Norwegian folk high schools redefine their role as value-based institutions

Analysis of value documents from two folk high schools

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ABSTRACT

The Norwegian folk high schools are value-based institutions with a 150-year history. As such, these schools have a continual need to reinterpret and redefine the values on which they were founded. This article examines how the Norwegian folk high schools redefine the religious values that are part of their movement’s heritage. Initially, the context of the Norwegian folk high schools is presented with an overview of the history of the movement and the laws governing the schools, along with relevant research. The second part of the article refers to an empirical study involving the text analysis of value documents from two folk high schools. Reification is introduced as the central analytical concept and defined from Etienne Wenger’s use of the term in his presentation of the theory of communities of practice. In the analysis, the value documents are understood as a presentation of reifications in the schools’ negotiation of meaning. As the reified values are categorised, the text analysis concludes that the documents focus on relational reifications. As the schools reintegrate traditional religious values, these are characteristically bridged or translated by using relational reifications and connecting these to Grundtvig’s legacy.

Keywords

folk high schools, etienne wenger, reification, negotiation of meaning, n.f.s. grundtvig, bildung, value-based organisations, christian organisations
INTRODUCTION
The folk high school movement represents characteristically Nordic phenomena and is an integral part of the Scandinavian cultural heritage. The movement can be regarded as both a representation of Scandinavian culture and a shaper of what this culture has become.¹ The Norwegian folk high schools were initiated in what has been defined as the era of enhetskultur (unitary culture) in Scandinavia. Through 150 years of history, the schools have defined themselves as value-based institutions. The heritage and values of the first folk high schools are in many ways distant from the students attending the schools today. As opposed to the 19th century’s unitary culture, modern students have been raised in a multicultural society. As value-based pedagogic institutions working with a main focus on young adults, the folk high schools have a continual need to reinterpret the values on which they were founded. This article seeks to answer the question:

How do the contemporary folk high schools redefine their role as value-based institutions?

To develop the background for the analysis, the article starts from a broad perspective by giving an overview of the context of the Norwegian folk high school movement. In the text analysis, the focus is then narrowed down to describe the values presented in the documents from two folk high schools. The article analyses these documents as part of the ongoing negotiation of meaning, using Etienne Wenger’s reification concept. The analysis presents an exploratory and generic application of Wenger’s conceptual base to Norwegian folk high schools. The documents are regarded as presentations of four different categories of reifications. In the discussion, the categorisation is applied to describe how the folk high schools redefine the values on which they were founded.

CONTEXT OF THE NORWEGIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MOVEMENT
The folk high school movement started in the mid-19th century in Denmark, followed by Norway, Sweden and Finland. The Danish author, historian and pastor N.S.F. Grundtvig developed the educational ideas on which the folk high schools were founded (Gustavsson, 2013:35–50; Korsgaard, 2000:316–317; Straume, 2013:43). The folk high school movement has a tradition of lifelong learning, endorsing equality and democracy as core values (Christophersen, Elstad & Turmo, 2011:106–107; Korsgaard, 2000:308; Løvlie & Standish, 2002:318–319). The first folk high school in Norway was opened in

¹. In the Nordic Journal of Cultural Science (01/2014), Røyseng explains cultural policy from both wide and narrow definitions of culture. The folk high schools can be viewed as actors in Nordic cultural policy, using the broad cultural definition. However, they can also be described as shapers of Nordic culture, using the narrow definition in terms of educating cultural performers, debating on cultural policy and being active centres of folk culture.
1864. Today there are 77 folk high schools in Norway and over 400 in total in all the Nordic countries (Folkehøgskolerådet, 2015).

The historical background of the Norwegian folk high school movement is connected to the democratic movements and revivals of the 19th century (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:28; Mikkelsen, 2014:19–24). The schools were established to give the people (Norwegian folk) the insights and maturity needed to take part in the democratic process (Korsgaard, 2002:8–15).

