

The establishment of the first folk high schools in Finland was initiated by student organisations and sets itself apart from the other Nordic nations by being closely connected to the universities (Ruokonen, Ruokonen & Ruismäki, 2013, Skovmand, 1983, p. 88). Throughout their history, the Finnish schools have retained a close relationship to the formal educational system, and they still have the strongest academic focus of the Nordic folk high schools, offering formal degrees from secondary education to university level (Suoranta, 2023).



The pioneer for Grundtvigian folk high schools in Iceland, Guðmundur Hjaltason (1853–1919), attended two of the early Nordic folk high schools, Vonheim in Norway and Askov in Denmark. Starting in 1880, Hjaltason adapted Grundtvigian pedagogy to Icelandic conditions as an itinerant teacher with his “wandering folk high schools”. In a monograph, Solveig Ståhl-Nielsen argues that Grundtvig’s pedagogical ideals and the folk high school movement have had a decisive influence in Iceland, showing that since 1880 there has been at least one active folk high school in Iceland (Ståhl-Nielsen, 2013).

## **Impact of the Nordic folk high schools**

The influence that the folk high schools had on the Nordic democracies can be seen in surveys that map the educational background of parliamentary politicians in the Nordic region (Heldén, 1968; Nordvall & Fridolfsson, 2019). Helden’s survey (1968) shows that 20% of the Danish parliamentary members had their principal education from the folk high schools (37 out of 179), similarly 17% in the Norwegian parliament (26 out of 150) and 19% in the Swedish parliament (74 out of 382).

The pedagogical model represented by the Nordic folk high schools has had an impact beyond the Nordic region (Holm, 2019; Nordvall & Åberg, 2011). Mapping the global spread of folk high school pedagogy, Bugge registers 695 regional adaptations of Grundtvigian pedagogy in European countries such as Holland, Germany, Hungary and Poland, as well as in North America, South America, Asia and Africa (2013). Busbee (2018) writes about the global spread of Grundtvig’s educational philosophy:

Grundtvig’s vision for education, his call for progressive enlightenment, and his belief that proper education embraces an idea of living community and fellowship—these ideologies have informed educational movements in countries all over the world.

(p. 79)

## **Legal and organisational structures**

In the Nordic region, the legal frameworks concerning folk high schools are either delimited to regulating solely the schools or more comprehensively to covering a wider field of educational activities. The legal frameworks governing folk high schools in Denmark (Lov om folkehøjskoler, 2013), Iceland (Lög um lýðskóla, 2019) and Norway (Lov om folkehøyskoler, 2002) concern the folk high schools alone. In Finland and Sweden, the Acts incorporate the folk high schools in a more extensive educational field, in Sweden called ‘*folkbildning*’ (popular enlightenment) and in Finland called ‘*fritt bildningsarbete*’ (free Bildung work) or *folkbildning*. In Sweden, *folkbildning* institutions encompass several of non-formal educational activities, including folk high schools, study circles, and public libraries (Prop. 2013/14:172). In Finland, the Act states that “educational institutions for free Bildung work are civic institutes, folk high schools, summer universities, sports training centers and study centers” (Lag om fritt bildningsarbete, 1998).

The folk high school Acts in Finland and Sweden grant the schools the right to issue qualifications from primary school up to higher education (Nylander & Östlund, 2018; Roukonen, Roukonen & Ruismäki, 2013). While the Norwegian Act of 2002 does not allow any form of exams (NOU 2022:16), the Danish Act gives the national folk high schools the right to give “examine-oriented and qualifying

teaching” when the exams are performed at another educational institution (Lov on folkehøjskoler, 2013).

The folk high school frameworks of Denmark, Iceland and Norway require that all folk high schools be residential, making these schools educational communities, combining living and learning (Lövgren, 2019; Tiller, 2016). Also, in Finland and Sweden, a significant portion of the folk high school students attend residential schools; however, the legal framework opens for the inclusion of non-residential day students (Nylander & Östlund, 2018; Roukonen, Roukonen & Ruismäki, 2013).

The aim of this short overview of the Nordic folk high schools’ history and legal framework is to create a background for the research presented in the 13 national chapters of this anthology and the subsequent overarching analyses. For more extensive introduction to the history and development of the folk high schools, see the reference list of this chapter (Korsgaard, 2004, 2018; Bugge, 1994; Skovmand, 1983; Mikkelsen, 2014; Tøsse, 2004; Gustavsson, 2013; Kantasalmi & Hake, 1997; Simon, 1989). Regrettably, there are few academic publications on the pedagogical identity, history and legal frameworks of the Nordic folk high schools available in English.

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## **Part I**

# **The identity of the Nordic folk high school teacher**





# Chapter 2

## The unprofessional teacher – A portrait of the Danish folk high school teacher

By Rasmus Kolby Rahbek

### What is a profession?

Professions are a certain group of occupations, characterized by being founded on a solid knowledge base, preferably of an academic nature. It is part of the idea of professions, that only those persons who have acquired a particular knowledge base through specific educations, are allowed to practice within the realm of the profession (Weicher & Laursen, 2003, p. 9, my translation)

This definition marks the outset for the book *Person og profession*, which is just one of long list of publications that over the last 10–15 years have been debating professionalisation within areas such as nursing, childcare, teaching etc. In these publications, the idea of professions is most often connected to so called ‘profession markers’ (Staugaard, 2017), where knowledge, education and monopoly are at the centre. To this understanding of professions belongs the ambition to develop standards and criteria for evaluating the quality

within the profession (Dale, 1998). The stamp of profession becomes a stamp of quality – a way to both guarantee and control the services provided by the professionals. Furthermore, this understanding of professions leads to a professional identity and a professional ideal that describe how professionals are supposed to act (also in relation to ethical questions) that is stipulated in policy documents (Bayer & Brinkkjær, 2003).

Seen in this light, the Danish folk high school teachers seem to be more or less the opposite. A survey from 2015, done by the Danish Folk High School Association, showed that only 16% of Danish folk high school teachers have a teacher education (Folkehøjskolerne Forening i Danmark, 2015). Most of the teachers are characterized by broad and diverse educational backgrounds. Also, there exists no independent, academic knowledge base for the educational and pedagogical practices of the folk high schools. Likewise, there does not exist any politically determined professional ideal or legal provisions concerning the teachers' specialised competences. Instead, the Danish folk high schools enjoy an extended freedom: The freedom to define their subjects themselves, without regard to exams or curriculums; the freedom to determine the value base that the individual school builds its work upon, and the freedom to employ teachers without regard to their educational background or experience. All at the same time as receiving substantial financial funding from the Danish state.

The rise in the idea of professions within many new areas has led to a discussion on whether professionals increasingly are held 'accountable' for their actions, accompanied by a drop in 'responsibility' of individuals regarding exercising their practice (Biesta, 2011). Others have pointed to the fact that one of the important reasons for the increased use of the label 'professional' is bound to a loss of authority of many vocations connected to the welfare state (Laursen, 2003).

Thus, the increase in professionalisation is seen as an attempt to regain this authority.

However, at the Danish folk high schools the situation is quite the contrary. Their extended freedom means that in relation to the educational practice there is not much to be accountable of. Instead, the schools and teachers are left with a high level of obligation to define their own practice in relation to their self-determined value base. Also, the folk high school teachers do not seem struck by the same lack of authority that is often connected to the areas that throughout the last 10–15 years have become educations of professions.

Considering the above, the folk high school teachers can hardly be defined as professionals. Then what are they – ‘unprofessionals’?

Being ‘unprofessional’, as used in this chapter, is not a matter of a lack a title or recognition, nor does the term describe someone who is not particularly skilled or able to perform a certain task or job. Rather, it concerns the entire framing of what it means to be a teacher in a certain structure. Thus, it becomes interesting to examine what an educational practice in a particular context looks like when the dominant aspect of almost all other perspectives on education and schooling the last decade falls away.

Thus, this chapter unfolds an attempt to understand what the educational aim and pedagogical practice looks like from the perspective of the unprofessional teacher, as a description of how folk high school teachers experience and understand their everyday practice.

## **A personal pedagogy**

The fact that only a few has a teacher education can be seen as an extension of the schools’ freedom to hire whomever they want, without regard to the teacher’s educational background. Becoming a folk high school teacher has thus traditionally been seen more as an ‘initi-

ation' (Hansen, 2000) than being linked to a specific education. How the tasks are applied in practice has to a large extent been up to the individual teacher.

In the following, I will take a closer look at what leads teachers into the folk high school and what it has to do with their pedagogical practice. Two typical approaches to being a folk high school teacher are drawn up here, each in its own way drawing on the personal side of the teaching profession.

The first type we can call the 'life-experienced' teacher: For some, being a folk high school teacher is not primarily linked to their educational background, and what they may have amassed of specific competencies and knowledge – rather, being a folk high school teacher should be seen as an extension of their life experiences:

The interesting thing is that to become a folk high school teacher, it is often something other than your knowledge of what you teach that was the reason you got the job. After all, there are hundreds out there who are professionally far more skilled than you in one area or another, so it's about the life story you bring with you and your ability to make it a part of your encounter with other people. (Teacher)

This should not be seen as a disrespect or lack of sincerity in relation to professionalism or teaching. It is rather about the perspective, about the basics. In this context the importance of being 'personal' is often described as having close relationships with the students, as opposed to being 'professional', which is associated with keeping a cooler and perhaps even a calculated distance.

Another important element in this connection is the ability to engage the students in the subjects through a personalization of the subject, with the aim of making the teaching relevant and inspiring for the students:

For me, one of the most important things about the folk high school is that we can have a personal space together. That one can afford to be personal so that we all do not behave the same or do things the same way. In the teachers, the students meet not only a professional who is in control of everything technical, but also a person with passions, thoughts and experiences that influence the teaching. (Teacher)

Such an approach can also be described as pedagogy as a relationship (Sævi, 2013; Werler & Sæverot, 2017), and as such comes quite close to an understanding of pedagogical practice in relation to the concept of tact. Pedagogical tact implies a particular sensitivity or responsiveness to the student's voice and point of view and implies that we have a sensory interface with another human being (van Manen, 2015). Tact can be seen as the ability to handle situations where there are no definitive answers; therefore, in this context it is based primarily on a pedagogical judgment. Although tact in a sense is linked to knowledge, it is not something that can be guaranteed through an education or formal requirements (Løvlie, 2011). Rather, tact attaches itself to the human presence in each situation.

The second type of folk high school teacher is the 'subject-oriented' teacher: For these teachers, their background and knowledge are central to their own self-understanding as teachers and to their pedagogical practice. However, since this is only rarely based on a teacher education, their identity is primarily linked to the specific subject(s) they teach – often based on a specific career in a particular field:

I became a folk high school teacher after being a musician for several years. For me, music is a very broad concept and I have always had an interest in trying to use music in

many different contexts. I want to explore what people can do with music and what music does to people. And I can do that in a folk high school in a way that I would not have the opportunity for elsewhere. Here I can be with the students around the music, where it is not limited by a 30 min. lesson. Here, music can become part of our common life. (Teacher)

Here, the academic identity is not just the reason why they became teachers at the folk high school in the first place. The teacher's professional interest also becomes decisive for how the teaching is organized: "The energy I bring with me as a teacher is incredibly important. That is why I first and foremost plan my teaching according to what I think is fun", as one teacher puts it. It is the personal interest in the subject matter that drives the work, not an educational professional understanding of professionalism in didactic form.

## **An indirect pedagogy**

There is something about not talking down to the students. Some of them come with an experience of feeling talked down to [in their previous schooling, ed.]. For everything must be concluded, articulated and defined to ensure that everyone now understands what is important and right. And we do not need that. We can leave it open, in the confidence that they themselves can feel that now something important is at stake. That conversation is interesting because it raises a lot of questions, both for themselves and for the substance, but also because it opens to something they had not discovered themselves, rather than shutting it down. (Teacher)

The folk high school pedagogy is characterized by the teachers seeing the students' involvement in the teaching – and in the folk high school as a whole – as a central element. This is partly rooted in the folk high school students' age group and an associated view of the folk high schools' task as education and not upbringing. It is linked to a pedagogical understanding that is rooted in the desire to give students space and responsibility. There is a clear expectation that the students contribute to and take responsibility for both the teaching and their time together. However, perhaps most important of all in this context is the recognition that the teacher does not always have the answer.

The opposite of direct teaching, an indirect pedagogy, is perhaps most explicitly unfolded by the Norwegian pedagogical researcher Herner Sæverot, who points out that pedagogy is often “associated with clarity when it comes to communication and action. To this extent, this is an important element in practicing pedagogy, but as soon as pedagogy includes questions that do not have clear and distinct answers, more indirect forms of communication and action are required” (Sæverot, 2017, p. 85).

The pedagogy must be indirect if it is to be seen in relation to a particular task that includes freedom, morality, and existence. The indirect pedagogy is thus tied up in an understanding of the pedagogical action, where the teacher does not try in advance to define the student's learning outcome, but instead leaves it open. This requires that the teacher not only focuses on what knowledge is related to a given academic context, but that the teacher is also open to what has value not knowing. The folk high school pedagogy can be seen as indirect – in Sæverot's understanding – for two coherent reasons: Firstly, because it concerns questions that neither can nor should be given definitive answers, in relation to the main aim. And secondly, because it relates to freedom, in the form of the student's freedom to throw out possible answers himself, as they are not to be accounted



for in an exam. The indirect inquiry thus aims to create space for the students' own subjective experiences by also giving space to their feelings and senses and not only to rational considerations. Thereby it encourages both the student and the teacher to relate to themselves and reflect on both the substance and one's own knowledge (Rahbek & Møller, 2015).

The argument is not that all pedagogical practice in a folk high school context is or must be of an indirect nature. Of course, there are lots of things going on in the pedagogical practices of the folk high schools that are not indirect in the mentioned sense. The point is instead that the task of the folk high school – as a task of formation – requires that more indirect approaches must also be considered, as these precisely implies questions concerning freedom, morality, and existence. Therefore, the pedagogical practice cannot be based solely on direct forms of communication or instructions.

## **An impure pedagogy**

It is my experience that I succeed best as a folk high school teacher when I can see what is at stake in the specific situation; that which suddenly appears. It's also about being aware of what it is for some students, and what is their potential contribution. For me, it is important to give the students a lot of responsibility in the teaching, but there can be a big difference in who I give what responsibility. That way, there can be a big difference between the different teams. (Teacher)

The need to relate to the specific situation and one's students is a trait that resonates with teachers. As the above teacher portraits show, it is not uncommon to have planned only the first few lessons in advance

and then to prepare a loose sketch for the rest of the semester, because the teachers are dependent on getting a sense of what situation they are in with the students:

I always start by looking at my students to find out where we can have a common interest: what we can be turned on by, what we might want to explore together. But also, to get an idea of how we can get a grip on this case in different ways, or what it is we are passionate about. (Teacher)

Other teachers, as is also expressed in the teacher portraits, probably make a teaching or content plan from the beginning of the semester (as the Higher Education Act prescribes that they must), but they fully realise that this must most likely be reworked on an ongoing basis, because they must necessarily be open to the fact that either the students or the world want them to do something else.

This focus on the specific situation is an extension of Tone Sævi's hermeneutic-phenomenological understanding of pedagogy and the possibilities for action that the teacher or pedagogue stands for: "Reflecting on possibilities for action does not mean that you as an educator try to find a specific general action that is always right in any pedagogical situation like this. On the contrary, it means that the educator tries to see each situation's specific characteristics and unique possibilities and acts in relation to these" (Sævi, 2015, p. 75).

Such an understanding can also be seen as an expression of an unclean pedagogy (Rømer, Tanggaard & Brinkmann, 2011). Impure pedagogy is described as a practice in which "teachers and educators must – in order to be the pedagogical task adult and be able to act appropriately here and now, in this class, with this class, with this student – exercise their judgment, which is primarily based on experiences and traditions (the impure) and not on abstract techniques and manuals (the pure) ", and where "people in concrete practices

interact and talk to each other, interpret and try to understand each other's intentions" (ibid. p. 8).

The impure pedagogy focuses on the situation, place, and relationship, but also on "experience, content, judgment, clash, reminder and appearance, tradition and practice" (Rømer et al., 2017, p. 9). Sævi, as well as Rømer et al., thus point out that pedagogy always takes place in a practice that is unique, as it depends on the preconditions and framework within which it takes place. In a folk high school practice, this means an always lurking chaos if you really want to stay open to the situation. But it seems to be a necessary reality, which is then tried to be turned into a strength, also in relation to professionalism:

Even though I start out with pretty tight plan, it always ends up moving around. It may be that at first, we were supposed to reach a certain theme in three weeks, but now the students are suddenly missing it, in relation to the project they are working on now, and then you have to mix and match the content. But I have some topics I would like to go through – it's just not always known in what order. I often come out and say, 'today we have to do this', and then they say 'we don't have time for that, we just have to work on this first'. Then I must consider whether I say 'fine, we'll take it tomorrow' or whether I insist that we should have time for that. But that is also what we want to teach the students – that working with this type of project often takes place in a bit of chaos. (Teacher)

So far, there is nothing new about the folk high school's pedagogy connecting to the framework to which the folk high school is subject (Rahbek & Møller, 2015; Madsen, 1995). This applies to the folk high schools' extensive freedom, which has the consequence that the

teacher can and must think and act differently when the goal is not in an exam or completing a fixed curriculum.

However, this freedom presents the teacher with the challenge that he or she must relate to and ultimately decide which approach to choose, but also what role the teacher has, as we have seen above. Here, as a teacher, you may well be in a dilemma between being able to see the potential possibilities and at the same time wanting to safeguard yourself in your pedagogical practice:

The question is whether we are brave enough. Now we talked about the fact that the students may not be so good at always taking the initiative themselves, and you could well choose to put that on the line and say: 'This week, I haven't planned shit, and we remain seated until something happens, and it does not come from me'. You could, as it were, make a teaching course about that. It would probably be brave, but also vulnerable to whether anything came out of it at all in the end, and therefore I think as a teacher you often go for the safer option. (Teacher)

Although the teacher here acknowledges that it is probably not very realistic that you as a teacher go to such lengths, there is basically a perception that it is a possibility precisely by virtue of the school's framework, and that this radicalism should perhaps also come more visible – if nothing else – than just occasionally. To be sure, on paper the schools are similar in terms of being boarding schools, but at the same time the schools are also quite different in their specific structures and physical frameworks. This means that it is not possible to set up a special folk high school pedagogical model that unambiguously explains how these frameworks come into play. This condition is a contributing factor in relation to the fact that daily practice can play out quite differently in relation to individual elements, but at

the same time it emphasizes that practice at folk high schools, at an overall level, is particularly affected by precisely these structures and frameworks that give the folk high schools a common touch.

## **The folk high school as a way of life – the return of the unprofessional teacher**

Traditionally, being a folk high school teacher has been linked to the understanding of being a teacher as a calling and a way of life. Although the conditions of employment have changed over time, and even though only few teachers directly use the word 'calling' today, many still talk about being a folk high school teacher as a way of life. For some, this way of life is specifically linked to the close connection between work and life that comes from living together as an important part of the folk high school.

Coming to an end of this chapter, we shall examine why this focus on the folk high school as a way of life is important in a pedagogical perspective, and how it relates to the form of the folk high school. Let's start with a teacher statement that is very typical:

I can't at all imagine what it would be like if the students did not live here. The fact that they live together and work together, even when there is no teaching. Of course, the folk high school is more than just a boarding school, but it's just so important, perhaps the most important aspect.  
(Teacher)

Thus, the folk high school pedagogy is placed in the middle of the paradox between learning and living. The pedagogy and formation of the folk high school thus becomes dependent on both form and content. And form must here not only be understood as the didactic

design of the content of the teaching, but also the entire folk high school form, with all that it entails.

This does not mean that knowledge must be disregarded or neglected, but that knowledge is put in relation to being. When the folk high school teachers repeatedly emphasize the integration of teaching and togetherness, it is precisely an expression of this ingrained realisation in the folk high schools that knowledge and being cannot be separated:

When you live together, not everything can be a glossy surface, you are in a way forced to be more honest with each other. So even though it often is perceived as difficult in the beginning, you also have ‘dig in’ to each other. But living in such a personal space is also a form of voyage of discovery. We have the great benefit of being able to constantly switch between social and educational spaces. (Teacher)

The folk high school thus emphasizes the paradox that is associated with the relationship between the school and the world. On the one hand, the folk high school is a suspension that shuts the world out so that the student can learn, and on the other hand, the folk high school is in the middle of the lived life, where things are not only tools for learning, but real things, a real life. These two levels cannot be meaningfully separated in a folk high school context.

In relation to this, the Belgian pedagogical philosophers Jan Masschelein and Marten Simons describe an opening towards the world that is particularly relevant in relation to the folk high school: “Opening up the world not only means coming to know the world, but also refers to the manner in which the closed-in world is opened up and the world itself is made open and free and thus shared and sharable, something interesting or potentially interesting: a thing of study and practice [...] It is about the magical moment when some-

thing outside of ourselves makes us think, invites us to think or makes us scratch our heads. In that magical moment, something suddenly stops being a tool or a resource and becomes a real thing” (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 47).

But in doing so, they also point to the danger that exists for the folk high schools, if one does not keep in mind that the co-thinking of life and learning necessarily takes place in a pedagogical framework. The life of the folk high school is always an educational life. The folk high school is a special approach in relation to the opening of the world that Masschelein and Simons are talking about. And it is here that the schools’ combination of freedom and shared life becomes crucial:

The free space here is important to me. If someone asks, ‘can we not do something completely different today?’ Then I would like to have the opportunity to say ‘of course!’ There needs to be room to improvise a little. But the form of schooling is often a great help. If there’s something we’re not getting right now, we’ll just look at it tonight. Time frames don’t become so incredibly important. It also has an impact on the way you meet, it becomes more equal because you are together in defining how much we really want to achieve. (Teacher)

This combination of freedom and shared life can perhaps even be said to constitute the folk high schools’ special pedagogical way of life. However, the paradox between learning and living also points to the role of the teacher – not least in a folk high school context. In the folk high school tradition, this has been inextricably linked to the concept of freedom, both for the folk high school and for the teacher.

But it is not only among the folk high schools that one can find such a view of the teacher. Masschelein and Simons point out that a teacher whose task (see the quote above) is to open the world and

create space for the magical moment where the student sees things in a new light, cannot be a professional at all. In Masschelein and Simons' optics, on the other hand, a teacher is a person "who has not sharply delineated 'tasks' in the way a 'professional' does. Conversely, the teacher is someone who puts herself at the service of the subject or the task [...] This is not an art teachers can possess merely through knowledge or skills. It is an embodied art and thus one that corresponds to a way of life" (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 116).

If the teacher is to open the world to the students by showing them the things of the world through open questions, she must necessarily stand in the middle of it herself. That task cannot be carried out within the framework of a professional understanding, such as that described in the introduction to the chapter. Instead, the act of teaching is a way of life, a special way of standing in the world. And that is not the job of a professional: "The general strategy of professionalisation [...] is therefore also an attempt to banish the risk of the school as a public place where something can happen (and not only were something can be learned)" (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 117).

## **Conclusion**

Danish folk high school teachers do not link their understanding of their work to a particular professional understanding. They are not tied up in formal requirements for explicit goals of teaching and togetherness. And they are free to organize their teaching largely as they please and with a purpose they find relevant.

Here, three aspects become central in relation to how teachers interpret the pedagogical task and unfold the pedagogical practice. First, it is a personal pedagogy that connects to the teacher as a person rather than the teacher as a professional. Secondly, it is an indirect pedagogy that does not prescribe specific goals for students'



learning, but instead seeks to open up for students' self-activity and co-activity. Thirdly, it is an unclean pedagogy that must constantly relate to the concrete and current situation in which the pedagogical practice takes place.

In this regard, it is a central point that the understanding of the pedagogical task and practice grows out of the school itself. Or in other words, the aim of the folk high school cannot be meaningfully separated from the lived practice of the place. Rather than being subject to theoretical knowledge, the teachers become teachers by virtue of their participation. It is the school – as a place of lived practice – that introduces teachers to what a folk high school is, can and should be. In that sense, the folk high schools' educational process includes not only the students but also the teachers – although of course they are of a different nature. In both cases, it can be argued that this formation is linked to a practice that is both personal, indirect, and impure.

It is thus a pedagogy that is strongly linked to the teacher's personal action, the student's participation, and the shared freedom, as well as the unique situation and the specific setting in which it takes place. Not being subject to a strictly defined understanding of "the professional teacher" accentuates the very freedom that teachers themselves consider so central for the pedagogy of the folk high school.

'The unprofessional teacher' is not primarily a matter of education or knowledge. It should not be understood as a teacher acting solely out of love or interest – in a real understanding of the word *amateur* – even though both are hugely important. It does not imply a teacher who is incapable of making pedagogically qualified judgments or actions. Nor is the point that folk high school teachers should preferably not have any theoretical knowledge of what they are doing or what they want to achieve.

Rather, ‘the unprofessional teacher’ must be seen as a metaphor for a teacher who is set free, because she has an interest and a task both in relation to the other person’s freedom and in setting things free.

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# **Chapter 3**

## **Teaching with a mission: Dimensions of professional identity among folk high school teachers in Sweden**

**By Helena Colliander, Anders Hallqvist and Per Andersson**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims at describing the ways in which folk high school teachers in Sweden understand and claim themselves and their mission. We assume that being a teacher presupposes not only subject matter knowledge and knowledge of teaching (however this may be conceptualised) but also presupposes a particular sense of self, a sense of being a certain kind of person, who acts with agency, and makes sense of oneself in one's teaching practices (see Hong, Cross Francis & Schutz, 2018). We could talk about this in terms of professional identity. Our rationale for asking this question is that the ways teachers understand themselves and their mission have vital consequences for their practice. This is even more true when it comes to the folk high school teachers as they are less governed by national curricula than other teachers.

Besides existing literature on the subject, our analysis below is based on interviews with 12 teachers, located at different schools and working with different courses and subjects. They teach vocational courses, esthetical courses, or courses preparing participants for further studies. Since the sample is limited, we cannot claim representativity. The interviews focussed on the teachers' view of their teaching mission and their relationship to the folk high school (both the local school and the movement). As the interviewees know that we as researchers also are teachers at the folk high school teacher programme, there might have been a tendency among them to emphasise their engagement in the folk high school movement.

Looking at previous research on folk high schools, we find that most of it focuses on the institution and its historical and intellectual historical development (Pastuhov, Lövgren & Nordvall, 2019). Two exceptions are Harlin's (2013) study on folk high school teachers' professional development and Andersson, Rudberg, Rydenstam & Svensson (2013) on being a folk high school teacher, though none of them explicitly address the question of professional identity.

## **Background**

There are more than 4000 teachers working in the more than 150 Swedish folk high schools (Folkbildningsrådet, 2018; 2020). These schools are spread all over the country and each has a distinct profile. Although this means that teachers work in very different contexts, the common features of these schools provide a common basis for teachers' mission and everyday work. The folk high school in Sweden is part of the liberal, non-formal adult education called '*folkbildning*', which has basic educational ideas in common with the Nordic folk high school movement. It has a certain degree of freedom when it comes to contents and ideological profiles of courses and schools,

participation should be voluntary, and the idea of ‘*bildning*’ (*Bildung*) in terms of opportunities of the individual to develop should characterise the life at the folk high school. To this can be added that all Swedish folk high schools are part of national organisations. Combined with extensive funding of these central functions from the state are certain conditions that govern the schools. The expectations from the state include support of and development of democratic values as well as contribution to participation and involvement in society, general higher educational level, and participation and interest in the cultural life (Prop 2013/14:172).

Within this broad framework, each folk high school can have its own profile. Almost three quarters of all schools are owned by an NGO, which could have an ideological profile – e. g., religious or political – that influences the school and the mission of its teachers, while the rest of the schools are owned by the public, regional authorities. Each school should have a general course, which is an alternative pathway to the formal school system up to upper-secondary level. In addition to this, each school is free to create and offer its own ‘special’ courses, which often include different types of esthetical courses (music, arts, writing etc.), but also ideological and vocational courses.

This variation in course contents as well as ideological profiles, produces a variety in the expectations the teacher meet and their specific missions. There are also different educational and experiential paths to becoming a folk high school teacher (see Hallqvist, Andersson & Morén, in this volume), which mean that we could not expect to meet a ‘typical Swedish folk high school teacher’, but that they all have their own background, mission, and identity as teachers.

## **Professional folk high school teachers?**

In the following, we will discuss teachers' professional identity to point out that the teachers themselves understand and claim their trade in certain ways and suggest they should be recognised as a particular kind of professional person.

Could 'folk high school teacher' then be seen as a profession? What is a profession in the first place? There are some criteria that have been used to discuss the concepts of profession and professionalisation of teachers (Colnerud & Granström, 2015; cf. Andersson, Rudberg, Rydenstam & Svensson, 2013): there is a research-based professional education, which is a formal requirement; there is a professional language; legitimisation exists and is required; there are ethical guidelines for the profession, and sanctions for not following these guidelines; and there is professional freedom in the work as for example a teacher. Based on these criteria, we cannot state that folk high school teacher is a profession in Sweden today. However, such criteria could not only be employed to define a profession, but also to discuss a possible process of professionalisation of a group – what criteria are fulfilled, how and to what extent?

A survey concerning the work as a folk high school teacher showed how active teachers value central aspects of this work (Andersson et al., 2013). First and foremost, the survey, with 1,344 folk high school teachers as respondents, showed that the professional freedom of folk high school teachers is highly valued. This freedom is for example realised in the opportunities to develop new courses. There is a research-based professional education for folk high school teachers in Sweden, but as this teacher degree is not a requirement for the teachers, the survey also covered teachers' attitudes concerning knowledge that could be connected to a professional education. Here, the survey shows that the teachers find it most important to be up to

date concerning the knowledge contents of their courses. Reading relevant literature and participating in continuing professional development activities are also seen as important. However, knowledge about folk high school education and *folkbildning* is not seen as that important.

The survey covered the ethics dimension in a question about the value of competence to handle ethical dilemmas and problems that turn up when teaching. This was relatively important for the teachers, but not a central issue. The study (Andersson et al., 2013) also included focus groups and interviews with 15 teachers and 15 school leaders (principals). The professional language was discussed in the focus groups, where teachers emphasised the value of a ‘teacher language’ to talk about their work in a professional way.

The professional education for Swedish folk high school teachers is discussed more in detail in chapter 16 (Hallqvist, Andersson & Morén, in this volume), but as mentioned, there are no formal requirements of this – or any other – teacher training. Still, 58 percent of those employed as folk high school teachers have a teacher degree, whereof 16 percent have the folk high school teacher degree. The survey (Andersson et al., 2013) even showed that more than 80 percent of the folk high school teachers valued it as very or rather important that the teachers have a teacher degree, which indicates a positive attitude towards this formal aspect of professionalisation. In interviews and focus groups, the school leaders and teachers also expressed a need for teacher training and continuing professional development for and about the folk high school and ‘*folkbildning*’, for the teachers to be prepared to work here.



## Experiential knowledge and personal engagement

The discussion on professionalisation has been going on for a while, probably with greater intensity among teachers working in the formally regulated school system and their trade unions. Meanwhile, in the folk high schools, teachers keep on claiming a teacher's professional identity somewhat unconcerned of this ongoing debate. However, there are other ways to talk about professions and professionalisation. Horn (2016) makes a distinction between 'professionalism' and 'professionality', suggesting the first (often found among policy makers and trade union representatives focusing on prestige and status) concerns the formal requirements of a profession while the latter is about the way in which teachers perform ('denoting a particular quality of occupational action', p. 132). We suggest the latter is more in accordance with the way in which folk high school teachers understand their trade.

Our preunderstanding drawn from meetings with folk high school teacher students and teachers indicate generally a carefree attitude, by which men and women with or without academic merits use a variety of ways to understand their position and uphold alternative views of what constitutes a professional teacher.

Firstly, rather than referring to formal merits, teachers highlight *informal and experience-based knowledge*. In the quotation below, a folk high school teacher admits she has no teacher education. Instead, working as a tourist guide, she says that she has 'the pedagogy' from her guide-education:

I have no teacher education. I have got 'the pedagogical' from my guide-education ... You have the drive anyway, without having it on paper ... The guide-occupation is like

the top of the teachers' occupation. You are supposed to provide a concise summary of any subject.

To be sure, we need to consider the context, the course, and the subject matter, but even so, the utterance says something important regarding the way in which folk high school teachers value informal and experience-based knowledge. Being a teacher is not mainly about formal legitimacy and formal educational merits, but rather it is about having 'drive' and to be able to provide information in a concise and helpful way.

Some teachers without teacher education do not comment on their legitimacy at all, but their talk centres around their personal interest, the subject matter, and their strong tie to this. This culture could be described as idealistic because of this carefree attitude when it comes to formal qualification, and because of its emphasis on meaningfulness and personal interest. Also, sometimes the language used is rather emotional and people talk about themselves as loving their subject, the materials and the practices that constitutes the subject.

Clearly, we are far off from the discourse on professionalisation and formal requirements. Instead, teaching is an interest-based and social activity.

Secondly, while teachers may admit there may be *some indistinctness and lack of stringency within the folk high school*, this is not in itself a problem but sometimes *regarded as a strength*. In our example below the interviewee is asked to tell how come s/he is working at a folk high school, and answers by elaborating on the formal vs. informal distinction. The formalistic framework is considered as countering the teacher's professionalism:

This may sound woolly really, but ... I had been working in the post-secondary school ... and I loved teaching. I loved standing in the classroom ... But I felt that I wasn't allowed

to ... I felt that I wasn't allowed to realise my full potential. I did not match with this regular [formal] school, because ... I was so entangled with all 'musts', what one ought to do, so that I couldn't do my job as well as I wanted to ... And then I felt ... I want to go to the folk high school ... Because there, I knew there was another freedom there.

In this way, folk high school teachers not only reject the formal requirements of a teacher but consider those as something that sometimes makes it difficult to carry out the teacher's mission. The interviewee 'loves' pedagogics and teaching while feeling extremely tired due to the 'incarceration'. S/he is so 'entangled' by all 'musts' and therefore cannot do her job properly.

Thirdly, teachers stressed their *strong relationship with the subject matter*. The following quotation comes from a teacher that educates church musicians. Describing her background, qualities, and qualifications, she does not mention a teacher education but points to a long-term relationship to her subject, besides her music education:

I played in my first service when I was 15 years old. Have been studying here ... and then at the University College of Music ... When I studied, I did a course for organ players. I have always been engaged in singing and music, growing up in the activities going on in the church as a child, so I had one foot in the church, and music has always been my big interest, not the riding house or the football field.

She has 'always' being engaged in singing and music, and she was only 15 years old when she for the first time played the organ at a service. Furthermore, her expressions indicate a close and personal relationship not only to the subject matter but also to the church. Later in the interview we learn that she also has 'her own' organ in the church where she works, and that she knows the people attending the

church. She points out that a strong relationship to prospective employers is important to her students – and therefore the teachers too need knowledge about the church *as lived experience*.

Finally, teachers claim a professional identity by referring to the *quality of their societal engagement and devotion to the educational ideals of folk high schools*. Our example comes from an interviewee teaching theatre instruction. Like the church musician, this teacher refers to long and rich personal experience and she let us know why they are relevant to the work as folk high school teacher, but she begins her account in passing by mentioning her formal teacher education:

I attended the folk high school teacher programme 30 years ago. I live and breathe *folkbildning* and knew early that I wanted to do this ... Active engagement in society is important ... I took a general course at a folk high school, and drama instruction at a folk high school. I did my practice here when I studied at the folk high school teacher programme and then I stayed. My interest in behavioural sciences and my theatre interest come together here. And I am interested in society, I want to make a difference. I have been engaged in drug rehabilitation and role-play among girls.

This teacher has a formal folk high school teacher degree, but she talks about this among other experiences that she considers equally important to her current teacher position. Note that she herself defines what a teacher needs to know, stating that ‘societal engagement is important’ in this educational institution. Moreover, she claims that this pathos covers the schools most fundamental values and ideas, saying that she ‘lives and breathes *folkbildning*’.

Thus, to become recognised as a folk high school teacher, our informants make use of different claims rather eclectically. They refer to formal and informal merits, saying that a folk high school teacher's professional expertise is very much about *lived experience*. Also, it is about embracing a particular pathos and ethos that is believed to characterise the folk high school as culture and educational institution.

## **Defining one's teaching mission in relation to the folk high school movement**

As previously shown, the teachers in this study referred their teacher identity to different dimensions of professionalism. Considering that teacher identity is closely related to agency and teaching practices (Hong et al., 2018), we here focus on how the teachers talk about their teaching mission. When describing this mission or purpose, the teachers in the study frequently refer to the folk high school movement.

To describe what is distinctive about the Swedish folk high schools, the movement applies the Swedish suffixes *anda* and *mäsighet* (e. g., *folkhögskoleanda*, *folkhögskolemässig*). These ambiguous notions can be translated as the 'spirit' and the 'characteristics' of the folk high schools. When used about teaching practices, they seem to imply certain ways of teaching, or perspectives, such as the importance of seeing each person as a member of a collective. At the same time, the two expressions are used about local practices and traditions, about a type of relations between agents within a school, or characteristics of the folk high schools in general (Paldanius, 2007). Such pervasive use of the notions indicates that the teachers, by working in the folk high school, meet implicit expectations about how to view their profession.

The state's formal requirements when financing *folkbildning* are perceived by the folk high school teachers in the study as essential to their work, especially the task of promoting democracy (Andersson et al., 2013). Despite the common ground in terms of goals and concepts found in the folk high school tradition, several approaches to education can influence the folk high school teachers' self-understanding and educational practice. Höghielm (1992) shows that teachers can be influenced by the concept of *Bildung*, viewing learning as a never-ending, holistic, and participant-driven process of an existential nature, or alternatively, by a goal-orientated and utilitarian perspective of education with a focus on societal needs and employment.

The teachers in this study commonly subscribed to the notions of *Bildung*. Generally, they not only described their mission in terms of transmitting skills and knowledge to their students but also claim that, as professionals, they contribute to a broader mission of achieving individual and societal change by supporting independent, individual learning processes. For example, teachers stated that they wished to support their participants in finding out for themselves what they wanted to do with their lives and to develop agency. Such goals were highlighted particularly by teachers who taught participants in a position of little power, like emergent adult readers or women not established in the labour market. The learning processes that the teachers wished to initiate, moreover, implied that the participants should learn to think for themselves, develop skills from their own interests and experience the joy of learning. The teachers also connected their teaching mission to the fostering of democratic ideals and actions through approaches where the participants interact and learn from each other, e. g., making use of the experiences within the group and not just of the teacher's knowledge. This could be done by encouraging the participants to help each other and not compete, by challeng-

ing their prejudices of other people or by helping them to develop a democratic approach in future work contexts.

Even though most teachers referred to a teaching mission with explicit or implicit references to the ideas and/or concepts of the folk high school movement, this was not always the case. One informant made no references to folk high school ideals but pictured herself as a teacher in adult education. Others identified themselves with folk high school ideals but stated that they would have worked from similar perspectives whether they were teaching at a folk high school or in the formal school system. For these it was important to specify that the folk high school had no monopoly of such ideals.

Still, for the majority of informants in our study the folk high school movement seemed to serve as a legitimation. The teachers' dedication to the students and their development inside and outside the classroom were a central theme as the teachers talked about their teaching mission. Thus, they presented themselves as active agents in these processes.

## **Discussion**

This chapter presents a perspective on the folk high school teacher's professional identity. The identity acts with agency and this, in turn, has an impact on the teachers' professional practice. Our examples have illustrated that the teacher's professional identity is related to different personal and institutional aspects which seem to be intertwined. Commonly, the teachers, regardless of what and who they teach, refer to values they see in the folk high school to define themselves. But they do it in different ways, in relation to, for example, what qualities they see as essential, their personal interests, their relationship to the social movement running the school and/or the ideas found within the folk high school movement.

It is not unexpected that differences appear between teachers, since there are great varieties in terms of the type of subject, course, and participants they teach, and in their relationships to the folk high school movement. What we also show, however, is multiple ways of understanding oneself as an individual folk high school teacher. In that sense, we claim, in contrast to Höghielm (1992), that it is not helpful to categorise folk high school teachers in ideal types. The various conditions for a folk high school teacher, as well as the freedom of this educational institution, offer several ways to define oneself. Sometimes, different dimensions can exist side by side, without any conflict, but in other situations, there can be tensions between different ideals, for example when one feels positive about two contradictory ideas, or, perhaps when the same folk high school concepts are interpreted in different ways (cf. Paldanius, 2017). One such tension can arise when it comes to the formal requirements for a teacher degree. Sometimes teachers emphasise informal experiential learning more than, or in addition to, formal merits. This way of valuing different kinds of knowledge, not by referring to a particular source or authority but to its value *in use*, and the extent to which it adds to their mastering of the art of teaching is possibly a characteristic of the folk high school movement.