Both in Grundtvig’s writings and in the primary establishments of the schools, the opposition to the pedagogical ideals that shaped the educational system of the time was a central ingredient (Korsgaard, 2000:316–317; Simon, 1989:16; Straume, 2013:44). The movement reacted against a mechanical reproduction of knowledge and sought a broader view of shaping students’ lives. The concept of bildung (formation) has been used to capture the central pedagogical ideals of the folk high school movement (Gustavsson, 2013:38–39; Korsgaard, 2000:316).

In the history of the Norwegian folk high schools, there was an important division between Grundtvig’s views and those of the pietistic movement, as represented by the Norwegian revival leader Hans Nilsen Hauge (Mikkelsen, 2014:55–58). Despite the connection and cooperation between the two, their theological differences formed the background for the division among the folk high schools of Norway. The Norwegian folk high school movement is to this day divided into two organisations as a result of this opposition. The frilynte (liberal, tolerant) folk high schools followed Grundtvig’s more positive view of human nature and culture, whereas Hauge had a darker opinion about the nature of humanity and of popular culture (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:21,23; Mikkelsen, 2011:79).² Besides the anthropological difference, the historical dissension focused on what role religious instruction should have as part of the schools’ pedagogic practices.³ This division is still evident in the fact that the Norwegian folk high school movement today has two central organisations, Folkhøgskoleforbundet (FHF) and Noregs Kristelege Folkehøgskolelag (NKF). The historical line between the two organisations has moved through the 20th century and beyond, and their identities have been debated (Grønvik, 2011:57–66; Lövgren, 2014:40–41; Mikkelsen, 2011:78; Ohrem, 2011:50).

**BILDUNG AND FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORDIC COUNTRIES**

As stated, the term bildung is used to translate the central ideal of the folk high school movement in Scandinavia. It is meant to capture the Scandinavian

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² In Korsgaard’s (2000) distinction, Hauge represents a more classical Lutheran view of human enlightenment, where all light must come from «above». Korsgaard positions Grundtvig as a representative of the view of «enlightenment from below», where the people are the source of light.

³ For the frilynte folk high schools, the approach to religion would be more dialogical, whereas the kristelige folk high schools historically had a missionary focus.
terms dannelsel and bildning (Gustavsson, 2013:38–39; Korsgaard, 2000:316; Straume, 2013:18–19), which are not easily translated into English. The word bildung has its roots in the classical educational ideal, with a connection to the Greek paideia and Latin formatio (Gustavsson, 2013:37). For Grundtvig and the Scandinavian folk high schools, the way the bildung concept was established by 18th-century German philosophers, such as Herder, wielded an important influence (Løvlie & Standish, 2002:320; Straume, 2013:34–37). As the folk high school movement argued for an alternative pedagogical ideal, the term bildung was given a different focus in each Nordic country. Sweden had a predominant German and Kantian influence. The Swedish use of bildung focused on a pedagogical ideal that did not segregate social classes (Gustavsson, 2013:38–40). This could be noted in the term folkbildning, an educational ideal meeting the needs of the entire people. In Denmark, Grundtvig’s use of bildung with a nationalistic focus was more prevalent.

In the first Norwegian folk high schools, Grundtvig’s influence was strong. From the start, the movement had Grundtvig’s religious values as a central aspect of the way bildung was interpreted (Mikkelsen, 2014:54). The historical division between frilynte and kristelige schools in Norway did not involve a controversy about whether faith values should be part of the concept of bildung (Knutas, 2010:22–23; Mikkelsen, 2014:54–57). The division focused on how religious practice should be formed by theological, pedagogical and cultural ideals (NOU, 2001:16).

LAWS AND IMPACT

In 1946, the folk high schools were joined under a common legal framework. In 2002, these laws were revised in response to the 2001 government report on the framework of the folk high schools. The new laws focus on the role of the folk high schools as an alternative pedagogic institution without grades or exams. The main introduction to the law states the identity of the schools:


("The purpose of the folk high schools is to promote bildung and popular education. Each school has the responsibility to determine its core values in accordance with this framework.")

The declaration of the movement’s identity is divided into two parts. First, the law affirms the schools’ mandate to work for bildung and popular education. Second, the law states that the schools should communicate a system of values

4. All translations from the original Norwegian are mine.
chosen by each school. These core values should conform to the framework of *bildung* and popular education.