With regard to the question on professionalisation, folk high school teachers would most probably discuss this in terms of professionalism rather than professionalism. While we should not end up making simple dichotomies, this distinction suggested by Horn (2016) is useful when we try to understand the ways in which folk high school teachers understand their mission. Less interested in prestige and status, the teachers express a strong engagement and dedication to knowledge, their teaching subject as well as to their students. They are teachers with a mission.



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## *Teaching with a mission*

Prop 2013/14:172, *Allas kunskap – allas bildning* [Everyone's knowledge – everyone's *Bildung*]. <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/EEC16A17-3600-49FE-A33E-5F3A9C41B0B2>



# Chapter 4

## The need-supportive folk high school teacher: Autonomy, competence and relatedness

By Johan Lövgren, Hedda Berntsen and Arve Amsrud

### Introduction

He saw me and I saw him. This is what I love about being a folk high school teacher. The feeling of being more than just teacher and student. The feeling of being equal.  
(Norwegian folk high school teacher)

For ten consecutive years a national survey has rated the Norwegian folk high schools as having the highest degree of student satisfaction of all types of educational institutions in the country (EPSI Norway, 2021). In the report, students explain how the folk high schools have given them “an academic lift within their area of specialization” while also “making them more independent” and supplying them with “valuable acquaintances and networks”<sup>1</sup>.

The report offers the following explanation to why Norwegian folk high school students reports such a high degree of satisfaction:

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<sup>1</sup> Authors' translation

The folk high schools in Norway have for many years shown that they are able to create good student experiences ... Competent and committed teachers in combination with very good social environments contribute to many students being left with the memory of their life<sup>2</sup>. (EPSI Norway, 2021)

In their analysis of the folk high schools' high level of student satisfaction, the EPSI report gives the teachers' competence and engagement a central explanatory position. The findings presented in the report correspond with other studies where folk high school students describe meeting a whole new kind of teacher, of being seen and met with respect (Lövgren, 2019).

The following chapter presents a study where we apply self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) in the analysis of autobiographic texts written by 26 Norwegian folk high school teachers. Our aim is to discuss the Norwegian folk high school teacher identity by analysing the motivation that drives them.

## **Analysing teachers' identity and motivation**

The empirical material for this chapter is taken from reflective texts written by students attending a part time course in folk high school pedagogy at the University of South-Eastern Norway. The analysis of this empirical material began with an initial inductive reading that led to a process of thematic text analysis (Squires, 2023), defining predominant categories, such as "being motivated by student contact" and "freedom to shape pedagogical practice". These were subsequently connected to different theoretical perspectives with the aim of further developing the analysis. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

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<sup>2</sup> Authors' translation

was found to be a theoretical framework that could uncover the identity and motivation behind the stories from our informants. The theory's focus on the social conditions that facilitate or hinder human flourishing was found to link to the context of this study on many levels.

The values that Deci and Ryan base their theory on (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3) are very close to the basic humanistic values that characterize the historical development of the folk high schools (Mikkelsen, 2014; Lövgren, 2018). A more essayistic connection was found in the similarities between Deci and Ryan's opposition to behaviourism in the 1970s (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1568) and N.F.S. Grundtvig's opposition to the Latin schools of 19th century Denmark (Korsgaard, 2011, p. 30).

## **A theory of motivation**

The founders of SDT point to the "origin-pawn" distinction presented by de Charms as an important inspiration (de Charms, Carpenter & Kuperman, 1965). De Charms describes a person who experiences personal causation in charge of his or her own behaviour as *an origin*. The opposite of being an origin is *the pawn*, describing a person who is pushed around by external agents.

Inspired by de Charms, Edward Deci initiated SDT by developing the concept of intrinsic motivation in his so called "reward studies" (Deci, 1975). Richard Ryan shared Deci's opposition to behaviourism, a controversy that motivated their initial studies on how extrinsic rewards undermine intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017; p. 108, 110, 118, 627). Today, SDT has developed into a meta-theory of motivation, applied in a wide range of research disciplines to examine how biological, social, and cultural conditions can lead

to psychological growth, engagement and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3).

The first SDT perspective we apply in this article is the central theme of motivation – *what energizes and gives direction to our actions* (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 13). The understanding that motivation can be regulated either by autonomous or by controlled forms of motivation is central to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008). *Autonomous motivation* involves behaving with a sense of volition and choice (Deci & Ryan, 2000) while *controlled motivation* connects to being a *pawn* driven by pressure, demand, reward or punishment toward specific outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 184).

Ryan and Deci develop the two opposing forms of regulation further in The Self Decision Continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2006). This motivational scale describes six levels of motivational regulation. The highest degree of autonomy is when an individual is driven by *intrinsic motivation* – when the activity is inherently satisfying, fun or interesting. The continuum then introduces four levels of *extrinsic motivation (identified, integrated, introjected and external)*. These describe motivation regulated by reward, punishment, or valued outcomes. The lowest degree of autonomy in the continuum is *amotivation*, when regulation lack intentionality (see Figure 1).

Based on Deci and Ryan's theory, researchers in a wide range of academic fields have showed that a higher degree of autonomy in the motivational regulations is associated with higher quality in behavioural, cognitive, and affective consequences (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste, Niemiec & Soenens, 2010).

### **Three basic psychological needs**

The second SDT perspective we apply in our analysis is that of *basic psychological needs* (Ryan & Deci, 2006). In the presented study of folk high school teachers' identity and motivation, the three basic

## The need-supportive folk high school teacher

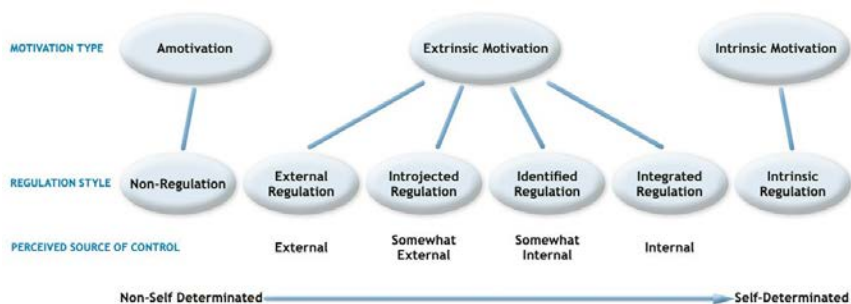


Figure 1 Self-determination continuum (adapted from Deci & Ryan, 2000)

psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness became central analytical concepts. In SDT theory, the degree to which these basic human needs are met is directly connected to a person's development and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Briefly, the basic psychological needs can be described as follows.

1. The psychological need for *autonomy* is the need to experience our behaviors to be self-endorsed and volitional (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The need to feel ownership of work activities.
2. The psychological need for *competence* is the need to perceive our actions as self-organized and initiated, that we master the tasks at hand.
3. The psychological need for *relatedness* concerns a deep need to belong, to be significant and matter in the eyes of others (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

SDT studies within educational research has described how teachers' work motivation will positively and significantly predict work engagement and job commitment (Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020). When teachers experience their psychological needs to be satisfied, they can internalize the extrinsic motivation and thus experience high



quality autonomous motivation (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). In contrast, when exposed to controlling, critical or rejecting context (need-thwarting conditions) human beings are at risk for controlled motivation and defensive functioning (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). The teachers' context, their students and their orientation influence their need satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Need-supportive contexts is given an important role in facilitating optimal conditions for the teachers themselves to act need-supportively towards their students (Pelletier, Seguin-Levesque & Legault, 2002).

## **Four sources of motivation**

The presentation of the empirical material will build around four main categories found in the text analysis. This structure is used to keep the text as close as possible to the informants' description of their professional identity.

### **Close teacher-student contact**

The empirical material shows how the framework of the folk high school provides a setting for a close and personal contact between teacher and student. The informants repeatedly describe this contact as the most meaningful part of their professional role. A former public-school teacher connects the close student relations at the folk high school to the freedom from formal evaluation:

The hours I used to spend on grades and tests I can now spend with the students. I can see the whole student ...

The openness provided by this close contact is in the texts connected to the folk high school teachers' role as counsellors for students. One informant writes:

*The need-supportive folk high school teacher*

... to be together with students day and night – from having breakfast and cleaning the dorms to hearing about a broken heart, anxiety and disease. This opportunity of getting close to young people was what actually made me want to become a folk high school teacher.

The teachers in the study describe the connection between a pedagogy that “sees the whole student” and the freedom from formal evaluation as fundamental to their professional identity. One text call this “the magic” of the folk high school:

Finally, I wonder if the folk high school magic may be that what we measure is the road we travel, not the goal we reach.

The reflective texts describe how freedom from formal evaluations opens for building students’ self-sufficiency and for providing experiences in mastering challenges. One text explains the teacher’s role simply as:

Helping them during the year to improve their self-esteem and self-confidence ...

The frequency of these passages and the central position they occupy in the material underline a reciprocatory dependence between freedom from formal evaluation, close student – teacher relations, and the pedagogical ideal in folk high school pedagogy for “meeting the whole person”. One informant puts it like this:

Helping to try to give a person his or her self-respect back, strengthening and anchoring it – I think that is one of my most important tasks as a teacher, and everyday life at a folk high school provides the freedom and the opportunity for that to happen.

Counselling is given a key role when the texts discuss how to support the personal development of students. This area is described as providing meaning to the folk high school teacher's identity; however, it also leads us to the next main category defined in the text analysis.

### **The challenges of close teacher-student contact**

The first area of challenge that the informants express is their own high level of engagement that characterizes their identity as folk high school teachers. This is exemplified by one teacher who describes how he tells his class:

I will always make time for you, no matter what.

Especially when students go through a personal crisis, the informants describe how they receive "sms- messages day-and-night" and may have "counselling sessions after almost every lesson". One teacher describes the problem of availability in this way:

The whole problem concerns the boundary between the private and the professional sphere.

The second area of frustration relates to teachers' encounters with more serious forms of anxiety problems and other complex mental issues among their students. When trying to counsel students with anxiety-related problems, the teachers frequently discuss the agitation of not being able to help. One male teacher tells of this challenge when trying to meet the needs of a student who is striving with a complex anxiety problem:

I'm desperately trying to understand things from her perspective, but I can't do it ...

The most distressing situation to the informants is when a student is forced to leave the school because he or she needs a more special-

ized treatment than the folk high school can offer. One informant concludes, when recounting a case like this:

I know that the school is not a treatment centre, and that I'm not a registered therapist.

In such situations, informants describe self-criticism and speculations on whether or not they have done enough for the student in question. The experience is captured by this informant:

It creates a very uncomfortable doubt in me if there are cases where I could have made a difference, but I let the opportunity go.

A final area shows another side of the folk high school teacher identity, how the expectations of the students may become a demanding aspect in the teacher-student relationships. The Norwegian folk high schools are partly student-financed, and these fees can be quite high, especially for courses which call for expensive activities such as travelling and skiing. A male teacher relates how the first days of a ski excursion did not fulfil the students' expectations. He describes the final day:

At the same time, I felt under pressure that the rest of the trip must meet student expectations. Fortunately, this day did.

The analysis suggests that expectation created by course presentations and the advertisement of the folk high school can become a liability for the teacher.

### **“Using all of me”**

The folk high school teachers in the study frequently use the expression “using all of me” in connection with their work. This category

is well described in a quotation from a young informant who writes about her first year as a teacher:

I got to try out what it means to be a folk high school teacher – performing a lot of different tasks and meeting with many different people ... The best thing about this year was that I had to apply so many qualities and aspects of myself. I had to use “all of me” in this teaching job.

One informant writes that her job gives her:

... the opportunity to be a whole person and see the whole person.

Closely related to the counselling setting, teachers describe how their role involves sharing their own personal experiences and vulnerability. One informant describes how his sharing can create an opening for students to do the same. By “using all of himself” he writes that:

my life story can be a tool for development in other people’s lives.

The expectation that a folk high school teacher should open his or her personal life is described as both a demand and an opportunity:

On the one hand you could say that the job demanded this of me, but on the other hand it gave me the freedom and opportunity to do so.

Connected to the expression “using all of me” is also a more playful side of the folk high school teachers’ identity. The informants write how they during work hours get to express their playfulness and develop their hobbies. One sports teacher says that his classes are:

## *The need-supportive folk high school teacher*

... a mix of hobby and work, games and sincerity, activities and movement, seeking reflective thoughtfulness while at the same time being totally unpretentious.

The opportunity to develop their hobbies and explore a passion for a special subject are often coupled with the freedom the folk high school gives to design teaching programmes. One teacher describes the course she created in sustainable development, saying:

I got to teach in my special field of study, the area that I'm passionate about.

However, while describing the development of their own special expertise and competence, the informants agree that the focus of the folk high schools can never be the subjects that are taught in class. One text puts it like this:

To me the most important parts of being a teacher at a *folk high school* are all those things that don't belong in the subjects that are taught.

The final category found by the text analysis describes the fellowship between the staff at a folk high school.

### **The staff – divergent and united**

The collegial fellowship emerged as a main category in the autoethnographic texts. One describes his colleagues like this:

I am amazed that a group of people with such different backgrounds, personalities and skills can work so well together ... they have such an enormous amount of competence. One problem is that these competences belong in so many different fields and professions.

Informants, especially those formerly unacquainted with folk high schools, comment on the diversity within these fellowships in areas such as competence, academic training and professional experience. This diversity is frequently contrasted to the experience of a collegial fellowship united by shared values. The following quotation reflects the place the collegial fellowship holds in the teachers' identity described by our informants:

I got to ... cooperate with lots of colleagues that I wanted to be shaped by and to help shape. I could test ideas and teaching plans and learn first-hand what worked and what didn't work.

The informants often use emotive language when describing the staff of their respective schools, using expressions like "coming home" and "being surrounded by warmth". One informant with experience from several other occupations writes:

I have never met anything like the warmth that I encountered from the first day at my folk high school.

The emotional support that these teachers ascribe to the staff of their respective schools becomes a central factor in the teachers' motivational regulation. The final part of the chapter applies the theoretical framework of SDT to the presentation of the empirical material.

## **Discussion**

Several informants in our study describe the change they experienced when they moved from being a teacher in a public school to becoming a folk high school teacher. Common to these descriptions are an increased degree of autonomous motivation. The teachers in the study relate this directly to the removal of need-thwarting fac-

tors (Chamberlin, Yasué & Chiang, 2018) that limit public school teachers' possibility to meet each student and create a learning environment that will make them flourish.

The analysis also depicts how the folk high school context fulfils the basic psychological needs of the teachers themselves. When informants use the expression "it was like coming home" to describe their meeting with their folk high school, their stories connect to the need for *relatedness*. Another expression, "using all of me", can be connected to satisfaction in the area of *competence*. Finally, the informants are allowed to develop classes and courses in "the area I'm passionate about". The freedom to develop the subject of your own choice is one of several themes that connects to the basic psychological need of *autonomy*. In this way the reflective texts connect the informants' high degree of autonomous motivational regulation with the folk high school teachers' experience of relatedness, competence and autonomy.

The collegial fellowship of the folk high schools is depicted as having two main traits in common. The first is *diversity* – the staff comes from a variety of professional backgrounds and areas of competence. The second trait is the strong sense of *shared values* that the reflective texts describe as characteristic for the collegial fellowship of their folk high schools. SDT theory describes how a high degree of acceptance of differences, together with a defined set of shared values, facilitate the teachers themselves to act need-supportively towards their students (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The analysis indicates that the folk high school context supports a high degree of autonomous motivation in the teachers. The combination of internalised folk high school values and a high degree of autonomy within the framework of the schools upholds their role as *need-supportive folk high school teacher* (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).



## **Paying the price for internalised values**

SDT research shows how teachers' experience of a need-supportive environment is essential for themselves to uphold the high level of intrinsic autonomous motivation. At the same time, the study uncovers some of the risks that might be connected to working from the high level of internalised motivation.

Students' expectations are indicated as a factor that can at times undermine the motivation of the folk high school teacher. In the schools' marketing material former students are often described as having "the best year of my life". This can, along with high student fees, be seen as factors building up under students' expectations towards the offered programme. In the analysed reflective texts, teachers describe these situations as being regulated by controlled motivation and an experience of a deficit in the area of competence.

Another competence-connected area of frustration can be seen in the teachers' counselling of students. The experiences that informants describe as the most distressing is when students are forced to leave the folk high school. Even if this is caused by a student needing specialised treatment, the texts show how teachers often perceive this as a failure on their part.

In our introduction we referred to the findings of the national survey performed by EPSI and asked how folk high school teachers can foster the high level of student satisfaction described in the results shown by the survey. The presented empirical study explores how the folk high school teachers' motivation and identity contribute to student satisfaction in the folk high schools. The analysed reflective texts attribute the teachers' contribution to a high level of intrinsic motivation supported by a combination of internalised folk high school values and a high degree of autonomy.

The freedom from need-thwarting factors is a major factor behind the autonomous motivation that describes the identity of the folk high

school teachers in the study. The analysis characterises the folk high school teachers in the study as regulated by internalised extrinsic motivation supported by an environment where their basic psychological needs are met. That the Norwegian folk high schools do not have a predetermined curriculum, as well as their freedom from exams, are described as prerequisites for teachers to develop this professional identity.

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# **Chapter 5**

## **Pedagogical Studies for Adult Educators – An expedition into your own teaching philosophy**

**By Jyrki Ijäs**

### **Introduction**

This article, describing the structure of the APO programme (Pedagogical Studies for Adult Educators) and the pedagogical theories it promotes, is based on academic papers, articles in scientific periodicals, interviews and on the author's own experience from the executive board of FEAE (Finnish Adult Education Association) and even as a participant in the APO programme. The chapter starts and ends by quoting former APO students commenting on how well the statements they wrote 15 years ago describe their identity as folk high school teachers. One of these students reflects on the APO teaching philosophy which emerged from the program:

For me, the core of contemporary concepts of learning is the perception of knowledge and how it is structured in different social contexts. Learning and action take place hand in hand. This is also typical of the dialogue-based folk high school pedagogy – the pedagogy of Bildung.

I am especially interested in how organisations learn, earlier I studied theories about it and my present work has a lot to do with strengthening folk high schools as learning organisations. I have chosen it as my approach in this essay “Towards a learner’s community”.

In a folk high school where its pedagogy is based on organisational learning, the dialogue within the whole community is supported. A folk high school is a learning environment for everybody, where the personnel learn from each other and from the students. The working community in a folk high school is often very devoted to the Bildung task and the values of their folk high school. A learning organisation can therefore be based on mutual respect and a shared curiosity. On the other hand, the tradition of prominent and notable folk high school headmasters has for a long time been the dominant narrative.

In a training programme for new (and “wanna-be”) folk high school headmasters, a model of shared leadership was tested and implemented. The model was not met with enthusiasm, it seems that the sense of ownership is still quite strong, both regarding “your own” pedagogical work and “you yourself/me myself” as a leader of the organisation. (APO, 2006a)

The questions of the folk high school teacher’s own identity and the different roles of the teachers in formal schools were frequently discussed within the folk high school movement in Finland in 1990’s. An almost 70-year long tradition of folk high schools’ own teacher training and their own examination for folk high schools had ended when a general teacher’s certificate of universal formal competence was introduced. One could still include a degree in andragogy in this certificate of 60 credits, but folk high school teachers no longer had

to practice for three to six months at a folk high school. For decades, an intensive training period in a value-based folk high school environment had been considered fundamental for understanding and carrying out the role of folk high school teacher.

According to a survey made in 1999 by the Finnish Folk High School Association (FAEA), the express goal of 1/5 of folk high school teachers was to complement their examination with a formal teacher's competence qualification. 84% of the about 1200 teachers who answered the survey, wanted to participate in further training that would develop and strengthen their identity as *folkbildning* teachers.

According to Mezirow (1997), the task of an adult educator is to promote the critical thinking and the emancipatory process in the adult learner. Transformative learning – self-reflection and a critical approach to and evaluation of your former role as a teacher – has been implemented as a theoretical practical structure the APO programme where the goal is an autonomous adult educator = folk high school teacher.

## **Introduction to the APO programme**

Towards the end of the last millennium, the Ministry of Education made an agreement with the Finnish Adult Education Association about launching a five-year professional development and research programme called Competence and Quality in Folkbildning (VSOP). The overall aim of the programme was to create a joint vision for future *folkbildning* and from this vision to formulate the goals for free and pluralistic *folkbildning* institutions in Finland. It was also agreed that all training programmes would promote the goal of strengthening the special identity of *folkbildning* teachers. Several universities agreed with FAEA that credits from VSOP professional development

courses could be accepted for transfer to teacher training programme credits.

One of the staff development programmes initiated by the VSOP process was a new qualifying training programme in andragogy, Pedagogical Studies for Adult Educators (APO). Organised by the University of Jyväskylä, it started in the autumn of 2001. A yearly quota of 30 students was reserved for teachers working in *folkbildning* institutes.

Out of about 90 yearly students in the APO programme, a quota of 30 was reserved for folk high school teachers and other participants working in the *folkbildning* institutes<sup>1</sup>. There are also specific quotas for master's degree university students, post-graduate students and even for junior educators from universities. A completed course in pedagogy/andragogy (of at least 25 credits) is required before you can apply to the APO programme and attend the entrance examination.

According to the head of the APO programme, Anita Malinen<sup>2</sup>, practically all APO students have experience from working life. Most of the students are thus able to implement their personal study plan and the APO learning tasks in their everyday work. This supports an experiential, reflective and transformative learning process and is essential for the self-evaluation and the re-structuring of the participants' identities as autonomous adult educators.

Pakkanen (2006) conducted an evaluation survey about the APO programme for the Pedagogical Institute at the University of

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<sup>1</sup> Finland has five forms of *Folkbildning* institutes: Adult Education Centres, mainly locally based (180), Folk High Schools (75), Sports Institutes (11), Study Centres (12) and Summer Universities (19).

<sup>2</sup> Senior lecturer Anita Malinen (Ed.D) is the main author of the APO programme and has now chaired the programme for 20 years. In this article I refer to her and Timo Laine's book "Elävä peilisali" (my own translation: "A Living Mirror Hall", 2009), and to her dissertation "Towards the essence of adult experiential learning" (2000). I have also interviewed her twice during the autumn 2021.

Jyväskylä. She asked students from three APO groups that graduated in 2002 – 2004 about the impact the programme on their work and their identity as educators. Out of 199 former APO students 136 (68,3%) answered her survey. Most of them (83,8%) had an MA degree, their age varied between 26 and 59, and their average work experience as teachers was 6.5 years.

Malinen (2000) presents several theoretical explanations and references for the experiential learning methods used in the APO programme. For example, David Kolb: “the experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work and personal development”. And Malcom Knowles: “Experience is the richest resource for adults’ learning: therefore, the core methodology of adult education is the analysis of experience.”

Malinen also refers to Paul Ricoeur when she describes the APO year as a hermeneutical circle, created through the correlation between explanation and understanding, between understanding and explanation.

## **APO programme structure**

According to the APO study plan for 2020–21, the extent of the programme is 35 credits, and it is structured in the following thematic entities/study units, where the “core unit” is *Becoming an adult educator – PCDP, practice and observations* (10 credits):

- Theoretical and philosophical foundations of adult education (5 credits)
- The individual and social dimensions of an adult learner (5 credits)
- Different interpretations of the role of an educator/a counsellor (5 credits)



- Adult education and the societal, community-based, structures (4 credits)
- Citizenship education as a challenge for adult education (5 credits)

During the APO academic year, you meet at the university for nine one week-long study sessions. In the beginning, you spend half the time in lecture halls and the other half in your own study group where the topics of the lectures are discussed. At the end of the week, the group decides the topics for the weekly learning diaries and how these and other “homework” will be reported in Moodle. As the programme progresses, the lectures become fewer and the work in different groups – your own study groups, reading circles, thematic groups – increases and intensifies. Your personal study plan is evaluated three to four times with the counsellor of your own study group and with the mentor you have chosen.

There is no final exam or other exams in the APO programme, but the studies are well documented. It starts with a personal study plan followed by nine one week-long study sessions, 24 learning diary entries, reports from lessons you have followed and lessons you have given, two videos from your teaching sessions, your presentations in your reading circle, one thematic essay, a “manual” of your pedagogical praxis. The final document – your personal teaching philosophy – reflects the APO process, your identity as an adult educator and your own personal practice theory. Altogether, an APO file exceeding 100 pages documents your learning process during the year-long journey towards your teaching philosophy.

Malinen writes that the APO programme is structured on two basic principles: that their own work is the most natural learning environment for adults and that the life and work experience of an adult learner should be respected. That is why the APO programme is based on what learners have described as their need to develop their ability and skills as adult educators. These studies combine the the-

oretical approach of andragogy with the evaluation of the students' own teaching experience and their previous pedagogical reflections. The APO programme should be a reflective evaluation that supports your own self-evaluation (Laine & Malinen, 2009).

## **The importance of study groups**

In a paper about *folkbildning* and its theoretical and practical principles in the Nordic countries, presented at a VSOP research workshop, Salo (2002) describes how transformative learning is an essential method in the study circles. According to him, in a study circle you can mirror your own experiences and ideas with alternative, even opposite ways of thinking. This is much the same that happens in the APO study groups, which Laine describes as exploratory/investigative groups (Laine & Malinen, 2009). He points out the important role that the counsellor of the group has in creating and supporting an open, dialogue-based atmosphere in the group. If the counsellor adopted the traditional one-way pedagogy, this dialogue could easily be prevented.

In her article in *Elävä peilisali* about the study groups, one of the counsellors, Pakkanen (2006), describes the processes in the groups. Student feedback describes these groups as the most important places of learning during the APO programme. They feel that they have had the opportunity to learn to become themselves; they have been listened to without competition in the group, and they have learned to listen to the others. Very often the students felt uncomfortable and reserved in the beginning, a general feeling that slowly was replaced by a sense of comfort and belonging. According to Pakkanen, the study groups are meant to be heterogeneous in their composition, because one of the ideas of the investigative study groups is to create a relationship of exchange and sharing between seasoned educators and newcomers. This is not always easy. In the beginning, experienced

students often feel that the discussions in the group lack substance and the newcomers feel that they have not been listened to properly.

I was shocked when I saw who the other students in my learning group were: MA-students, a social worker, a labour office counsellor, a kindergarten teacher; just one folk high school colleague out of ten in my group! Are these the people with whom I will discuss my work, identity and my folk high school pedagogy for more than 100 hours? I almost left the whole APO programme. But later on, I was thankful that I stayed and that was also what I wrote in my evaluation, published in the learning group's own platform. It was called "Ottopojasta ryhmäriippuvaiseksi" [*From an outsider to a group-addict*] and describes how important the open feedback from the heterogeneous group had been and how the different points of view had made me develop the most important method of dialogue – listening. The transformative method of the APO programme had really proved its efficacy and legitimacy! (APO, 2004a).

## **The fracture method**

The word "Särö" (fracture), unknown to most of us, is found in the APO study programme's chapter IV where the methods are described. An Autumn Fracture and a Spring Fracture are listed, both of which last practically the whole term. During the autumn, the students will visit and explore an adult education institution/organisation or a learning environment that significantly differs from their traditional environment. The idea is to find pedagogical practices which make you wonder and ask questions about your own role as an educator. The Spring Fracture will prepare you for your teaching practice.

It is benchmarking where you look for variations of praxis to employ when you implement the theme you have chosen for your teaching practice<sup>3</sup>. Both fractures will be documented in the learning diaries and discussed in the study groups and in the thematic groups.

In *Elävä peilisali*, Laine asks Malinen what she means by *the fracture*: “Is it that you should be aware of your uncertainty?” Anita: “It is much more than that, it is an experience, not just a feeling. I adapted it from studying how Kolb describes the learning experience, how Mezirow uses the concept of a disorienting dilemma, and also from Schön’s concept of an element of surprise”.

The idea of an arranged fracture in transformative learning – a second-order experience – is well described in Malinen’s dissertation (2000): “This disturbing or violating second-order experience usually generates at least confusion in adults. Knowles, for example, believes in arranged second-order experiences, “learning experiences in adult education *are* increasingly *organised* around life tasks or problems” And: “In this inconvenient or confusing situation, the adult is faced with *a choice*. More precisely, in this situation the subject has two basic options to defend the familiar way of seeing or to modify it, i. e., to learn”.

In her article about the ethical responsibility of the educator, Malinen (2004) clearly states: “creating a fracture, within acceptable ethic limits, is educators’ epistemological responsibility”.

My fracture took place in folk high school of Lehtimäki, practically the only educational institute in our country where even severely mentally retarded and often also functionally disabled young adults are met as learners. Most of them stay at Lehtimäki several, 3–4 years attending classes,

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<sup>3</sup> In 2021–2022, the themes of teaching practice and their study groups were: Dialogue in teaching and counselling, Experience-based learning, Intercultural learning, Identification of prior learning, Arts-based methods, Interactive e-learning.

taking part in joint activities, and practicing daily routine tasks. I've never experienced such a diverse and motivated learning community, supported by such a devoted folk high school staff of personal assistants, nurses, supervisors, and teachers (APO, 2004b).

## Asking the APO alumni

In her survey, Pakkanen (2006) grouped the answers about the impact of the APO programme into four categories: impacts on me and on my qualities, formal competence, the pedagogical content, and the qualities of the APO programme. Altogether, the answers mentioned these categories 435 times: 200 times for *my qualities*, 110 for the *APO programme*, 110 for *pedagogical methods* and 30 for formal competence.

In her MA thesis, Mustakorpi (2009) analysed how well the APO programme had reached its goals that were based on the theory of a transformative learning. Out of the 97 students during the academic year 2006–07, 80 students (82,5%) answered her survey, and the results were clear and unanimous: the APO studies provide an emancipatory training which empowers students' critical reflection, as well as encouraging and supporting the re-evaluation of pedagogical perspectives. According to the survey, the structure of the APO programme – learning groups, reading circles, learning diaries and the feed-back from the fellow learners – supports the self-evaluation and the APO learning process very successfully.

Honkanen (2014) interviewed in her MA thesis<sup>4</sup> former APO students from the quota of university staff in the APO programmes

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<sup>4</sup> Her master's thesis has a quite – especially for universities' pedagogical praxis – descriptive headline: “It was really a luxury to be able to reflect on your own role and identity as a teacher” (Jyväskylä University, 2014).

2006–2012. All her informants were still working at Jyväskylä University when the survey was made in 2014. All of them reported that they had been able to strengthen their identity as teachers. They had become more conscious about their pedagogical work, values and goals, as well as widening their views of processes regarding teaching/educating and of different ways of learning. Her study also shows how sceptical university faculties and institutions are concerning training for and development of pedagogical professional competence in universities. It seems that for most of them, a pedagogical teacher education is merely a requirement from the new University Act.

The APO studies had according to Honkanen's informants encouraged them to explore new and different kinds of methods. A better self-understanding had helped them to renew old traditions in their institutions through intensified and better dialogue with their colleagues and with the students.

My idea was not met with enthusiasm in the beginning among my colleagues, and I wouldn't have dared to present it if I hadn't had theoretical background and the practical experience from the APO programme.

The results of Honkanen's survey show that the APO studies have been successful in creating transformative learning and in redirecting the pedagogical approach of their students. The participants have also become more autonomous as teachers.

Now I can better rely on my ability to read even the hidden messages from the students, so that I am able to recognize where we are in the process and how we could continue. The competence I got from APO programme has strengthened and even legitimised my autonomy.

APO studies supported my growth in becoming the teacher that I wanted to be, because already in the beginning the stereotype of “a good teacher” was abolished and instead they pointed out that everyone can build their own role as a teacher regarding their own personality and abilities. We were encouraged to find our own ways.

I agree with Honkanen that it is important to gather research-based facts to determine if former APO students as teachers have been able to act autonomously and in accordance with their own teaching philosophy. I also asked my colleagues and former APO students how they now, approximately 15 years later, identify with their APO teaching philosophies. Here are three more of their reminiscences.

### **“A combatant educator”**

I wonder if adult educators of today are ever going to be able to experience the historical, political, poetical and romantic ideal of learning that Grundtvig has described. Learners’ needs and rights are now subordinated to the market economy. Students have become consumers in the shop of competencies. The foundation of Enlightenment – “human being first, then the knowledge” – was abandoned a long time ago.

The policy proclamation of the *Bildung* work from the beginning of the process of modernisation, “*Bildung* will make us free from tyranny”, seems to fit well even in the post-modern time. We face an enormous *Bildung* task, if we want our fellow citizens to be active, democratic subjects in a multicultural, globalised society where inequality is a growing threat for individuals.

I am glad that intercultural learning and the importance of language-based identity have aroused more interest in our society and led to new structures in our adult education system, both pedagogically and politically. You become conscious of yourself through the language, it is the foundation for ethics and morals. (APO, 2004c)

### **“I believe in awakening, learner awakening”**

My APO philosophy presents a strong idea, even an ideal, of an educator who supports the learner and is a counsellor of the learning process. Teaching methods are versatile, a teacher can illustrate the subjects you are dealing with and translate them to the learner’s language and world of experiences. Most important is what happens in the learner’s mind, not what the teacher does. One cannot be trained to get excited according to certain model or to fall in love; that is created by your own mind.

This principle leads to learner-centred methods where the ideal goal is to support the learners’ self-awareness and their own image and identity as a learner. In that way their motivation is strengthened, they do believe in their own ability to look for facts, to learn, to grow and in having an impact on their own lives and even in society. My philosophy is based on my faith – in God and in life in generally – this is why I trust in humanity and respect it.

In my “APO fracture” I challenged my communication skills and my ability for dialogue. It seems that this challenge is still going on, I do try to stay calm and listen more to the others. The “fracture” made me to think more about the importance of dialogue and forced me to learn from it.



I still agree with this. I was a bit astonished when my identity as a teacher and my philosophy can be described as emancipatory. That's fine for me, an adult educator should be a bit revolutionary, even though I consider myself as a quite typical folk high school teacher who just have happened to find herself at a folk high school. (APO, 2005)

### **“I challenge, learners decide”**

I think that within *folkbildning*, learning means a multi-faceted support for the learner and at the same time a process that also empowers the community.

For me, it is the learner's needs and standpoints that are essential in the dialogue. As an educator I have the responsibility of creating the frames for the learning process and the didactical tools we use; my job is to enable a goal-oriented learning in a safe learning environment. I will challenge the students, wake them up and encourage them to ask questions and make reflections. It is the learner's responsibility to decide whether they want to learn, start to explore, and change their way of thinking and of acting. I also trust in the constructivism, but I also want to point out the importance of the relationship, language, and the learning environment.

I also find these reflections, critical comments in my teaching philosophy:

Is listening more important in a dialogue than talking?

You sense and learn also with your body – a holistic approach?

Generally, you are not able to teach the adults.

My APO philosophy was and still is based on encouraging, challenging, counselling and supporting. I have been

able to follow these APO principles in my work during the last 15 years and been able to support dialogue and holistic learning. I will carry on with these principles in the field of *folkbildning*, perhaps with some new extra spices like “arts-based-methods” and “transformative learning”. (APO, 2006b)

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# Chapter 6

## LungA School – Doing school as collective artistic practice

**By Jonatan Spejlborg Juelsbo**

In the summer of 2019 Lilja Alfredsdottir, Minister of Education and Culture, signed the bill that marked the establishment of the first formal legislative framework for folk high schools in Iceland. While folk high schools, or schools inspired by and similar to other Nordic folk high schools, have existed in Iceland before, the recognition and support of folk high schools has now become public policy. I find that exciting. I am hopeful.

Without specifying the content of the legislation in detail, I read it as a framework that allows for considerable differences from school to school and offering significant autonomy for each school to design its structure, pedagogy, and content.

At least my hope is that it will be interpreted and practiced as such in the years to come and a plurality of different schools will result from it.

The work with establishing this legislation has largely been carried by the two folk high schools that currently exist in Iceland; The LungA School in Seyðisfjörður, established in 2013, and the Flateyri Folk School, established in 2017. Having been involved with the

LungA School since 2012, this is where I will be writing this text from.

I do not intend to propose an ambition or direction for the Icelandic folk high schools, and I will do my best to avoid any general claims. What I can offer is a lived experience of this particular place and reflections on the educational practices that have emerged over the last eight years.

Existing for years outside an educational legislative framework, and with an aspiration to include many worlds in our practice, we have throughout assumed several identities at once. We have called ourselves in(ter)dependent art school, residency, fluid art project and anarchist commune; all of which I still recognise and believe to be valuable for reminding ourselves that we are not here in a singular fashion.

We are many.

We contradict ourselves.

As necessity, strategy, and praxis.

While each of these identities carry with them both distinct and overlapping problems, potentials, histories, and discourses that we have become entangled with, this particular text will focus on what it means for us to consider the school, and the practice of ‘doing school’, as a collective artistic practice and the implications of this concerning our role as participants and in experimenting with non-hierarchical and un-coercive modes of social organisation.

## **The LungA School – brief introduction**

Early on, the structure of many folk high schools provided part of the trellis on which our ambition for a school could support itself. ‘School’ became a way for us to understand ourselves and a way to be understood. Not without friction and not completely, but enough

to keep going. For us, at the time, ‘school’ and ‘folk high school’ meant a way of attempting to carve out a space that particularly resisted instrumental logics in education, an existence somehow (yet intentionally) on the margin in the larger educational landscape.

But from the beginning, ‘school’ was only one of the ways we understood what we were doing. This was not because it was unclear to us what we were doing. Well, it was unclear and clear at the same time, but we did not intend to resolve this. We strove, and still strive, to remain multiples.

Confusion and contradiction as response (and responsibility) to, and in, our worlds.

We try to develop language for this confusion. This process started before the school began and was articulated further in 2015–16 as we received an Erasmus grant dedicated to the development of an experimental arts-based curriculum.

This resulted in a manifesto with four different voices (ideally seen as a choir – voices overlapping and nesting in each other), each activating a particular aspect of the school’s ideological patchwork of thoughts and questions, and a program structure composed as a graphic score influenced and inspired by traditions of performance scores based on indeterminacy and autonomy<sup>1</sup>.

As with these performance scores, we became acutely aware of the silences. Here was the school, we thought: In between the notes. It was not a revelation, but it was helpful. A way of talking about how things like breakfast and cleaning and wandering ties things together. Paying attention to the ‘silences’ of a program.

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<sup>1</sup> The manifesto and score can be found on the school’s website: <https://www.lungaschool.is/img/lunga-curriculum-and-manifesto.pdf> It was written in 2015–16 and while much of it still resonates, I would like to note that I think it’s time for a revision. Particularly I would like to develop more delicate language concerning care, autonomy, communality, reciprocity and play.

An exciting conversation between our ideas of a school and the experience of doing school. Developing these thoughts and practices further has woven it delicately into all corners of the fabric, holding it together.

## **Teaching and learning as performative practice**

This school is to be approached as an act of art. This school is also a fully functioning school. That, in this case, is the same thing ... Teaching and learning here is a performative practice, a lived practice that unfolds unpredictably. (LungA School, 2016, p. 10)

While the first part of this essay followed a fairly linear narrative in providing a context for the school, the next part is structured as a series of notes that does not as such progress but are attempts at focusing on a few aspects of the school as artistic practice. These aspects are enfolded in each other and thus the relation between them is symbiotic. Separating them in this way is of course an artificial manoeuvre but can hopefully contribute to a kind of overview-from-within. In writing this I have not stepped apart from the school; I am speaking it rather than speaking about it.

## **Performance of school-and**

Considering the school as collective artistic practice is structurally communicated through the name of the program: '84'. A score defining not just the notes, but also the duration; 84 days. 12 weeks. The process of actively considering those 12 weeks as a performative space requires certain mental gestures and a conceptual flexibility.

That the 84 days is a performative space does not mean that we somehow pretend to be a school, but really aren't. It is also not the case that we act out a school or act as if we were a school. Both of

those understandings of performativity are too simplified and seem to consider performativity as something separate from what it performs (e. g., the performance of a school is not a school). What we are arguing is that the performed activity operates in ways where it is not *either* a school *or* a performance of a school but rather allows the activity to be simultaneously a school and something else.