In modern Norwegian society, the folk high school movement has an impact that can be measured in terms of different values. The movement’s influence can be observed in the number of students attending the schools. In the last decade, around 10% of the cohort leaving 13th grade each year attended a folk high school (Knutas & Solhaug, 2011:31–32, 119–122). The amount of government and private resources spent on the schools is another indicator of the movement’s importance in society. The Scandinavian folk high school movement also contributes through its position as a pedagogic alternative and a correction to the rest of the educational system (Christophersen, Elstad & Turmo, 2011:106–107; Gustavsson & Wiklund, 2013:201–207; Tiller, 2014:40–42).

The folk high school movement has developed differently in the Scandinavian countries. In Norway, the movement has focused on one-year courses for students who have finished their final year in public school. This means that the majority of the students attending these courses are young adults, 18–22 years old. This pattern is reinforced by the state’s system of study grants, offering students a special scholarship to attend a folk high school within the first three years after finishing public school.

Another area where the Scandinavian folk high schools have evolved in various ways relates to the public school system. In Norway, the schools are not allowed to give academic credentials for the courses taken by the students (folkehogskole.no). In the other Scandinavian countries, the schools offer courses where students earn credentials in the public school system (højskolerne.dk; folkhogskolor.fi; folkhögskola.nu). Whether or not the movement awards credentials in the public school system, the folk high school movement today describes itself as an alternative to the public school system. Professing a learning code, meeting both social and emotional needs, as well as providing new knowledge constitute a common denominator in the presentation of the Scandinavian folk high schools. The folk high school movement’s identity as a pedagogic alternative to the public school system is also recurring in the research on the Norwegian folk high school movement.

**RESEARCH ON NORWEGIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MOVEMENT**

Although a decisive part of Norwegian culture and pedagogic practice, the folk high schools have received little attention as a field of research (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:16). The studies presented in this section are the main ones on the Norwegian folk high school movement over the last two decades.

In 2010, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim conducted a study published under the title «Som en sang i sinnet – som et eneste sollyst minne» («Like a song in the mind – like a memory full of...»). This article is downloaded from www.idunn.no
The report was commissioned by the Norwegian Department of Education and the Council of Norwegian Folk High Schools. The research presented in the publication represents the most thorough study on the Norwegian folk high schools over the last two decades. The study asked two research questions; the first dealt with “the role of the folk high schools as institutions for bildung in today’s society”, and the second evaluated the students’ experiences from their year in a folk high school (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:19). The empirical material presented in the study was based on two surveys. The first survey focused on the headmasters of the Norwegian folk high schools and the second on the students in five of the schools. This was combined with focus group interviews with former students and with material from Statistics Norway (SSB) (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:19). The report concluded that the folk high schools were characterised by learning subjects, social interaction and democratic involvement. It stated that the students gained personal maturity and the ability to master life. They also developed social skills and self-respect through their participation in the schools (Knutas & Solhaug, 2010:13).

Besides the NTNU report of 2010, there had been two government reports since 1995 about the folk high schools. The first was «Kompetansespørsmålet i folkehøgskolen» («Competence in the folk high schools») published in 1995, which highlighted the issues of learning and life skills. The second was the report NOU 2001:16 «Frihet til mangfold – Om folkehøgskolens rammevilkår» («Freedom diversity – the folk high school framework»), which analysed the required evaluation of the schools.5

In the fall of 2014, Tom Tiller, a professor of pedagogics at the University of Tromsø, presented a study of the Norwegian folk high schools in his book Læringskoden, fra karakterer til karakter (The learning code – from grades to character). Tiller studied the folk high school movement through letters written to him by teachers and former students of the schools (2014:16). The book emphasised the difference between the public school system and the folk high schools. Tiller presented the study’s results as a learning code owned by the folk high schools, forming the students’ character (2014:17,40–42,166–168).

The folk high schools in the four Scandinavian countries have many differences in their historical development, governmental structures and pedagogical identity (Gustavsson, 2013:37–38; Knutas & Solhaug, 2010: 33–37). Such differences make the research from one of the countries less valid in the analysis of the folk high schools in another.

INTRODUCTION TO TEXT ANALYSIS

The folk high schools of Norway have their historical roots in the 19th-century movement of people enlightenment in Scandinavia. Both the historical back-
ground of the schools and research on the movement emphasise the pedagog-ical and religious value base of the schools. The two schools under study are both affiliated to the NKF (see the section entitled Context of the Norwegian folk high school movement). In this empirical study, I analyse the schools as value-based institutions. It can be considered an exploratory case study, using research on two folk high schools to develop a conceptual basis for analysing the value base of the folk high school movement. The question I explore is:

How do the contemporary folk high schools redefine their role as value-based institutions?

The empirical study is conducted as a text analysis of the value documents produced by two folk high schools. These schools have been sampled due to their religious value base, as well as to give variation to the materials while limiting their amount to make an in-depth analysis of the texts feasible. The two schools are alike in terms of being both owned by Christian organisations. The schools both have stated intentions and are expected by their owners to connect to traditional religious values. The sampling of the two schools could be said to follow a maximal likelihood estimator (Hardy & Bryman, 2004:414). The schools differ in their geographic location, years of existence and current number of students. It has been agreed with the two institutions that their identity does not need to be kept confidential.6

VALUE DOCUMENTS FROM TWO FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS

The texts in the analysis are derived from a wider study of empirical materials, including school catalogues, the full homepage, the schools’ presence in social media, historical documents, evaluations and other documents produced by the two schools. The wider study gives a background for the analysis and for the sampling of the texts central to the analysis. The sampled texts have in common a specific focus on presenting the values of the schools and explaining their religious affiliation.

The value documents from the two folk high schools are taken from three major sources. These sources represent differences in where they have been published and to whom they communicate.

Both the schools present their values on their respective websites. These texts are meant to communicate to the public, specifically intended to recruit new students. The presentations are, at least in part, addressed directly to students who might enrol. In explaining the goals of one of the classes, the website of Rønningen folkehøgskole (2014) states:

6. The two schools are Rønningen folkehøgskole in Oslo and Stavern folkehøgskole Fredtun in Stavern.
«...er det du som blivende elev som er med på å bestemme.»

(«...that is a decision in which you as a future student will take part.»)

For the Norwegian folk high schools, the school homepage is central to their marketing efforts, and both websites have used it to present the value base of the schools.

The second group of documents has been produced as part of the schools’ personnel handbooks. These aim to present and consolidate the schools’ value system in relation to their staff, especially newly hired employees.

The third category includes value statements and strategy documents produced as presentations of the schools’ values. These mainly target the school board and the organisation that owns each school.

The analysis of the documents has followed an abductive approach. First, the texts have been read inductively to locate their patterns and categories. This has been followed by a content analysis, where the words representing values have been identified and counted manually (Bergström & Boréus, 2005:43–87; Hardy & Bryman, 2004:545–563). After the initial inductive reading, different theoretical models have been tested as tools to analyse the value documents. This part has followed Bergström and Boréus’ method of ideological analysis (2005:149–178), with several possible orientations. This study uses what the cited authors classify as analysing the perspectives of specific groups or organisations (Bergström & Boréus, 2005:155). The method includes finding analytical tools that are applicable to answering the research question. After different tools have been tested by applying them to the two schools’ value documents, reification has been found as an operational analytical concept. Wenger’s description of how a community of practice negotiates meaning has been chosen as the theory to explain the use of values found in the documents (1998:51–71). Wenger’s concept of reification and its place in the negotiation of meaning in a community of practice have been adapted to the context of the Norwegian folk high schools. Central to this theoretical description of the schools’ value presentations is the categorisation of four types of reifications. The analytical process ends with a description of the documents as representatives of an ongoing reinterpretation of the schools’ basic value system.

**REIFICATION AS A CONCEPT IN WENGER’S THEORY**

The concept of reification has its etymological roots in the Latin *res*, meaning «thing». The term «reification» literally means «to make into a thing». In his book, *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning and Identity* (1998), Wenger uses the concept of reification in his theory of social learning.
Wenger uses the term to describe how a community of practice negotiates meaning. «Meaning» here is not metaphysical or existential but is directly connected to how the communities explain why they engage in practice (Wenger, 1998:51–52). The negotiation of meaning has a double focal point. It is enacted by participating in the practice and by reifying or giving an independent existence to the objects central to the practice.