The performed activity (in this case the school, the teaching, the learning) comes into being as performance by drawing on what it denotes. The open-ended concept of a school is brought into being through the articulation of a space of practicing, and the corporealization of roles and responsibilities in relation to this space. But the performed activity, while drawing on what it denotes, is clearly also something else. In the same way that a lecture-performance is clearly a lecture, but clearly also something else (art), a school-performance is clearly a school, but clearly also something else (art?). The performance of a school introduces a tension between performing and schooling – a productive tension in which what we do is always *school-and* and never reduced to *school-or*. The school is always more than itself. This is true even to the point where I see no problem in the statement that we are simultaneously a school and not a school. The performed activity does not follow laws of non-contradiction<sup>2</sup>, but even relies on the possibility of contradiction if there is to be any room for experimentation and novel creative gestures. The *school-and-something* does not produce possibility through a dialectic relation but are enfolded in each other symbiotically. The importance of considering the school a collective performative practice is exactly this. It is a way of always, in the lived practice, holding lightly the structures that emerge. It is a way of collectively making room for other voices and logics. It is a way of remaining fluid. This pro-

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<sup>2</sup> This whole passage owes a lot to the work on play developed by Brian Massumi in his book *What Animals Teach Us About Politics* from 2014 where he builds on Gregory Bateson's concepts of play and metacommunication.



ductive paradox is exactly what nourishes us, as humans and artists involved with schooling. This is important if we, as a community, arts institution, school and more, are to cultivate and stimulate environments for social practices dedicated to principles of reciprocity, benevolence, solidarity, co-operation and self-governance.

## **School as actualisation**

The kind of school that we are interested in making is not exactly preparation. It is not preparation for further studies (not a pre-school), it is not even preparation for life in general.

The relation between school and preparation is similar to the relation between play and usefulness. Given that usefulness is always contextual and refers both to circumstances and logics, it is exactly by not being bound by those logics that play becomes play. And it is by not being bound by given educational logics (in which preparation belongs) that school becomes school.

Considering the school as collective artistic practice is centrally concerned with dissolving rigid concepts as well as distinctions and hierarchies between spheres of life.

Between artmaking and lifemaking.

Between work and care.

Between politics and ethics.

Between emotion and reason.

Between means and ends.

Between preparation and doing.

Between school and society.

Inspired by anarchist pedagogies, the practice of engaging critically with these distinctions takes place in small scale communities in ongoing experimentation with manifestations of other ways of organising, other ways of making sense. Exercising this experimentation is not preparation, but actualisation, instantiation.

## (An additional note on anarchism)

A short note might be helpful concerning my use of the term ‘anarchism’. As I use the term, anarchism is not, as generally misunderstood, disorder. Anarchism is not against governance and organisation *per se*, but against hierarchical and rigid (non-negotiable, involuntary) structures of governance and organisation. While some forms of anarchism have an explicitly liberal and/or libertarian ambition, the way I am using the term is inherently social and communal. Autonomy and community are intimately woven together. Autonomy is not primarily a principle concerning an individual separate from others, human and non-human, but is the ability for collectives to develop time- and site-specific life-worlds<sup>3</sup>.

Autonomy is not independence but is a form of agency in interdependence.

Anarchism is the practice of cultivating conditions for autonomy. A decentralisation of social, cultural, and political life.

I do not recognise anarchism as an antidemocratic practice, as it has often been accused of. I see it rather as a form of democratic participation and a tradition of thought that in my opinion deserves serious scholarly attention, not least when it comes to making education<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> My use of the word ‘autonomy’ and ‘pluriverse’ is hugely inspired by Arturo Escobar’s descriptions of *autonomía* understood and used in a South American context. “*autonomía* is a theory and practice of interexistence and interbeing, a design for the pluriverse” (Escobar, 2017, p. 175). Though the concepts have originated in different contexts, I find a lot of overlaps between Escobar’s descriptions and social anarchist practices yet with a more decidedly feminist approach of attention to the caring involved with maintaining communities and practices of autonomy.

<sup>4</sup> In the book *Anarchism and Education* Judith Suissa gives a brilliant introduction to various anarchist positions and the implications these positions have for education. While anarchist educational philosophy is rarely described by anarchist thinkers, Suissa draws out these theories through thorough readings of a wide variety of anarchist literature. I have found very few other sources exploring anarchist educational theory and philosophy.

## **Rhythm**

Manifestations of school as collective artistic practice takes place in the nuances of the everyday, but these nuances lend themselves poorly to descriptions. They most often present themselves embedded subtly in the fabric of words and gestures amidst everyday processes and routines with everyday thoughts, situations, challenges. Everyday tedium and everyday enthusiasm. And the everyday is a messy place, literally and conceptually.

The program is 84 days, yes, but we go through the days one at a time. There is a rhythmic quality to it. And a structural quality. I would describe the structure as ‘enough to hold things together’. A loose beat.

We eat together.

Start the days together.

We take turn.

In food-making.

In getting the day started.

Structure to serve basic needs.

I wouldn't say that the structure is followed, but it's used to lean against. When getting up early in the morning to make breakfast for the others, it's helpful with something to lean against.

Some weeks we have guests facilitating explorations into various artistic practices, other weeks are dedicated to individual and communal studio practice. We share facilities and organise these activities communally.

I am writing this sentence sitting in an old factory space looking out at the water. I hear someone making coffee in the kitchen and I see someone working on a large sculpture in what seems to be a glue, cardboard, and dust-based material. Outside someone is recording the sounds of jellyfish. I have the deepest admiration for how the faculty for sensemaking is being stretched in these practices, while

every day here also makes me think that there's something about this place that resembles a good joke. The dedication of endless attention in the most surprising ways, to the most surprising things.

We will meet this afternoon and share and give feedback to each other.

Structures and spaces to support collaboration and conversation.

And additional structures and cultures emerge to support maintenance and care for the physical as well as the social and mental spaces. House meetings, sparring sessions, long walks, parties, and spaces to share both exuberance and vulnerability.

These structural elements make up a rhythm that sometimes follow a trajectory towards the arhythmic as we go along.

## **Institution as medium pt. 1**

Considering the school as actualisation, rather than preparation, highlights the school as social constellation and situation existing in a particular context with which it is intimately involved. This involvement is not a given. The institution is a medium for this involvement. In everything it does. And every way it does it. The institution as medium directs the attention to the situation and to what it looks like to develop a reciprocal relationship with the context we exist in and are part of. And it questions what, and who, we mean and see when we say 'context'.

The school, the institution, is not just *where* these things happen. If the school is a kind of supportive container for artistic experimentation and critical consideration, it is a container full of holes. A container that does not enclose, but merely carry/support.

Simultaneously, the school is a practice existing in other containers full of holes; Seyðisfjörður town, the educational system in Iceland,

the folk high school community in Scandinavia, international artist communities etc.

If our practice is one of actualising an engagement with these worlds, the school is both where we do it and what we do it with. The logics of the institution are as much up for consideration and experimentation as are the logics for each participants' particular practice.

Institution as medium is a relation that requires ongoing re-articulation from everyone involved. And ongoing translation into practice. From us who are here from program to program. And from all other participants.

Institution as medium means an artistic consideration and treatment of:

School as illusive, as casting a spell of invisibility.

School as illusion. Look in one direction and something happen in another.

School as an excuse.

School as collective, an articulated responsibility for the other.

School as invitation.

School as contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence manifested. We both are and aren't what we say we are and aren't.

School as cultural institution – participating where we are with what we are (and aren't).

School as local politics. Both in active participation and in considering the political implications of all our actions.

School as utopia – a living on the premise that other ways of living are indeed possible.

School as a mess – it is out of control.

School as fluid, as a shapeshifting assemblage.

Etc.

There are frictions and overlaps between all the above. They contaminate each other. As do we all. As collaboration<sup>5</sup>.

Parasitic and symbiotic relations.

## **Institution as medium pt. 2**

Practicing a relation to the institution as a medium requires autonomy for everyone involved. This kind of autonomy rests on ontological, epistemic and social equality (Escobar, 2017, p. 181).

This is an ambition with implications for organisation and structure and for the curation of the programs. How we are organised as institution + community and how we structure our programs + our time together are both considered processual aspects. They are subject to ongoing transformations, alterations and inventions. Mutations supporting the pluriverse, the many ways of knowing, and being in, our worlds. Organisation is a sympoietic practice – it does not pre-exist the social interactions but rather arise in relation. This in turn means that whatever roles arise are situational, limited, and temporary. And this goes as well for whatever authority and responsibility that might be attached to the roles.

While this might sound disorganised, that is not necessarily the case. But it is an attempt at working with organisation in a way where authority does not imply hierarchy. And where participation is voluntary. And where roles can change. It is both clear and ambiguous at the same time, which, again, does not imply a contradiction.

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<sup>5</sup> The term ‘Contamination as Collaboration’ is borrowed from Anna Tsing and is the title of Chapter 2 in her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World – on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. She articulates contamination as a premise: “Everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option” (Tsing, 2015, p. 27) and as a productive force in collaborative world-making projects.

## **Arhythmic**

In a previous essay we wrote:

The school is the responsibility of all and exists through the initiative of everyone. This does not mean that there are not different roles, but the relation between role and participation is conceived in reverse. Participation is not made possible by assuming or being allocated a role; on the contrary, it is through participation that roles are enabled and actualised. This loosens up the weave ... roles and identities fade away and come into existence in a play of chance and transience. (Juelsbo, 2020, p. 39)

To be sure, the premise for participation is different for those of us who are here over and over again, who make the invitation in the first place, and those who come to participate for 84 days.

I ground my participation in a felt responsibility to pay attention to the wellbeing of all participants.

While the responsibility for the school is distributed and shared amongst all, I still carry a special responsibility. This, again, does not imply hierarchy but implies an attention towards certain things due to the specifics of the situation. It is my responsibility to recognize and hold space for all voices. To invite and encourage several distinct epistemologies into the program. To stay with the trouble of living in uncertainty. To keep questioning and pushing our practice and performance of school-and. To keep insisting. To have something at stake – my self and my world, that is – and to keep inviting.

I am often unsure what I am in this place. Or rather, I experience myself as embodying many roles and existences I don't even understand or comprehend myself. It feels out of control. It makes me feel fragile and fragmented. An invitation I accept without knowing what that means.

I keep mentioning confusion because it's so central to my everyday experience.

And along with the confusion, also doubt, naturally.

I find it important to note that practicing these thoughts about school is not a utopian practice and it is not a practice that strives for, or believes in the value of, smoothness or purity in the lived experience.

It can be a messy practice with plenty of room for misunderstandings and conflicts. And while I value this certain kind of un-clarity, I am also convinced that not all misunderstandings and conflicts are equally interesting and valuable. Some are quite the opposite. And over time we will experience quite a range, I'm sure.

My daily practice here has a lot to do with maintaining and caring for the structural and conceptual openness and fluidity while still communicating clearly the things that can be communicated clearly. Perhaps like this: To be clear about which things are clear and which things are clearly unclear.

A side to this implies that I am always in doubt about the extent to which I am imposing structure or hierarchy.

Structures do so easily become rigid. Divisions and hierarchies forming. Patterns re-created once too many.

I am sure that we are part of reproducing structures that we don't believe are helpful. I am sure that the school is not accessible for everyone. I am sure that these are circumstances that all schools must actively deal with/live with/live in.

It's a knot.

It's a mess.

There is no purity to be achieved. The mess will stay messy.

This does not mean that school is an unreachable ideal. But it does mean that school is not primarily a thing or a place or a structure



or program, but a collective practice that needs attention, care and dedication.

## **An ending**

School as performance is a school-and. What comes after this ‘and’ is always a surprise. The ‘and’ ties together the ‘is’ and the ‘yet-to-be’. The ‘and’ is an open door for that which we did not expect. And itself a practice in opening doors.

While this educational practice is open-ended and non-prescriptive it holds no claims to neutrality. It is opinionated and vocal in the attempt to nurture caring communities – and dedicated to the artistic experimentation at the heart of this attempt.

We are not educated as educators, we are artists-and doing schooling-and. In this conversation, intended to nurture languages and practices for education, that is our contribution.

## **References**

While there are only a few direct references in the text, I have included here the books mentioned in the notes as they are very direct sources and inspirations for my thinking about the school in the process of writing this essay.

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# **Chapter 7**

## **Meta-analysis of concepts and findings: The identity of the Nordic folk high school teacher**

**By Johan Lövgren and Odd Haddal**

### **Introduction to meta-analysis on the theme of identity**

An executive editorial team handled the process of preparing the 13 national chapters for publication. In their on-going dialogue about the assembled research projects, the editors saw that the thirteen national projects assembled in this anthology constituted a research material in themselves. The text material carried a unique possibility to deduce an outline of the characteristics that together shape the Nordic folk high school teacher. In meetings with the larger editorial group, they introduced the idea that the assembled national chapters could be applied as an material for a meta-analysis on the themes that connect them (Timulak, 2014).

After receiving a positive response from the other editors, we went on to study literature on the meta-analysis of groups of research articles. McCormick, Rodney & Varcoe writes that as studies on the same theme are “combined, compared, contrasted, and integrated”

their potential for “knowledge development and theory building” is increased (2003).

Literature on the analysis of text material presents a variety of methods for meta-analysis. Schreiber, Crooks & Stern describe a process of meta-analysis with the aim of “discovering the essential elements and translating the results into an end product” (1997, p. 314). A related analytical process is outlined by Leary and Walker as a *meta-synthesis* that “brings together and then breaks down the findings” of a group of studies (2018, p. 530).

Leary and Walker describe steps in a process of analysing meta-data (2018, p. 533). The first step in this analytical process is the definition of an objective for the analysis and the second outlines the sampling of studies included in the analysis. These two initial steps had been covered by *the Network for research on the Nordic folk high schools* in their initial planning and design for the anthology project. In Leary and Walkers’ third step the sampled studies are to be coded. The thirteen chapters in the material were both coded initially by hand by performing a structured content analysis (Tunison, 2023), while an auto coding and query were performed on the data analysis software NVivo (Tang, 2023). The coded text material went through a process of text analysis and condensation, connecting central concepts from the NVivo analysis with findings under each theme (Tang, 2023).

Chapters 7, 13 and 19 summarise this process of condensation. Each of these chapters starts with synopses of the presented national chapters. The focus of these chapter synopses is to provide a context to the concepts that were found to be central to the analysis of each chapter. Building on the synopses of each sub-theme, we go on to provide an analysis where each of the central concepts and themes found in the national chapters are connected. The meta-analysis ends with the implication of an overarching concept that is seen as a summary of each theme.

The final stages of the meta-analysis, where the national chapters went through a process of condensation, can be seen in the structure of this chapter. The text follows the process where each national chapter is first condensed to a synopsis, after which the findings in each chapter are extracted to create an overview where the central concepts found in the chapters are connected. In the next stage, the findings on the theme of education are synthesised into one text, and lastly, overarching themes are conceptualized.

## **Chapter synopses**

The structure of this chapter follows the process of condensation and starts with synopses of the national chapters on the theme of the identity of the folk high school teacher. The intention behind these synopses is not to present an abstract or to cover all findings presented in each chapter. Instead, the chapter synopses are used as a first step in a structure that follows the process of condensation. The focus of these chapter synopses is to provide a context to the concepts that have been found to be central to the analysis of each chapter.

### **Chapter 2: The unprofessional teacher – A portrait of the Danish folk high school teacher**

In his chapter, Rasmus Kolby Rahbek examines teacher identity in terms of a profession and outlines the central markers of the idea of a ‘profession’. Based on these definitions Rahbek argues that it is not correct to define the Danish folk high school teachers as “professionals” and he asks: “Then what are they – ‘unprofessionals’?”

To Rahbek the term “unprofessional” does not refer to titles or skill levels, “rather, it concerns the entire framing of what it means to be a teacher in a certain structuring form.” It refers to a context where the

schools and teachers enjoy “a high level of obligation to define their own practice in relation to their self-determined value base.”

Based on an empirical study, Rahbek defines two approaches to being a folk high school teacher. For *the life experienced teacher*, the job is not primarily linked to educational background and competencies; rather, being a folk high school teacher is an extension of personal life experiences, the ability to engage the students through a personalization of the subject and make the teaching relevant and inspiring. The second approach is *the subject-oriented teacher* whose self-understanding and identity are primarily linked to the specific subject(s) they teach.

Rahbek states that what he calls a *direct pedagogy* is associated with clarity in communication and action. The folk high schools engage in *indirect pedagogy* which deals with questions that neither can nor should be given definitive answers, questions where students will have to find their own answers.

According to Rahbek, folk high school teachers are expected to practice a flexible ‘impure pedagogy’ in which “teachers and educators must ... exercise their judgment, which is primarily based on experiences and traditions (the impure) and not on abstract techniques and manuals (the pure).”

Rahbek shows how in Denmark the role of a folk high school teacher was traditionally seen as a calling connected to a specific way of life. The tradition has been a part of placing folk high school pedagogy “the middle of the paradox between learning and living”. This leads Rahbek to define the pedagogy and *formation* of the folk high school as being dependent on both form and content.

### **Chapter 3: Teaching with a mission: Dimensions of professional identity among folk high school teachers in Sweden**

The chapter presents an analysis that combines findings from previous research with an empirical study based on interviews with teachers active in the Swedish folk high schools. Based on this material, the researchers identify basic features in *the teacher's understanding of their professional identity*. Like Rahbek, the authors of the Swedish chapter *argue that the concept "profession" is not applicable* to describe folk high school teacher's identity.

The authors warn against the use of simple dichotomies to define folk high school teachers' identity, arguing that the empirical material shows too much of a variation. They find a distinction presented by Horn (2016) useful to understand the ways in which folk high school teachers describe what the authors call their mission. The teachers in the study can be described by Horn's definition of "professionalism" (the way in which teachers perform) rather than "professionalism" (the formal requirements of a profession).

In an empirical study performed by the authors, the Swedish folk high school teachers are described as having focus on *informal and experience-based knowledge, freedom from being entangled by 'musts', strong relationship to the subject-matter, and devotion to the folk high schools' educational ideas*. Other referred studies indicate an identification with the task of *promoting democracy* and contributing to *"a broader mission of achieving individual and societal change by supporting independent, individual learning processes"*. In this way the teachers in this study refer their teacher identity to different dimensions of professionalism.

Swedish folk high school teachers will refer their identity to the characteristics of the folk high school and to implicit expectations about their work. The authors show how their "professional identity



is related to different personal and institutional aspects which seem to be *intertwined*”, such as values they see in the folk high school, and/or the ideas found within the folk high school movement.

#### **Chapter 4: The need-supportive folk high school teacher: Autonomy, competence and relatedness**

In this chapter, the authors present an empirical study based on texts written by teachers in Norwegian folk high schools, using a theoretical framework taken from Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT builds a system that describes degrees of autonomy, from when a person is being governed from the outside (extrinsic motivation), to when motivation is internalised (intrinsic motivation).

The chapter describes four main categories behind the folk high school teacher’s professional identity. The first two of these categories refer to *student contact* – first described as the main source of the very high motivational level registered among the informants. But while being a source of motivation, close student contact is also the area teachers describe as the most challenging.

The name of the third main category in the analysis, *using all of me*, is taken from an expression used in the reflective texts to characterise the role of a folk high school teacher. The phrase is used by the informants to describes the tendency for work to be all consuming, but also the freedom to teach classes connected to their own areas of interest, as well as a closeness to students that engages “all of me”. In a final category, *the staff of the folk high school* is described as divergent in professional background while at the same time united through their devotion to the values they stand for.

The writers conclude by characterizing the informants as *need-supportive folk high school teachers*. The study indicates that folk high schools strongly support the three basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy both in staff and students

(Ryan & Deci, 2017). The authors argues that this *need-supportive environment* is dependent on the folk high schools' freedom from need-thwarting factors such as grades and exams.

## **Chapter 5: Pedagogical studies for adult educators – An expedition into your own teaching philosophy**

In this chapter, Ijäs presents the Finnish Pedagogical Studies for Adult Educators (the APO programme). This teacher training programme was designed when Finland introduced the requirement that all folk high school teachers and *folkbildning* educators earn a general teacher's certificate. When the course of study was established, it replaced an almost 70-year long tradition of the Finnish folk high schools' own teacher training programme with a professional teacher's certificate.

Each student in the APO programme is expected to join an “expedition into your identity” as a teacher. Seeking to create a joint vision for and strengthen the special identity of *folkbildning* (*popular education, peoples' education*), the programme has for two decades trained folk high school teachers together with educators that will serve in other folkbildning institutes.

The goal of APO is to promote *autonomous adult educators*. According to Mezirow (1997), the task of an adult educator is to encourage critical thinking and emancipatory processes in the adult learner. *Transformative learning* – self-reflection, a critical approach to and evaluation of your former role as a teacher – has been implemented as a theoretical and practical structure in the APO programme. There are no exams, but each student has to deliver their own personal teaching philosophy, a form of examination that reflects the pedagogical ideal of the programme focusing on participants' identity as adult educators and their development of a personal practice theory.

## Chapter 6: LungA School – Doing school as collective artistic practice

Spejlborg Juelsbo focuses on how Iceland's legislative framework for folk high schools, enacted in 2019, allows for significant autonomy for each school to design its structure, pedagogy and content. Since 2012, the author has been involved with the LungA School, one of the two folk high school now established in Iceland. The LungA School describes itself as an in(ter)dependent art school and an anarchist commune characterised by residency and fluid art projects.

This essay on pedagogical philosophy depicts a radical and non-prescriptive form of folk high school pedagogy that nevertheless “holds no claims to neutrality.” Dedicated to collective artistic experimentation, its focus is on teaching and learning as performative and artistic practice. The performative space of its 84-day programme allows the activity to be simultaneously a school and something else. The productive tension between performing and schooling always reflects *school-and* and is never reduced to *school-or*. The school is always more than itself.

The LungA School is not a preparation for further studies, nor a preparation for life in general. Inspired by anarchist pedagogies, school as actualisation portrays a collective artistic practice concerned with “dissolving rigid distinctions and hierarchies in life.” It is a social constellation existing in a particular context.

Participation requires autonomy for everyone involved; however, role and participation are conceived in reverse: “Participation is not made possible by assuming ... a role; on the contrary, it is through participation that roles are enabled and actualized.” However, certain participants, such as the author's role as Program Director, carry a special responsibility; this, however, does not imply hierarchy, but attention to certain things.

## Extracting national findings

Following the synopses of chapters, the meta-analysis will follow a process of condensation extracting national findings from the five chapters on the identity of the folk high school teacher.

Rahbek writes about the *unprofessional* folk high school teachers who engage their whole *life experience* in their teaching. The *impure pedagogy* that he presents is similarly described as based on experience. Through the expression *a way of life*, Rahbek updates a traditional Danish conception of the role of a folk high school teacher as a *calling*.

Colliander, Hallqvist and Andersson present a conceptualisation that is parallel Rahbek's unprofessional teacher with their differentiation between the concepts of *professionalism* and *professional-ity*. The authors' definition of professionalism includes *experience-based knowledge*. To express the commitment of the folk high school teacher they turn to the concept of having a *calling or mission*.

As Lövgren, Berntsen and Amsrud analyse Norwegian folk high school teachers' autobiographical texts, they name one of their four main categories *using all of me*. The teachers describe their everyday work experience as *all-consuming* with a pedagogical aim that challenges both intellect and feelings. *Close contact* with their students is a major source of motivation, while the *freedom from need-thwarting factors* such as grades and exams is crucial to the context.

Ijäs shows how the APO programme has the aim of promoting *autonomous adult educators*. To reach this goal, the course introduces *transformative learning* processes for folk high school teachers and other adult educators to initiate a *personality development* through self-reflection.

Spejlborg Juelsbo outlines a radical form of folk high school pedagogy that is "open ended and non-prescriptive, it holds no claims to neutrality ... dedicated to the artistic experimentation". The per-

formative space of the LungA school's 84-day programme gives the students an experience of teaching and learning as performative and artistic practice.

### **Synthesising findings on the theme of identity**

The final section in the chapter brings together the conceptualisations condensed from the national chapters on the theme of identity. The section's aim is to synthesise the findings of these chapters in order to outline the picture they project of the Nordic folk high school teacher's identity (Timulak, 2014).

To conceptualise the identity of a folk high school teacher, the first two texts choose to apply a dialectic comparison with other more defined professional roles in society. The concepts *unprofessional* and *professionalism* project a negation of the identity they describe. Unlike other professions, the folk high school teacher cannot be defined by formal credentials or clearly defined tasks.

The way in which these five texts apply negations or indirect descriptions illustrates the difficulty involved in the conceptualisations of the identity of the Nordic folk high school teacher. The dominant way in which the teachers' identity is described, emphasises the way they meet their students and the ideals they represent. Thus, the concepts developed by the authors are connected to the pedagogy and practice of the different national folk high schools.

Using an expression coined by the teachers themselves could provide an opening to an empirically grounded conceptualisation. The phrase *using all of me* communicates the quality of dedication of the folk high school teachers, but also indicates a limitless work task. The work these teachers set out to do, captures all of themselves, it challenges their knowledge and skills as well as their life experiences.

Though the Icelandic text denounces all conceptualisations, the creative process of collective artistic practice that it describes in-

volves an engagement of creative energy that engrosses the whole participant, teacher and student alike.

Another road towards the conceptualisation of an identity is to analyse educational programmes designed for folk high school teachers. The APO programme for Finland's *folkbildning* educators is based on Mezirow's (1997) educational philosophy of *transformative learning*. In this transformative process, folk high school teachers generate their own learning philosophy, not primarily as a theoretical exercise, instead, the focus is on the internalisation of the values that they will be representing as folk high school teachers.

To describe the task that the folk high school teacher sets out to do, authors employ concepts with associations to a religious fervour that envelops all of life. To be a folk high school teacher is to have a *mission*, it is a *way of life* connected to a tradition of having a *calling*.

## **Outlining an overarching conceptualisation**

The national chapters in the first section of this anthology have been taken through a thematic analysis and a condensation process, yielding overarching concepts on the theme identity. The concept of embodied learning (Lövgren, 2023) is used in the texts to conceptualise folk high school teachers' identity as a personification of the learning and ideals that they represent. The analysis indicates this embodiment of learning as the source for the folk high school teachers' motivation as well as their basis for their teaching practice as they enter what the identity chapters call the chaos of impure pedagogy. These conceptualisations of the identity project an image of *teachers who embody learning*.

Teachers who embody learning are ...

... teachers whose work researchers find so multifaceted that they cannot narrowly be called professionals. The authors turn to negations of what other vocations are to describe them.

... teachers whose main source of motivation comes from close contact their student. Personal involvement in their students is what drives them, but it is at the same time their most demanding challenge.

... teachers whose education is based on transformative learning processes. To become folk high school teachers, the pedagogy that they are to represent must become a part of who they are.

... teachers who engage in learning processes based on life experiences and are ready to risk the chaos of impure pedagogy.

... teachers whose job description is expressed by researchers as entering *a way of life*, being on *mission* or having a *calling* to fulfil.

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# **Chapter 8**

## **Authors' reflective dialogue on the theme of identity**

**By Michael Noah Weiss**

### **Introduction**

In the section on the identity of the folk high school teacher, different approaches were employed in order to examine this topic more closely. The present chapter intends to summarise these various perspectives that have been put forward in the different chapters. For that purpose, their authors were invited for an online dialogue in which they investigated and discussed their perspectives together and where they generated a sort of synopsis of this topic.

### **Research question**

The question that guided the authors' dialogue, which also forms the guiding question of the present chapter, can briefly be put into the following terms:

What is the identity of the folk high school teacher about?

Before presenting the outcomes that the authors arrived at in their dialogical investigation, a brief description of dialogue as a research methodology is given.

## Method

The idea behind this chapter was not simply to analyse the different contributions of this section in order to find and summarize common threads, key aspects and main characteristics of the topic. Rather, the intention was to facilitate an *inter-view* of the authors perspectives. Hence, and put in general terms, the research method chosen for this purpose was dialogue, which is not the same as a conventional interview, as e. g., Finn Thorbjørn Hansen points out when outlining what he calls the *Socratic research interview* (Hansen, 2015). According to Hansen, the main difference between conventional qualitative research interviews and dialogue-oriented interviews is that in the former the actual research is carried out *after* the interview, e. g., in terms of an analysis, while in the latter, research is done *in* the interviews, together with the interview partner (Hansen, 2015, p. 179 & 188f).

In order to clarify this difference further, Matthew Lipman's *Community of Inquiry* concept can be brought into account. In this concept, dialogue is understood to be a common investigation of a topic in order to bring forward different perspectives on this topic (Lipman, 2003, p. 84). Furthermore, according to this concept, only by means of a perspectival variety, deeper insight into and understanding of the topic is possible. For the present chapter's methodology, this means that the dialogue between the authors represents the actual research – and not some interview that was analysed in a subsequent research process.

Starting with the Socratic Dialogues of Plato, philosophical dialogue as research methodology has a long tradition in the humanities. Famous examples from the field of philosophy of education are e. g., Paolo Freire's and Myles Horton's dialogue book *We make the road by walking* (Horton & Freire, 1990) or John Hattie's and Steen

Nepper Larsen's *The Purpose of Education* (Hattie & Larsen, 2020). Today, one can find quite some variety of dialogue-based research approaches, e. g., Brinkmann's epistemic interview (2007), Dinkins' Socratic-hermeneutic interpre-viewing (2005) or the previously mentioned Socratic research interview of Hansen (2015), just to name a few. Even within the broad field of action research one can find what is called *dialogical action research*, where the researcher takes on the role of a Socratic midwife, facilitating the development and expression of ideas with the dialogue participants (Alrø & Hansen, 2017, p. 9).

Another academic field known for its dialogue-based philosophical investigations is the discipline of philosophical practice (Weiss, 2015). The dialogue format used for the present investigation comes from this discipline. This format is called Philo Café, originally developed by Marc Sautet in order to facilitate philosophical dialogues in larger groups in coffee houses in France in the 1980s (see i. e., Weiss, 2015, p. 323). The Philo Café format represents an open dialogue with no specific structure or steps to be followed. Rather, the idea is to put forward ideas and perspectives on the topic and to resonate with each other's statements in a more spontaneous and intuitive manner. In this way essential aspects of the topic under investigation should come to the fore. The format is not only suited for large groups. Already in groups of four (the size of the dialogue carried out in our case, including the facilitator) it works well. The reason why this format was chosen for the dialogue between the authors who contributed to the section on the identity of the folk high school teachers, was because it let them philosophize and reflect freely on the topic. There were no procedural steps that had to be followed or a conclusion they had to arrive at. In the following, the outcomes of this open dialogue – in terms of reflections and ideas of the authors – is presented in a summarized way.

## Results

Since a philosophical dialogue examines the nature and essence of a topic, the results presented here do not indicate *which* of the participants said what. Rather, the focus is on what was said in order to illuminate key aspects with regards to the identity of the folk high school teacher. These key aspects can be summarized as follows.

The identity of the folk high school teacher is about:

### Multifacetedness

Quite early in the dialogue the *multifacetedness* of the identity of the folk high school teacher was addressed. The identity of the folk high school teacher “is not one thing; it is more like this idea of a multiple identity; there are many dimensions” as Per Andersson put it. That is, instead of being able to pin down this identity with one or two general aspects, it consists of several, i. e., ideological, political, religious ones. Depending on the folk high school and its value base, these aspects can vary in both content and degree, and a folk high school teacher from one school might have a quite different identity compared to a teacher from another school. This being said, there also seem to be some characteristics that folk high school teachers have in common, which refer to the topic of identity.

### Identification

During the dialogue it was pointed out that identity and *identification* are not entirely the same though related to each other. In this respect, Jonathan Spejlborg stated that “the way I relate to the folk high schools does not so much concern identity but is more a question of identification in the sense of ‘What aspects of this tradition do I identify with?’ It is not necessarily that I see this as part of my

identity, but I can identify with certain aspects.” In general, folk high school teachers appear to feel a strong identification with their school, its values and its community. During the dialogue it was pointed out that it is not so important what these values are about, but rather that it is this strong feeling of identifying with specific values seems to be something prevailing among folk high school teachers.

### **Self-determination**

Since there is no strict curriculum in any subject at a folk high school and since the schools are in fact free to choose their subjects, the teachers have a much greater autonomy compared to those at a normal high school. In fact, as it comes forward “through all these interviews with the folk high school teachers, they have a very high degree of autonomy” as Hedda Berntsen asserts. This autonomy gives the folk high school teacher a unique “professional freedom; it is not someone else telling you exactly how to do things” as Per Andersson pointed out and adds “There is no curriculum, or at least no national curriculum. You have a lot of influence, not only when planning a lesson but you can plan the courses and take initiatives (...) and make new things.” Also, in the teaching situation itself, this freedom can find expression. “I am not feeling trapped. It gives me the ability to move in the situation and with the situation,” as Jonathan Spejlberg noted. This kind of autonomy and professional freedom was summarized by the term *self-determination* in the research dialogue, and it was assumed to form one of the central aspects of the identity of the folk high school teacher. This self-determination is also something which the students of such a school can see and obviously sense in the practice of the teachers. This is what, according to the dialogue participants, creates a good environment. Furthermore, the observed self-determination with the teachers is what the students want themselves.

## Spontaneity

In connection with self-determination another important aspect of the identity of the folk high school teacher has been mentioned: *spontaneity*. A key characteristic of a folk high school teacher is that he or she can make spontaneous changes in his or her teaching. That is, to be able “to grab some sort of relevance, because what is relevant and the way to talk about something that is relevant is also something that changes with the dynamics of the group” as Jonathan Spejlborg stated in the dialogue. Not bound by any curriculum, the teacher can quickly adapt his or her teaching practice to the needs of the students and the situational conditions.

## Discussion

When discussing the previously presented key aspects of the identity of the folk high school teacher, it must be mentioned that these aspects are of course not all-encompassing. With a different group of participants and with different questions raised during the dialogue, other aspects might have come to the fore, too. This, however, does not mean that the presented key aspects are meaningless and trivial concerning the folk high school teacher’s identity. Rather, as it is with other phenomena too, different aspects can reveal themselves at different times and under different circumstances. The addressed multifacetedness of this identity already indicates that (see e. g., Lövgren, 2020, p. 14f). In simple words, there is no mould in terms of an ideal of how a folk high school teacher has to be and everyone working in this type of school has to fit the mould. Due to the variety of subjects and courses offered at the schools (see Haddal & Ohrem, 2011, p. 26), this would be a sheer impossibility. And it appears that such a variety of subjects – as an obvious key aspect of

folk high school in general – requires what has been called a high degree of self-determination in the dialogue. However, despite this self-determination, which first makes the variety of subjects possible, there appears to be a common focus among all the Nordic folk high schools. And that focus is on *Bildung*. Interestingly, *Bildung* – even enshrined as one of the main goals in the Norwegian Folk High School Act (Folkehøyskoleloven, 2003, § 1) – was not mentioned as key aspect of the folk high school teacher's identity during the dialogue. Here, one could ask whether the idea of *Bildung* is so internalized that it is hard for the practitioners and researchers to raise it to awareness, on the one hand. On the other hand, the key aspects brought forward in the dialogue could be read as preconditions in order to make *Bildung* possible (see e. g., Haddal & Ohrem, 2011, p. 31). The room for spontaneity, for example, appears to be a necessary prerequisite in order to support and foster the students in their individual *Bildung*-processes (see e. g., Weiss, 2021, p. 117). Furthermore, identifying with a certain value base and being autonomous in one's self-determination, do not only appear to be something that the teachers practice. It also seems to be something that the students learn by the teachers practicing it. In other words, the teachers become role models for the students in their developmental process dealing with *Bildung*. Seen from such a perspective, we can conclude with that the identity of the folk high school is not only concerned who and how a teacher at such a school is. Rather, the teacher's identity also appears to be immediately related to the students' development.

## **Concluding remarks**

In this summary chapter, the outcomes of a philosophical dialogue are presented, in which the authors of the section *The Identity of the Folk High School Teacher* investigated the question “What is the identity



of the folk high school teacher about?” The dialogue yielded four key aspects of this identity, namely: A) Multifacetedness, expressing that a folk high school teacher’s identity cannot be pinned down to one or two core aspects but that there are several, which also can vary. B) Identification, relating to the fact that the identity of a teacher is often characterized by him or her identifying with his or her school’s value base. C) Self-determination, addressing the teacher’s autonomy in his or her pedagogical activities and teaching. D) Spontaneity, expressing the teacher’s freedom to spontaneously change his or her planned learning activities.

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## **Part II**

# **The work of the Nordic folk high school teacher**



# **Chapter 9**

## **Sustainable Bildung – Danish folk high school teachers in times of change**

**By Jonas Andreasen Lysgaard, Petra Maribo, Simone Albers**

### **Introduction**

The Danish folk high schools (hereafter folk high schools) could in 2019 celebrate their 175-year anniversary as a free educational institution that still enjoys a strong position in Denmark as a unique, open and experimental educational space (Korsgaard, 2019). Since its infancy, the folk high schools have managed to stay relevant in relation to overall societal agendas and also to the more specific issues of importance that any young generation experiences. The folk high schools still have a distinct freedom in both the choice of content and the form of the activities that frame their work.

The law governing the Danish folk high schools contains three key aspects: Enlightenment of life (Livsoplysning), popular enlightenment (Folkeoplysning) and democratic Bildung (demokratisk dannelse) (FFD, 2006). Despite, or perhaps because of, these both ambitious and vague aims of the schools and the entailing room for experi-

mental pedagogical practices, the folk high schools remain extremely popular and allow a historically embedded dynamically changing focus on societal challenges. The folk high schools remain popular; a growing part of young generations choose to spend time at a folk high school before continuing with their formal studies. Each year, about 10.000 persons enrol in a course of more than 12 weeks' duration at the folk high schools (StatisticsDenmark, 2021).

A growing trend is how individual teachers, specific schools and the Danish Folk High School Association are bringing focus to and are working with sustainability issues as part of their core activities (FFD, 2017). This work is a heterogeneous process, reflecting the open and dynamic nature of folk high schools as exploratory pedagogical spaces when working with complex issues such as sustainable development (Lysgaard, 2020). The nature of the folk high schools leads to greater flexibility in terms of dealing with emerging societal challenges, but also to insist on issues which are not necessarily politically opportune, or has yet to reach mainstream narratives (Rahbek, 2019).

In this chapter, we will examine how the folk high school, and specifically the Danish folk high school teacher works with emerging issues such as sustainable development. We will also question the possibilities and challenges regarding the folk high school as a historically embedded, but also ever-changing pedagogical space.

## **Methods and analytical approaches**

This chapter draws on historical insights into the development of the folk high school as educational and pedagogical spaces characterized by both tradition and change. We combine those insights with interviews with teachers at folk high schools working with sustainable development. They were questioned about their practice with

sustainability, and how they imagine their work as part of the development of a notion of Sustainable Bildung.

Our study population is three folk high school teachers who teach at three different folk high schools with long courses. The teachers can be characterized as front-runners of sustainable development in the Danish folk high schools. Common to them are their explicit reflections about their practice, but their approaches are rather different. Two of them teach courses with sustainability as their main focus at general folk high schools. The third teaches at a specialised folk high school – more specifically a school with a focus on design and architecture. His courses do therefore not explicitly focus on sustainability, but more indirectly, e. g., through sustainable materials. Our interviews have been shaped by the phenomenological tradition and an explicit interest in the meaning-making structures and processes that the teachers experience and express regarding the foundations of their pedagogical ideals and practices (Manen, 2014).

## **The rise and growth of the Danish Folk High School**

The Danish folk high schools have witnessed changing conditions and levels of interest and support through their more than 170 years of existence. From prosperous years with new schools emerging to slumps of school closures, the folk high schools have developed and debated their *raison d'être* and different approaches to Bildung.

Rødning Folk High School, considered the first Danish folk high school, was established in 1844 with the aim of strengthening the position of the Danish language. Back then, Rødning was a part of Schleswig, where about half of the population spoke German (Korsgaard, 2019). N.F.S. Grundtvig was behind the idea of a folk high school. He feared for Denmark's security and existential foun-



dation against the increasing German nationalism in Schleswig and Holstein. Grundtvig was also concerned with the social position of the peasantry, and the peasants at that time constituted a large part of the Danish population. With an explicit wish to broaden the scope of enlightenment to also include this group, the concept of popular enlightenment (folkeoplysning) became central (Korsgaard, 2019).

Through time, the *raison d'être* of the folk high schools has been subject to change and debate. From setting the agenda with reference to their own foundational values in terms of *Bildung* and enlightenment, the folk high schools are now forced to adapt to society to a greater extent than before. During the 20th century, the folk high school became subject to external pressure – from structures of society and the technical and social development. The folk high schools had to comply with trends in their age to stay relevant and thereby ensure their own survival. With the youth revolt of 1968 and rising urbanization in Denmark, the main part of the students no longer consisted of young peasants, but younger people from the bigger cities. They were far more enlightened than their predecessors, which put new demands on the folk high school, such as more democratic structures. During the 20th century, the *raison d'être* of the folk high school became a debate about whether the folk high school could keep up with the times, or needed to adapt more to the outside world (Korsgaard, 2019; Slumstrup, 1984).

Alongside the democratic development and the folk high schools' loss of position as a beacon in a changeable world, the environmental movement started to flourish in the 1960's. The changes paved the way for the movement's impact on the folk high schools, and students and teachers started to experiment with self-sufficiency, ecological societies and critique of marketization of e. g., food supply chains. Even so, it was not the first time such ambitions were carried out in the folk high schools. Back in 1981, Poul la Cour, teacher at Askov

folk high school, developed Denmark's first electricity-producing windmill in close collaboration with his students. Since then, as the agendas changed from environmentally driven focus on e. g., pollution towards global agendas linked to climate change and sustainability, various folk high schools have developed a specific focus on these challenges. Almost half of the Danish folk high schools are a part of the Sustainability Network (BæredygtighedsNetværket) established by the Danish Folk High School Association (FFD, 2020). Here, the folk high schools are able to exchange experiences about sustainability – pedagogically, practically and in relation to values (FFD, 2020).

Linking notions of sustainability with different concepts of Bildung, we draw inspiration from Koselleck's differentiated analysis of Bildung to highlight some of the potentials of the current development within the folk high schools; also, how practitioners' perspectives on their work and practice substantiate understandings of Sustainable Bildung. The concept of Bildung is both dynamic and central to a continuum of debates surrounding the form, function and substance of the concept. Very different positions have emerged over time, often drawing on diverse conceptions of the individual, community, society and the role of the folk high school in such complex processes. Koselleck argues for at least four different positions in order to understand the varied approaches to Bildung: 1) Bildung as external shaping of someone by the society and culture, 2) Bildung as internal development of innate potentials of the individual, 3) Bildung as critical exploration of different ways of being in the world, 4) Bildung as experimental and creative transgression of the existing order (Koselleck, 2007). These different positions would rarely be found in distilled pure forms, but do, also in a folk high school setting, emerge as hybrid conceptualizations of Bildung in both theory and practice, simultaneously drawing on different positions. These

different conceptualizations of Bildung and the ongoing debate surrounding them and their role as part of the folk high schools also link to the ongoing mainstreaming of issues linked to sustainability, environmental challenges, climate change or green transformation of society (Lysgaard, 2020).

## **Empirical perspectives on Sustainable Bildung**

We have engaged three Danish folk high school teachers, in order to explore how the folk high school teacher is working with these emerging challenges linked to sustainability in relation to the overall Bildung-oriented ambition of the schools and their understanding of their work and the ensuing challenges that it offers. The three teachers are anonymous and appear under the names Tor, Jens and Karl.

### **The need for a new form of Bildung?**

The teachers emphasize that their main motivation comes from exploring the foundational challenges that we face as individuals and societies. Jens describes one of our societal challenges as environmental illiteracy or semi-Bildung, as he stresses that the climate challenge cannot be solved merely by hard science or technological fixes but revolves around “consequences of the ways we think and the ways we are”. Tor emphasizes that we must unlearn the habits and norms with which we grew up; “We talk so much about Bildung and learning something new, but we must also unlearn”. Consequently, there must be a change in our worldview, view of nature and in our self-understanding as human beings. Karl agrees with this need, which for him is about a change of mind. For him, it is exactly the Bildung that we have practiced for generations that is to blame for the fact that we are not able to act sustainably today. In line with

this, Karl believes that the concept of Bildung, to which the folk high school subscribes, tends to put the human being at the centre; “We have become distanced from the fact that we are a part of a bigger universe. Our concept of Bildung does place us in the centre – it is the human, that is interesting”. For Jens, sustainable Bildung is about understanding that we have become alienated from the foundation on which we as a species stand. He believes that our collective Bildung has failed and that we must scrutinize our comprehension of the concept to get on the right course. Tor emphasizes that we are actually good at adapting if we see it as a necessity: “We can actually get by on much less. It is not a problem to take a cold shower if there is no hot water”. However, it can be argued that we have not yet reached a point where we see sustainable behaviour as a necessity.

## **Facing reality**

It is important for the teachers to give students a thorough understanding of the state of the Earth and nature, and the consequences of our current way of life. Tor begins his teaching with an overview of the consequences of our behaviour. “It is important to view the world as something we need to take care of instead of taking it for granted.” Karl has the same focus. In his teaching, he compiles dystopian narratives about the future, which involve floods, increasing temperatures and declines in biodiversity, and hands students tasks that involve designing for this different future. This challenges the students as they are forced to think in new directions and take some unfamiliar considerations into account. Tor and Karl each try to communicate the vulnerability of the Earth and see this as a core task in their way of teaching.

Jens and Tor reflect on how their approach to teaching can be depressing and can lead to the students suffering from climate anxiety. However, they both see this concern as a sign of health and agree that

it is a natural consequence of understanding the realities. Jens states: “Sometimes I have students who tell me that they have climate anxiety. And it is important for me to tell them that it is not a problem, it is a sign of health. It is because you understand something.” Although this can lead to powerlessness, the teachers see knowledge about the fragility of nature and the overview of the consequences of our way of life as an important prerequisite for further work. For them, it is a cornerstone of sustainable education.

### **Symbolic actions?**

The climate change can be hard for the individual to conceive. For some of the teachers, action is therefore a central part of education for sustainable development. For Karl, it is important that the students rediscover their creative powers; “I am a do-it-yourself person. You can actually make things yourself. If you want a skateboard, go build a skateboard, you do not have to buy one.” Jens emphasizes the practical element as well, since education for sustainable development easily gets very theoretical. It is important to him that the students experiment with taking action.

On the other hand, Karl experiences that the small initiatives, like building plant boxes or being self-sufficient, are brought too much into focus on the folk high schools. He believes that we need to take some drastic steps to save the planet. This is related to the individual’s psychological barriers to a commitment to sustainable development (Læssøe, 2012). When it comes to climate change and sustainability, we often find ourselves in a dilemma between ideals and reality. A solution for the individual can be to do a little bit of everything. For example, buying recycled clothes, but at the same time driving 80 kilometres by car to work every day.

This technique is called simulation, where the individual with a symbolic action – such as buying recycled clothes – tells himself and

others that he is helping the environment. This can be understood as a sort of greenwashing at the individual level, but it is also transferable to the collective (Læssøe, 2012). In a folk high school perspective, it is particularly relevant, since smaller initiatives such as building plant boxes or being self-sufficient, can be perceived as small, socially valued actions. This allows the schools to tell themselves that they are helping the environment and makes it possible for them to brand themselves as sustainable folk high schools. It can be argued that these minor actions remove focus from the core problem, and risk expressing itself as a form of interpassivity. In relation to this interpassivity, the collective is absolutely central. The social field helps to create meaning and narratives for the individual, which can cover the feeling of being alone in the chaos that climate change causes (Lysgaard, 2018). The folk high school can be understood as a meaningful community with its own structures and narratives. This creates a strong platform for learning and Bildung processes, but always runs the risk of putting the specific community at the overarching centre of all processes, something that could conflict with the global and more-than-human focus of working with sustainability (Lysgaard, 2018).

## **Sustainable Bildung as pedagogical practice**

A key aspect of the teachers' practice of Sustainable Bildung is to emphasize scenarios and images of the world in a near future that emphasizes the development that is underway. Rising temperatures and sea levels, extreme weather conditions and so forth are present in their practice. They argue that these images and scenarios help the students, through a reflective process, understand the gravity of climate change and Earth's vulnerability. This is a form of pedagogy that relies on scepticism to reach a certain educational goal and imposes a critical view of the way human beings live in the world and

exploit its resources. We do not know for sure what the future consequences of climate change will be, but here, the worst-case scenario is applied.

This way of practicing Sustainable Bildung relies on a reflective process and experimental thinking and bears resemblance to Koselleck's third form of Bildung; Bildung as critical exploration of different ways of being in the world (Koselleck, 2007). This view of Bildung dissolves the previous dichotomy regarding Bildung; the external (socialisation and indoctrination) and the internal (actualisation). The development of a critical and reflective approach to our being in the world is a crucial part of Sustainable Bildung in the teachers' practices. They argue that it will make the students want to do better, mirroring a reflective stance to Bildung underlining the importance of the development of critical consciousness that also reflects on the social and historical context that makes this development possible (Paulsen, 2021).

Even though teaching the new generations critical thinking and the importance of a sceptical stance towards the current world order are highly valued elements in modern pedagogy, the way our informants practice their teaching can be viewed as "learning by fear". The informants also mention that their students risk developing climate anxiety. The question is therefore whether this anxiety-driven teaching practice is favourable. Too much intellectual critique and scepticism can potentially hinder any real changemaking. Putting a heavy emphasis on negative aspects, critique and scepticism could lead to a situation that primarily challenges the students and not necessarily helps them to create and make new things (Paulsen, 2021). At this point the essential question is what the end goals of Sustainable Bildung should be or what these are. Is it desirable that students develop critical thinking and natural scepticism, or are concrete behavioural changes more desirable?

### **“Practice vs. reflection”**

While this third position on Bildung emphasizes a more critical view on our basic human situation and ways of being in the world, the first position stresses Bildung as an external shaping of the individual by culture and society (Koselleck, 2007). From this point of view, Bildung is regarded as coming from ‘outside’ and implies that it is both possible and legitimate to affect people in a pre-given way. This is related to what Jensen & Schnack call “behaviour-modifying teaching” which, they argue, rarely if ever leads to intended long-term behavioural changes (Jensen & Schnack, 1997). This can be identified in some of the teachers’ practices with food waste events, building plant boxes and bee-keeping, as well as in FFD’s (Danish Folk High School Association) environmental indicators with focus on waste separation, and economizing on power and water (FFD, 2017). While the third position on Bildung is more intellectual and reflexive, an aspect of action is embedded in the first form, since the aim is to influence people to act in a certain way. Within the Danish folk high school, it is possible to identify two positions that mirror this dilemma between practice and reflection – one position that argues for action integrated into education, and another that argues for reflexive education which makes students able to take action after their school year.

According to Schnack and Jensen, the aim of environmental education is to make students capable of acting on both a societal as well as a personal level. Their concept on action competence could therefore be a compromise or a way to combine the two perspectives on Bildung. Environmental education must consist of four different components for the students to develop and strengthen their action competence: knowledge/insight, commitment, visions and action experiences (Jensen & Schnack, 1997).



Environmental education must firstly provide coherent knowledge in the field, together with insight into challenges and problems in relation to sustainability. This is a big concern for the three teachers, who offer the students an overview of Earth's and nature's condition. As stated above, this kind of education can, however, contribute to the feeling of powerlessness felt by many young students. Therefore, this component must be supplemented with others.

Secondly, it is crucial to encourage the students' motivation, commitment and drive, so the knowledge about environmental problems is transformed into action. The three teachers try to incorporate action in different ways due to at least two major reasons. They experience it as meaningful to both themselves and their students. Besides, the action experiences become a counterpart to the knowledge and reflection mentioned above.

Thirdly, the students' ideas, dreams and perceptions about their future lives must be developed. The teachers try to broaden the students' horizons by showing them alternative ways of living, alternative construction materials and alternative narratives on the future on Earth.

Finally, environmental education must provide students with concrete action experiences. All the teachers have an explicit focus on incorporating action into their teaching. Because of the absence of school curriculum and exams in the folk high schools, the teachers can focus on providing the students with action experiences in relation to sustainability.

The concept of action competence is drawing on perspectives from critical theory and critical pedagogy emphasising the importance of democratic *Bildung* as a mix of critical reflection, action and transformational competences (Mogensen & Schnack, 2010). In this way the concept has the potential to be meaningful to different positions

within the Danish folk high school and ensure strong relationships between practice and reflection in educational activities.

### **“A change in worldview”**

The folk high school teachers agree that a new form of Bildung is necessary in line with a new view of the world and our way of being in the world. Tor points out; “There must be a change in our worldview, view on nature and our self-understanding as human beings” and Karl agrees that there is a strong need for a change of mind. “We are a part of something a whole lot bigger, and right now, we are destroying our own livelihood”. For the teachers, this is a central aspect to be included in a concept of Sustainable Bildung. We must be able to alter not only our view of nature and its resources, but also our own place in the world and what impact we make. Drawing on Koselleck and Paulsen, it can be argued that the task of educators then becomes to confront people with challenging otherness (other ways of being and thinking that questions what one takes for granted). Bildung then represents efforts to become “critically conscious about how we are present in the world, what assumptions we rely on about a good life, where these assumptions come from and what consequences they have” (Paulsen, 2021). In that sense, Sustainable Bildung would revolve around our relation to the world in a very broad sense. It is not only about how we exploit the earth’s natural resources, but also how we think and act towards one another and the global community. The Danish theologian and philosopher Peter Kemp points out how Bildung could work towards solving global problems, such as armed conflicts or the climate crisis. In line with this, he points out how a new form of Bildung necessarily must be created in a global context and breed global responsibility; “In the ideal school, students are formed through Bildung and educated to global responsibility” (Kemp, 2013). The sort of Bildung that, according to

Kemp, will be an important tool in solving global problems, has to be sustainable. It has to do with our worldview not only in the present historical context, but also with regard to future problems such as rising seas and climate refugees. This is why the concept is named sustainable Bildung and not sustainability Bildung. Bildung should not only include visions of sustainability with regard to acting and being in the world in a sustainable way, but should also in itself be sustainable, adaptable and future-proof. In order to avoid the risk of the new Bildung concept being outdated (as we presently see as the need for a new form of Bildung) we have to create a form of Bildung that not only involves sustainability but also is sustainable in itself.

## **Sustainable Bildung?**

Since the very first folk high schools, controversy and heated debate have surrounded their foundational values and practices. The concept of Bildung has remained central in these debates, often covering very different perspectives on the content of such a notion, and not least the consequences for the work of the folk high school teacher. The dynamic and often troubled relationship between concepts of the folk high schools, manifesting traditional ideas of society and socially towards Bildung as critical and often transgressive approaches to the existing, is still both relevant and visible among the Danish folk high schools. As a case for understanding the ongoing work of the high school teacher as a way of navigating and substantialising different perspectives on Bildung notions, such as sustainable development, it offers a window into current challenges. The folk high school enables pedagogical space to work with concepts that have not yet been developed in the formal educational systems, but at the same time this also offers challenges.

In practice, drawing on the three teachers involved in this study, it is clear that the framework of the folk high school offers potentials, advantages and pitfalls when it comes to nuancing a strong pedagogical tradition in accordance with emerging agendas. The teachers emphasize how the folk high school's liberal status in the educational system gives them the opportunity to experiment, which is also a central part of the folk high school tradition. In their teaching, there is a strong focus on action, tangible experiences and sensuousness as a supplement to factual knowledge and teaching about climate change. The teachers find themselves in a dilemma regarding the interest and perceptions of their students as they try to navigate efforts to attract them while at the same time insisting on a progressive and emerging notion of *Bildung*.

The liberal position, history and tradition, as well as the opportunity to offer students committed communities, illustrate the folk high school as a dynamic and strong framework for engaging with concepts such as sustainable development. There is ample room to incorporate elements of action in the teaching. However, there is a danger that folk high school teachers misguide the engagement of the students and their specific interest or ambition to deal with such challenging issues at a folk high school – a period in life often framed as time off from the ongoing worries of young people trying to get a foothold in relation to their future.

The folk high school and the work of the folk high school teacher remain contested and under constant development. While our three highly sustainability-engaged teachers argue that the folk high school remains one of the few liberal and open spaces in which to engage with massive societal and individual challenges such as climate change or green transformation, this work aligns with both certain historically bound and tradition-infused efforts to strengthen the individual's engagement in society. It also represents the possibility of

seeing the folk high school as a nesting place for a new and potentially far-reaching concept of Sustainable Bildung.

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# **Chapter 10**

## **Freedom with reservations: The work of the Swedish folk high school teacher**

**By Per Andersson, Filippa Millenberg and Sofia Österborg Wiklund**

### **Introduction**

Folk high school teachers work many hours in fluid ways with no clear distinction between working hours and leisure time. Pedagogically, they are often described as being value driven and participant focused. Creating interests, involving, motivating, giving recognition to, challenging, and creating possibilities for participants to grow as human beings is important for the teachers. In this chapter, we mobilise empirical examples to explore if these aspects are connected to a particular understanding of what learning is and should be, a mutual/embedded exploration process where both participants and teachers are challenged and grow as persons and where collaboration and the collective are prerequisites. This particular perspective on learning appears far removed from the traditional subject-based classroom of child education.



We describe and discuss the work of folk high school teachers in Sweden, and problematise the work conditions of this diverse group of teachers. Even though a national folk high school teacher programme exists, there is no formal requirement of a teaching degree (cf. Hallqvist et al., in this volume). Therefore, we focus on the work of those who are employed as folk high school teachers, regardless of their educational background. In an extensive study of the work as a folk high school teacher (Andersson, Rudberg, Rydenstam & Svensson, 2013), a general conclusion is that folk high school teachers have a strong commitment in their work, with a clear focus on the participants and the individual dimension in the aims and ambitions of the folk high school movement. The teachers work long hours; even apart from the lessons they spend time on activities with their participants. They also state that they need more knowledge to be able to identify and support participants with special needs. The chapter also discusses the potential tension between the ethical and value-based convictions of the teacher, and the societal structures that are present in the context of a folk high school. We end the chapter by discussing and problematising the teachers' approach to the learning showcased above.

## **What teachers do – and when: Work without boundaries**

What do the teachers actually do, and how do they spend their time on different work tasks? In the study of the work of Swedish folk high school teachers (Andersson et al., 2013) basically all teachers had the opportunity to respond to a survey concerning their work (1,344 teachers responded). In addition to this, 94 teachers recorded their work tasks and time use during a seven-day week. Headmasters and teachers were also interviewed. The detailed study of how folk high

school teachers spend their time, describes the work of 94 teachers during seven days, in total 658 days in these teachers' lives. The teachers spent an average of 47.5 hours on work during this week. However, some teachers work part-time, and the average for those with a full-time position was 49 hours. This includes four hours of meals and coffee breaks – activities that are not formally included as working hours, but that actually are used for work in terms of conversation with colleagues and participants, planning etc. About one third each was spent on teaching, preparing and follow-up of lessons, and other work activities.

More women than men worked part-time. But among those who worked full-time, the study showed that male teachers spent somewhat more time on work than female teachers. However, the most striking difference between categories of teachers was that teachers in the special courses reported more time on work than teachers in the general course. The difference was as much as five hours per week, and these hours were mainly spent in the evenings and weekends. This might be a result of special courses more often attracting participants who end up living in school dormitories, which could entail organised activities where teachers are involved outside daytime working hours. Of course, it might also be that teachers in special courses generally are more involved and engaged in their subjects and teaching.

The time use illustrates the focus on participants in the work of teachers. Among these teachers, an average of 13 hours per week were spent on teaching in lessons. Supervision, counselling, conversations with participants, communal meetings for the whole school, social activities with participants, and being with participants in informal meetings, were other activities with participants that accounted for another three hours per week. In addition to this, the teachers often meet participants during lunch and coffee breaks. An-

other indication of the deep involvement was the high amount of time spent on work outside regular work (daytime) hours (Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–5 p.m.). As many as 94 percent of the teachers had done this – 92 percent on weekdays and 80 percent on weekends. Almost one fourth of them had been working outside daytime hours all seven days of the week (one third of the male teachers, one fifth of the female teachers). This illustrates the deep involvement in their work – but it also confirms the teachers’ descriptions of their work as ‘without boundaries’. It should also be noted that the number of hours spent on work are averages, which means that many teachers spend considerably more time working, and others do less, during a rather normal week of work. Actually, one of eight female teachers, and one of ten male teachers, reported a workload of more than 60 hours during the week when the study was conducted.

## **Work conditions**

The time available, and how it is spent, is a central condition of the work as a folk high school teacher, but there are also other important factors. The survey of the teachers covered attitudes to a number of factors that influence work conditions. In general, the teachers’ responses indicate that the conditions are ‘good’ or ‘rather good’ regarding most of the aspects of work in the survey. However, some factors stand out. On the one hand, the teachers indicate particularly good work situations concerning their professional freedom, the opportunities to cooperate with colleagues, and conditions of employment. On the other hand, aspects that were assessed as less good were the workload, the IT equipment and support, the teachers’ offices, and opportunities to participate in continuing professional development activities. Concerning professional development, the need for knowledge concerning participants with special needs was emphasised.

Taken together, the results from the survey and the time-use study tell the story of a situation where the teachers had a focus on their participants, a positive attitude towards both the professional freedom and the conditions of employment at the folk high school. However, the workload was heavy and time-consuming, and the opportunities of organised professional development were limited (Andersson, 2014; Andersson et al., 2013).

## **The teacher in the folk high school context**

The work of the folk high school teachers takes place in a certain organisational context with structures that form the basic conditions of their work. As described, there are often ethical and value-based driving forces underlying the long working hours and deep engagement that many teachers experience. The folk high school is often described as an inclusive and welcoming social place for participants to flourish; developing personal interest, getting to know a new country, recovering from previous life events, or getting access to education that previously felt unachievable. Governed by missions and regulations that differ from other forms of education, folk high schools in general are surrounded by negotiations of a unique and mythical spirit that creates the particularity of the folk high school and its learning environment (e. g., Paldanius, 2007). It is known for being opted for providing empowering spaces for many participants with different forms of disabilities, who have previously fared badly in the regular school (Hugo et al., 2019). The folk high school has a history of mobilising (or getting mobilised by) different social movements with educational, social, religious, environmental, or global justice endeavours, e. g., peasant or labour movements.

The value-based missions of many folk high schools put didactical challenges to the fore. As in many other sites of emancipatory strug-

gles, there are often greater endeavours than there are resources and possibilities. Participants, teachers and others involved in the educational practices may get trapped in tricky and even painful dilemmas between what is desirable, achievable, what should happen, versus what really happens. Besides a lack of resources, examples of dilemmas are teachers' limited time in relation to their visions; written assessments; rules and regulations that go against their own didactical ideas, etc. Not least, the folk high school teacher must manage the engagement regarding the relationships with the participants; participants who are socially vulnerable, threatened by deportation or with mental health difficulties but still struggling to manage school. Not seldom, the fluidity of folk high school teachership is characterised by a compassionate sense of responsibility towards the participants' life and wellbeing, on top of an already heavy workload.

### **The teacher being 'in and against'**

In order to capture dilemmas that occur in emancipatory education settings, scholars in the 1970s coined the expression 'in and against'. The notion refers to the intrinsic challenges of acting *within* a system; a school system governed by national, global, historical, and social structures, at the same time as you are aware of, and working against, the very same system (LEWGR, 1979). This ambivalence of "in and againstness" can often be seen in the challenges of folk high school teachers, not least since the folk high school alternates in the tension between struggles 'from below' and governance from 'above' (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2014). Both in and against the struggles for societal change, the folk high school has historically been dealing with patriarchal (Lundin, 2008), colonial (Dahlstedt & Nordvall, 2011; Österborg Wiklund, 2018, 2019), and racist structures (Osman, 1999; Yang, 2010, 2016; Österborg Wiklund, 2018, 2019), which some folk high school teachers are actively working

against, not least from a minority position. This means that folk high school teachers could be struggling in and against, and from below, the impacts of racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, ageist, and other societal structures.

Often, teachers form their own strategies to manage and tackle challenges inherent in their settings. An example comes from a special course on global injustice, where grassroots organisations with teachers in Sweden and the Global South receive Swedish participants for study visits or longer periods of volunteer work (Österborg Wiklund, 2019; 2022). Here, the curriculum aims at raising awareness about global development and injustice. The ethical dilemma lies in the fact that the condition for the existence of the course is the very same global injustice; it relies on unequal global mobility, travelling facilities, as well as economic and social stratification in order for the participants to learn about global injustice. This puts teachers and facilitators in stressful and sometimes painful didactical dilemmas, not least when handling the quandaries of the participants.

Affiliated to different organisations in the Andean region, the teachers express much of their in and againstness as being about managing the classroom effects of structures of inequity. The teacher Vilma expresses the educational purposes of the course as an unlearning of what has been taught about development, aid, global justice, and equality. Instead of viewing development as a linear, economic form of human progression, the aim of the course is to help participants to recognise the historical, colonial causes of the inequalities of today.

In this particular classroom, unlearning refers to learning about different forms of colonialism ‘in us, in our actions, in our self-image’. Vilma works with raising awareness about how one is involved in different structures of power. One of the challenges is, however, to get through the participant’s sense of individualism and emotions of

shame, guilt and resistance towards this awareness. It also includes helping them to heal from the effects of a harsh and individualised Swedish society in order for them to be able to take real action for global change. Vilma says:

I was probably quite unsympathetic many times, towards ... this more, what can I say, this more 'personal development' thing. Fiddlesticks! (laughs) (...) I come from such a collectivist tradition, and a movement tradition (...) Before, I kind of thought that if we open the door to the continent for them, then they should do something for it! (laughter) (...) But then I have understood that, because society seems to be so hard now, maybe too hard, that for many it is more an escape from that. (...) Harmed people can't help in the struggle, either, in the long run.

The tension between 'personal development' and 'collective tradition' that has characterised the folk high school since a long time back (cf. Sundgren, 1999, 2002), becomes part of Vilma's depictions of in and againstness. She and her colleagues have to start with personal development in order to get access to the main purpose of collective action against global injustice. There is, hence, not a necessary opposition between the two; the first is rather a tool, and the latter a subgoal towards the greater purpose of changing the world.

Another feature of in and againstness is expressed by the mentor Natalia. In her long experiences of receiving and supervising Swedish folk high school participants in her organisation, she expresses how she sometimes have been managing patronising perceptions of aid and development, which lately even has turned into consumerism:

One thing that I've always criticized the Swedish movement for in some way is that Sweden somehow always had

that image of international solidarity; there is a moment when it turns around, solidarity turns around and becomes help. (...) But lately I have seen beyond what coming to help is ... because they are middle-class companions, young middle-class, with a lot of privileges in Swedish society and a lot of privileges in the society of the world, they come with this perception ... not of solidarity, of the building of solidarity, but of the purchasing of a service, purchasing of knowledge (...). And that scares me a lot. Because what we want to build (...) is not that. We want to build the solidarity of the world to change this world.

Thus, Natalia problematises not only how philanthropic attitudes sometimes prevail in the classroom, but also how ‘solidarity’ increasingly becomes commodified and commercialised. This adheres to research pointing out how the notion and experience of ‘global development’ during the recent decades are becoming desirable areas of knowledge to be sold to a wealthy middle class in the Global North (Vrasti, 2010, 2013; Österborg Wiklund, 2019), a mission that is far from the value-based endeavours of Natalia’s organisation. This in turn governs the relationship with the participants, and hence the in and againstness of the teachers and in the classroom.

## **Discussion**

The high degree of freedom is important if the Swedish folk high school teachers should be seen and consider themselves as professionals (cf. Colliander et al., in this volume). However, the workload that often is ‘without boundaries’ indicates that the employers – the folk high schools and their headmasters – must take responsibility for the work conditions, create a context where freedom is sustainable,



and provide opportunities for creativity and development among the teachers.

This freedom contributes to a teaching practice where teachers greatly influence the purpose, content, and staging of the teaching. The teaching practice expresses that personal growth is highly valued and intertwined with learning of the craftsmanship. Growing as a human being should not be understood as only a project for the individual; rather the growth is about emerging as a human being, as a human among other humans (Arendt, 1998; Biesta, 2014; Larsson, 2018). The Swedish folk high schools, drawing on a Grundtvigian idea, view personal development as both vital to the learner's growth through *Bildung* (Gustavsson & Wiklund, 2013), and as an important democratic right. This identity has been questioned or scrutinised many times (Hållén, 2015; Nylander, 2014). Such critique is important for a healthy conversation on what education is and should be for. At the same time, it is important to recognise productive or positive aspects of education as well. Folk high school teachers draw on the core values and beliefs of popular education in order to make their participants visible. By recognising and challenging them, by inviting them to take their place as human beings among other human beings, teachers give participants a chance to express their whole being. In this, they enact a humanist pedagogy closer in ethos to those of Freire and Mezirow than to capitalist notions of learning as means to becoming employable.

A continuous critical reflection on what other structures and inequities that are governing the classroom, and the teachers and participants inhabiting it, is important in the development of folk high school educational ideals. For example, in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic, the work of the folk high school teacher has reached new dimensions. Teachers and participants were very rapidly forced to redirect most education to online and distance modes, complicating

the study situation for many participants depending on factors such as socio-economic and technical resources as well as language skills (Folkbildningsrådet, 2021). The collectively long-time developed features of folk high school teacher identities were all at once forced to be translated into a mostly digital endeavour. Interestingly, while the folk high school environment has been reported as favourable for participants in neuropsychiatric difficulties (Hugo, Hedegaard & Bjursell, 2019), reports from the pandemic-state folk high school show that some neurodivergent participants sometimes do better *beyond* on-site education – online (Folkbildningsrådet, 2021). Such findings alter the whole idea about what a good study environment, and good folk high school teachership, could be, beyond that of the sole on-site educational ideal. What are the barriers that could actually be removed with distance education (given the right conditions), for both teachers and participants? Are there ‘neurotypical’ standards that are also built into folk high school on-site ideals? And, in that case, what could an in and againstness look like? Importantly, one could ask how an inclusive and diverse folk high school education and teachership could be developed accordingly.

To return to the initial queries of folk high school teachers being value driven, and where the working time appears as fluid with sometimes no clear distinction between *on* and *off* work, the dilemmas of in and againstness add new dimensions to the understanding of the work of folk high school teachers. This is not limited to working conditions or schedules but include the working environment in itself and the institutional dispositions surrounding the setting. Particularly, this raises questions that often are asked regarding participants, students, and pupils, but not as often when it comes to teachers: how inclusive and diverse are the folk high school teachers’ working conditions and settings? Is their freedom a freedom with reservations? To what extent are there classed, raced, gendered, and

ableist ideas of normality governing the idea of the ‘folk high school teacher’, and ‘good’ folk-high-school-teachership? Are there barriers preventing different kinds of teacherships to flourish? How does the working environment include a diversity of teachers, with different experiences, identities, and knowledges, whom participants can relate to and identify with? Whom have the ‘walls’ of the folk high school classroom been formed according to, as the critical race and whiteness studies scholar Sara Ahmed (2010) would say, and who are the walls constantly chafing or even blocking the very entrance for? This narrows down to the crucial question of the lived experiences of teachers teaching ‘from below’ at the folk high schools, and how the folk high school as a form of education is engaged in creating – or breaking – normalcy, practices of exclusion and inclusion. The work of folk high school teachers should be not only about the growth of the participants but should also be a space where teachers themselves grow as human beings, and where participants and teachers together contribute to the development of a better world. More research is needed on these important and critical subjects.

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# Chapter 11

## How can research foster folk high school pedagogy?

By Michael Noah Weiss

### Introduction

In the autumn of 2020, I was invited to a symposium about folk high school pedagogy at the University of South-Eastern Norway. The event marked the beginning of its first academic program for folk high school teachers and a central question was raised there: What is it that a university program has on offer that this unique type of school could not develop on its own? The answer that was brought forward sounds as simple as surprising: It is research. It sounds simple because research is generally attributed to universities. And it sounds surprising because one can legitimately ask whether the pedagogical practices of folk high schools would indeed benefit from research activities.

### Research question

How folk high schools can benefit from research activities, seems to depend on how research can contribute to these schools' main pedagogical goals. As laid down in *The Folk High School Act*, these goals

are, in Norwegian, *allmenndanning* and *folkeopplysning*. There are various translations of these terms (see e. g., The Folk High School Act, 2003, § 1; Lövgren & Nordvall, 2017; Weiss, 2017; 2021) but in order to operationalise them for the purposes of this chapter, I decided to translate *allmenndanning* as self-formation and *folkeopplysning* as people's enlightenment. Instead of self-formation one could also have chosen *Bildung*. Interpretations of the latter, however, sometimes tone down the dimension of individual growth and personal development (Klafki, 2007, p. 15f & 2001, p. 39) – a dimension which still seems to be essential in folk high school pedagogy (Eidsvåg, 2011, p. 164). *Folkeopplysning*, then, is generally translated as public enlightenment. This, however, does not fit the intentions of the folk high schools' founding father, N.F.S. Grundtvig, who understood enlightenment more like an attitude towards life, characterised by critical reflection on life's key dimensions, such as politics, democracy, community, solidarity, etc., and not as some sort of knowledge to be imposed on the public (see Ohrem, 2011, p. 44f). Therefore, the term *people's enlightenment* appears to be a better choice.

A key assumption in this paper is that if certain research activities foster self-formation and people's enlightenment, then the schools can benefit from these activities. However, instead of critically reviewing others' research, I try to 'clean up in my own backyard first' in the present chapter. As a lecturer in the program for folk high school teachers and as a researcher, philosophical dialogue practices are central to my work. What makes philosophical dialogue specifically relevant when examining potential benefits of research for folk high schools is on the one hand that dialogue was suggested by Grundtvig as the central pedagogical method of these schools (see e. g., Korsgaard, 2017, p. 283). On the other, in light of the Socratic method of *maieutics*, dialogue can be seen as one of the oldest forms of research (see e. g., Wortel & Verweij, 2008). Therefore,

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the projects investigated in this chapter have different dialogue practices at their centre. The guiding research question of this chapter therefore reads:

How can dialogue-based research promote<sup>1</sup> the main goals of Norwegian folk high schools, in terms of self-formation and people's enlightenment?

### **Method**

In order to find answers to this question, I will use the methodological approach of Reflective Practice Research (Lindseth, 2020) to analyse three research projects carried out at different folk high schools. Developed by Anders Lindseth, this approach intends to reflect professional practices (e. g., those of a pedagogue) with the purpose of getting a deeper understanding of them and improving them, as well as improving oneself as practitioner (see Lindseth, 2017a, p. 244). The approach suggests three steps of reflection (Lindseth, 2020, p. 97f): In the first, *Concrete reflection*, a concrete practice experience or case is narrated. With reference to Ricœur's phenomenology (2007, p. 265), Lindseth points out that already the act of narration represents a form of reflection, since the narrator reflects on how to frame the case, what to emphasise, and so on (Lindseth, 2020, p. 97). In the second step, *Critical reflection*, the hermeneutical questions "What is at stake in this case or experience?" and "What is it essentially about?" are central in order to identify more general, universal themes implicit in the narration. In the third step, *Theoretical reflection*, the identified themes and the narration are brought into dialogue with theoretical concepts and perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the term *to promote* here is also used in the sense of *to challenge in a positive and constructive way*, for example, by means of critical reflection.



For reasons of research ethics, all personal data that was included in any way in these three projects is anonymised. Furthermore, the present research was reviewed and approved by NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

## Case studies

In this section I present three small-scale research projects, comparable to what Torbert (1999) outlined as Action Inquiry. Each project investigated a specific philosophical dialogue format and its impact on *self-formation* and *people's enlightenment*. The first two were carried out by teachers as part of the university program on folk high school pedagogy. The dialogue methods used were taught in the lectures that I gave in this program. The third project is one that I did in the autumn of 2019. I will present the first two steps of the Reflective Practice Research on each project, while the third step is done as a common reflection on all three cases.

### Case 1: Socratic dialogue

#### Concrete reflection

The first project that I present here, was carried out by four teachers from four different schools. By means of action research, they investigated whether the Socratic dialogue method after Nelson and Heckman could foster *inclusion* among students and staff (Nelson, 2004; Heckman, 2004). This dialogue method takes its point of departure in concrete experiences about the topic under investigation (in this case *inclusion*); these experiences are then examined in the group in order to formulate more general ideas about the topic, which are rooted in the investigated experiences (see e. g., Weiss, 2015, p. 215f). Hence,

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the participants of this dialogue-based action research project presented and reflected on examples about how and where they once experienced inclusion at their school. In all four dialogues, the groups also arrived at a more general definition of what inclusion is. As their theoretical background, they assumed that inclusion is central to democratic education and active citizenship, which again are closely related to self-formation and people's enlightenment. In the course of the project each teacher facilitated one dialogue at his or her school, with either regular students, prefects (second-year students) or participating teacher colleagues. After each dialogue, a so-called meta-reflection was done. The participants were asked whether they would think that the Socratic method would be a useful approach to promote inclusion at their school. Surprisingly, the common tenor in all meta-reflections was that this dialogue format appeared to be highly valuable in order to make one aware of how inclusion is practiced at the respective schools. Even though, as the investigated examples in the dialogues had shown, inclusion was already practiced in various ways, it was only through these dialogues that the participants began to realise that. In other words, inclusion was an implicit practice that only became explicit through the dialogues.

### **Critical reflection**

The guiding question of the present step called *critical reflection* reads *What is at stake?* So, what is at stake in the previous narrative? According to Ohrem, *tacit knowledge* represents a key term in folk high school pedagogy (see Ohrem & Weiss, 2019, p. 9). That is, much of this pedagogy is not put into words but rather practiced in terms of *leading by example*. Students learn by observing the teacher's attitudes and actions, and they might be inspired to emulate them, which Lövgren calls *embodying values* (Lövgren 2020, p. 20f). In the previous project, *inclusion* obviously represented an em-

bodied value that was already successfully practiced at the schools whereas an explicit strategy to promote this value was absent. It was primarily through the research and the Socratic dialogues that the participants became aware of *how* inclusion was practiced. This process of *bringing to awareness*, however, rather led to a more universal understanding of inclusion than to general strategies about how it *should be practiced*. This difference appears to be important because what seems to be at stake in the previous project is the specific handling of the tacit knowledge of inclusion. If one is setting out to make implicit values explicit by formulating recipe-like strategies, the students might certainly be able to simulate inclusion, but this simulation would lack authenticity. Hence, it would endanger the schools' tacit knowledge. Instead of embodying the value of inclusion by means of one's authentic attitude, one would just blindly follow a standardised procedure. Here we arrive at two fundamentally different forms of knowledge, which at a later point will be described in detail: *techné* (know-how knowledge) and *phronesis* (prudence), as Aristotle called them (1980). For reasons that will be explained in the theoretical reflection, it appears that the previously presented research project chiefly deals with the latter.

## **Case 2: Democratic speed dating**

### **Concrete reflection**

The second case represents an action research project carried out by teachers from five different schools. They investigated whether a few minutes of *democratic speed dating* – a dialogue format derived from *philosophical speed dating* – could foster democratic self-formation and active citizenship in their students. To that end, they developed a matrix of democratic self-formation, which consisted of five categories (connectedness, friction, development, inclusion, en-

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gagement) and three levels (individual level; small communities like groups and classes; big communities like schools and society). By means of participant observation, each teacher investigated where his or her school could be located in this matrix. In the second phase of the project, the teachers facilitated democratic speed dating dialogues, which are short one-on-one dialogues, where the dialogue partners talk spontaneously on a given topic for about 2–6 minutes before they change dialogue partner and start a new dialogue. In this project the teachers provided ten topics, which the students reflected on in ten rounds of democratic speed dating. After the dialogue sessions, qualitative interviews were done with the students. When analysing them, the teachers found out that, in one way or another, all the categories of their matrix were met on all levels. However, it could not be determined to which degree they were met. In other words, a few minutes of democratic speed dating had an impact on the students' democratic self-formation, but the research tools used could not determine how deep this impact was. To me, what appeared to be even more interesting than this finding, however, was that the teachers emphasised that they themselves went through important learning and reflection processes due to this research project. It improved their practical knowledge to promote democratic self-formation with their students.