Wenger describes a duality of participation and reification where the community constantly works to define the meaning of its practice. For Wenger, the reifications represent «projections of meaning» (1998:58–62), which he describes as follows:

«We project our meanings into the world and then we perceive them as existing in the world, as having a reality of their own» (58).

As the schools produce their value documents, this can be viewed as a process of reification. The values perceived as central to the schools’ practices are reified into a congealed form by writing them down. The documents in themselves are reifications in the sense of Wenger’s use of the concept. He describes the process in this way:


PROCESS OF REIFICATION

In the analysis of the value documents of the two folk high schools, the concept of reification can be applied, focusing on both the function of each text as a whole and on its content. First, the texts in themselves represent a reification of the values present in the practices of the two schools. The texts have an expressed intention of capturing and reifying the central values of the schools as institutions. The documents are introduced in words such as:

«... skolens formål slik det er formulert i våre vedtekter.»

(«... the intent of the school as drawn up in our statutes.»)

(Rønningen, 2012:2)

Other signs of the reifying process can be noted in document titles, such as «Strategy Document» or «Vision» (Stavern, 2014b; Rønningen, 2012).

The texts also indicate a continual change of focus between the participation of the staff and the students in the school practices and the reification of values that represent the meaning of these practices. In this sense, the analysis of the
documents deals with texts that form part of the reifying process. When Wenger connects this process to «negotiation of meaning», it gives a frame for the interpretation of the value documents. The documents can be perceived as part of the ongoing negotiation of meaning that takes place in the communities of practice represented by the two folk high schools.

This study does not focus on the documents as reifications but on the specific reifications presented in the texts. In the study of the texts, the term «reification» can also be used in a more detailed analysis. In producing the documents, the schools present values central to their practices. Here the concept of reification can be used to analyse the documents as part of the schools’ process of negotiation of meaning. The analysis of the documents shows that the texts present several reifications central to the schools’ value systems. As the words that signify values in the texts are extracted and categorised, they are observed as representing different groups of reifications. The focal point of the study becomes the functions of these different groups of reified values. The new categories of reifications are named to further develop Wenger’s terminology and modify it to describe how the folk high schools’ negotiation of meaning is present in the value documents.

VALUE DOCUMENTS AS A PRESENTATION OF VALUE REIFICATIONS

The value documents contain references to objects or concepts that their respective authors wish to give the position of reification in the ongoing negotiation of meaning in both schools.

The documents typically present reifications or presumptive reifications and imply how they will take shape or be realised as participation. The duality of participation and reification is constantly present in the texts. The reifications are presented as connected to participation in a practice. An example can be noted in the ecological values stated in the documents. Each institution uses «green» as a reification (Rønningen, 2012:3; Stavern, 2014b). The label is then connected to participation in practices, such as learning about an environment-friendly lifestyle, how the school limits the food waste from the canteen, and other practices connected to environmental consciousness.

The analysis presents four classes of reifications. The reifications found in the texts are not limited to only one of these classes. The descriptions are not meant to be exclusive. A term can function as an example in several of the classes presented. The classification is meant to show how these reifications work in the ongoing negotiation of meaning in the schools. The classification of reified values provides a background for the discussion where it is used to shed further light on the research question.
RELATIONAL REIFICATIONS

The most common type of value reification presented in the documents is the group I classify as «relational». These reifications share in common the use of human relationships as a metaphor for the values represented by the schools. In the negotiation of meaning that the documents represent, these reifications or signs of a reifying process are central to the understanding of the values that motivate the schools’ practices. The relational reifications are described as values in the relations among the members of the school community, mainly between the staff and students. However, the term is also applied to relationships in the student community and to student attitudes towards the staff. The connection between reification and participation is shown by sentences that give a picture of how the reifications are acted out in practice. An example can be found on the homepage of Stavern folkehøgskole (2014a):

«Det betyr at alle har samme Verdi og er like viktige for oss. Det betyr også at du vil bli møtt med same respekt uansett hvilken tro du har.»