### **Critical reflection**

At this point the project's research question lends itself to some critical reflections: Can a few minutes of a simple dialogue format really have a lasting impact on the democratic self-formation of the participants, or does it rather undermine in-depth learning on the topic? Posing the question like this, it appears to be democratic self-formation itself which is at stake here. When one takes a closer look at the previous project, two decisive aspects emerge: 1) All the questions used

in the speed dating were self-reflective, like “What is my opinion on this topic; what do I truly think and how do I really feel about these questions?” Having the students express their thoughts and feelings appears to be essential for people’s enlightenment. According to Grundtvig, people’s enlightenment has to come *from within*, in terms of the Socratic “Know thyself” (see Ohrem & Weiss, 2019, p. 19). Through dialogue with others, one can go into dialogue with oneself and develop one’s own stances, attitudes, beliefs, etc. Seen in this light, it appears to be better to have only a few minutes of self-reflective dialogue than hours of lectures on democracy. The latter could easily turn into public enlightenment where established societal values are just delivered to the students, without any further critical reflection (Ohrem & Weiss, 2019, p. 19). This was of course not the case in the previous project. The analysis showed that the dialogue format of democratic speed dating could address all categories in the matrix of democratic self-formation, indicating that it was people’s enlightenment that was promoted instead of public enlightenment. 2) This project was not only about a few minutes of dialoguing. When the involved teachers stated that they themselves learned a great deal about democratic formation through their reflections and experiences from this project, this indicates that it was the research activity itself that led to a development of their knowledge and competence. And here research turns into a *caring* practice, in order to *safeguard* the students’ democratic self-formation processes. The idea of philosophical investigations as *care for the self* is not new though. As Foucault points out, we already find it with the ancient schools of philosophy and he defines this form of care as “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre” (Foucault,

1986, p. 10). A definition which seems to go well together with the theme of self-formation.

### **Case 3: Philosophical guided imageries**

#### **Concrete reflection**

The last project presented here is a research project that I carried out at a folk high school in 2019 (see Weiss, 2021). Over a period of two months, I facilitated seven *philosophical guided imageries* with around 15 students participating; the purpose being to see whether and how such imagery exercises would contribute to the students' self-formation. The imageries were derived from the Trilogos method (see e. g., Roethlisberger, 2012) and written like short stories. Each story was about a specific philosophical theme, such as self-knowledge, the art of living, etc. The idea was to let students not only philosophise about these themes but let the students experience them in their imagination. In the imagery about self-knowledge, for example, the participants were invited to an imaginary tour through the Temple of Apollo in Delphi where the maxim "Know thyself" was inscribed at the entrance, which Socrates referred to on several occasions. In each imagery, the students could discover something unexpected, a gift, a piece of art, etc. that was related to the topic of the exercise. After each exercise, the students would share their experiences in small groups, with the focus on the gift, piece of art, etc. Then, based on associative and creative thinking, each group philosophised about what the experience and the gift may be able to tell and reveal about the philosophical theme under investigation. The goal was to formulate some definition-like ideas, which represented the students' understanding of the respective themes. The ideas were written on sticky notes and pinned on a blackboard that was shown and discussed in plenary. By means of these definition-

like ideas and an open questionnaire handed out after each imagery, I could identify three tendencies that were triggered due to the imageries: 1. Feeling generally calmer and safer due to the exercises 2. Existential learning, such as learning how to deal better with certain issues in one's life 3. Self-knowledge, that is, learning more about one's identity, character, and potentials (Weiss, 2021, p. 101f). After the last exercise, the students made summarising comments about the project. Here, one student stated that "I have learned a lot about myself during this project, and it has helped me to become a better version of myself." Another one mentioned that "I feel more ready with things that my inner self wants to make me more aware of." Other examples were "I got many new experiences and knowledge about myself, which I was not aware of" and "I see personal growth and how to go deeper into myself," just to mention a few (Weiss, 2021). One of the interesting outcomes of this research project was that such philosophical guided imageries not only fostered self-formation with the students, but that their self-formation processes were triggered and guided by their own intuitive imagination and their experiences from the exercises (Weiss, 2021).

### **Critical reflection**

What is at stake in this presented case, appears to be hidden in plain sight. It is our capability of *intuitive imagination* as a fundamental resource for personal development and self-formation. In the imagery on the art of living, for example, the students could intuitively imagine an artwork. The question then was what the different artworks (no one in the group had the same) could eventually reveal about this topic in general terms, but also what it could specifically mean for the current life situation of the one who received it. It was interesting how a simple, intuitively and spontaneously imagined piece of art could yield unexpected but still meaningful views on the art of

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living. The same thing happened in the other exercises. Needless to say, it was not me as the facilitator who encouraged these views; rather, it was the students who unearthed them, so to speak, by exploring their intuitive imagination. However, it was not only these commonly developed, general ideas about the topic that fostered the students' self-formation process. It became especially obvious after the dialogues when the participants were asked to reflect individually on whether their personal gift would make them aware of something important in their personal lives, for example, a character trait or personal potential that could be developed further or a personal issue that could be approached from a new angle. It was here many students could gain important insights during the project. Often, they were quite surprised that it was their own intuitive imagination that could reveal the next steps in their individual self-formation processes. Of course, these next steps differed from person to person since they had different personalities and were in different places in their lives. In summary, this imagery approach appears to be closely related to the philosophical theme of self-knowledge. To gain self-knowledge with the purpose of self-development was a key intention in all ancient schools of philosophy and to use imagery exercises for this purpose was quite common (Hadot, 2010). Inge Eidsvåg, furthermore, seems to be of the same mind as these ancient schools, when he promotes self-knowledge as one of the pillars in his program for self-formation at Norwegian folk high schools (Eidsvåg, 2011, p. 165).

## **Theoretical reflection**

As has been shown in the critical reflection on each case, the methodologies used in the different projects yielded, in one way or another, self-formation, people's enlightenment or both. With regard to the research question guiding this investigation, "*How can dialogue-based*



*research promote the main goals of Norwegian folk high schools, in terms of self-formation and people's enlightenment?"* one could get the impression that we already have arrived at proper answers. However, this impression is deceptive since we have not yet clarified whether philosophical dialogue can be understood as a research practice or merely as a teaching practice. Therefore, we first have to make clear what the essence of research is: A key aspect of scientific research seems to be the development of new knowledge (see e. g., Lindseth, 2017b or 2020). However, when examining the history of science, we find that the concept of knowledge has changed enormously over time. Until the Enlightenment, it was systematic insight that signified scientific knowledge; however, research today is mainly about testable and falsifiable knowledge (Lindseth, 2017a). Furthermore, in the Antique, knowledge was understood as *virtue*. A *virtuous* person did not only have knowledge but could apply it excellently (Lindseth, 2020, p. 81).

A key approach in this respect we find with Aristotle. He distinguished between two fundamentally different spheres of life: the theoretical life (*bios theoretikos*) and the practical life (*bios praktikos*) (Biesta, 2015, p. 14). The form of knowledge attributed to the first sphere is theoretical knowledge (*episteme*), an intellectual virtue dealing with eternal and universal principles as for instance mathematics is concerned with. In the second sphere of life, we find two forms of knowledge: 1) know-how knowledge (*techné*), which is about knowing how to make things, such as the knowledge of how to build a house. 2) practical wisdom or prudence (*phronesis*), which is a "reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regards to human goods" (Aristotle, 1980, p. 143, as quoted in Biesta, 2015, p. 15) in terms of an awareness to do the right thing in the given situation with regards to the good life overall (see e. g., Weiss, 2018). While *techné* represents technical knowledge about how to *make something well*,

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phronesis is about *doing good* – it is about “the promotion of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*).” (Biesta, 2015, p. 15)

Biesta assigns teacher education to the practical life (*bios praktikos*), because teaching in general deals with know-how knowledge and living a good life (2015, p. 16). However, he puts the emphasis on phronesis over *techné*. Otherwise, as he claims, education would deprave to nothing but a tick-box exercise (Biesta, 2015, p. 4). Only by means of phronesis can education be set into perspective, and that perspective is the good life. For what else would one take an education or educate others if not for the good life? Biesta’s perspective seems to fit well with the educational goals of folk high schools in terms of self-formation and people’s enlightenment. Both appear to be strongly related to *human flourishing (eudaimonia)*. Consequently, we can conclude that phronesis is of central relevance for folk high school pedagogy.

However, phronesis cannot be taught, it can only be learned, as for instance Gallagher has pointed out (Gallagher, 1992, p. 198). It cannot be transmitted through lectures and books. It only comes with experience and self-reflection (see e. g., Biesta, 2015; Gallagher, 1992, pp. 198f; Weiss, 2018). Hence, phronesis can never be squeezed into the mould of scientific knowledge in terms of its testability and falsifiability. Nevertheless, Gadamer himself was convinced that *phronesis* (he simply calls it *practical knowledge*; Bernstein, 1983, p. 39) represents the type of knowledge the human sciences should focus on:

When Aristotle, in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, distinguishes the manner of ‘practical’ knowledge ... From theoretical and technical knowledge, he expresses, in my opinion, one of the greatest truths, by which the Greeks throw light upon ‘scientific’ mystification of the modern society of specialization. In addition, the scien-

tific character of practical philosophy is, as far as I can see, the only methodological model for self-understanding of human sciences if they are to be liberated from spurious narrowing imposed by the model of the natural sciences. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 107)

If we stay with Aristotle's concept of the *bios praktikos* and its two forms of knowledge (*techné* and *phronesis*), it appears to be obvious that research in this sphere has to be practical (that is, *practical* or *technical* in Gadamer's terms). In this respect, Lindseth suggests two types of practice research (Lindseth, 2017a, p. 243): *instrumental* and *reflective* practice research. Instrumental practice research develops technical knowledge (*techné*), for instance the knowledge how to produce an effective vaccine, how to build effective solar panels, how to use the iPad as a teaching tool, etc. (Lindseth, 2017a, p. 243). In contrast to that, reflective practice research is not about filling specific knowledge gaps. Rather, the intention of such research is to get a deeper understanding of one's professional practices and of oneself as practitioner with the purpose of improving these practices and oneself as practitioner. However, not in the sense of adding technical improvements or acquiring new skills (*techné*). It is the *phronetic* knowledge and awareness that is developed by reflecting on one's experiences as practitioner. That one can find such a research approach not only in projects explicitly labelled *reflective practice research* but also in others, is shown in the previously presented cases, where two of three have been designed as action research. The outcome in each case was a deeper understanding of a certain dialogue practice as well as a better self-understanding of the teachers. However, not only the respective philosophical dialogue formats yielded this understanding; also, what essentially contributed to this outcome was the meta-dialogues and meta-reflections, for instance the student interviews, colleague discussions, analysis of questionnaires and so

on. And this leads us to the question about the adequate research methodology for research promoting phronetic knowledge.

As I mentioned earlier, Gadamer pointed towards phronesis as the leading form of knowledge for the human sciences. When we outline an adequate research methodology for this form of knowledge, Lindseth's reading of Plato appears to be helpful (Lindseth, 2015, p. 46f). Plato was the first to use the term method, in Greek *methodos*, which consists of two words: *meta* and *hodos*, *meta* meaning *over* and *hodos* meaning *way*. Literally speaking, method means *a way over* to something and Plato used it to point out that the way of life cannot be gone backwards; what we have done, we have done and what happened, happened. We cannot change life in retrospect. But what we can do is to reflect on our experiences, learn from them and grow with them. This is what Plato meant by *methodos*, that is, a way of reflecting over life. That the outcome of such a reflection is open and never predefined seems to be obvious, and that dialogue is also a form of *methodos*. In fact, Lindseth (2015, p. 46f) speaks of *monological methods* that are being employed in *instrumental practice research*, while *reflective practice research* relies on what he calls *dialogical methods*. Furthermore, the form of knowledge or even wisdom yielded by such dialogical methods is necessarily practical in nature; it is phronesis. By reflecting on our experiences, we want to learn *from life for life* in order to live a *good* life.

In the three previously presented cases it is not only the philosophical dialogues that turned these projects into research. It was not until what I called the meta-dialogues and meta-reflections, such as interviews, peer discussions and so on, that the self-reflection process of those carrying out the research set in. It was not until this part of the project that the development of self-knowledge, which "is intimately linked with *phronesis* and thinking for oneself" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 198), became an explicit issue. In other words, it is the

philosophical dialogues plus the meta-dialogues and their accompanying reflections which turn these projects into research in terms of further developing phronetic knowledge. Had the projects only consisted of the philosophical dialogue formats, they could be said to be more about teaching than research. The development of phronesis might eventually have taken place with the teachers, but it would not have resembled what could be called the development of systematic insight and understanding; the latter, according to Lindseth (2020, p. 87), being a key feature of scientific knowledge in the Antique and therefore of phronetic knowledge as we have outlined it here. And in the previous projects, this feature was only brought to light by means of the respective meta-reflections. On this basis, it seems that we now can formulate a general, almost universal aspect that must be in place for research to contribute to folk high school pedagogy. For that purpose, let us recall the title of this investigation: *How can research foster folk high school pedagogy?* A straightforward, summarising answer appears to be that *research can promote folk high school pedagogy if it is virtue-oriented*. And by virtue, we mean practical knowledge in terms of phronesis (see e. g., Biesta, 2015, p. 19).

## **Concluding remarks**

Some might criticize the strong focus on philosophical dialogue in this investigation as if only research which includes a philosophical dialogue approach can promote and inform folk high school pedagogy. This criticism can be rebutted, however. The reason why I narrowed down the focus of the guiding research question of this examination on dialogue, was not only because I, as lecturer and researcher, actively use dialogue in my work. It was also because Grundtvig, as the founding father of folk high schools, explicitly as-

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sumed dialogue to be these schools' main pedagogical *methodos*, so to speak. Furthermore, my intention was not to advocate philosophical dialogue as the only legitimate research methodology for folk high schools. Rather, in a first step, I used these dialogue formats in order to point out how they contribute to self-formation and people's enlightenment (e. g., through awareness raising, self-knowledge and intuitive imagination). In a second step, I intended to show how the projects featuring these formats – and with that promoted the main goals of folk high schools – can be understood as a type of research oriented towards the development of practical knowledge, *phronesis*. By means of reflective practice research, I tried to explicate that the research suited for this purpose is research that examines and reflects the pedagogical practices in place at folk high schools. However, the crucial point here is that this research should be carried out by teachers or others involved in the respective pedagogical practices, and not by externals who have no personal, and with that, moral involvement in these practices. This might sound absurd when it comes to the development of scientific knowledge. But when it comes to the development of *phronesis*, as the type of knowledge towards which folk high school research should be oriented, as I suggest, a personal, moral concern is crucial, as Gallagher points out:

Education is more than rhetorical technique, [...]. Rhetoric [...] is a collection of purely formal techniques used to impress those who listen. As a formal technique it does not manifest moral involvement and concern for student, subject matter, or truth. If we define art (a term that in English once signified “learning”) as a practice that manifests such moral concern, then [...] education has more to do with art than with formal, unconcerned *techné*. The notion that art or learning involves moral concern would not be irrelevant

to the concept of virtue (areté) or phronesis [...]. (Gallagher, 1992, p. 198f)

It is clear that education and art are not the same as research. While education might be concerned with the development of phronetic knowledge with the students, research, as outlined here, is concerned with the development of phronesis with the pedagogues. And here a reference to participatory action research can be made, which is a form of research not done *on* or *for* but *with* those involved in the respective practice or action under investigation (see Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Only when research is done *with*, or even *by* those involved, a deeper understanding and improvement of a practitioner's practice and of oneself as practitioner (e. g., as pedagogue) – as the actual goal of reflective practice research – appears to be possible (see e. g., Lindseth, 2017a, p. 244 or 2020, p. 78) If one goes along with this assumption, then it seems that folk high school research can become as unique as folk high school pedagogy already is, compared to the mainstream of education.

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# Chapter 12

## Social pedagogical counselling as a framework for folk high school teachers

By Elina Nivala, Juha Hämäläinen and Tytti Pantsar

### Introduction

The starting point for this article is an understanding that the work of a folk high school teacher is not just teaching but also counselling. With the term *counselling* we refer to everyday work of teachers and other staff in folk high schools that aims at supporting the students to find their own paths forward during and after their studies in the folk high school. It can be about solving together practical problems that students face in their everyday lives, and it can be about discussing big questions concerning the choices of where to go next and what to do with one's own life. In counselling, students can get support for finding their future places to study or work, but it is not only about study and career guidance. Counselling can also help them in questions about hobbies, health, social relations and so on. Counselling is thus based on a holistic understanding of the student. We understand counselling as an integral part of the studies in folk high schools and in other non-formal adult education institutions.

In Finland, folk high schools are considered as part of liberal adult education, which is a field of non-formal adult education institutions. According to the current legislation, liberal adult education is provided by adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, study centres and sports institutes. They are regulated by a law, the liberal adult education act, that defines the promotion of lifelong learning as the main principle of liberal adult education. The general aims of the studies are to advance the versatile development of humans, to support well-being, democracy, and diversity of values, and to promote sustainable development, multiculturalism and internationality. In recent years, the societal role of liberal adult education institutions has been emphasized. According to the law, folk high schools have a special task in the Finnish society in the areas of education for the immigrants and education for young people who have difficulties in moving ahead on their educational paths. Both of these tasks emphasize the significance of understanding the work of the folk high school teachers as counselling instead of mere teaching, and of understanding counselling holistically.

The approach for counselling in folk high schools has previously been described as social pedagogical (Suoraniemi & Pantsar, 2013, p. 6). This understanding was the starting point for the research and development project that is described in this article. The project was called *Social pedagogical counselling in non-formal adult education institutions – towards social inclusion and a meaningful life* (abbreviation: *SOSPEVA*). Its aim was to develop a social pedagogical model for counselling of immigrant students in non-formal adult education institutions. The idea was to start a collaborative and reflective process that would engage counsellors, teachers, and other staff from folk high schools and study centres into searching for a shared understanding of the principles and methods of social pedagogical counselling. This would make visible the social pedagogical

elements already existing in folk high schools. Making them explicit and conceptualised in a participatory reflection process would give people more confidence in their work and support their understanding of what they are doing, how and why. This process was facilitated by a researcher from the University of Eastern Finland.

The whole project took two-years from autumn 2018 until the end of 2020. It was administered by the Finnish Folk High School Association. The project partners were the University of Eastern Finland, The Association of Study Centres and Bildningsalliansen, the Swedish-speaking national association for the non-formal adult education institutions. The project was funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

In this article, we will first explore social pedagogy as a framework for education and look for connections with the history and present role of folk high schools. Then we will briefly present the SOSPEVA project and describe what was done in practice to create the social pedagogical model for counselling. After that we will outline the main characteristics of the model: the principles, the process and the methods for counselling. The model was developed to support work with immigrant students specifically, but we will discuss its application also in a broader context, in the work of folk high school teachers with all their students. In the end, we will reflect on the value of the project in particular, and on applying social pedagogical thinking to non-formal adult education in general. We ask what kind of possibilities it can open up for folk high school teachers in their work when it is understood holistically as social pedagogical counselling.

## **Social pedagogy as a framework for folk high schools**

From the very beginning, the Grundtvigian folk high school system has been built on a social thinking that emphasizes the solidarity and co-operation of citizens (Korsgaard, 1997). This also applies to the Finnish liberal adult education, including the folk high school movement (Niemelä, 2011; Ojanen, 2014; Pätäri, Teräsahde, Harju, Manninen & Heikkinen, 2019). However, folk high school activities have undergone a significant functional and organizational transformation from the birth of the movement to the present day.

Social pedagogy as a pedagogical line of thought emphasizes the social connections and social role of education. It is a special tradition of discussion, theory and action in education as well as a related academic discipline (Hämäläinen, 2015). As such, social pedagogy provides a perspective and a point of reference for the examination of all educational activities in society, including work in folk high schools. Basically, it deals with the relationship between individual citizens and society from a pedagogical point of view.

The folk high school movement can be seen to come into existence to carry out a certain social task, to meet the educational challenges of society at that time. One of Grundtvig's ideas was that education should play a significant role between individuals and society (Korsgaard, 2011, p. 21). Today, the folk high school still carries out the same mission, but in many ways in a different social reality. With the modernization of society, the scope of its tasks has expanded to include not only general education, but also vocational education and training of various skills needed in today's working life. It is reasonable to consider what the social pedagogical perspective means in the context of this educational mission and in this institutional context,

on the one hand historically and on the other hand in today's challenges.

Social pedagogy offers not only a perspective from which the features of past and present educational activities can be analysed, but also a normative perspective concerning the ideals and principles of pedagogical activity in connection to the political vision of creating a more humane society (Nivala & Ryyänen, 2019). Although social pedagogy as an academic field consists of different philosophical schools of thought, it can also be outlined as a specific set of pedagogical norms and ideas that define practical educational activities (Hämäläinen & Nivala 2019). One can even speak of a social pedagogical approach in which certain pedagogical principles are emphasized, and practices are even built on them.

As a pedagogical trend that examines education through the boundary conditions imposed on it by the social reality, social pedagogy seeks pedagogical solutions to the challenges of building social relations that are characteristic of each era. Regarding our own era, for example, we can talk about a social pedagogical framework of citizenship education in the global era (Nivala, 2008). In social pedagogy, the reflection on educational activities is attached to social analysis, in other words to the knowledge of prevailing social reality, as well as to the view of the desired direction of development.

The social pedagogical approach is not about certain pedagogical methods and techniques, but rather about a special perspective on the person as a member of society and on education as an activity that builds a person's relationship with society. Education that seeks to build a social relationship can be described as an activity that promotes people's social functioning, inclusion and participation as members of society. At the same time, it is about education on the flip side of promoting participatory and active citizenship, it is about try-



ing to prevent and alleviate social exclusion and deprivation through pedagogical means.

These two lines of development – civic education for active citizenship on the one hand and education for combating social deprivation on the other – are two intertwined lines of development in the conceptualization and interpretation of social pedagogy (Hämäläinen, 2013). They were both included in the idea of folk high schools from the beginning and have shaped and continue to influence folk high school activities. As a concept that identifies these two lines of development, social pedagogy provides a theoretical frame for conscious and appropriate development of folk high school activities.

Many countries have a special professional group that uses the professional title of social pedagogue, social educator or one of its derivatives. However, social pedagogy can also be, if understood widely, a comprehensive concept that applies to a wide spectrum of professions working in various educational and well-being tasks. The latter is how the concept is defined in Finland. (Hämäläinen & Eriksson, 2015.) This definition emphasizes the idea that social pedagogy provides a knowledge base and orientation for professionals working in different educational and well-being professions as well as in different organizational environments and institutional contexts.

Although there is no complete consensus on social pedagogical work orientation and approach, common elements can be identified in different interpretations. The approaches are united by a largely shared view of human nature, seeing man as a communal being and education as a communal activity. Frequent emphases include dialogue, openness, activity-based and community-based working style, participation, and raising critical awareness. (See e.g., Nivala & Ryyänen, 2019.) It is easy to see that such principles do not only apply to social pedagogy but are common when it comes to educa-

tion in general, especially education that has its roots in the ‘Bildung’ tradition.

As a branch of study and a field of research, social pedagogy deals in particular with (1) the processes of human growth that make up integration into society, social participation and social functioning, (2) pedagogical activities designed to promote these processes, and (3) those specific problems people face in integrating into systems and communities that maintain quality of life, inclusion, and life management. These same elements also structure social pedagogical practice. The fundamental goal of social pedagogical work is to help people build a functional relationship with society.

It is important to see that a functioning relationship with society is not an innate human trait, but one that every individual must grow into it. A person must be brought up to become part of the knowledge and skills he or she needs as a member of society and to grow up to be an active citizen who thinks independently and is morally responsible. Social pedagogy is, in principle, an educational thinking and activity that promotes such human development and creates the conditions for individual and community self-education.

The idea of awakening the self-education potential of the individual and the community in close connection with national culture has been included in folk high school activities as a key principle from the very beginning (Siljander, 1984). Folk high school activities essentially followed the idea of people’s common self-education based on understanding of the educational power contained in the community. In that respect, social pedagogy does not offer a fundamentally new kind of orientation to the activities of folk high schools, but rather conceptualizes and helps them to become aware of what is historically and fundamentally relevant.

Despite many paradigmatic changes, the original vision of the folk high school movement of educating young people to deepen their

worldviews and promoting the knowledge and skills they need in life as human beings and citizens, is still a worthwhile idea. During recent years, the role of folk high schools as promoters of equality, societal integrity, multiculturalism and sustainable development has actually been emphasised in Finland. The special nature of the folk high school pedagogy is considered to be essential to carry out these tasks. (Niemelä 2009, 2011; Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2017.) The citizen-centred way of thinking as a significant ideological anchor of folk high schools fits well with social pedagogical perspectives on education. In the Nordic context, even the role of public authorities in the financing of folk high school activities can be seen as an expression of solidarity in accordance with the Nordic social order.

## **About the project**

The SOSPEVA project started in the autumn 2018 with the launching of an initial study to identify concrete needs concerning counselling of immigrant students in non-formal adult education institutions. A researcher from the University of Eastern Finland conducted a digital survey for the employees at folk high schools and study centres and interviewed immigrant students on their experiences of counselling. She also made a literature review on previous research concerning counselling of immigrants in different contexts and in the field of education especially. (Pakarinen, 2020.)

The collaborative development process was started in November 2018, facilitated by another researcher from the University of Eastern Finland. There was a seminar that gathered employees from more than 20 folk high schools and study centres around Finland. Three thematic working groups began their work based on the discussions in the seminar. During the next spring and autumn, the process con-

tinued with three workshop meetings, and between them in small group meetings. The workshop meetings consisted of small lectures and discussions around different themes that familiarized the participants with social pedagogy as a field in general and as a perspective on counselling of immigrant students in particular. Between the workshop meetings, participants reflected on their own work from different viewpoints and collected relevant material in their organisations. There were many discussions around the pedagogical and societal meanings of the work in folk high schools and study centres and about teachers' role as supporters of students' integration and sometimes also emancipation in society. The process was participatory, reflective and based on dialogue where everybody's expertise, experiences, and thoughts were valued.

Through various stages, a common understanding of the social pedagogical framework for counselling of immigrant students was formed. An initial model that combined the work done in the collaborative process and the main findings of the initial study, was created in the early autumn 2019. It was piloted at six folk high schools and six study centres between October 2019 and March 2020. Based on the diaries from the pilot organizations and student and employee interviews conducted during the pilots, the model was slightly modified. All different parts of the model were described in text thoroughly, and a website was created both in Finnish and in Swedish to store all the information (*Sosiaalipedagogisen ohjauksen malli, 2020/Modellen för socialpedagogisk handledning, 2020*). A shorter description of the model can be found in Finnish (Nivala, 2020) and a presentation of the project in Swedish (Nivala & Pakarinen, 2020).

The SOSPEVA project focused on counselling of immigrant students in folk high schools and study centres. In the Finnish folk high schools, there are a significant number of immigrant students. Folk high schools offer a diverse set of courses and study programs that

are specifically tailored for immigrant students, and in addition, immigrants can apply to all the main study programmes. In 2017, the Finnish government accepted a change to legislation on liberal adult education in Finland, and now the legislation identifies immigrant education as one of the special tasks of liberal adult education in Finland. The goal of this change of legislation was to open new study possibilities for immigrants and to support their paths to further education and working life (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2017). Counselling offered to immigrant students plays a significant role in their integration and getting employed (Pakarinen, 2018, p. 14; 2019).

## **The social pedagogical model for counselling**

The social pedagogical model for counselling that was developed in the SOSPEVA project is a framework for thinking and action that a teacher can adopt and apply in his or her work. It is not a strictly defined process pattern that should be implemented as is. To apply the model, one needs to get familiar with the basic ideas and then reflect one's own work through them. It is important to search for possibilities to develop one's own work applying the ideas in meaningful ways in different situations. The model can be used with students in different situations, not only immigrant students, and in different levels and types of education. The model has three components: 1) principles of counselling, 2) process of counselling, and 3) working methods.

### **Principles of counselling**

The heart of the model is the principles. They should guide all the activities and they are the basis for the relationship between the teacher and the students. There are five principles in total. The first one is

called *dialogical encounter*. The theoretical basis for this principle is Paulo Freire's concept of dialogue (see Freire, 1993). The teacher should encounter the student holistically as a unique and valuable person. The encounter is based on the desire to understand the student, get to know this unique person, hear about the life story and find out about the future aspirations, hopes and dreams. Dialogical encounter is based on equality as people, mutual acceptance, respect and appreciation. It is about mutual sharing of realities – the teacher needs to be ready to share, too, not only listen. This kind of a relationship requires willingness to be open to the other person, as well as trust, attentive presence and time.

The second principle of counselling is defined as *hope, faith in the future, and courage*. The teacher's role is to support the student to reflect on and look for one's opportunities and to identify one's dreams for life. This is not possible without supporting the creation of hope and maintaining it even though there might be some setbacks. Here the ideas of Paulo Freire are also very present (see Freire 2014). The teacher needs to believe in the student's opportunities for a meaningful life in the society and to help the student to believe in those, too. Creating hope is not based on mere dreaming, though, but it requires a shared process of assessing the student's situation realistically and identifying possible paths for the future. Hope is the basis for the student's agency in one's own life and in society, and it is the basis for faith in the future, and courage to act in one's own life.

The third principle is *activity and agency*. Social pedagogical counselling is based on the appreciation of the student as an expert in one's own life. The teacher needs to support the student in understanding one's own expertise. The student is expected to take an active role both in counselling and in other issues concerning information that needs to be found and choices that need to be made in life. The teacher has the role of offering support to the student in building

up agency in different situations. They can do things together and reflect their experiences in discussions, and this will help the student to obtain information, examine different possibilities for action and, finally, take action. The goal for this process is that the student grows towards the agency of one's own life and also towards the agency as an active and critical member of the society.

The fourth principle of counselling is a *community-based and holistic approach*. Counselling is considered to be not only a task for the counsellors or other professionals whose job is to take care of the study and work guidance of the students. Counselling is a matter for the whole community in folk high schools. All employees can support the students through counselling when needed. If they encounter situations where the student needs help, advice, or joint reflection, they are supposed to give the student the support needed – as best they can. The community-based approach means also that peer counselling is considered important and opportunities for it are provided. Counselling is thus understood both as a formal process between a teacher and a student and as informal support that can be given to the student in any situation in everyday life. Understanding the importance of the community in counselling means also that there are activities that seek to strengthen the sense of belonging between the students in the study group and between the members of the whole institution. In addition, counselling is considered holistic in the sense that the student is encountered as a whole person, not only as a student or a future employee. Thus, the teacher is ready to support the student in all areas of life, if needed. However, this does not mean that the teacher should know everything about everything, but that there is a network of professionals to whom the teacher can turn if special expertise or support is needed.

The fifth principle of counselling is *knowledge of and ability to identify different opportunities* for and with the student. This is a

special requirement for counselling in an educational institution. It is important for the teacher to be aware of a wide range of further opportunities in the areas of education, working life and other activities in the society such as volunteering and civic activities. It is not only about guiding the student to a new place to study or to the labour market, but also about considering other activities that could make life more meaningful and provide opportunities for being socially, culturally, and politically active in society. In counselling, the teacher should have time to search for and find out about these kinds of opportunities together with the student. The goal is to identify together the most meaningful possible further paths for the student.

### **Process of counselling**

In addition to the principles, another component of the social pedagogical model of counselling is understanding counselling as a long-term process. There are three phases that can be identified in the process, but they overlap each other, so that to some extent they are all present throughout the process. To identify the phases, an approach called ‘positive recognition’ was applied to analyse the experiences of the project participants. The approach has been developed in the field of youth work in collaboration between youth work professionals and researchers (see Häkli, Korkiamäki & Kallio, 2018). ‘Positive recognition’ is theoretically grounded in the so-called theories of recognition (e. g., Honneth, 1995). The phases in the counselling process are 1) getting to know (each other), 2) acknowledging, and 3) providing support.

*Getting to know* each other is something that happens naturally in the early stages of counselling, but it should also continue and deepen throughout the process. Getting to know each other is based on dialogical encounters between the teacher and the student, and the starting point for it is seeing the student openly as a unique person. It



is important to listen to the students and to encourage them to tell their life stories. It doesn't happen right away but needs a longer process of building trust. Getting to know is a prerequisite for being able to identify the student's competences, goals in life and dreams. Getting to know is always a mutual process where two people meet and share, so the student should also be able to get to know the teacher. The teacher, too, is present in the relationship as a unique person who is willing to share things about own experiences and thoughts.

The second phase, *acknowledging*, is based on getting to know. Acknowledging means that the teacher notices and gives positive feedback to the student about things that the student feels relevant. This is not possible without knowing each other, at least on some level. The teacher can give acknowledgement to the student verbally, for example by giving feedback on successes or asking the student's opinion on topics of importance. Additionally, acknowledging is possible through action, for example, through the assignment of responsibilities to the student, because it communicates the teacher's trust in the student. Showing confidence in the student's abilities and believing in the student's possibilities to reach goals, is an important form of acknowledging, because it strengthens the perspective of hope. Also, acknowledging should be reciprocal, which means that the teacher needs to be prepared not only to give but also to receive acknowledgement.

The third phase, *providing support*, is based on the two previous steps. In order for the teacher to be able to provide support to the student in matters that are relevant, the teacher needs to get to know the student. Providing support happens naturally when the teacher acknowledges positive things to the student. An important way of providing support is also to strengthen the social inclusion of the student, which means creating opportunities to participate as a member of the community and have a say in the decision making. It is also

about supporting the sense of belonging to a community and to the society. Providing support means also supporting the student's agency, that is, ability to make choices and act accordingly in a particular environment. Counselling aims at supporting the student's agency both in studies and in life more broadly. Based on the principles of 'positive recognition', it is essential to support the kind of agency that is relevant to the student. However, supporting agency as a social pedagogical goal means also supporting the student to become an active, critical and reflective member of the society. Thus, counselling aims at strengthening the student's societal agency that not only helps the student to cope and survive in life but also enables critical participation in society in order to make it a better place to live for all its members.

## **Methods for counselling**

The third component of the model is working methods. Many of these methods are already in use in folk high schools, but what is new is that they are seen as part of this model and thus their application is guided by the principles and an understanding of the process. The methods are interactive and creative in order to support the teacher in the implementation of the principles of dialogue, activity and agency, community and also hope and courage. The methods should always be applied and modified according to the situation and the students: What kind of methods are meaningful with a particular student or group at a given time? In the model, the methods are described in three groups based on which phase of the process they best serve, but many of them are suitable for several phases. A detailed presentation of the methods and materials that support their application are included on the website of the model.

## **Discussion**

The SOSPEVA project inspired folk high school teachers to consider folk high school pedagogy from a new theoretical point of view. The participatory workshops during the project brought together teachers' tacit knowledge of folk high school pedagogy and concepts from a social pedagogical framework that helped them to understand their work better and gave them theoretical and practical tools to develop it. Many of them were inspired by the discussions that we had together during the workshop meetings, concerning the big questions of their work: Why are we doing what we are doing, what are the values that guide us and what are the expectations for our work in society? They appreciated the opportunities for reflection that the project offered them, both in the meetings and in their everyday work, especially during the pilot phase.

Many of the project participants also felt that the social pedagogical perspectives explored during the workshops seemed familiar to them even though they had not known social pedagogy before. They found similarities between their intuitive ways of thinking and social pedagogical concepts. Some of them recognised connections between the traditional folk high school pedagogy embedded in their organizations and social pedagogy. Learning about theoretical frameworks and concepts based on social pedagogy, gave them more confidence in their own ways of working. They said that they were happy to get a theoretical basis for something that they had already known through practical experiences. It gave them stronger arguments to justify their work and working methods to others as well as to themselves: 'There is theory and research behind the choices that I make. It is not just about intuition or personal experience.' The social pedagogical model of counselling gives them an organized framework for something that in everyday life is usually quite unorganized, and

thus it helps them to understand the bigger picture in small and transient incidents and encounters. It helps them to find and remember the meaning of the work.

Now that the project is over, the model of social pedagogical counselling still exists and can be of value not only to those who participated in creating it, but also to new people, folk high school teachers in particular. The model, as well as social pedagogical perspectives more generally, can help a folk high school teacher to frame one's work as holistic counselling where the student is seen as a whole person, as a social being with connections to different communities and as a member of the society. It gives theoretical reasons for why a teacher needs time to get to know the students, why things outside of the curriculum often need to be addressed, etc. It offers theoretical frameworks to understand what kind of processes students are going through when they are looking for their places in society and what kind of difficulties they may encounter – and how the teacher can support them. A teacher can build an own social pedagogical framework to guide one's work and connect it with the traditions of folk high school pedagogy. Together they may form a pedagogy that is based on the ideas and ideals of 'Bildung' and thus look for ways to support every individual's growth to one's full potential as active, creative and critical members of society, able to live their lives fully and transform society together.

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# **Chapter 13**

## **Meta-analysis of concepts and findings: The work of the Nordic folk high school teacher**

**By Johan Lövgren and Odd Haddal**

### **Introduction to meta-analysis on the theme of work**

In their work with the thirteen national research projects presented in this anthology, the editorial team found that the material carried a unique possibility to study the characteristics that together shape the Nordic folk high school teacher. In literature on methods for meta-analysis, we found descriptions of processes where groups of articles could be “integrated and synthesized for deeper understanding” (Leary & Walker, 2018, p. 533).

Leary and Walker describe a process of meta-analysis that “allows for inductive examination of patterns and concepts in a more hermeneutic fashion, for the refinement of new knowledge and theories” with the aim of translating “findings meaningfully to inform research, theory, and practice.” (2018, p. 530). To generate such a meta-analysis, the national chapters were coded both manually and by the data analysis software NVivo (Tang, 2023). This was followed



by a structured content analysis (Tunison, 2023), ending in a textual condensation of each of the themes of identity, work and education.

Chapters 7, 13 and 19 summarise this process of condensation. Each of these chapters starts with synopses of the presented national chapters. The focus of these chapter synopses is to provide a context to the concepts that have been found to be central to the analysis of each chapter. The meta-analysis ends with the implication of overarching concepts seen as a summary of each theme.

## **Chapter synopses**

The structure of this chapter follows the process of condensation and starts with synopses of the national chapters on the theme of the *work* of the folk high school teacher. The intention behind these synopses is not to present an abstract or to cover all findings presented in each chapter. Instead, the chapter synopses are used as a first step in a structure that follows the process of condensation. The focus of these chapter synopses is to provide a context to the concepts that have been found to be central to the analysis of each chapter.

### **Chapter 9: Sustainable Bildung – Danish folk high school teachers in times of change**

The authors build the chapter around a critical examination of Bildung traditions and pedagogical practices of the Danish folk high schools in relation *to the development of a concept of Sustainable Bildung*. They combine historical insights with interviews with teachers at folk high schools to discuss how the Danish folk high school teacher works with emerging issues such as sustainable development.

The authors explain the popularity of the Danish folk high schools for each new generation with that the schools' vague aims gives room

for them to be both *historically embedded* and have a *dynamically changing focus*.

In their search for a new form of Bildung, authors draw inspiration from Koselleck's Bildung concept that emerges as hybrid in four positions: *Bildung as external shaping, as internal development, as critical exploration, and as creative transgression of the existing order* (2007).

This hybrid concept of Bildung is useful for understanding the ongoing work of the high school teacher as a way of navigating and substantialising different perspectives. The authors argue that such an ambient view of Bildung, complemented by the folk high school's vague pedagogical aims and room for experiments, allows for "a historically embedded dynamically changing focus on societal challenges."

In order to avoid the risk of the new Bildung concept being outdated, we have to create a form of Bildung that *not only involves sustainability but also is sustainable in itself*. The authors see the possibility for the folk high schools of becoming a nesting place for a new and potentially far-reaching concept of Sustainable Bildung.

## **Chapter 10: Freedom with reservations: The work of the Swedish folk high school teacher**

The authors refer to Swedish studies where folk high school teachers are characterised as 'value-driven and participant-focused', working long hours, often with no clear boundaries between work and leisure time. The same teachers are described as grounded in the core values of *folkbildning* (popular education) and motivated to make their schools an inclusive and welcoming social place for participants to flourish. The expression of participating as "human beings among other human beings", is used to reflect how the teachers give participants a chance to express their whole being.

The authors present an overview of Swedish surveys (Andersson et al., 2013; Andersson, 2014) examining folk high school teachers' tasks and time use. They show an average workload above the limits set by Swedish regulations, especially among teachers working in the special courses, more than one out of ten teachers worked above 50% overtime during the study. The authors see this as an illustration of the boundless workload of the folk high school teacher.

To describe a central aspect in the Swedish folk high school teachers' work, the term *in and against* has been used (Laginder et al., 2014). The expression refers to the intrinsic challenges of acting within a school system governed by national, global, historical, and social structures, at the same time as being aware of, and working against, the very same system. The authors interpret this to mean that folk high school teachers struggle in and against, and from below, the impacts of racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, ageist, and other societal structures. Thus, the authors conclude that their freedom is a freedom with reservations.

## **Chapter 11: How can research foster folk high school pedagogy?**

The author prefers to translate the two central Bildung-related concepts in the Norwegian folk high school act as *self-formation* and *people's enlightenment*. To describe how these are realised in the work of the folk high school teacher, he presents three small-scale research projects and analyses these using the method of a Reflective Practice Research (Lindseth, 2020). Weiss applies the example of these three cases of philosophical dialogue to show how they can promote the main goals of Norwegian folk high schools while at the same time develop the schools' pedagogical practices.

To explain how the goals of self-formation and people's enlightenment are realised in the folk high school teachers' work, Weiss con-

nects them Aristotle's concepts describing theoretical life (*bios theoretikos*) and practical life (*bios praktikos*), know-how knowledge (*techné*,) and practical wisdom or prudence (*phronesis*). The author follows Biesta (2015) who emphasizes *phronesis* over *technè*; However, *phronesis* cannot be taught or transmitted through lectures and books. It can only be learned through experience and self-reflection, and it aims at *human flourishing (eudaimonia)*.

The author concludes that the two forms, Socratic dialogue and reflective practice research that were presented in the chapter, not only foster folk high school pedagogy in practice, but they also open up a path towards folk high school research.

## **Chapter 12: Social pedagogical counselling as a framework for folk high school teachers**

The authors describe the practice of social pedagogical counselling as based on the same holistic understanding that shapes folk high school pedagogy. They describe both teaching and counselling as integral parts of the regular work of the folk high school teacher. The authors define social pedagogical counselling as “supporting the students to find their own paths forward during and after their studies in the folk high school”.

Social pedagogy is discussed from multiple perspectives. Civic education for active citizenship can be described as “an activity that promotes people's social functioning, inclusion and participation as members of society.” At the same time, it is also about combating social deprivation by trying to prevent and alleviate social exclusion and deprivation through pedagogical means. An additional perspective is normative, which concerns the ideals and principles of pedagogical activity connected to “the political vision of creating a more humane society.”

In 2017, the legislation in Finland was changed to identify immigrant education as one of the special tasks of liberal adult education, including the folk high schools. “The goal was to open new study possibilities for immigrants and to support their paths to further education and working life.” Counselling plays a significant role in integration and getting employed, and a project was initiated to develop a social pedagogical model for the counselling of immigrant students in Finnish folk high schools and study centres.

### **Extracting national findings**

Following the synopses of chapters, the meta-analysis will follow a process of condensation, extracting national concepts and findings from the four chapters on the work of the folk high school teacher.

Lysgaard, Maribo and Albers see the strength of the folk high schools’ conceptualisation of *Bildung* in that it is *historically embedded* with the capacity of *dynamically changing* its focus. They argue that the global climate crisis calls for a revision that *creatively transgress the existing order* to the conceptualisation of *sustainable Bildung* that can foster a *global responsibility*.

Andersson, Millenberg and Österborg Wiklund describe the folk high schools’ *value-driven teachers* as being highly motivated to see *participants grow as human beings*. The folk high schools’ inclusion in and dependence on the educational system is described as a frustration for these teachers, placing in a position of being at the same time *‘in and against’* destructive societal structures.

Weiss translates the two central *Bildung*-related terms in Norway’s folk high school legislation as *self-formation* and *people’s enlightenment* and connects these to *a critical reflection on life’s key dimensions, such as politics, democracy, community, solidarity*. He applies the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* to show how the work of the folk

high school teacher builds *experience and self-reflection* that aims at *human flourishing (eudaimonia)*.

Nivala, Hämäläinen and Pantsar describe how social pedagogical counselling and folk high school pedagogy share the same holistic understanding of the student, developing students' social functioning and inclusion to foster *active citizenship* and *activism against social deprivation*. Their project focuses on the legally defined task of the Finnish folk high schools to develop models of *counselling for immigrant students*.

### **Synthesising findings on the theme of work**

The final section in this chapter brings together the conceptualisations condensed from the national chapters. The section's aim is to synthesise these findings to outline the picture they project of the work of the Nordic folk high school teacher (Timulak, 2014).

The four national chapters vary both in analytical methodologies and theoretical frameworks. The process of condensing these very diverse texts uncovered three underlying tensions that connect them. Firstly, the authors all analyse the work of the folk high school teacher with *an aim of revitalizing the historical concepts behind their practices*. For a renewal of the folk high schools' teaching practices, the authors argue that the educational philosophy behind these practices must be adapted to contemporary challenges. As the authors discuss ways towards a revision of the educational philosophy of the folk high schools, they do so by reflecting on the concept of *Bildung*.

The authors all relate to an inherent tension in the folk high schools' conceptualisation of *Bildung*. The texts describe *Bildung* or self-formation (*bildning* or *dannelse*) as the constitutive concept in the educational philosophy that shapes the practices of the folk high school teachers. The four texts show the need for a revitalisation towards a *contemporary conceptualisation of Bildung*. At the

same time, they agree that the concept of Bildung must be *embedded in the historical vision* of the folk high schools.

The folk high schools' conceptualisation of Bildung is described as separate from a classical Bildung tradition (see Gustavsson, 2013) or other variants that, as Weiss writes, tend to “tone down the dimension of individual growth and personal development”. The pedagogy of the folk high schools is described by the authors as derived from a conceptualisation of Bildung that is historically embedded while having a capacity for *dynamically changing focus towards contemporary challenges in society*. This explains the on-going relevance of the work of the Nordic folk high school teacher over 175 years of societal changes.

A second underlying tension connecting the four texts, has to do with the aim of the work of the folk high school teacher. The folk high schools are described as having a holistic focus that helps students *grow as human beings* in a *self-reflection* that aims at seeing them *flourish*. The four chapters all describe how the work of their national folk high schools aims at students' *functioning, inclusion and participation as members of society*. The texts describe how this personal focus on student development leads to their identification as *active citizens*, ready to engage in *activism against social deprivation* (Ohrem & Weiss, 2019).

The second tension involves the demand that the folk high schools develop a *sustainable conceptualisation of Bildung* that can *creatively transgress the existing order* and foster a *global responsibility*. Here, however, the chapters indicate one of the major differences uncovered by the meta-analysis between the national branches of the Nordic folk high schools, exemplified by the Finnish schools have a legally defined task to *include immigrants* in Finnish society. The Finnish and Swedish folk high schools play a significant role in the national plan for integration of immigrants into society. Studies on

the national folk high schools show that the Norwegian and Danish folk high schools do not have the same function in their national educational systems (NOU 2022:16; Nordic Folk High School Council, 2013).

Here, a third tension can be observed where the national folk high schools are caught in a position where they are at the same time *in and against destructive societal structures*. Even if the context for the national folk high schools differs, they are bound by a legal framework and by their dependence on state funding. The chapters demonstrate a tension between the folk high school movement's role as an alternative education promoting a creative transgression of the existing order and being a part of societal structures. This third tension will be further developed in Chapter 19.

## **Outlining an overarching conceptualisation**

The meta-analysis ends with an interpretation of the synthesised concepts and findings on the theme of work. In this final paragraph we reflect on how the findings distilled in the condensation process can be combined to capture some central overarching concepts on the theme of the work of the Nordic folk high school teacher.

The tension of the folk high schools' societal engagement can be described as being in and against the societal structures in which they function. The values they oppose are on many levels ingrained in the society they are a part of.

The authors argue that this position demands a continual renewal of the folk high schools' educational philosophy, epitomised by concepts connected to *Bildung*. The authors argue that this is possible because the folk high schools' conceptualisation of *Bildung* has the strength of being at the same time *historically embedded* while having a capacity for *dynamically changing focus*.



In the four chapters on the work of the folk high school teacher, the educational practices of the folk high schools are described as having a dual focus. Their value-driven teachers create practices of *self-formation and reflection* where *participants flourish and grow as human beings*. The innate aim for this process is to *build active citizens* who engage in *activism against social deprivation*.

A contemporary projection of Bildung must *creatively transgress the existing order*. The authors point towards two societal issues where such a transgression is vital. The global climate crisis demands that the folk high schools foster a *sustainable conceptualisation of Bildung* that can foster a *global responsibility* that not only involves sustainability but also is *sustainable in itself*. The second issue concerns the immigration of global refugees to the Nordic region. In this respect, the national folk high schools differ in their practical engagement.

The work of the Nordic folk high school teacher *embodies learning* in an *intersubjective meeting* that:

- Becomes an expression of a revitalised conceptualisation of Bildung.
- Allows participating students to grow as human beings.
- Leads to processes of self-formation where students flourish.
- Substantialises a sustainable global identity.
- Equips students to become active citizens.
- Empowers students to engage in activism against social deprivation.

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# Chapter 14

## Authors' reflective dialogue on the theme of work

By Filippa Millenberg

The work of teachers in folk high schools has been explored from different perspectives in the anthology. This chapter develops the different perspectives presented in the national chapters in a reflective dialogue between the authors. The procedure is initially described in the introductory chapter of this anthology and further developed in the initial summary chapter on the identity of the folk high school teacher.

The online summary dialogue between authors of this anthology's texts on the work and practice of the folk high school teacher developed the main question: What is the work of the folk high school teacher about? In the following, dialogue ideas and perspectives are put forward which can be described as central features of the work of folk high school teachers. The results will be presented as key aspects based on what was being said in the conversation.

### A broad mission

As we met online, we started off by asking ourselves: *What comes into our minds when thinking about the work of teachers in folk high*

*schools?* The first idea from the group was that teachers' work at folk high schools is *multifaceted*. It is not possible to talk about *the* work in singular. The conditions for the teaching assignment, in its broad definition, imply great opportunities for teachers to plan and stage teaching.

Compared to other educational institution in the Nordic context, the work of teachers in folk high schools cannot be strictly defined, it is by its nature diverse. Even though some courses involve more of strictly defined teaching, our reflection still highlights this diverse nature. Compared to teachers in the formal education in the Nordic context, the folk high school teachers' work is characterized by freedom, flexibility, and pedagogical autonomy.

## **Sharing life – a holistic mission**

In the dialogue, the teachers' work was portrayed as a holistic mission with focus on the students as individuals and on personal growth. The holistic view of students and learning means that social aspects of students' lives are considered.

*Self-directed learning* was also pointed out as a central concept, in the sense of supporting learning processes more than sharing information or teaching in a very knowledge-orientated way. Being a teacher, then, is not limited to transferring knowledge on specific subjects, rather it encompasses learning processes that concern the students as whole human beings.

This ideal was also expressed as developing students as a human being *in* the world *with* others and described as essential to teachers. This comes alive not just in the classrooms. One of us described this by saying: *They meet the students on a personal level, and they meet them not only in the classroom but also in the dormitories, in their homes and in their lives after the end of the school day.* The

teachers end up in situation where students bring everyday questions and problems to them. This is encouraged by the teachers themselves in their effort to take students into account as whole human beings, or fully human and to connect with them on a personal level.

Implicitly, the work is characterized by the idea about sharing life – *meeting new perspectives through the encounters with others*. The work can be understood as carrying an idea about sharing life – meeting new perspectives through encounters with others seems to be expected by these teachers and even searched for.

Meeting needs is not just a factor of caring, but a pedagogical method aimed at making the student able to focus on today's learning. One author expressed this as "getting rid of the urgent matters to be able to focus on studies". The holistic approach has impact on the teachers' way of viewing the students. They do not primarily view them as learning objects (addressing the cognitive sides of the learners) but rather as humans in a learning environment. "Human first", as Grundtvig put it. This in turn means considering, for example, their previous experiences, existential considerations, and challenges in their everyday lives.

*Creativity* was highlighted when talking about the work of teachers in the folk high school contexts. On one hand it was seen as having time to use different methods and ways to support students learning. On the other hand, it was defined as relating to students as unique individuals. Their uniqueness opened for the creativity of the teachers in the sense to being able to see the students and adapt their actions in relation to each student. Creativity is then not just about methods, but also about something that is being born in the encounter, that is born out of the idea of meeting the participants as unique individuals.

## A changing role

The teacher's role was featured as changing and adapting over the years but still maintaining central ideas from folk high schools' history, traditions, and special conditions as an educational actor. Societal change, which means that the participants' needs change, affects the teachers' work. Young people's ill health, young people's increased need for special support in their studies, growing number of newly arrived participants, and increasingly targeted state contributions are examples of factors that affect the role of teachers. Teachers' freedom to plan and stage teaching can thus be said, indirectly, to be conditioned by the changes that society offers. Freedom, rooted in the historical ideology of the folk high school's mission as well as in legislation, might remain as part of a framework; however, the values embedded in the historical ideology may be challenged.

For example, when students no longer to the same extent live in dormitories, is not as easy for teachers to organize community-based education and learning experience in today's folk high schools. As one of us pointed out: *The role of folk high schools, as well as the role of teacher, have changed from a historical point of view. Traditionally, its function and mission were to provide general civilization for young people in society, a mission to provide such a process for young people in which they can learn important knowledge and skills needed in practical life, in society as a member of society was built upon Grundtvig's ideas. By being a community, it was an education where people learned from each other. The role of the teachers was connected to these ideas.*

Changing student demographics and new courses are some factors that affect what the teachers' work is at a given moment in time. When participants engage in folk high school contexts, they bring with them discourses and narratives currently established in society

at large. Such narratives can embody ideas and values which may clash with the ideas and values that inform the teachers' views and practices. As an example, expectations of what school is and how learning in classrooms is constructed, can differ widely between newcomers and folk high school teachers. Further friction exists also between these teachers' pedagogical credo and how folk high schools are folded into the broader formal education system through regulations and financial grants. As one of us said: *This thing about having to think about money all the time and think about the requirements that come with the money – that is eating away some of their freedom and guiding them in directions they don't want to go. They ask themselves: are we giving up our freedom when we go after the money?* One consequence of this entanglement of popular education and formal education is that folk high school courses start to resemble mainstream education. Arguably, this becomes a subtle governing of popular education that stands in contrast to this education form's presumptive freedom.

## **Combining history and traditions**

It is a challenge to combine the history and traditions of the folk high school, such as pedagogical autonomy and community-based learning, with the requirements of today's society, such as a strong idea about individual freedom. It was pointed out that the most important issue for today's folk high school was *not to lose its history and traditions*. The folk high school is an educational institution, but in all the Nordic countries education and welfare are very strongly interwoven. The work of the folk high school could in one sense be described as a social political mission since our welfare society is based on similar values and ideas. The work of the folk high school teachers was pointed out as *somehow influenced by the Nordic welfare model in*



*how the function or task of folk high schools is designed and legislatively based.* The law in general could be understood as a manifestation of the welfare ideology in all Nordic countries. For instance, in Finland and Sweden it is part of folk high schools' existence to support people who probably have not had many schooling opportunities in their childhood or their youth. Now, however, they have found an opening to start building up their lives; folk high schools and other institutions in liberal education can be the first steps towards finding a new life career through studying as an adult.

In our dialogue it was pointed out that in order to legitimize the teachers' pedagogical work outside the walls of the folk high school, the importance of concepts that visualize the work and its founding ideas was paramount. As one of us stated: *Folk high school is not just about playing, having fun, even if they don't have a strict curriculum.* The folk high school is productive and meaningful, but in a different way than what is perceived as productive and meaningful outside its walls. However, there is a need to put this into words.

## **Part III**

# **The education of the Nordic folk high school teacher**



# **Chapter 15**

## **The education of folk high school teachers at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching**

**By Simon Finnerup**

### **The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching**

If you cross the doorstep at a Danish folk high school, you are likely to meet a very diverse group of teachers. Like other professions, they do not necessarily share interests and subjects, and, as a special feature of the folk high schools as educational institutions, the teachers are also educated very differently, if indeed they have a formal education at all. In that sense, the Danish folk high school teacher is “unprofessional”, as recent research points out (Rahbek, 2019), which gives the teaching staff a motley character. Ironically, it also contributes to a pedagogical freedom, which is the shared foundation for all the staff. The act on folk high schools provides a legal basis for this diversity, as it neither describes specific professional ideals nor mandates provisions for the teachers’ professional and educational background (Lov

om folkehøjskoler, 2013). In other words: In Denmark there is complete freedom for each folk high school to hire whoever they want; thus, it is more the rule than the exception that teaching staffs consist of a mixture of academics, self-taught artists, school dropouts, skilled craftspeople – as well as trained teachers. In this context, it is worth noting that only a minority – 21% – of folk high school teachers have completed a teacher training programme (FFD – Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark, 2021).

An undetermined part of these 21% are graduates of The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching (hereafter the Independent Academy), which is Denmark's only higher education institution that offers formal teacher training specifically aimed at folk high schools<sup>1</sup>. The Independent Academy's articles of association describe its aim as training “teachers at the free schools, *efterskoler*<sup>2</sup> and folk high schools, in addition to other school types”; also, it must “offer and develop further education” (Articles of Association, 2021). This aim forms the basis for one of the two main tracks in this chapter, which deals with how the Independent Academy actually trains folk high school teachers. The other main track of the chapter draws attention to how the Independent Academy's idea-based and hands-on features match the folk high schools' general pedagogy. The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching was founded in 1949 in buildings that shortly before had housed Ollerup Folk High School, and the folk high school's pedagogy – ideas, contents, and praxis – has

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<sup>1</sup> In Denmark, there are also various general adult learning educations, which function as continuing education with a scope of 60 ECTS (Uddannelsesguiden, 2021). In addition, the Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark offers Folk High School Pedagogical Education, which is a continuing education for active folk high school teachers (Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark, 2021). The latter is an educational course that runs over a year as a part-time study.

<sup>2</sup> *Efterskole*: an independent pre-sixth form [pre-senior high school] boarding school for teenagers, with very similar aims as a folk high school.

shaped the Independent Academy over the years to such an extent that its students still go through a formal higher education in a folk high school setting (Value Statement, 2021; Madsen, 1999). The Independent Academy's purpose and goals, such as the training of folk high school teachers, and its means, the folk high school setting, thus seem to be very closely associated, opening up for an examination of the school's pedagogy as master teaching, a craft, a tradition, and a hands-on collective experiential pedagogy.

This chapter addresses the professionalism of the Independent Academy and includes perspectives on education, *bildung*, freedom and responsibility. The focus is on how the school designs its practical professionalism and 'does' it in everyday life, and how this contributes to the creation of "teacher personalities" (Value Statement, 2021). Methodologically, the chapter is based on a series of interviews of students from the Independent Academy, both current students and former students who subsequently became folk high school teachers (Finnerup, 2021), on selected texts about the Independent Academy's history and tradition, and on analyses of the education's current practical manifestations in everyday life.

## **Free Professionalism**

It's Wednesday morning, and the pale sun shines into the drama hall, which is centrally located at the Independent Academy. Inside, there are 200 students, twenty teachers and a principal, and they are gathered for a Great Assembly. There is a Great Assembly held every other Wednesday. It opens with a sing-along from the Folk High School Songbook and a welcome by a student from the Great Assembly's business committee. This Wednesday, there is one item on the agenda: a proposal to replace the oblig-

atory common subject Language with the subject Sexual Education. The initiative for the proposal is taken by, submitted by and presented by a group of 4<sup>th</sup> year students. The executive committee outlines the process of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading in plenary, discussion in small basis groups, consultation in relevant committees and departments, and the final decision-making procedure. Some students ask clarifying questions, while others criticise the outlined process for leaving too little time for discussion. Then a discussion opens up about the content, intent and consequences of the proposal. Some students and staff talk a lot and for a long time, while others listen. After half an hour, a group of students leave the room, feeling that it doesn't make sense to discuss that kind of thing. They would rather attend lessons and think it's a waste of time to attend Great Assemblies. Outside, a few share a smoke with a few other students who have not attended the Assembly at all. Inside the hall, the windows are fogging up.

At the Independent Academy, the subjects occupy a central place (Teaching Plan and Subjects, 2021). The school distinguishes between *obligatory common subjects*, such as Storytelling, Language, Community and Pedagogy, Psychology and Didactics, *specialist subjects* such as Danish, Mathematics, Religion, English, Drama, Outdoor Life, and Natural Sciences, and *elective subjects* such as Swim Teacher Education. The specialist subjects and the obligatory subjects of Pedagogy, Psychology and Didactics are distributed throughout every year of the programme. The subjects are allocated 210 to 320 teaching hours, a substantial number compared to that of the public school teacher education in Denmark (Public school teacher degree, 2016). In the first year, the aim of most of the obligatory subjects is to create a shared foundation of knowledge, as well as an

educational and human vision, which is expressed in the Independent Academy's Grundtvig-Kold inspired value base (Articles of Association, 2021; Value Statement, 2021) while the aim of the specialist subjects, primarily read in the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 5<sup>th</sup> year, is to qualify the student to teach four to five of these subjects.

The Independent Academy is, in contrast to the public teacher education, a free, self-governing institution (like the folk high schools). This autonomy is specifically reflected in the array of subjects offered, how many teaching hours they are allocated, the content of the subjects and how the teaching takes place. All subjects – compulsory subjects, specialist subjects and electives – and other teaching activities (general and interdisciplinary programmes, major written assignments, short and long internships, as well as the special in-depth project which fills the entire final semester) – are jointly decided by the school community at the Great Assembly. This assembly, composed of students and teaching staff, functions as the ultimate authority in curricular matters. Thus, deciding the purpose and scope of each subject is a free and shared responsibility, borne solely by the school community as a whole, corresponding to the freedom that the folk high schools also enjoy in their educational approach (FFD – Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark, 2021b). The purpose of this freedom and participatory decision-making is for students at the Independent Academy to gain experience in managing a local democracy: Assuming and handling responsibilities, contributing to the creation of a shared pedagogical project, developing a professional judgment, and gaining ownership of the school's educational approach (Holm, 2016). These free competencies and this democratic *bildung* correspond to what is required of a teacher at the free schools in Denmark – free schools, *efterskoler* and folk high schools – and are intended to create congruity between the Indepen-



dent Academy's practice and the tasks that staff members face at a free school.

Free and unrestricted conversations about the form and content of the Independent Academy are perceived by some students as meaningful, but also as wide-ranging and a hassle, and call for a great deal of patience, constructive criticism, and constant practice in an interactive fellowship (Finnerup, 2021). An ongoing conflict concerns the question of specialist and generalist concentrations in the teacher training; students who want to move the programme in the direction of a folk high school teacher's life are especially involved this issue<sup>3</sup>. Compared to an academic education at a master's level, the teacher education at the Independent Academy is a generalist programme; students graduate in four to five specialist subjects and are also required to complete all the compulsory common subjects. This results in a professional potpourri; the students interested in folk high schools generally perceive this as the biggest barrier to later employment at a folk high school since they compete with graduates from academies and lengthy higher education programmes (Finnerup, 2021). Compared to the public teacher education, however, the question is more about specialization, as the number of hours for the specialist subjects is somewhat higher. Also, throughout the training longer periods of self-selected tasks are included – with half a year's work on the in-depth project as the foremost example. Finally, there are opportunities for students – on their own or in groups – to delve into selected subjects and activities after the end of the school

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<sup>3</sup> This theme has been debated throughout the history of the Independent Academy for Free School Teaching (Madsen, 1999) and points to the condition that the Independent Academy's education has continuously undergone changes due to the changing needs of the free schools. In the period from 1949, when the Independent Academy is founded, and to more recent times, folk high schools have changed their profile from a high degree of a broad general bildung focusing on literature, history and religion to professional specializations focusing on sports, theater and visual arts (Korsgaard, 2019).

day. Dedicated classrooms and workshops, such as music rooms, sports halls, visual arts and craft rooms, are open to students in their free time, and the school is set up to encourage students make use of the rooms, assume independent responsibility, and not only “*get* a teacher education, but *take* a teacher education,” as a student puts it (Finnerup, 2021). Cultivating a subject at the Independent Academy often results in dedicated students greatly exceeding the number of hours on the subject and not limiting their in-depth study to class hours alone. This commitment generally matches the approach to subjects often encountered at folk high schools, where passion for a subject and the school’s purpose blur the line between work and leisure (Finnerup, 2019; Møller, 2019; Rahbek & Møller, 2015).

Side by side with the dedicated teacher student, you will find the non-dedicated teacher student at the Independent Academy (Finnerup, 2021; Christensen, 1977). Typically, this student does adequate work in the subjects, completes the homework (so that the teacher does not notice the low commitment), spends minimal time at school after the end of the class, avoids the school’s areas of democratic bildung, and never participates in school activities where absences are not registered, such as a Great Assembly. This student may well have developed an attitude to the school and its teaching and has as much formal power as the students and staff who engage in the school’s development and participatory democracy. This state of affairs raises a question of how strong the democracy at the Independent Academy really is, whether ignorance and lack of commitment among some of the participants risk eroding the foundations of the school’s democratic structure. This shortcoming seems to afflict the Independent Academy, as all participants have both direct and indirect power, and there are even those who fear that the “lazy and listless idiots grow in number year by year” and damage the school’s democratic tradition (Finnerup, 2021). A death of democratic com-

mitment, as well as a fundamental lack of belief that democracy and education should be linked, are acknowledged as problems at the Independent Academy, problems which, incidentally, reflect a trend in a number of traditional Western democracies (Biesta, 2021). On the other hand, this also points to a condition which comprise an inherent potential for *bildung* and learning. Nevertheless, a clear and specific problem unfolds for the students who aim for folk high school work, a problem which can influence their learning and *bildung* tasks, a problem that teachers at Danish folk high schools are aware of (Rahbek, 2016). Seen from a teacher education perspective, this is not about *best* practice, but *bad* practice, a distinction which may help clarify to what extent it contributes to a culture of growth for teacher students. No evidence exists to address this, but it may be said that the problem still exists and is continuously found in the history of the Independent Academy for Free School Teaching (Christensen, 1977; Madsen, 1999).

## **Education without exams**

Hi there, teacher.

Here's an e-mail with my evaluation of the teaching this semester.

In general, I've looked in vain for a common thread in your teaching, and I can't see why we for instance should have to spend time on historical perspectives. I'm training to become an *efterskole* and folk high school teacher, and I still haven't been presented with specific methods, for instance, on how to create an authentic dialogue among young people and adults in a classroom. For a school leader, it's probably relevant to be prepared to work with the school's values, but my goal is to become a good

teacher in Danish and social studies. Furthermore, I found much of the teaching to be abstract and without grounding, and some of the texts were far too theoretical for me. The modules on the learning paradox, Rousseau and Kant I chose to stay away from. I think we should read newer texts that tell us what works in the classroom and what doesn't work. It annoys me that there was no room in the curriculum for low arousal and conflict resolution, which incidentally many of us asked for at the beginning of the semester when we drafted the curriculum. Overall, I'm tired of the fact that we so often apply a meta-perspective. It's getting too fluffy for me. We also had too many rambling plenary conversations where people just go on and on about things they don't know.

Another conflict that routinely crops up at the Independent Academy concerns the emphasis in a subject, about the relationship between an acquisition of subject-matter knowledge and a focus on broader *bildung* – a relationship which in Scandinavia traditionally is expressed as a competence to both *teach the subject* and to *teach by means of the subject* (Rahbek & Møller, 2015). The education at the Independent Academy is practice-oriented, and much of the teaching aims to equip its students with specific skills that are instantly useful to a teacher at a free school. On the other hand, the students' growth and their general *bildung* are heavily weighted, with an emphasis on developing a teacher identity and teacher personality, on the subject matter's historical and general perspectives as well as on an integrated focus on life experience and compassion (Value Statement, 2021) – values that are pedagogical discourse markers of the general, Grundtvigian ideal of life enlightenment (Korsgaard, 2019). The relationship between subject-matter competence and broader *bildung* is an open one. It is discussed, negotiated and decided by the teachers and students

who meet in the setting of the subject, and this background not infrequently gives rise to conflicts in the classroom and at school. This tension is described among students with metaphors such as “tool-box” and “glasses to see with,” and the conflicts are felt to be mixed, everlasting and without actual solutions (Finnerup, 2021).

Underlying these and several other pedagogical disagreements at the Independent Academy are the school’s freedom *from* exams and *to* the freedom of teachers and students on each team to exclusively select and decide the syllabus and teaching methods. Often, sparks fly in the classroom in a remarkable mixture of commitment and frustration, as the empowerment is experienced as both enormously liberating and a real hassle. Some students voice the opinion that student participation is an obstacle to good and relevant teaching, while others believe that the goal for the specific courses should be much clearer and that poor teachers fail to express this (Finnerup, 2021).

In today’s late-modern world with its accelerating loss of traditions, increasing individualization, and a dominant trend to direct the school unequivocally towards educating workers for a competitive labour market, it has been pointed out that a broader *bildung* and the school’s pedagogical freedom labour under more difficult conditions (Illeris, 2014). It seems that this trend also has found its way into the Independent Academy, according to its students (Finnerup, 2021). Although many students and staff traditionally have attended purpose-oriented and *bildung*-oriented schools, a group of school participants are nevertheless perceived as being part of this trend. In a theoretical perspective, this may be described as a parochial view of labour market-oriented competencies, a functional view of goal-directed learning and a general weakening of educational freedom (Tanggaard & Skovmand, 2020).

The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching and the other free schools still enjoy an extensive degree of freedom, guaranteed

by relevant legislation. However, in light of the late-modern changes, the question is to what extent the Independent Academy is able to hold on to and practice its autonomy, and how the school handles what may be called its freedom of didactic interpretation. On the one hand, the Independent Academy is still *free from* a large number of conditions that apply to the rest of the schools and education system, on the other hand, considering the late-modern changes in school culture, the question is whether the school in actual fact is *free to* manage and interpret its mission – to carry out its values in real life and thus keep the freedom alive in the tension between, for example, individual autonomy and an ethical responsibility for the other communities the school is part of. The Independent Academy is a very small institution of higher education, with its teaching staff of 20 members and approximately 320 students. It cannot be emphasized enough that the individual participants' commitment, their knowledge and skills, are crucial for the school's identity-based survival. If students and staff do not appreciate the school's traditional principle of balance between, for example, professional skills and a broader *bildung*, and if this understanding cannot be provided, there are no external circumstances or central legislation that can salvage the institution. In that sense, the Independent Academy is also set free to disintegrate, or "perish," as one student puts it (Finnerup, 2021).

Thus, the task of the Independent Academy, from a current perspective and to a certain extent as a broader *bildung* and a familiarity with a free school philosophy as well as an unfettered practice, is present as a prerequisite for its freedom of didactic interpretation. However, it cannot be taken for granted among the school participants. Seen from a folk high school perspective, this reflects the challenge that according to several observers also afflicts the folk high schools (Lindsø and Rykind-Eriksen, 2017), as well as the *bildung*- and purpose-oriented obligation folk high schools have in relation

to “teaching of a broad, general nature” (Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark, 2021b). A minimum of 50% of the teaching at Danish folk high schools must apply a perspective beyond the subject itself; hence, such teaching must therefore be done *by means of* a subject, even though folk high school students may arrive with an expectation of only being *taught the subject*. Teachers at the Danish folk high schools are obliged to meet this challenge, and they must learn to manage the problem constructively as an integral part of the free and open conversations that take place in the classroom. Students at the Independent Academy continuously meet similar interpretive challenges in terms of everyday, ordinary freedoms, and the purpose is to enable them to handle exactly such tasks at folk high schools, among other places. The basic aim is to empower students to integrate a purpose-oriented educational approach and to manage instructional sessions in the tension between competence and broader *bildung* (Value Statement, 2021).

Ideally, the teaching at the Independent Academy takes the shape of “living interaction”, a concept related to Grundtvig’s pedagogical ideas, which were published in the 1830s and formed the theoretical foundation for the establishment of a number of folk high schools in subsequent years (Korsgaard, 2019; Teaching Plan and Subjects, 2021). In practical terms, *living interaction* is intended to be applied as reciprocal action, dialogue and oral communication; traditionally it is extensively used by many folk high schools as well as the Independent Academy (Value Statement, 2021). When the teaching-learning transaction aspires to enact living interactions, it seeks a mutual, constructive and expanding relationship between students and teachers, as well as an open relationship between materials and participants. The intention is that teachers, students and subjects must be freely integrated in the teaching, with an ongoing opportunity to re-establish understandings, expand horizons and even recreate the

world and man. Ideally, everything seems to be at stake – the substance, the students, and the teacher – with the aim of imbuing the teaching with a fundamental, human quality, which entails being part of and changing the world. Thus, everything in the teaching-learning transaction is a starting point for discussion. According to teachers and students this can be both enriching and distressing when running a school, as it challenges educational ideals such as continuity and progression. “I often find that the professional level is lowered in the lessons. Teachers sometimes set the bar low, and still some students lower the level even more in the lessons. At times, some teachers also seem insecure. I really hate it when students oversimplify the issues we work with,” says one student (Finnerup, 2021).

Of course, there may be many reasons why the teacher and some students lower the academic level in the lessons and that the teacher appears insecure. One explanation suggests that some students and teachers experience discomfort when a dimension of interactive chaos arises; in the words of the German social psychologist Thomas Ziehe, they are culturally liberated and therefore (often unconsciously) demand cosmos, clear frameworks, rigour, and control (Ziehe, 2004). In this light, students and staff at the Independent Academy seem to live a paradox: on the one hand, they have chosen the free life at the Independent Academy, on the other hand, it can be perplexing and painful to have to assume the responsibilities and the burdens that comes with freedom.

## **Practical friction pedagogy**

Suggestions for improving the internship guidance at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching:

The evaluation of the annual internship at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching has shown in the



last few years that there is an increased need to strengthen the internship guidance. Several students show signs of dissatisfaction and stress during the internship, some interrupt their internship, and many demand increased contact with the supervisor at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching. Therefore, the Internship Optimization Committee proposes that each internship teacher be allocated more hours for supervision, that clearer requirements be set for continuous contact between the intern and supervisor, and that the internship schools be obliged to make a mentor available to the intern.

The foundation for Independent Academy's ideas about broader *bildung* and education is a material-dialectical view of *bildung*, where man ideally grows and develops in the meeting with someone else and something else (Winther-Jensen, 2005). At school, this may be implemented as a committed community with sweeping obligatory attendance, a school day where students are physically present for many hours, and a physical school building with highly specialized classrooms, full of things and cases, objects and artifacts from the different worlds of the subjects – a culturally embedded and historically rooted professionalism. It is the school's intention that education and *bildung* do not take place in empty rooms, but in situations and places where the individual meets resistance and is challenged by other individuals and something unfamiliar. In that sense, this teacher training is a friction pedagogy or “resonance pedagogy”, which the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa has suggested (Rosa, 2017). The classroom should be animated, and students should explore the world, talk to each other, and perform actions in places where resonance is possible. In a Grundtvigian sense, this is reminiscent of the concept of ‘living interaction’: a constructive process in which people act as opposites in a field of tension, in which they interact with each other, move

themselves and each other and thereby become part of a creative activity. Criticism, boisterous debates and friendly fights – which Grundtvig referred to as the Nordic cycle (Overgaard, 2008, p. 153) – are generally regarded as ideals at the Independent Academy. In other words, professionalism is thus characterized by being situated, meaning-oriented and carried by communities of practice whose goal is to contribute to a case-and-content pedagogy (Tanggaard, 2017).

The practice-oriented pedagogy at the Independent Academy is primarily evident in the part of the teacher education where the students 'do' their teacher training as interns. Internships take up a lot of time, three weeks in both the first and second year of study as well as the entire third year, where the student work in internships, usually at a free school in Denmark (Teaching Plan and Subjects, 2021). The third-year internship is a hallmark of this teacher education, where students are employed as regular teachers and on the same terms as qualified teachers. It is hard for many of the students, and the internship year is often experienced as a momentous and serious task: "I was 'lost' at my internship school and not prepared for the pupils being so difficult to manage. Halfway through the internship year, I changed my internship place. It was some help, but it doesn't change the fact that I think it's really crazy what a teacher is supposed to deal with" (Finnerup, 2021).

The maxim "Virkeligheden er altings prøve" (Reality is the measure of all things) is carved in granite over the entrance to one of the Independent Academy's main buildings. It marks what you as a student enter into and must prepare for: A practice-oriented education, where theory and practice are closely linked. The aim seems twofold. On the one hand, the purpose is to lessen the practice shock, which unfortunately affects many newly qualified teachers, according to observers primarily from the public teacher education in Denmark (Lendal-Jørgensen, 2020). On the other hand, the statement

“reality is the measure of all things” also highlights the Independent Academy’s philosophy of both education and humans, a view that fundamentally shapes its practice and a view that is shared by a large part of the Danish folk high schools: That words, theory and spirit do not in themselves embody a meaningful human life, it must materialize in action, practice and the products of the hand to be a lived life in the true sense (Korsgaard, 2019).

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# Chapter 16

## Becoming a folk high school teacher in Sweden

By Anders Hallqvist, Per Andersson and Sol Morén

### Introduction

The educational pathways among the 4000 Swedish folk high school teachers are many and diverse. Some (less than 20%) have a formal folk high school teaching qualification, a folk high school teacher's exam, while others have learned the trade from experience (Folkbildningsrådet, 2020). Still others (around 40%) have completed a teacher education designed for working among youths within the regular public school system. Some take additional courses that provide knowledge about the folk high school's ideas, educational practices, organisation, and governance. Formally speaking, however, becoming a folk high school teacher is not about education; it is about being recruited. When you are recruited and employed as a folk high school teacher, you have become a folk high school teacher. Some of the recruited teachers have a teacher's qualification when they become employed and some participate in teacher training parallel to their job as teachers, something others will never do. In addition to (teacher) education and experience-based knowledge, experience from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is sometimes



considered germane because many folk high schools in Sweden have a connection to NGOs with specific ideological profiles. Drawing on existing literature and five authentic cases that exemplify folk high school teachers' career trajectories, this chapter will describe and discuss this diversity of teachers' educational pathways. Looking at the higher education ordinance and based on interviews with teachers in charge of the national folk high school teacher programme, we also describe the programme. We discuss how this prepares the students for the folk high school as a diverse and creative work environment. Being part of the teaching staff of the teacher programme, the authors of this chapter try to shoulder the position of a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983).

## **Informal pathways to becoming a folk high school teacher**

There are many different folk high schools in Sweden. Owners and school profiles are many and diverse. The subjects taught are manifold, and new courses are continuously developed. Accordingly, there is a great variety among the teachers' knowledge and skills. Most of the teachers at the general course have a teacher's degree, however, this is less common among teachers that teach vocational and aesthetic subjects (Folkbildningsrådet, 2020). Many of the teachers have followed pathways that to a large extent are based on informal learning gained from working life experiences. The case of Gunilla provides an example.

Gunilla studied tourism at a folk high school, and she has also a long experience of working in tourism. A few years ago, she became a teacher at the school's tourism course and later appointed to start a course for tourist guides.

Today, she combines work as a teacher with work in the tourism trade. She has a part-time position at the school, running a course for tourist guides.

She came to the school, and to the small city where the school is located, many years ago to participate in a tourism programme. She settled down and worked in tourism, and guiding was one of her work tasks. When the folk high school was looking for a teacher for its tourism programme, Gunilla was approached and recruited. After a while, the courses were changed, and the tourism course closed. But Gunilla was able to keep her position, however, now mainly working with administrative tasks, such as the booking of conferences organised at the school. Parallel to this, she has continuously been working in the tourism trade, mainly as guide.

A few years ago, there was a new need for the training of guides in the city, and the school started a part-time course for guides, with Gunilla as course leader. As such, she is both teacher and administrative leader coordinating the course, recruiting lecturers and doing other work tasks that suit her. Gunilla's work as a teacher is interwoven with parallel work in tourism and as guide. She has no formal teacher training. She has not 'had time' for this, Gunilla says, believing she is too old for this now. 'But I have participated in a lot of internal training in the folk high school world.' Gunilla also points out that guiding is an educational job. 'The educational [part], I have it via my training as a guide.'

Gunilla's trajectory as a teacher of a vocational course is thus interdependent with her trajectory in the tourism trade. For her, being a teacher and being a guide are both educational duties. What she has

learnt as a guide is useful in teaching, and she has followed a mainly informal pathway where both lanes run in parallel and intertwine.

## **Combining academic and professional merits**

While the first pattern represents a pathway that is mainly experience-based, the following covers both working life merits and higher education credits. Our example teacher, Stefan, has a teacher's degree, not, however, from the folk high school teacher programme, but from the regular teacher education. Nevertheless, today he works as a folk high school teacher, responsible for a vocational course that introduces the participants to the development of computer games.

Asked to tell the story about his working life, Stefan begins by saying that his career is 'extremely motley'. Ever since he was a kid, he has been engaged in video games and gaming, and he also constructed games already as a kid. At post-secondary school he studied technology and then he worked in a gaming store for some time. It never turned out, however, that he studied programming or IT at the university. The reason for this, he lets us know, is that he never considered himself as good as his classmates at programming. Therefore, he chose another occupational path. He studied to become a history and Swedish language teacher, intending to work in the ordinary and curriculum-based school system. After additional studies in history, he worked as a secondary school teacher for a couple of years. He then returned to the IT-sector and occupied different positions: writer, copy manager and project leader, Stefan is experienced in both the technical and the story-making aspects of game development.