(«This means that all have the same Value and are of the same importance to us. It also means that you will be treated with the same respect, whatever faith you profess.»)

In these two sentences, «value» and «respect» are examples of words used in ways that could be said to be part of a reifying process. The document’s author even uses a capital «V» in the word value, which is not the rule in the Norwegian language. I interpret this as a sign of the reifying process; the word is written as a proper noun, similar to a name of a person or place to mark its significance.

The citation above also uses «respect», which is the word most commonly used in a reified sense in the documents. Respect as a reification is primarily used to describe the relationship between the staff and students (Stavern, 2014a):

«…du vil bli 100% respektert for dine egne standpunkter.»

(«…you will be respected 100% for your own views.»)

The term «respect» is often connected to the institutions’ values as Christian schools. The personnel handbook of Rønningen folkehøgskole (2012:4) instructs the staff to:

«…legge til rette for et ærlig og raust møte med kristen livsforståing, kristen tru og kristent liv. Dette skal gjøres i dyp respekt for elevenes sin integritet og ansvar for egne livsvalg.»
Another central group of relational reifications is represented by the words «dialogue» and «discussion». On their online homepage, Rønningen folkehøgskole (2014) presents the kind of community that the students will meet if they apply there.

«Vi er glad i en god diskusjon og ønsker oss undring og refleksjon rundt de viktige spørsmål i livet.»

«We like a good discussion, and we wish to address the important questions in life with wonder and reflection.»)

The term «dialogue» (samtale) is repeatedly linked to the pedagogical ideals historically connected to the folk high schools. The documents relate these to Grundtvig and his ideal for the school to encounter each student as «a whole person» (Rønningen, 2012:6), as well as to develop the totality of the student, «mind, body and spirit» (Stavern, 2014b). The folk high school movement’s focus on interpersonal values could be regarded as an explanation of the dominant use of relational reifications in the documents.

REINTEGRATED REIFICATIONS

Wenger writes about reifications that are «vestiges», objects designed long ago. These can be «reintegrated into new moments of negotiation of meaning» (Wenger, 1998:60). The schools’ documents hold a number of these reintegrated reifications or vestiges. The reintegrated values originate from three main sources: each school’s organisational background, its religious traditions and the pedagogical ideals of the folk high school movement. The reintegration of these values into new moments of negotiation of meaning is central to the reification process of the two schools.

The organisations behind the schools show examples of reifications that are an established part of the negotiation of meaning represented by these communities of practice. Thus, Rønningen folkehøgskole being connected to the YMCA/YWCA uses terms such as «global» or «Ten Sing» (2012:3) and links the school to projects such as «Joint Advocacy Initiative in Palestine» (2014). These terms and projects represent reifications that are an established part of the owner organisation. The history behind these reifications and the values they represent are associated with the schools and take an active part in their negotiation of meaning.
The value documents include reifications that are reintegrated from traditional religious language. These are frequently connected to the Christian confession and faith as a foundation of the schools’ values. In the documents, these reifications take the form of expressions such as «our Christian heritage», «what the Bible says» and «an eternal hope for reconciliation» (Stavern, 2014b). References to and quotations from Grundtvig’s religious texts and hymns are used on several occasions (Stavern, 2014c). These reintegrated reifications represent the clearest example of the vestiges described by Wenger. A connection exists between the relational reifications and those reintegrated from the traditional religious language. They are repeatedly linked to each other in the texts:

«Det kristne fellesskapet på skolen er det vi skaper sammen – du er derfor invitert til å delta og bidra med det du har av liv og erfaringer.»

(«The Christian fellowship in the school becomes what we make of it as a fellowship – you are welcome to take part in it with everything that is part of your life and experience.») (Rønningen, 2014)

The third group of reintegrated reifications is associated with the pedagogical ideals of the folk high school movement. There are in all the documents of the analysis references to the pedagogic traditions of the folk high school movement and to Grundtvig’s legacy. Several terms taken from Grundtvig’s works are used in the texts in a reifying sense. They are presented to the staff, potential students and school boards as representations of the values that shape the schools’ practices. In describing the pedagogic history of Stavern folkehøgskole, one of the documents (2014c) states:

«‘Det levende ordet’ sto også sterkt i vår tradisjon, noe som gjorde at den muntlige formidling og ‘samtalen’ ble et viktig pedagogisk virkemiddel.»