## *Becoming a folk high school teacher in Sweden*

When Stefan returns to Sweden after a period abroad, he finds himself with duties that really do not match his interests ('e-commerce and such things, that was not me'). But as he is also an experienced author, he quits and decides to set up his own business, intending to offer courses in writing. Preparing for this, Stefan takes a course that includes practice at a folk high school, during which he is asked to stay on and to become a folk high school teacher. And there we found him today, employed half-time at the folk high school, teaching IT. And he is working half-time at an IT-company.

Clearly, Stefan's career is protean, and the motley character of his experiences becomes a strength in the sense that several points of connection are established between him and a potential employer. Faced by different situations, different teaching subjects are actualised, and different options are opened. The case of Stefan is interesting also because it illustrates that educational innovation and the continuous development of new courses, so characteristic of the Swedish folk high schools, require teachers with new and rare combinations of knowledge that sometimes are difficult to find.

Knowledge acquired from art schools and from working as a professional artist is often valued highly when folk high schools recruit teachers in their arts, crafts, and design courses. The following case illustrates a kind of educational pathway that includes a Master of Fine Arts and a formal teacher education, as well as the experience of working as a professional visual artist. While Stefan in his educational pathway moved horizontally between different subjects, in our next case, Moni shows a vertical career pattern which is far narrower and more specialised.

Moni already knew that she wanted to become an artist when she was young, and during secondary school she did an internship at an art school. After upper secondary school, Moni studied art at a preparatory art school in Northern Sweden and continued to pursue the art teachers' education. Moni then got a job as an art teacher in a major city in the west of Sweden. The workplace was a large school in a suburb where many of the pupils had various problems, connected to sociocultural circumstances. Moni experienced her first job as a teacher as tough, since she had recently graduated and was receiving little mentoring support from her colleagues at the workplace. When the opportunity came to get a job at a folk high school in the north of Sweden, she didn't hesitate.

Moni then worked as a folk high school teacher, teaching arts and crafts, including subjects like drawing, painting, ceramics, and various forms of traditional crafts techniques. She was very content with the work as a teacher at the folk high school; however, after a few years she felt that she wanted to further develop her artistic side, because becoming an artist was still the most important thing for her. Moni then attended an art school run by another folk high school, in a major city in the middle of Sweden, and after this she continued her pathway of becoming an artist by studying sculpture at the academy of fine arts. During her professional career, Moni has worked as a professional artist, exhibiting at galleries and museums, and producing public art works, and in parallel she has also worked as an art teacher.

Today Moni has a permanent position at a folk high school which runs an art school for young people with neu-

ropsychiatric disabilities. She regards the activities at the schools' workshop and her job as an art teacher there as very important. She states that at the workshop art becomes a tool for personal development, in a holistic sense, for the young people with neuropsychiatric functional variations who attend the art school. The pedagogy of the folk high school serves as a foundation for the teachers who have developed their own artistic pedagogy during many years. Moni expresses that the aim of her artistic pedagogy is to support personal and artistic development among young people with neuropsychiatric functional variations, including a sense of being part of society.

The case of Moni illustrates how folk high schools attract highly educated people as teachers in their artistic programs and workshops. The ideas of *folkbildning* go well with pedagogical ideas connected to historic arts and crafts movements, such as the Bauhaus school, an experimental art and design school in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany (see Droste & Gössel, 2006) or the British arts and crafts movement, represented by for instance William Morris (1912). Here, the ideals of *folkbildning* could be compared with the German concept of *Bildung*, where the aesthetic knowledge was thought to contribute to and refine the cultural capital of an individual. The case of Moni is also significant as it illustrates something which is common among folk high school teachers, namely a combination of personal and professional engagement, both in relation to their subject and in pedagogy for social inclusion. This is highlighted by Moni's statement that in her pedagogy, art becomes a tool to support personal development among young people with neuropsychiatric functional variations, where being a part of the folk high school's workshop contributes to her students' sense of inclusion in society.

## **The folk high school teacher programme as a bridge into teaching**

We now turn our attention to the more formal and, in a weak sense, authorised path to become a folk high school teacher: the folk high school teacher programme.

There are at least two different educational pathways here. Some use the folk high school teacher programme as a bridge into folk high school teaching. Others use the programme as continuous education while working as a teacher. Within both these pathways we will find a variety, for example when looking at the subject matter and the ways in which the students have received their subject matter knowledge.

A European study of ways of becoming an adult educator in different countries (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson & Milana, 2013; Milana, (Ed), Andersson, Farinelli, Gross, Jögi, Köpsén & Larson, 2010) included the analysis of adult educators' career pathways. Based on interviews with adult-educators-to-be who participated in programmes like the Swedish folk high school teacher programme, the study showed that many already had experience from teaching in adult education, or had been students in adult education themselves, an experience that could be important for becoming an adult educator. Many of the pathways in this study were long and winding, and the variety was great, but even so the study pointed out two main types. One pathway was becoming an adult educator as a new step forward in a personal career – either as a step on an existing path when you became a teacher in a subject or vocation where you already had your background and were active, or as a step into a new career as a teacher. For those already employed as teachers, similar 'positive' and internal motives for taking up teacher training was experiencing a need for more knowledge and competence to do a better job as a teacher. The other main pathway was the story of becoming an adult educator

as ‘plan B’. These adult-educators-to-be did not describe this as their first choice, but something that they were forced to do. For example, an injury could make it impossible for you to keep on working in your vocation; an alternative was to become a teacher of this vocation, or difficulties to get a job in a profession such as biologist led to the decision to become a teacher in biology instead. Those already working as teachers could also have similar less positive, external motives for entering teacher training, such as a local requirement of a teaching degree. Finally, one striking difference between these (prospective) adult educators was that their focus as teachers was different depending on how far they had come on their pathway to becoming teachers. Those who had limited experience of teaching were mainly focussing on the subject contents, and on how students would perceive them as teachers. With increasing experience came a higher degree of focus on their own professional development, the teaching context, and the students. And those who had more extensive experience from teaching had a focus on the communication with and relationship to the students (Andersson et al., 2013; Milana et al., 2010). The case of Jenny exemplifies this kind educational pathway.

Jenny is almost 50 years old and a student at the folk high school teacher programme. She has no previous experience as a teacher, but she has been an educator in other contexts. She previously studied and worked with finance and human resources in business, where she also worked with staff training. She has also been a volunteer in an athletics club, where she was a leader and a leadership trainer. When she attended a university course in adult education, she became aware of ‘folkbildning’ and the folk high schools, via a lecturer who told her about the folk high school teacher programme. She also realised that she could become a teacher in only one year, even a teacher in adult education.



She found the field of adult education to be exciting with her background in leadership training and staff training.

Jenny has no explicit plans, now that she is in the middle of the folk high school teacher programme; however, because of her broad educational background she is confident that she will get a job. She can even imagine a combination of work tasks at a folk high school, for example teaching and working with its finances. She describes how the teacher programme has given her theories and concepts for what she has done previously as a trainer. ‘Now I get the theory for what I have been doing. Yes, I get concepts for mediation and learning-by-doing, all these concepts ... [...] The theoretical concepts make me grow as a teacher, it is scientific, it is knowledge, this is how it is!’ She can also see parallels between being a folk high school teacher and leadership roles in the club, when it comes to keeping the participants in focus and helping everyone to develop their talent.

## **The folk high school teacher programme as further education**

Some of the students are already onboard, i. e., they worked as folk high school teachers when being admitted to the teacher education. There is a separate admission group for students employed as folk high school teachers. This group uses the programme to renew and develop their teaching practices. Sometimes their headmaster asks them to or requires that they take the exam. They are allowed to do their practice within their own regular teaching, using a colleague as a mentor.

Stefan and Moni (above) *could* have travelled this path and studied at the folk high school teacher programme alongside their regular work, and many students with similar backgrounds do so, to renew their teaching and become more familiar with the educational visions and teaching practices of the folk high school movement.

Again, within this group there is a great variety in the paths already travelled, i. e., the way in which they have acquired their subject matter knowledge. Below we provide different example with the case of Jacob.

Jacob has spent a lot of time in the wilderness ever since he was a kid, encouraged by his parents and as a member of the scout movement. Also, his interest deepened during his military service. Moreover, it turns into an educational and occupational pathway as he takes a course to become a mountain hiker, works as such for a few years and thereafter enters a vocational folk high school education to become a qualified mountain leader. While completing this course, he soon decides not to do the ‘nature-thing’ for a living, but as leisure. During the course he meets his wife, which is why he stays in the area. After completing a technology course, the folk high school suggested to Jacob that he could teach maths and biology at the school. Even though he is a little hesitant about maths, he enters this path, and a few years later he applies to the folk high school teacher programme. Lacking academic merits as well as working life merits in his subject matter (biology/maths), he was probably enrolled because he was already employed and because of his documented knowledge in biology, nature, and the wilderness – even though he also or mainly teaches maths. As a maths teacher, Jacob is to a great extent ‘self-made’.

The case of Jacob illustrates that some people take the folk high school teacher exam to further develop their teaching practices, to become more familiar with the folk high schools' educational ideas and to become and to feel legitimate as a folk high school teacher. Besides, the case of Jacob illustrates a way to become a folk high school teacher that to a great extent is dependent on personal interest and engagement and that the 'authorised' path does not hinder people or schools to make 'horizontal' moves between subjects. This is because there is no subject-matter specific degree, but only a general teaching degree.

## **The structure and content of the folk high school teacher programme**

It is time to describe in more detail the teacher education designed for working as a teacher in the Swedish folk high school. The programme covers only educational issues; when being admitted, the students already have a degree in the subjects in which they are going to teach. Their degrees may be in more traditionally academic subjects, such as maths or languages, but they can also be in arts like painting, music or poetry, or in handicrafts and vocational subjects.

The folk high school in Sweden has had its own teacher education since the beginning of the 1970s (see Carlsson, Harlin & Roselius, 2018). Currently, the courses in the teacher programme are designed to satisfy the national regulation of higher education from 2017, saying that the student shall 'show the kind of knowledge and ability necessary to work autonomously as teacher in the folk high school' (Linköping university, 2020). Being part of the national higher education system, the teacher education is closely linked to research, in particular educational research on *folkbildning* and adult learning.

It is possible to finish the programme in two years as a half-time student, or in one year if studying full time. The programme is composed of four courses. The first presents the educational system and milieu and introduces some of the main concepts and perspectives of teaching. This is followed by a course that investigates thematic teaching and focuses on sustainable development and digital resources, and two courses with extensive supervised practice at folk high schools. That vocational orientation is high on the agenda stems from the requirement of it being relevant to the students' future activities as teachers. Clearly, it is necessary to make sure that the students get opportunities to do teaching exercises and to reflect on their own approaches to teaching and their preferred teaching strategies.

## **The pedagogy of the folk high school teacher programme**

The teachers in charge of the programme accentuate their students' diverse background, also observing that many students share the social pathos and educational ideals of *folkbildning*:

Many of [the students] say that they have done a lot of different things, and that they would want to tie this together into something useful. They want to create a better world, to influence, and to make a difference.

The programme leaders point out that the students themselves represent a rich variety of folk high school experiences and therefore exert a great and important impact on the programme. Moreover, they emphasise that the programme tries to hold on to the values of *folkbild-*

*ning*<sup>1</sup>, saying that these must have an impact on both the programme and the students' approach to teaching:

There are various actors and stakeholders who would like to, and try to, define the Swedish concept of '*folkbildning*'. In the first course of the programme, we go through the available documents ... and we look at what these means for the folk high school teacher in practice. I try to keep that in mind during the whole programme; for example, it implies that if you aim for more people to have their voice heard, you cannot design your education based on a teacher's monologue. We ponder on how to design education where all participants are encouraged to make their voices heard.

In the first course of the programme, the students become familiar with the pedagogical ideas of the folk high schools. Even though each folk high school has its own profile, they have educational ideas in common. One important idea is to encourage pluralism and autonomy. The programme is formed by a continuous dialogue between educational research and the teaching ideas and practices of the local schools. The programme representatives talk about how the openness to new ideas and a pluralistic pedagogy is expressed in the programme:

During the last couple of years, the programme has continuously been subject to change. From the history of ideas to teaching training, and presently back to the ideas again. Recently, norm criticism has been emphasised as important. Aesthetic learning processes have been added. The

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<sup>1</sup> Including equality, students' influence, political mobilisation, sustainable development, pluralism, and the significance of lived experience.

lack of stability characterises both the local schools and the teacher education, pointing to an openness for revitalisation. This suggests that we are defined by autonomy and freedom; there is not much stability to hold on to.

But what more precisely can be said regarding the educational ideals of the Swedish folk high schools? And which are the most important ideas that serve as the foundation for the Swedish folk high school teacher programme? The programme leaders suggest that participants' voice and influence are central, and that sustainable development is another key value statement. They further reflect upon the schools taking a possible position as a change-agent in society, where ideally the classroom expands as students and teachers try to not only talk about but *live* certain values such as democracy, equality, dialogue, or sustainable development. Besides those social or political ambitions, the idea of subjectification is often considered as central to the educational philosophy of folk high schooling.

When it comes to the ideals *as lived*, i. e., the pedagogical practices within the teacher education itself, the program leaders say that the students who already work at a folk high school bring their pedagogical experiences and ideas from this unique folk high school environment to the programme, which supports the programme with a continuous educational renewal. This is clearly important: students who already have positions as teachers while entering the folk high school teacher programme 'infect' the education with their ideas and practices. Furthermore, when the programme teachers visit students during their teaching practice, they get the opportunity to update their knowledge concerning what a folk high school is. Thus, the 'spirit' of folk high school is not simply defined, but it is created when students and teachers and teacher educators meet and interact, representing different parts of Sweden, different subject matters, and different educational ideas and teaching practices.

The Swedish folk high school teacher programme maintains a continuous dialogue and knowledge exchange with many of the folk high schools across the country. This ongoing knowledge exchange is made possible partly because the teachers of the programme go out and visit the folk high schools where students do their teaching practice; partly because many of the students already work as teachers at folk high schools and thus bring their local folk high school's pedagogical traditions into the programme; and partly because the folk high school teacher programme arranges further education for folk high schools.

## **When pathways cross**

In this chapter we have described the variety of pathways people travel when they become folk high school teachers in Sweden. We have provided examples to show how people combine a variety of life experiences, work experiences, educational merits, teaching experiences, and sometimes the folk high school teacher education. We have also described this programme and discussed the ways in which teacher students are being prepared for interacting with the diversity of knowledge traditions at the local folk high schools. When participating in the programme, teacher students interact with teacher educators and each other, and, by virtue of their heterogeneity and through a continuous dialogue with local folk high schools, co-create the folk high school's pedagogy, identity, and ideas. As the teacher students' various educational pathways cross and their different educational traditions meet with each other and up-to-date educational research, as well as research on *folkbildning*, reading and discussing classical and contemporary academic texts, together they contribute to the evolving of what we could call the folk high school movement.

The latter is both influencing and being influenced by the folk high school teacher programme, because of this constant collaborative dialogue between the programme and the schools. Educational pathways cross not only in the context of the teacher education however, but at the local schools and with other educational institutions. The interconnection between individual trajectories, local schools and formal educational arrangements is significant for trading and recreating the folk high school movement's values and pedagogical ideas.

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## Chapter 17

# Can a university-based teachers' education incorporate folk high schools' identity and practice?

By Johan Lövgren and Arve Amsrud

### Introduction

The university auditorium was filled with an unconventional mixture of organisational leaders, researchers, teachers, academics and headmasters from all of Norway. We had initiated this conference to mark the opening of the country's first academic folk high school teacher training program. To us, the arrangement also marked the end of four years of preparations and discussions on how to adapt the university's teacher training programme to the needs of Norwegian folk high school teachers.

Our first key speaker was Rasmus Kolby Rahbek, giving the lecture "The unprofessional folk high school teacher" (Rahbek, 2019). He argued that for a folk high school teacher, the standardised markers of a profession, such as shared competence and certified education, do not apply. Kolby Rahbek showed how these educators represent such a wide range of competences and educational backgrounds that, if anything, they must be defined as unprofessional. Further,

he claimed that this freedom from formal definitions is a necessary prerequisite for the work of a folk high school teacher.

Listening to Kolby Rahbek's lecture, we both reflected on how his lecture reflected the many critical discussions that our work with the new teacher training programme had provoked.

## **Two educational traditions**

In the fall of 2020, the University of South-Eastern Norway in cooperation with the central organisations of Norwegian folk high school launched the university course PPUFHP – practical pedagogy for folk high school teachers. The two authors of this chapter first met in the preparatory planning committee for this folk high school teacher training programme. We have also shared the responsibility for running the programme. The theme of the “unprofessional” folk high school teacher had followed us through the years that we had worked together.

The two educational traditions were also reflected in our diverse professional backgrounds. Amsrud has spent his working life in formal teachers' education. Before we started working together with PPUFHP, he was a part of the committee that revised Norwegian teacher's training to become a more “professionalised” education. Lövgren, on the other hand, comes from 20 years of working experience as a folk high school teacher and his research has had the aim of describing these schools from the inside (see Lövgren, 2018; 2019).

As we applied our different fields of expertise to the development of this project, it became increasingly clear that we represented two very different parts of the Norwegian educational landscape. To use Kolby Rahbek's phrase – we had established a programme for the development of the competence of these “unprofessional” folk high

school teachers in the framework of a “professionalised” teachers’ training programme.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the challenges and possibilities involved in establishing an academic training program for folk high school teachers. The chapter will develop and discuss the following question:

How does the establishment of a university-based folk high school teachers’ education challenge the Norwegian folk high schools’ identity and practice?

To further develop this question, we will present a short historical introduction to Nordic folk high schools’ relationship to higher education and teachers’ competence. This overview leads us to the contemporary Norwegian folk schools and the development behind the new teacher training programme. The main part of the chapter presents a key informant study where the six main leaders of the Norwegian folk high school associations were interviewed. The chapter ends with a discussion where we reflect on how the establishment of a university-based teacher training programme challenged the Norwegian folk high schools.

## **The folk high schools and the university**

The discussion about formal teachers’ education for folk high school teachers has been a point of tension between the national folk high schools of the different Nordic countries (Skovmand, 1983). The theme of a formal demand for teachers’ competence has also been an ongoing debate within the national folk high schools (Korsgaard, 2002). The historical differences that lie behind these discussions are reflected in the contemporary national folk high schools’ varied connections to a formal educational system (Kantesalmi & Hake,

1997; Korsgaard, 2004; Ohrem & Haddal, 2011; Gustavsson, 2013; Nylander & Östlund, 2018).

In Norway, the folk high schools developed in close connection to Denmark and the heritage from N.F.S. Grundtvig (Mikkelsen, 2014). During the initial establishment of the Nordic folk high schools, Norway was under Danish rule. That there is a historical connection between these two national folk high schools can also be seen in their present form, exemplified by similarities in the contemporary legal framework of the two national schools.

In Norway, the question of teachers' academic competence has historically been one of the main causes of conflict between the two national folk high school associations (Mikkelsen, 2014; Tøsse, 2004). Though the Danish and Norwegian branches of the movement have the least degree of formal connection to the national educational system (Lövgren & Nordvall, 2017), the Norwegian folk high school organisations have in the last decade established a more formal connection to higher education; one sign of this being their collaboration with the University of South-Eastern Norway.

The national folk high school organisations in Norway have in this period cooperated with the University of South-Eastern Norway in the development, organisation, and implementation of further education programmes such a leadership training programme and the new programme for teachers' education. Course evaluations have indicated that the partnership between the university and the folk high schools in the implementation of the courses has been decisive for the realisation of these educational programmes (Folkehøgskoleforbundet, 2020). We will go on to describe how this cooperation worked in establishing an education for folk high school teachers.

## **Practical and academic qualifications**

The preparatory committee behind the new education for folk high school teachers combined the resources of the university and the national organisations of the Norwegian folk high schools. The work of the committee can be described as a process of negotiation where plans for the formal teachers' education were adjusted to serve the pedagogical ideals and practices of the folk high schools. In this way, the revised plans can be said to reflect the competence expected of a folk high school teacher. The revised course plans were then formally approved by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

A central aspect for the committee was what qualifications would be demanded for students to be admitted to the programme. This is one area where the regulations for public school teacher training had to be adjusted to the pedagogical practices of the folk high schools. The members of the committee saw the need to admit both teachers who were employed by a folk high school based on practical skills as well as those with academic qualifications (Haddal & Ohrem, 2011). The courses offered in the Norwegian folk high schools are to a large extent practically oriented, with their major courses focusing on combining personal development with topics such as music, crafts and sports (Tiller, 2016; Lövgren, 2018). The need for competent instructors to conduct these courses has been used as an argument for folk high schools to have the option of hiring teachers from a practical as well as an academic background (Ohrem & Haddal, 2011).

The Norwegian folk high school act from 2002 (Lov om folkehøyskolen. 2002) primarily demands the same standards of formal education for folk high school teachers as for teachers in the public school system. However, the legal text goes on to present an exception for the folk high schools, giving them the right to recruit teachers based on non-academic qualifications. While this book chapter was being prepared for publication, an official government report on the

folk high schools was presented (NOU 2022:16). This report opens the way for a new legal framework for the folk high schools and proposes that the new act would also regulate the formal demands for teachers' competence. The reports suggestion is that the exception from the 2002 Act should be continued, but that its use should be limited so that 80% of the teachers at each school must have a teachers' education.

## **Empirical study – six key informant interviews**

The second half of this chapter is designed to further develop how the establishment of a university-based folk high school teachers' education challenges the Norwegian folk high schools. To widen the discussion, we performed an empirical study based on six interviews. The study can be seen as a form of key informant research (McKenna & Main, 2013), sampling the six main leaders from the organisations involved in the establishment of the new programme. Interviews were conducted with the five leaders of the national organisations for folk high schools in Norway. The planning, performance and analysis of these interviews constituted the first phase of the study.

In her method chapter on thematic text analysis, Squires (2023) describes how a question can evolve “inductively during the coding process”. The analysis uncovered a number of such questions, which led to an additional key informant interview. To address our research question from another angle we conducted an interview with Per-Ludvik Kjendlie, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science at the University of South-Eastern Norway. To further develop the analysis, interviews were condensed and categorized (Franzosi, 2009). To present the empirical material in context, we will connect the six interviews with experiences that we have in

common with the informants. The material is presented under the central themes found in the thematic analysis.

## **Bildung and university education**

The first theme that was found in the analysis of interviews connected to our common experience with the folk high school leaders in the years prior to 2020. As representatives of the preparatory committee, we had regularly participated in the folk high schools' national conferences and gatherings to present the plans for the new teachers' education. One of the reasons for our presence at these gatherings was to answer questions, and in this way to prepare for the new programme. The majority of responses we got from the folk high school community at these conferences were favourable, expressing positive expectations of the new programme. The folk high school leaders' responses in the five interviews reflected the same basic positive attitude towards our project.

However, the responses we met at the national folk high school gatherings also included concerns and discussions about how a closer connection to a university would affect the folk high schools. A recurring basis for criticism of the project was the apprehension that the theoretical, analytical methods of academia would not provide room for the Bildung pedagogy of the folk high schools.

In our interviews, each of the folk high school leaders related to the concern that lay behind this question. Can the true identity of folk high school pedagogy be recognized in an academic setting? Their understanding of this concern could be expressed like this:

The folk high schools have one main focus, that of meeting the whole person – the 24-hour person. It can become challenging for the university to acknowledge this as a decisive factor in education.



We brought this question with us to our interview with Dean Kjendlie. As leader of the educational department, he addresses this challenge from another angle. He opens the interview by stating that he observes several overlapping interests between current focus areas of the University of South-Eastern Norway and what he sees as the fundamental ideals of the folk high schools, saying:

We should not just ‘utdanne’ (educate) our students but also provide them with ‘dannelse’ (self-realisation/Bildung). Teachers should learn to see and develop the whole person, not just as a pupil studying mathematics or English, but the whole person.

The response we got from Dean Kjendlie reflects an alternative image of university-based teachers’ education. His expresses an ambition for the university to develop a clearer Bildung perspective in the university’s teacher training programme.

## **Freedom and autonomy**

The second theme that we found to be central in the analysis of the interviews was that of freedom as an essential characteristic of the folk high schools. The national leaders used the terms *freedom* or *autonomy* to describe their organisational identity. One of them described this central feature as:

the enormous freedom that the folk high schools have. Not unlimited freedom, but something almost like it.

Throughout the interviews, the leaders discuss both positive and negative consequences of a partnership with the university. The central element here is the ways in which the autonomy of the folk high schools can be both protected and challenged by a closer coopera-

## *University training and the folk high schools' identity?*

tion with an academic institution. One possible negative influence is described as:

the risk of losing our freedom by making just one track for teachers' training, a specified way that everyone has to follow.

When discussing the positive effects, the folk high school leaders agree that an academic teacher training program can also assume the role of a supporter and even a guardian of the identity of the folk high schools. The national leaders explain that the level of freedom characterising the folk high schools carries with it a great responsibility. One of them expresses this responsibility as:

There is a big challenge connected to this freedom ... to secure that the whole staff understands what it is we are doing. What folk high school is really about.

To perform the educational mission entrusted to the folk high schools, teachers must be given the opportunity of learning to know and internalise central elements in folk high pedagogy. The national leaders credit this as the most important contribution of the new teachers' education. One of the leaders explains how this is possible:

The way the PPUFHP has put the Bildung-perspective on the map ... When almost 30 folk high school teachers who know this perspective come together, that's dynamite, isn't it?

This final comment expresses the central role ascribed to the teacher training programme by the national folk high school leaders.

## **Bridge builders**

Dean Kjøndlie expresses his ambition for an increased focus on Bildung, both in the university's educational strategy and in its programmes for teacher's training. While reasoning around this ambition, he says that "a concept of learning that includes the whole person" would be the most important contribution the folk high school could bring to the university. Kjøndlie sees the folk high schools as a potential "bridge builder", supporting the development of a more Bildung-oriented pedagogy at the university. He summarises the contribution of the folk high schools like this:

This is the kind of learning perspective that I believe the folk high schools can contribute to the university.

Dean Kjøndlie sees a potential role for the folk high schools as contributors to university pedagogy. The bridge builder function assigns the folk high schools a position of potential impact. Again, Kjøndlie's answers delineate a new angle to the theme by describing the folk high school not as the weaker part in a cooperation, but as a contributor with an expertise that the university needs.

The empirical study contained key person interviews where initially leaders from the Norwegian folk high schools were sampled as informants. The empirical material was later expanded by an interview with Dean Kjøndlie to add another angle to the material. The interviews brought forth a number of central issues that we will return to in the concluding discussion.

## **Concluding discussion**

This chapter's aim has been to analyse the tensions involved in the process of establishing an academic training program for folk high

school teachers. We ask in what ways a university-based teacher training challenges the folk high schools' identity.

## **Challenging historical boundaries**

When the national folk high school organisations initiated their collaboration with the University of South-Eastern Norway, they challenged a scepticism of academic qualification that has been described as characteristic of the Danish and Norwegian folk high schools. The partnership that was instigated, kindled a discussion about how a university-based folk high school teachers' education would affect the Norwegian folk high schools. The material presented in this chapter was put together with the aim of developing this issue further.

The first theme that emerged in the analysis of empirical material, was a concern raised by the folk high school community. Could the theoretical, analytical methods of academia encompass the wider aim of *Bildung* pedagogy? There are in the presented material two sections that relates directly to this concern.

The student evaluations from the first two years of the new teachers' education show the importance of a cooperation between the university lecturers and representatives for the folk high school community in conducting the programme. The students' response indicates that the presence of experienced folk high school practitioners in the course management anchors the programme in the everyday practices of the folk high schools.

A second section can be found in the interview with Dean Kjendlie from the University of South-Eastern Norway. He expresses an ambition on the university's part for an increased focus on *Bildung* pedagogy. We would argue that these responses from the Dean reflect an openness within academia towards the pedagogical ideals of the folk high schools.

## **Preserving the folk high schools' freedom**

A second main theme in the presented material relates to how a closer cooperation with the university would affect the freedom of the Norwegian folk high schools. This freedom is reflected in the schools' right to hire a teacher with the competence needed to conduct a course, regardless of formal pedagogical training. It is also seen in the freedom from predetermined curriculums, exams and grades.

The folk high school leaders describe this freedom both as a characteristic of the movement and as a great responsibility. This autonomy puts a lot of responsibility on the schools' staff as bearers of a pedagogical identity connected to an "almost" unlimited freedom. There are among the folk high school leaders a concern that a centralised teachers' education could make "one track" that impairs the freedom and variety among the teachers. But there is also the picture of the teachers' education programme as a possible supporter of the identity and freedom of the folk high schools. A central question would then be how the new teachers' education should be designed to become a support for the schools' freedom and identity.

The presented material indicates one central organisational factor for such a development. Both in the overview of the process that led to the teachers' education and in the key person interviews, the close cooperation between the university and the folk high schools is designated as decisive. The design of the programme combines the structures and resources of the university with experienced folk high school practitioners. We would argue that this design is vital for the teachers' education to become a support for the identity of the folk high schools.

## **Ambitions for higher education**

The interviews with folk high school leaders and Dean Kjendlie represent two different angles of themes that are central to the analysis. The leaders of the folk high school organisations indicate that the cooperation might not allow room for the central elements in their identity.

Dean Kjendlie sees several overlapping interests between current focus areas of the University of South-Eastern Norway and what he sees as the fundamental ideals of the folk high schools. He expresses a hope that the university's programmes can develop towards a pedagogy that encompasses the whole person of the learner. In this development he sees a possible role for the folk high schools as bridge builders, connecting the university's educational tradition with the folk high school knowledge and experience of Bildung pedagogy.

This chapter opened with Kolby Rahbek's keynote at the opening conference for the new folk high school teachers' education. His somewhat provocative lecture on "The un-professional folk high school teacher" was in many ways a summary of the concerns that the establishment of a new teacher training programme had provoked. Our aim with this chapter has been to build a background for a discussion of the central issues that our work raised.

The analysis of the material presented in this chapter uncovers two developments that have been crucial for engendering a positive response to the new folk high school education. The first of these is the partnership between the university and the national folk high school organisations where experienced practitioners become a part of the programme. The second is the development in higher education that is reflected in Dean Kjendlie's answers. The Dean outlines an ambition for university-based education to encompass the whole student. Here the Dean describes how the folk high schools can become a contributor to this development in higher education.

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# **Chapter 18**

## **Should the state certify folk high school teachers? Historical development of teacher training in Finland**

**By Jyrki Ijäs**

### **Introduction**

Already the first legislation on folk high schools in Finland – in 1925 – included regulations and requirements about the education and formal competence of folk high school teachers and headmasters. Ordinary teachers had to have at least a regular schoolteacher’s certification, a degree in pedagogy plus a training period at a folk high school. Headmasters had to hold a master’s degree, including studies in pedagogy and at least a one term’s practice (training) at a folk high school. At a two-year folk high school (Folk Academy), ordinary teachers had to have at least a bachelor’s degree. By 1937, 48% of ordinary folk high school teachers had gained their formal competence qualifications from the folk high schools’ own training programme.

In 1928, the Citizens' University<sup>1</sup> started its own three-year training programme for a teaching degree in the field of *folkbildning*. *Folkbildning* pedagogy then became the major degree in pedagogy included in the folk high school teachers' own training programme.

The legislation concerning teachers' training and competence was comprehensively renewed in the beginning of the 1990's. Instead of separate certifications for different forms and levels of schools, teacher training was formally consolidated and based on pedagogical studies at universities and a master's degree. This revision also meant the end of the folk high schools' own successful and highly esteemed teacher training programme.

The Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA) criticised this new "broad and flexible teachers' competence". The Act on Liberal Adult Education (632/1998 & 1765/2009) sets out the aim of *folkbildning*: "to support active citizenship and emphasize the learner's communality and participation"<sup>2</sup>. Adult education programmes and the pedagogy of *folkbildning* institutes are based on the needs of adult learners. The learning processes in non-formal study programmes are very similar to processes in informal learning and in open, even global, learning environments. A need for specific adult educators' competence qualifications is therefore essential in our society (FAEA, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> Today, Tampere University

<sup>2</sup> Author's translation.

## **Finland – an aspiring member in the Nordic folk high school family**

Denmark 1844, Norway 1864, Sweden 1868, Iceland 1881, and Finland 1889 – this is the order on which the folk high schools were established in the Nordic countries.

An important trend that helped spur the emergence of folk high schools in Finland was the “awakening” of a national identity. Notable cultural figures introduced and supported the idea of *folkbildning* in Finland. The Hegelian philosopher, professor and statesman J.W. Snellman, frequently referred to as “the awakener of Finnish nationalism”, writes in his *Study of the State* (1842): «Free enlightenment is the foundation for the citizen’s right to take part in the governing of the state». The idea of folk high schools was also strongly supported by the national poet J.L. Runeberg and the prominent novelist Z. Topelius. “When Russification began ... many folk high schools were founded.” Artists and composers contributed their work; for instance, Sibelius composed the Karelia suite to raise funds for the folk high school in Uusikirkko in 1893 (Ruokonen, Ruokonen & Ruismäki, 2013).

However, their *folkbildning* initiatives, and those of many other «awakeners», were not approved by the Empire. Folk high school was too revolutionary in its nationalism. At the time of its first folk high schools, Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire. As such, it had the right to have its own Parliament, keep its Lutheran religion and retain the Swedish legislation already in place from the years of Finland being part of Sweden. Swedish was the dominant language – Finnish did not become the second official language until 1863.

In the course of just a decade (1891–1901), a total of 23 folk high schools were established around the country. Prior to the founding

of the first Finnish folk high school, a Finnish delegation had taken part in the 2nd Nordic folk high school meeting in 1883 at Sagatun folk high school in Norway, where the majority of participants from Finland were women. Andersen & Björkman (2017) note that women played a more significant role in *folkbildning* in Finland than in other Nordic country. Incidentally, the first folk high school in Finland was founded by a woman, Sofia Hagman, and focused on the education of young women.

Hagman had won a scholarship from the Society for Folk Enlightenment to visit both Danish and Swedish folk high schools. Her folk high school visits were followed by a veritable “invasion from Finland” when at least 22 scholars in short order descended on Askov folk high school in Denmark. Most of them later became headmasters. Adapting the Danish folk high school vocabulary and methodology, they published these in Finnish. The study tours to Denmark and Sweden continued for decades and can be considered the first and until mid-1920’s the most important *folkbildning* education for folk high school teachers (Karjalainen & Toiviainen, 1984). These visits helped to create an important and durable network between the Finnish and the other Nordic folk high school movements.

The first folk high school meeting in Finland was held in 1896 to discuss the general principles and the pedagogical guidelines for folk high school work. This Sääksmäki meeting was the starting point for folk high school teachers’ and headmasters’ further training, which is still going on, organized by their own folk high school community (from 1905 operated by the Finnish Folk High School Association). At the Sääksmäki meeting, 70 teachers and headmasters gathered, more than three out of four of all those employed in Finnish folk high schools in 1896. The pedagogical guidelines confirmed that the youngest member of the Nordic folk high school family wanted to base its processes on the Danish model. Among the guidelines were

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calls for thematic approaches, for a practical, understandable, and individually based pedagogy, as well as an adherence to the spirit of Grundtvig's legacy.

These one-week "lecture courses" were organized every summer at different folk high schools, and more than half of the folk high school teachers and headmasters gathered yearly (Karttunen, 1979). Already in 1920, the Folk High School Association received an allowance from the Board of Schools for a further training course arranged in co-operation with the University of Helsinki. In the 1925 Folk High School Act, these allowances became a regular feature and guaranteed continuity and a broad programme for the "lecture courses" arranged by the Folk High School Association. In 1950's, the summer courses gradually became shorter and more social gatherings (still with around 300 participants) and in a way, the "andragogical week" replaced the lecture courses. Folk high school teachers from Finland also continued to travel to the traditional Nordic folk high school meetings arranged every four years.

Scholarships for study tours to other Nordic folk high schools were granted by student associations and foundations. Initially, Denmark was visited most often, but already in the 1910's, the Swedish schools became more popular. It was partly for financial reasons, but also because the folk high school work in Finland was formed more in accordance with the "Swedish model", different from the Danish historical-poetical narratives and more rational and pragmatic in its spirit and praxis (Heikkinen, 2017).

## **In-service training instead of pre-service folk high school teacher education**

When the Finnish folk high schools started to receive state subsidies in 1907, the Board of Schools allocated a yearly allowance to the Folk

High School Association for scholarships to other Nordic schools and for in-service practice in Finnish folk high schools (Karjalainen, 1984). The annual state subsidies were soon followed by fresh recommendations and controls invested in the Board of Schools. The folk high schools were free to decide their own study programmes but were required to submit a yearly report to the Board's folk high school inspector. Thus, a folk high school was supervised by the Board of Schools, but its work was led by the headmaster along with its own board.

In 1915, the Folk High School Inspector, Dr. Franssila (former headmaster of Lahti folk high school), wrote practical and pedagogical guidelines for the folk high schools, rules which were in force until the advent of the first folk high school legislation in 1925. Headmasters and teachers were required to create a yearly curriculum and continuously evaluate it. Since there were no formal requirements for the headmasters or the teachers, Franssila was worried about the pedagogical standard at the folk high schools. In his opinion, headmasters should have a master's degree and the teachers at least a regular schoolteacher certification; in addition, both should have studied pedagogy and practised it. These requirements were included in the first folk high school legislation. Its decree (269/1925) in many ways incorporated Franssila's guidelines, stating that educational task of folk high schools was "to promote the students' personal development and to encourage them in becoming responsible citizens and members of the nation and their community".

Parliament launched repeated initiatives to establish a sustainable folk high school legislation, and a folk high school committee was appointed in 1920 and submitted its report in 1923. The committee made no proposals about the schools' pedagogical work, because it was felt to be essential that the autonomy granted to the schools should be respected, a practice that was consistently adopted in later

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folk high school legislation. For this reason, the 1925 legislation was called the “Act on State Subsidies to Folk High Schools” (233/1925). The sustainability of folk high schools was in the committee’s view assured by teachers’ improved competence, by better salaries and by securing the financing of the folk high schools (Karttunen, 1979).

Even earlier, the Finnish Folk High School Association had arranged teaching practice for folk high school teachers and granted practice scholarships. The new legislation mandated that the teaching staff undergo a «guided teaching practice» of at least two months (headmasters, four months). The annual allowance from the Board of Schools to the Folk High School Association was made permanent, enabling the association to arrange both in-service teaching practice and summer courses for teachers and headmasters. For almost 70 years, the Folk High School Association had carried out this programme, making it the main pedagogical trajectory to folk high school employment for the majority of folk high school teachers (Karjalainen, 1984; Silvennoinen et al. (2009); Pätäri, Teräsahde, Harju, Manninen & Heikkinen, 2019). Until 1937, 48% of folk high school teachers had completed this folk high school teacher training (Karjalainen, 1984). The academic year 1992–93 was the last when teachers were trained at designated practice folk high schools, and a graduating summer course in andragogy was organized.

The teaching staff had to hold a degree in pedagogy. Finland was first among the Nordic countries to establish a professor’s chair in pedagogy (1852) and the first to start academic teaching in the field of *folkbildning* (1928), in 1965 renamed «adult education». From 1930 it was possible to earn a master’s degree in this field; it soon became a popular pedagogy degree to include in the folk high school teacher’s examination.

Earlier it had been proposed that pre-service training for folk high school teachers and other professionals in the field of *folkbildning*



(e. g., librarians, study circle leaders) should be organized at designated folk high schools. The current vocational training of youth instructors, temperance workers, parish workers, etc. at Finnish folk high schools is based on these earlier proposals of value-based, non-academic training programmes in folk high schools; however, the idea of the folk high schools' own in-service teacher training at dedicated "normal folk high schools" was never realized.