(«‘The living word’ had a strong position in our tradition, which made oral communication and ‘dialogue’ important as pedagogical tools.»)

Reifications taken from the pedagogic tradition of the folk high schools often have a relational focus that gives them a possible connection to both classes of reifications. The pedagogical ideals present in the folk high school heritage emphasise personal relations and the social development of the students. This concentration can also be observed in the overview of the research on the movement. The pedagogical traditions’ relational focus explains why these reintegrated reifications can also be present as relational reifications.

**ASPIRING REIFICATION**

The texts can be regarded as a presentation of the values that are active in the life of the schools. The texts are here perceived as involving a conscious reifying process where their respective authors present the readers with reifications.
that are seen as active in the practices of the schools. However, the authors can also offer reifications that are hoped to be present in the schools. These reifications point towards values that the schools set out to work for, reifications intended to be witnessed in the schools’ practices. An example can be taken from the strategy document of Stavern fokehøgskole (2014b):

«Vi ønsker å peke på at det gode liv handler om forankring.»

(«We define a good life as having a centre of gravity.»)

This citation clearly states the school’s aspiration or wish. Other instances imply the aspiration of the value presented. Both the schools have chosen slogans that express their central values. In Rønningen folkehøgskole, the motto «Ærlig – Rusfri – Tilstede» («Honest – Sober – Present») is posted in large letters in the main entrance hall of the school. The schools’ respective slogans are also stated in their value documents (Rønningen, 2012:3; Stavern, 2014c). These can be understood not only as values seen as present in the schools but even more as aspired reifications, stated as goals to work for. Similarly, the documents include reifications that declare an ambition as much as they describe an existent value in the practices of the two schools.

The aspired reifications are most often connected to the schools’ identity as religious institutions. In the instructions to the staff of Rønningen folkehøgskole (2012:4), this combination of aspiring reifications and reintegration of traditional religious values can be observed:

«Yrkesidealet bygger på at skolen har et kristent verdigrunnlag og mål for sitt arbeid.»

(«The professional ideal is built on the school’s foundation of Christian values as an aim of its work.»)

The schools’ use of aspiring values points to the reinterpretation of traditional religious values as central to their practices. The reifications that are most often observed in combination with aspiring values are those categorised as relational. An example is shown on the homepage of Rønningen folkehøgskole (2014):

«På Rønningen vil du merke vår kristne verdiforankring. Hos oss håper vi at du vil oppleve en inkluderende, raus og romslig kristendomspraksis.»

(«You will notice our Christian value base at Rønningen. We hope that you will experience an inclusive, generous and open-minded Christian practice at our school.»)

In negotiating the meaning of their practices, both the schools combine aspiring reifications with traditional religious values and relational reifications.
This combination is witnessed repeatedly, which can be perceived as a conclusion in the analysis.

**BRIDGING REIFICATIONS**

There is a last class of reifications that I mark as a central part of the negotiation process represented by the value documents. The bridging reifications are named after their function in the texts. These terms connect or make a bridge to a reification to facilitate its role in the negotiation of meaning. The bridging reifications can for example make it more realistic for a traditional reification to be reintegrated in the practices of the schools. This is done by connecting the traditional reification to a reification that interprets it to the members of the community of practice. A bridging reification makes another reification accessible to the members for their use. In the presentation on its homepage, Stavern folkehøgskole (2014a) writes:

«Det betyr også at du vil bli møtt med samme respekt uansett hvilken tro du har. For oss handler dette om å ta en Kristen tro på alvor.»

(«This also means that you will be treated with the same respect, whatever your faith is. This is what it means for us to take [the] Christian faith seriously.»)