When the Citizens' University was established in 1925, the intention was to start a three-year qualifying, academic pre-service training programme for folk high school teachers in keeping with the newly enacted folk high school legislation. In 1930, the Citizens' University became a university college, and the teachers' qualification was expanded to a bachelors' degree in *folkbildning*, qualifying students for a variety of tasks in civic society (Tuomisto, 2002). Degree programmes at university colleges (e. g., *folkbildning*, journalism, social work, cooperative work, community administration) were the only academic programmes available for students without a matriculation exam. The two-year folk high school education (Folk Academy<sup>3</sup>) qualified students for studies in ordinary teacher training seminaries and at university colleges. Until the 1980's, folk academies were the only educational, non-matriculation path for attending academic studies. According to Karttunen (1979), 51 102 students attended the two-year folk high school programmes from 1908 to 1979. Thus, Folk Academies have had an important

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<sup>3</sup> Legislation about a two-year folk high school was included already in the 1925 Folk High School Act. The first two-year folk high school, *Svenska folkakademin*, had been established in 1908, the first Finnish speaking *kansankorkeakoulu* in Orivesi in 1917. Half of the folk high schools in Finland (36/73) had two-year programs at the end of 1970's, there were also 13 separate *folkakademies*. Almost 40% of all folk high school students were attending these two-year programmes when the 1979 Folk High School Committee concluded that these programs were not needed anymore because of the compulsory school reform.

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role and impact on educational equality in Finland, both socially and regionally.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of 1930's, approximately half of the folk high school teachers had completed the practice trajectory required for the formal competence qualification. Despite these numbers, the Board of Schools criticized the system because most of the participants had completed their practice at their own folk high school. One of the tasks of the new Folk High School Committee, appointed in 1937, was to strengthen the teachers' position and re-organize the teachers' practice, preferably under the supervision of the Board of Schools. The war postponed the Committee's work, and the report was not published until the summer 1945. The Committee also recommended that folk high schools should remain free institutions and their education still should be based on the teachers, their personality as an embodiment of Grundtvig's concept "living word" (Karttunen, 1979). The new law passed Parliament in July 1950 and included instructions about how the formal competence qualification of folk high school headmasters and teachers should be attained – under the supervision of the Board of Schools.

The length of the teachers' practice was 14 weeks, ten weeks at a folk high school approved by the Board of Schools and four weeks at a "designated practice folk high school"; headmasters additionally had to practice ten weeks of folk high school administration. The Folk High School Committee proposed that a new Folk Academy should be established for the practice and further training of teachers, but the folk high school movement did not accept this. Instead, the Board of Schools agreed that three Finnish speaking schools – Luther

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<sup>4</sup> The opportunity to take part in higher civic society adult education was important politically and for modern nation building. The Workers' Academy was established few years after the Civil War, Sirola-opisto (Folk Academy of the Communist Party) after the II WW and labour movements folk academies in 1950's.

folk high school, Orivesi folk high school and Workers' Academy – and two Swedish speaking folk high schools – Borgå folkhögskola and Svenska folkakademin – should be in charge of the special part of the teacher's practice. In this way, the pluralistic values of folk high school work were reflected in the new program of folk high school teacher training.

The Commission on Folk High School Practice, consisting of representatives from the practice folk high schools, the Folk High School Association, the schools and the Folk High School Inspector, wrote the general instructions for the practice programme, read the reports from the practice folk high schools, made a budget for the programme, and evaluated the applications<sup>5</sup>. The 1969 Folk High School Act granted state subsidies for the special training folk high schools and for the further training of folk high school teachers.

Many "folk high school veterans" reported that the folk high schools' own practice programme became a foundation for the new teachers' identity as folk high school teachers. It also gave them the opportunity to experience the different values of the pluralistic folk high school movement.

## **Increased need for further training when folk high school teachers' own training is ended**

On January 11, 1991, the Government issued a decree stating that the folk high school teacher practice should be arranged in accordance with directives from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Ed-

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<sup>5</sup> In the beginning the number of participants in the practice program was 15–20, in 1970's and 80's it grew yearly up to 50–70 participants, all of them teachers without the formal competence already working in a folk high school, that was the entry requirement as also a degree in pedagogy.

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education appointed a commission to improve the education of adult education teachers (1991:40). Its task was to recommend how the folk high school teacher training could be arranged at universities and how the teacher practice should be organized. The Ministry had already appointed a commission on teacher eligibility (1991:31) to propose new, harmonised regulations to unify and standardise regulations on the education of different kinds of teachers. This teacher eligibility commission submitted its report four months before the deadline of the report from the commission on adult education teachers. Receiving the report, the Ministry issued orders (7/011/20.6.1991) about a unified regulation for all teachers' training, calling for a broad and flexible teacher's competence qualification. The adult education teachers commission had to accept the *de jure* situation and merely recommend that teacher students could still choose the option to practice at a folk high school and specialize in folk high school didactics. This specialization should be arranged as in-service training. The proposal about specialisation in folk high school didactics was not implemented; however, it took ten more years before the folk high school further training was properly financed. (Larsen, Schulte & Thue, 2021).

The discussion about the adult educators' didactic qualifications surfaced again at the turn of millennium. Parliament asked the Ministry of Education to present a report about teachers' education and Ministry did so at the end of March 2001. In its comments, the Education and Culture Committee expressly asked the Ministry to strengthen the resources for teachers' further training in accordance with the principles of lifelong learning (SiVL 4/2001). Already the state budget for 2002 allocated money for teachers' further training.

An important step in strengthening the impact of folk high schools' own pedagogical profile was a parliamentary report in 2002. It proposed that all citizens should have an annual opportunity for train-

ing and for “more thorough upgrading every 10 to 15 years”. Additionally, it advocated a separate action programme for the untrained adult population to attain secondary qualifications. The report recommended that liberal adult education (i. e., the *folkbildning* institutes) should play an important role in achieving these goals and in realizing equal opportunities in (adult) education. A working group in the Ministry of Education was tasked to draw up a development programme for the special *folkbildning* educational tasks that were considered most urgent. The group started its work in the same year and was made permanent as a co-operation committee between the Ministry and the Finnish *folkbildning* associations.<sup>6</sup> This committee has made proposals for financing the special costs arising from the growing number of educational tasks. For example, funding was required for new programmes for challenging target groups, for the recourses reserved for the Board of Schools for further training of teachers, and for quality and development at *folkbildning* institutes. The fees for students from special target groups was to be covered by study vouchers. The integration programmes for migrants receive a 100% state funding, as do the new folk high school programmes for compulsory schooling.

During the last 20 years, the Folk High School Association has regularly arranged further training for the folk high school staff, improving and strengthening the professional ability of folk high school communities and their readiness to develop programmes consistent with the changing needs of society. The following examples of further training programmes and development projects stem from the yearly activity reports of the Folk High School Association.

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<sup>6</sup> The author of this chapter was a member of the Co-operation Committee from 2003 to 2019.

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- Rehabilitation through learning
- Learners who are in the need of special support
- Basic studies for adults
- Basic digital skills for adults
- Multicultural integration programmes at folk high schools
- Folk high school programmes for young asylum seekers
- Quality work in folk high schools
- Internal auditing in folk high schools
- Internet-based learning in folk high schools
- Sustainable development in folk high schools
- New folk high school programmes for compulsory schooling

The Folk High School Association's further training programmes enrol about 1500 participants annually. In addition, there is an on-going training programme for folk high school headmasters available at the Association's website, complete with a network of mentors. Digital open badges have been used in the Folk High School Association's training programmes since 2016.

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# Chapter 19

## Meta-analysis of concepts and findings: The education of the Nordic folk high school teacher

By Johan Lövgren and Odd Haddal

### Introduction to meta-analysis on the theme of education

In preparing this anthology for publication the editorial team discussed if the texts we worked with could be utilised as empirical material for a text analysis. We explored the possibility of performing a meta-analysis of the thirteen research projects presented in this publication. The subsequent search for literature found a number of studies describing methods for this kind of analysis where researchers analyse groups of related articles.

The process behind this chapter has followed the steps described by Leary and Walker in a process of analysing meta-data (2018, p. 533). *Network for research on the Nordic folk high schools* had in their initial planning for the anthology designed the study and sampled the textual material (see Chapter 1). In the next step, Leary and Walker describe a process where the sampled studies are coded. In the larger context of a content analysis (Timulak, 2014) the chapters

were coded manually (Tunison, 2023) as well in a process based on the data analysis software NVivo (Tang, 2023). The coded text material went through a process of text analysis and condensation (Tunison, 2023), connecting central concepts from the NVivo analysis with findings under each theme (Tang, 2023).

The final stages of the meta-analysis, where the national chapters went through a process of condensation, can be seen in the structure of this chapter. The text follows the process where each national chapter is first condensed to a synopsis, after which the findings in each chapter are extracted to create an overview where the central concepts found in the chapters are connected. In the next stage, the findings on the theme of education are synthesised into one text, and lastly, overarching themes are conceptualized. While chapters 7 and 13 end with the conceptualisation of the two themes, chapter 19 presents a final overarching conceptualisation of all three themes based on the process of meta-analysis.

## **Chapter synopses**

The structure of this chapter follows the process of condensation and starts with synopses of the national chapters on the theme of education. The intention behind these synopses is not to present an abstract or to cover all findings presented in each chapter. Instead, the chapter synopses are used as a first step in a structure that follows the process of condensation. The focus of these chapter synopses is to provide a context to the concepts that have been found to be central to the analysis of each chapter.

## **Chapter 15: The education of folk high school teachers at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching**

Denmark's Independent Academy for Free School Teaching is presented and analysed by staff member Simon Finnerup. The Academy is designed to train teachers for the Danish free schools, among these the folk high schools, in a programme aimed at developing "teacher identities and personalities". The author applies a blend of literary analysis and empirical material to describe how the Academy trains folk high school teachers, and how its idea-based and hands-on features match the folk high schools' general pedagogy.

The author highlights the diversity in background and training among Danish folk high school teachers and sees this as a consequence of the schools' autonomy in hiring "whomever they want". The freedom of the schools is also seen in educational statistics, the author shows that 21 % of the Danish folk high school teachers have a formal teachers' education.

The Independent Academy has several traits in common with a folk high school. Two of these are that a large part of students live on campus and that after-school hours are often spent on campus-based activities. The programme differs from formal teacher education in terms of student specializations and the extent of self-selected projects; however, the most radical difference occurs in the area of student democracy and dedication. The aim of the Academy is not only for students to "*receive* a teacher education but *take* a teacher education."

The Academy's focus on democracy and independence is reflected in the importance of 'the Great Assembly'. The assembly is composed of students and teaching staff alike and is the ultimate authority in matters of teaching and learning at the Academy. Finnerup argues that this practical form of democratic Bildung creates a congruity between the practices of the Academy and the tasks of teachers at Dan-

ish folk high schools. At the same time, Finnerup also includes critical perspectives on the responsibility and freedom entrusted to students at the academy. These democratic learning processes demand dedication, and the author shows that such a degree of dedication is not exhibited by all students.

## **Chapter 16: Becoming a folk high school teacher in Sweden.**

In their chapter, Hallqvist, Andersson & Morén claim that formally speaking, “becoming a folk high school teacher is not about education; it is about being recruited.” Of Sweden’s about 4000 folk high school teachers, about 60% have a teachers’ education, 20% of these have a formal folk high school teaching qualification and about 40% have regular teaching degrees.

The authors identify several pathways to become a folk high school teacher. The informal track includes no teacher training, instead working life experiences are paired with desired competencies on specialized subjects at the school. A second pathway combines regular teaching degrees and professional working life experience. The educational innovation and continuous development of new courses at the Swedish folk high schools are one explanation why experience-based teachers are hired. These courses call for teachers with new and often rare combinations of knowledge that are not necessarily based on academic studies.

To attend the folk high school teachers programme at Linköping university is the third option. This one-year study covers folk high school-specific educational issues and involves a large portion of at-school practice. Some students in the programme have no folk high school experience while others already are folk high school teachers looking to further develop their teaching. In the programme, the participants’ voice and influence are central, focusing on their change

agency and of embodying the schools' educational values. Students already employed at a folk high school contribute their own pedagogical experiences, ensuring a continuous renewal of the programme.

### **Chapter 17: Can a university-based teachers' education incorporate folk high schools' identity and practice?**

Lövgren and Amsrud discuss how the pedagogical traditions of the university might challenge the folk high schools and how the two educational systems can complement each other.

After an overview of both educational systems and their basic structures, the authors present a key informant study based on interviews with main leaders from the Norwegian folk high school associations and the University of South-Eastern Norway. Though positive to the new programme, the folk high school leader questions if the true identity of folk high school pedagogy will be fully understood and correctly communicated in an academic setting.

A second area mentioned by the folk high school leaders in connection with the new teachers' education is that it might threaten the folk high schools' freedom and autonomy. The folk high school leaders describe freedom as a vital characteristic of the folk high schools. But this autonomy is at the same time seen as an "an enormous responsibility".

Here the folk high school leaders see a possible role for experienced folk high school practitioners to be included in the staff of the teachers' education. These could become an asset for folk high schools by describing their work and supporting their autonomy and freedom.

Per-Ludvik Kjendlie, Dean of the universities educational department, declares his ambition for a broader educational aim for teacher education. He sees a possible role for the folk high schools as "bridge

builders,” connecting the university to a more Bildung-oriented pedagogy.

## **Chapter 18: Should the state certify folk high school teachers? Historical development of teacher training in Finland**

In this chapter, Ijäs presents an historical expose of how the education and continuing training of folk high school teachers have been organised in Finland in the last century. The country’s first folk high school legislation in 1925 regulated the requirements concerning the educational background and formal competence of folk high school teachers and headmasters.

By 1937, 48% of ordinary folk high school teachers had obtained the formal competence from the folk high schools’ own training programme.

The first folk high school teacher training was an in-service approach, where the folk high schools trained their own teachers. Ijäs describes how through the last century this has been gradually superseded by a pre-service approach, where teachers are trained by the universities for the folk high schools.

By the Act on Liberal Adult Education (1998) Finnish folk high school teachers’ education was formally connected to *folkbildning* (popular education). The act states that the aim of *folkbildning* is to *support active citizenship* and strengthen the learners’ civic participation.

The Finnish folk high school teachers have the highest level of formal academic training of the Nordic schools and offer courses from primary education to open university courses. About half of the students at Finnish folk high schools attend these courses to receive an exam or a qualification leading to an academic training programme.

## Extracting national findings

Following the synopses of chapters, the meta-analysis will follow a process of condensation, extracting national concepts and findings from the five chapters on the education of the folk high school teacher. The meta-analysis of the four education chapters relates the education of folk high school teachers to the schools' inherent *independence, freedom and autonomy*. The continued process of condensation presented below will outline how this deep-rooted feature of the folk high schools unfolds in the four chapters.

Finnerup's presentation of the Independent Academy for Free School Teaching as a *free, self-governing* institution illustrates the central role of autonomy in the identity of the Danish folk high schools and the movement that originated there. The tension described by Finnerup is mainly related to the students being invited to engage in the "Great Assembly", the Academy's radical form of democracy and many students' lack of dedication to do so.

Hallqvist, Andersson & Morén describe *freedom* as a central aspect in the folk high school teachers' programme. Like Finnerup, they see the inherent autonomy of the folk high schools mirrored in an ongoing dialogue where *participants' voices* are respected and given influence on the development of the education.

Lövgren and Amsrud analyse the challenge that a university-based teachers' education might pose to the folk high schools. A central concern is if the university will have room for Bildung pedagogy and if it will hamper the autonomy of the folk high schools. Their study shows a possible way where each of these educational institutions fulfil a need in the other organisation.

Ijäs' historical overview provides an example of how the development of a legal system can both mirror and shape a national folk high school. The legislation governing teachers' education, the opening for folk high schools to issue formal educational degrees and the sys-



tem for state funding are described by the author as fundamental to the development of the Finnish folk high schools.

## **Synthesising findings on the theme of education**

The aim of the meta-analysis is to bring together the conceptualisations condensed from the national chapters to outline the national differences and similarities of the Nordic folk high school teacher's education. The process of condensing the four chapters on education will follow the theme of autonomy and how the tension between freedom and legal frameworks is described and conceptualised in the presented texts.

## **Legislation, formal qualification and funding**

In the education chapters, the overarching theme of *autonomy* is contrasted to *the legal frameworks* that govern the different national schools. The national legislations that regulate the folk high schools vary between the five nations. Common for the national chapters is the indication that these formal, judicial regulations exert a significant influence on the schools. The legal framework influences the development of courses, the pedagogical practices of individual schools and the education of the folk high school teachers.

The educational chapters also provide examples of the connection between the legal frameworks and the Nordic folk high schools' financial dependency on state funding. Each of the national schools are bound by systems of state subsidies. The chapters demonstrate a tension within the folk high school movement between the movement's intrinsic characteristic of autonomy and the limitations imposed on schools by the laws governing state subsidies. These funding regulations will, as Ijäs shows, promote certain developments while undermining others.

## **Freedom and autonomy**

The radical freedom and student democracy at the Independent Academy reflect the central element of autonomy found in the Danish roots of the Nordic folk high schools. This autonomy is expressed on different levels. It can be seen in teachers' freedom to adjust their classes to the needs of each student, or in the local schools' independence in defining their value-base and developing educational programmes. On a national level the folk high schools autonomy can be seen in the national organisations' limited influence on the local schools expectation for teachers to have a formal teachers training.

The autonomy of the folk high schools is in many ways confined by the laws and funding regulations that governs them. The different national characteristics within the Nordic schools are shaped and mirrored by the differing legal frameworks that they are working within. An example of this is the variation in regulations for the relationship between the folk high schools and the national educational system.

The legal systems that govern the education of the folk high school teacher is another example of the tension between autonomy and regulations. The schools' freedom to choose the teachers as they see fit is limited by national directives for the formal competence required of folk high school teachers. The innovation and creativity in developing new courses are dependent on the schools' freedom to hire the teacher that has the specific skills and values needed. At the same time, the establishment of different national training programmes for folk high school teachers indicate a need for formal teachers' education.

## **Outlining an overarching conceptualisation**

The final meta-analysis connects the concepts and findings from the theme of education with the two themes on the identity and work of

the Nordic folk high school teacher. Among the concepts and findings of the four national chapters on education, several links can be found to the overarching themes of *embodied learning* (Chapter 7) and *intersubjectivity* (Chapter 13).

## **Connecting the themes**

The learning processes at the Denmark's Independent Academy, the participant orientation of the Swedish folk high school teachers' programme, the tension between university and folk high schools in Norway, and the Finnish folk high schools' educational merger with *folkbildning* all relate to the themes of the identity and work of the Nordic folk high school teacher.

The editorial analysis of the four education chapters directs attention to a third overarching theme seen as an intrinsic characteristic of the Nordic folk high schools. The authors all relate the education of folk high school teachers to the inherent *independence, freedom and autonomy* that characterize the folk high school movement.

The autonomy of the folk high schools is not a goal in itself. It allows for an openness to the experiences of each participant, creating radical democratic learning processes where students engage in a self-formation. Such learning processes enable an internalisation of democratic values which equips students to be active citizens, characterised by a sustainable, global responsibility.

## **Embodied learning and dynamic Bildung in autonomous folk high schools**

The meta-analysis projects a profile of the Nordic folk high school teacher. He or she is a person who embodies learning, a learning that is based on an historically embedded, dynamically changing Bildung concept that relies on autonomy.

Teachers who embody learning cannot be confined within the limitations that define a profession. Their autonomy within the folk high schools is a prerequisite for their role as un-professional teachers. The freedom from prescribed structures becomes an essential background for a pedagogy that has room for the life experience of each participant.

The identity of Nordic folk high school teachers can only be developed, their work practiced, and their educational transformation realised in a framework which allows an openness to live out a pedagogy that has become a part of the teacher. Their learning emanates from a freedom that makes it possible to steer through the chaos that is the innate risk of impure pedagogy and collective artistic practices. Their identity and work are dependent on a framework that grants autonomy for each participant to grow as human beings and flourish into active citizens.

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# Chapter 20

## Authors' reflective dialogue on the theme of education

By Johan Lövgren

The following chapter builds on the recording of a meeting between the authors of the four chapter on the anthology's third sub-theme of education. This is the third time the authors meet for a conversation based on the reading of each other's texts. The authors' request for this third meeting arose from the shared experience of the two earlier sessions where they learned from one another's research and competence.

Simon Finnerup from the Independent Academy for Free School Teaching initiated the theme of how academic a folk high school education should be. What elements of academic teacher's education belong in folk high school teachers' education?

We are doing this education in a paradox, actually. We are somewhere in between "dannelse" (Bildung) and "uddannelse" (formal education). Historically, that has been a struggle throughout the development of the Academy. The discussion has been how we can manage the balance between formal education and folk high school pedagogy. The Academy embraces the folk high school pedagogy and puts a focus on the quality of teacher-student relationships.

But the folk high school heritage of the Academy is also a daily frustration because some students seem to think that this is still a folk high school after having studied here for 4 or 5 years.

Anders Hallqvist is one of the leaders of the Swedish folk high school teachers' programme at Linköping university. He reflects on the development of the teachers' training programme:

I don't know if this dichotomy is necessary or helpful. In one way you could say that the tendency is that our programme has become more academic throughout the years, but at the same time we have moved closer to the everyday practice of teachers.

We used to read more philosophical texts, now we focus on doing the teaching. We have moved from the ideas to the concrete teaching practice. At the same time, we have become more interested in how to conceptualise the teacher's work and in that sense, you could say that we have become more academic and more scientific in a way.

We really try not to make this division between theory and practice, or academia and folk high schools, but we try to think holistically – to understand theoretically and conceptually. Very close to the teacher's everyday life.

Jyrki Ijäs speaks from his 30 years' experience as the head of the Finnish Folk High School Association, as well as his own experience as a student in the APO programme.

We have experience from 20 years of adult teacher education at the University of Jyväskylä. In our programme, the main focus is on learning processes in small groups.

It is important that we go through the education together with other adult teachers. The learning processes are aimed at finding out our identity and to experience a *transformative* learning. Is this the pedagogy that we should have in common in folk high school teachers' education? A transformative learning that supports us in becoming autonomous folk high school teachers?

Johan Lövgren is one of the leaders of the newly established folk high school teacher's programme at the University of South-Eastern Norway. He comments:

I can recognize the tension that you describe, Simon. Our aim is to keep close the practice of teaching and to connect this to relevant theory. It is important that we who are a part of academic institutions find theories and concepts that can mirror folk high school pedagogy.

## **Legal definitions that shape the national schools**

Ijäs has a hard time accepting that there has to be a problem for the folk high schools to be a part of academia. His experience is that the students who study to become teachers in *folkbildning* (popular adult education) create their own sphere at the university. There, studies are "almost like a folk high school, not so much an academic education". They are close to their schools with a large amount of practice.

He goes on to define what he sees as an important difference between the Nordic folk high schools. The Finnish folk high schools have been defined both as a *skolform* (type of school) and an *utbildningsform* (type of education). The Danish schools are locked in by an educational law that defines them as only a type of school. They cannot meet new needs in society.



Look at the Swedish folk high schools, they have managed to be defined both as a type of school and a form of education and learning. This means that every new need that the society encounters can be addressed at a folk high school, because they have their own way of dealing with new challenges.

This is one of the crucial aspects of this anthology, that it describes both the identity and the education of the folk high school teachers. Our teacher's education trains all types of adult educators and so do the Swedes. But in Norway and Denmark you describe how you keep yourselves apart. You don't engage with society the way we do. You just make your own reality and talk about how wonderful it is to meet these young people and how they are free to become themselves. You create a romantic, mythical discourse of leading the growing youth but don't face the real problems.

I often heard this expressed in the meetings of the Nordic Folk High School Council.<sup>1</sup> Finns and the Swedes were prepared to meet new challenges and needs regarding adult education and were part of the forces working for a more inclusive and democratic society. We were talking of broader society and of a really autonomous teachers' way to meet adults.

If we look at the students in the Swedish folk high schools, 32% are of them are immigrants, in Finland it is 17%, in Norway it is 1–2%, and Denmark is somewhere between Norway and Finland. Integration is not a special

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<sup>1</sup> The Nordic Folk High School Council is composed of leaders from the national folk high school associations.

task in Norway and Denmark as it is in Sweden and Finland.

### **What academia can contribute to folk high schools**

The question is picked up by Finnerup who relates it to the Danish folk high schools as “free schools” with an identity based on autonomy and how they engage in “the ecological sustainable movement”. He sees how the schools give up their autonomy and their right to ask critical questions to enter a cause. He asks:

Who is reminding the folk high schools of their identity?  
The academics are!

Yes, people from the universities are reminding the folk high schools of who they are. They are the ones to help them define their goals and remind them of their own methods.

Arve Amsrud represents the formal teachers' education at the University of South-Eastern Norway. He refers to his and Lövgren's interviews with the leaders of the national folk high school associations (see chapter 17) where he heard:

a great fear of the formal frames and curriculums of the university. But is that necessary? The folk high schools are upholding their freedom, but don't you need a lot of knowledge to become really free?

Lövgren reflects on the work he and Arve have been heading and recalls the discussions the new teachers' education initiated in the Norwegian folk high schools. The question was what the folk high schools could lose when their teachers' training became connected to an academic institution. He remembers:

In the end the question became: Can an academic education be a protector of the autonomy of the folk high school teacher or is it a threat? Is it possible that academic research can document the pedagogy of the folk high schools in a way that increases the respect and understanding for the work of the folk high schools?

Ijäs is provoked by folk high school leaders and teachers who are afraid of the consequences that academic education of folk high schools will bring. He puts much power behind his exclamation:

Afraid – you shouldn't be afraid! We have 100 years of experience with academic folk high school teachers' education. As long as you have two things: the connection to the wider field of adult education and an opportunity of practice at folk high schools. Also, the board of the local folk high schools must be free to engage the teacher that agrees with the values of the school, not necessarily the one with the highest academic degree.

Ijäs views the problem from a Finnish position, their folk high schools are the ones most closely connected to the formal educational system. The Danish could be defined as the folk high schools that are the least connected to academic education with 25% of their qualified teacher's having a pedagogical degree. Lövgren asks Finnerup the question "How would it effect the Danish folk high school if teachers were trained at a university?" Finnerup's initial response to this is that "The folk high schools would become more like the university." But then he goes on to reason around this question:

At the same time, the history of Danish education shows that the folk high schools and their pedagogy have been an important influence on other parts of the educational sector

and other types of schools. If the folk high schools could create their own sector in the university.

Also, it could have some positive aspects. The expression is that you are not educated to be a folk high school teacher, you are recruited. But many of the young teachers that are recruited to the schools don't know what a folk high school stands for. I fear that they are not able to communicate the special atmosphere, the relationship and the pedagogy that are the identity of a folk high school.

You could say that the folk high school pedagogy is not so deeply rooted in the folk high schools. Maybe the university could help the folk high schools to find their roots, and maybe academics could help the new teachers to become folk high school teachers?

So ends the third reflective seminar for the authors of the chapters on education. Their reflections were mainly concerned with the relationship between the education of folk high school teachers and academic teachers' education. In Chapter 19, the editorial meta-analysis suggests that the national regulations that govern the schools mirror the national identity of the Nordic folk high schools. In this sense, the authors' reflections in this chapter and their educational ideals could also be said to mirror the different national folk high schools that they represent.



# Notes on contributors

## Steering group of the Network for Research on the Nordic Folk High Schools

*Network for Research on the Nordic Folk High Schools* was established to strengthen and foster research initiatives and collaborations through greater interaction between researchers with an interest in the Nordic folk high school. The network's aim is to develop, carry out and disseminate research projects that describe the pedagogical practices and identities of the folk high school. Projects will rely on the national networks of the respective researchers to ensure both national and Nordic perspectives in the projects.

The network is facilitated by a steering group consisting of researchers representing the Nordic countries. Steering group members:

- Johan Lövgren, Associate professor, University of South-Eastern Norway (Chair).
- Rasmus Kolby Rahbek, Headmaster, The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching, Denmark.
- Jonas Andreasen Lysgaard, Associate professor, Aarhus University, Denmark.
- Annika Pastuhov, Postdoc, Linköping University, Sweden and Åbo Akademi University, Finland.
- Anders Hallqvist, Senior lecturer, Linköping University, Sweden.
- Filippa Millenberg, Lecturer, Linköping University, Sweden.

- Michael Weiss, Associate professor, University of South-Eastern Norway.

## **Author presentations by country**

### **Denmark**

**Jonas Andreasen Lysgaard**, associate professor, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark. BA in history, master's degree in political theory and international studies, PhD in education for sustainable development. "I have been teaching on and done projects with folk high schools for years, mostly circling the question of how they play a crucial role in developing a viable and humanistic path towards sustainability. I have also been lucky enough that several students, including **Petra Maribo** and **Simone Albers**, co-authors on the chapter, have done excellent research on the folk high schools as part of the Danish educational landscape. Outside of academia, I have for years been involved in establishing a folk high school in Copenhagen."

**Simon Finnerup** teaches general pedagogy, psychology and didactics at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching where he works with the education of teachers for the free schools in Denmark: free primary schools, free boarding schools and folk high schools. Finnerup has a Master of Arts in Danish and Religion as well as a Master of Child and Youth Cultures, Aesthetic Learning Processes and Multimedia. A former folk high school teacher, he takes part in the continuing education of Danish folk high school teachers, write articles and contribute to current debates relating to the folk high schools.

**Rasmus Kolby Rahbek**, PhD, is Headmaster at The Independent Academy for Free School Teaching. He has a *Cand.mag.* in History

of Ideas and Aesthetics & Culture. Gained his doctorate from Aarhus University for the thesis *The pedagogy of the place: An interpretive description of high school pedagogy in an educational perspective*. He has formerly held positions as folk high school teacher, education and development officer at the Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark and senior analyst at the Danish Institute for Non-formal Education.

## **Finland**

**Jyrki Ijäs** has an MA degree in History and has worked as Secretary General of the Folk High School Association 1999–2018 and also as a Secretary for the Nordic Folk High School Council (NFR). He has received the *Folkbildning* Price from Svenska Folkskolans Vänner and the Honorary title *opetusneuvos* (Counsellor of Education) from the President of Finland. Ijäs is preparing a research plan for the Doctoral Programme at University of Eastern Finland (UEF), Department of Geographical and Historical Studies. His topic is “The nationalistic ethos of the folk high schools in the border areas in Finland, Norway and Sweden during the period of 1890–1925”.

**Juha Hämäläinen** is Professor of Social Work, specialising in Social Pedagogy, at the University of Eastern Finland. He has a PhD in Social Sciences with Social Policy as major and a Licentiate Degree in Educational Sciences. Hämäläinen has been a member of the Board of the European Research Institute for Social Work since 2008, Editor-in-Chief of the Finnish *Journal of Social Pedagogy* since 2000. His research focus on the history of ideas and theory of social welfare, child welfare policy in particular. He has published on the concept and theory of social pedagogy and has examined the interconnections of social work and social policy, with a particular focus on historical aspects as well as the methodology of comparative research of social welfare and social work.



## *Notes on contributors*

**Elina Nivala**, Ph.D., associate professor, University of Eastern Finland. Formerly a researcher in a joint project with the Finnish Folk High School Association and the University of Eastern Finland 2018 – 2020, her research concerns various social pedagogical research patterns. She has done research on citizenship, civic education, the inclusion of children and young people, the loneliness of young children and school social work. She is involved in research on global citizenship education and privileged migration. Nivala is the chairman of the Finnish Society for Social Pedagogy and the editorial secretary of the *Journal of Social Pedagogy*.

**Tytti Pantsar** has a master's degree in education (adult education, social psychology and work psychology). She holds a teacher qualification and a headmaster qualification. Currently, she is Executive director of the Finnish Folk High School Association, having worked almost 20 years in adult education (*folkbildning*). Her interests center on transformative learning, ecosocial Bildung, educational legislation and educational leadership. Pantsar publishes mainly in Finnish, and her publications include material and tools for teachers and school leaders in themes such as *folkbildning* pedagogy, leadership and legislation, quality and evaluation, and sustainable development.

## **Iceland**

**Jonatan Spejlborg Juelsbo**, co-founder and Program Director at the LungA School has a MA in Death, Religion and Culture from Winchester University, UK. Other projects that he has been part of initiating and running are Seyðisfjörður Community Radio FM107,1 – a community-driven, digital and analogue broadcasting platform located in Seyðisfjörður, Iceland – hosted, nurtured and initiated by an open-ended international community inhabiting various locations on the planetary surface. HEIMA Artist Collective – a shared second

home for an international group of artists, located in Seyðisfjörður, Iceland.

## **Norway**

**Arve Amsrud**, Cand. paed., has just retired from a position as lecturer at the University of South-Eastern Norway. Arve's specialisation is musical pedagogy, and he was the editor of *Sang i Norge* (2008), the main songbook in Norwegian schools. He was central in the establishment of the Norwegian folk high school teacher's programme, which he headed together with Johan Lövgren. Also, he is main author of the article "Teacher students in the Norwegian practical pedagogical course" from 2017 which was a background and inspiration for Chapter 17 in this publication.

**Hedda Berntsen**, PhD, received her doctorate from the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences for the dissertation *Teaching and understanding "need supportive" coaching: Developing and implementing a coach development program*. Currently an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway, Hedda has had a top sports career with success at the highest international level in three sports. Her commitment to and motivation for pedagogy and dissemination of research is expressed through published books, chronicles, learning materials that have been developed for training courses, and scientific works and lectures at international conferences and seminars.

**Odd Haddal**, M.S.Ed. & M.S., has degrees in education from Oslo Teachers' College, Moorhead State University, Minnesota and University of Wisconsin-Madison. A former folk high school teacher, he served for 14 years as Manager of professional development at a national organisation of Norwegian folk high schools. He has been central as a writer, translator and editor working with influential publications on folk high school pedagogy in Norway. Odd has devel-

oped and headed numerous further education programmes for folk high school teachers.

**Johan Lövgren**, PhD, has for the last 15 years combined different positions as a researcher with being an active folk high school teacher. In 2018, Johan received his doctorate for the thesis *The Reflective Community: Learning processes in Norwegian folk high schools*. From 2021, he holds a full-time position as associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway. Johan's publications include empirical studies based on sociocultural learning theory with a focus on the Nordic folk high schools.

**Michael Noah Weiss** has a Dr. phil in philosophy with a main focus on the philosophy of science from the University of Vienna. He is an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway where he teaches philosophy of science, research methodology and teachers' education. He is also supervising international teachers' training and value-based leadership training for the folk high schools. Michael has a special focus on themes such as philosophical practice, dialogue methods, experiential learning, self-formation (paideia), practical wisdom (phronesis) and philosophical mindfulness.

## **Sweden**

**Per Andersson**, PhD, Professor of education at the Division of Education and Adult Learning in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University. A full professor since 2013, his research is mainly about validation of adults' knowledge and competence, about teachers' work and competence development, about the marketisation of adult education. His research also concerns vocational teachers continuing professional development. He also teaches at the vocational teacher programme and the folk high school teacher programme.

**Helena Colliander**, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Education and Adult Learning at Linköping University. A former folk high school teacher, at Linköping she teaches at the folk high school teacher programme and other courses designed for folk high school teachers. She also teaches in an intercontinental MA programme in Adult Learning and Global Change. She is involved in a research project on migration, learning and social inclusion.

**Anders Hallqvist**, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Education and Adult Learning in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University. A former folk high school student and teacher, he served as programme manager for the folk high school teacher training programme (2015–2022). His research concerns, among other issues, adults' career transitions and the concept of biographical learning.

**Filippa Millenberg**, PhD, lecturer in the Division of Education and Adult Learning in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University. received her PhD in 2023 for the thesis *Interpersonal encounters in the folk high school: a study on folk high school teachers' pedagogical approach* explores the relational dimension of interpersonal encounters can be understood and what significance they have in teachers' practice. Her research interests are directed towards lifeworld phenomenology, ethnography and encounters in the folk high schools.

**Sol Morén**, PhD, associate professor in the Division of Education and Adult Learning in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University. A creative artist working in painting, photography, film and sound art, she received her doctorate in 2019 for the thesis *Relational creativity. What can participatory art do for higher education?* Her research shows how developing knowledge about design for creative learning environments is an important quest in educational research. Creative learning environments and

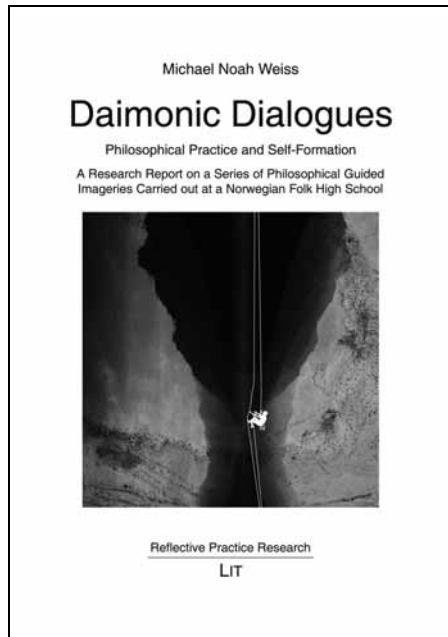
## *Notes on contributors*

artistic processes contribute to students developing an understanding and competence to solve complex problems in a range of different areas.

**Sofia Österborg Wiklund**, PhD, is an international postdoctoral fellow in educational science, funded by the Swedish Research Council. She has a master's in Social Science and Cultural Analysis. In 2019, she defended her doctoral thesis *Popular Education in Global (In)justice: Power and Resistance in the Swedish Folk High Schools' Internationalization and Transnational Courses* at Linköping University. She is active in the history and education research environment at Umeå University, as well as the research groups Nordic Civil Societies and The Nordic Education Model at the University of Oslo. Her postdoctoral project is about the historical relationship between Swedish international aid and popular education, and how Nordic identities, inclusion and exclusion have been created in education for aid workers during the '60s-'90s.

## Reflective Practice Research

edited by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Michael Noah Weiss (University of South-East Norway), Prof. Guro Hansen Helskog (University of South-East Norway)



Michael Noah Weiss

### **Daimonic Dialogues**

Philosophical Practice and Self-Formation. A Research Report on a Series of Philosophical Guided Imageries Carried out at a Norwegian Folk High School

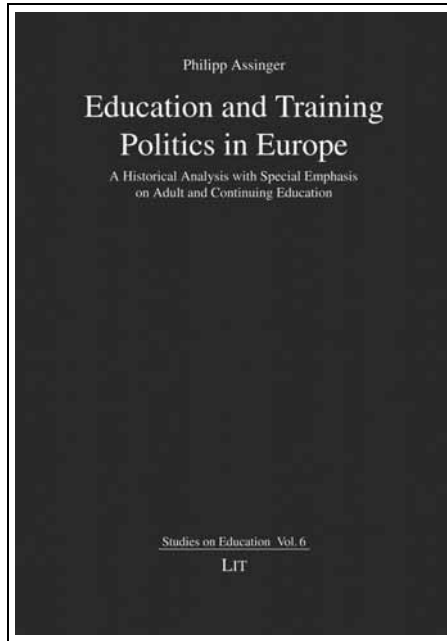
In this research report a philosophical practice project is presented which was carried out in 2019 at a Norwegian folk high school. Its main purpose was to examine whether and how philosophical guided imageries can foster self-formation. In the analysis of the empirical data three tendencies are identified: The participants felt calmer and safer due to this philosophical practice; they developed personally in terms of experiential learning; and several of them could also gain self-knowledge. The discussion then shows how these three tendencies relate and contribute to self-formation.

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**LIT** Verlag Berlin – Münster – Wien – Zürich – London

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## Studies on Education



Philipp Assinger

### **Education and Training Politics in Europe**

A Historical Analysis with Special Emphasis on Adult and Continuing Education

In the past seventy years, education and training have evolved from side issues of political cooperation to political priorities of the EU. For three decades within this period, they were promoted implicitly to enable the mobility of workers in the internal market. Later on, a European dimension of education and training has developed through mobility and cooperation programs and through the lifelong learning discourse. Today, a European policy space of education and training is unfolding, which the EU is coordinating by the means of soft governance arrangements.

vol. 6, 2020, 218 pp., 34,90 €, pb., ISBN-CH 978-3-643-91170-4

**LIT** Verlag Berlin – Münster – Wien – Zürich – London

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This anthology presents the Nordic folk high school teacher through thirteen research articles combined under three themes: identity, work, and education, each part capped by overarching summary chapters. The teachers represent the folk high schools' identity, and in their work a 175-year old tradition is confronted with new realities and forced to adapt to new challenges.

The folk high schools are given a central role in the democratic development of the Nordic region and are described as a significant influence on adult education globally, but there have been few regional research projects describing the schools. The inclusion of research covering five Nordic countries in a peer reviewed anthology makes this publication a unique portrayal, both of the schools' common identity and their national variations.

“The anthology is a fresh and important addition to the literature on Nordic folk high school teacher, providing an exciting collage and actual insight into the forming and framing of this field. The chapters engage in interesting discussions of concepts and perspectives that provide new insights into the topic.”

Professor Jorun M. Stenøien, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