In these sentences, a traditional religious reification is being reintegrated by explaining the school’s practice to a potential future student. By using the relational reification of «respect», a much-used expression in the youth culture, the traditional religious reification of «Christian faith» is explained. The traditional religious reification is translated and made more accessible by bridging it with the reification already in use in the community of practice to which it refers.

In the documents, the bridging reifications are mainly used in two ways. Primarily, the schools use bridging reifications to communicate their religious and pedagogical values to the students (Rønningen, 2014; Stavern, 2014a). Second, in presenting religious and pedagogical values to the school board and owner organisation, there is more focus on the bridging or translation of the relational values to a traditional religious system (Stavern, 2014b: Stavern 2014c).

In the discussion and concluding argument, the concept of bridging reifications takes a central position. The values that the documents use to bridge or translate their traditional reifications are essential ingredients in the schools’ value system. If functioning, they make the traditional values available for reintegration into the practice of the school.
DISCUSSION

In producing their value documents, the folk high schools engage in a process that can be defined as a conscious negotiation of meaning. They set out to present the values that they view as reified in their practices as folk high schools. The process continually links the presented value reifications to the participation that they imply. The schools’ presentation of these values is an example of how the folk high schools reinterpret their role as value-based institutions.

The most frequently reified values in the documents are those classified as relational. The use of relational terms to describe the schools’ values can be tied to the central theme of the movement’s pedagogic tradition. Both in the historical overview and in recent research, the folk high schools are described as focusing on interpersonal values. Relational values highlighted in the documents, such as «respect», «dialogue» and «discussion», are connected to the pedagogical ideals and heritage of the folk high school movement. All documents of the sampling contain references to Grundtvig as the main source of values central to the schools and the folk high school heritage.

The documents’ citations from Grundtvig are used both as reintegrated and bridging reifications. On the homepage of Stavern folkehøgskole (2014a), the use of a Grundtvig citation as a bridging reification is especially interesting. This could imply that Grundtvig’s religious and pedagogical ideas are perceived as closer to and thus more easily reintegrated in the practices of the schools. The values presented by Grundtvig would then also be regarded as having a connection to the contemporary society of the young people to whom the texts seek to relate. The values found in Grundtvig’s writings seem to function as bridging reifications in the reintegration of the values on which the schools were founded.

References to Grundtvig and his writings are used as bridging reifications, in both the reintegration of values from the movement’s pedagogic tradition and the translation of traditional religious values. In several instances, the two are connected, as in a Grundtvig citation used on the homepage of Stavern folkehøgskole (2014a):

«Langt mere verdt enn det røde gull, det er sin Gud og Seg selv å kjenne!»

(«Of far more value than red gold is knowing your God and yourself!»)

The Christian folk high schools use Grundtvig’s legacy to translate or bridge the reintegration of traditional religious values. As the Christian folk high schools negotiate the meaning of their practices, they connect to Grundtvig’s positive view of human nature and openness towards public culture. In their definition of the place of religion in the schools, the pedagogic model’s relational reifications taken from Grundtvig are repeatedly used as bridging reifications.
In the analysis, the aspiring reifications are used to combine traditional religious values with relational reifications. Through this use, the schools could be said to point to a translation of the reintegrated religious values as relational. The schools negotiate the meaning of a practice that combines the values found in the pedagogic traditions of the folk high schools with the reintegration of religious values. Values such as «respect» and «dialogue» are central to the aspired reification of traditional religious values in the documents.

The analysis of the value documents indicate that as the two folk high schools redefine their role as value-based institutions, they use relational reifications to reintegrate their traditional religious values. In doing so, they refer to Grundtvig not only as a source of pedagogical values but also in the process of translating religious reifications. The documents have no references to the pietistic view of human nature and popular culture that historically would be central values for the kristelige folk high schools. The two schools are owned by different organisations with diverse pedagogical and theological traditions; from this perspective, one of the schools is not directly connected to the pietistic tradition. In their organisational affiliation, the schools are both within the framework of the NKF schools. It is therefore noteworthy that the historical dissension between the frilynte and the kristelige schools is not found in the analysis of the value documents. Here the schools reinterpret their values in closer accordance with those of Grundtvig than with Hauge’s legacy. The value documents would here imply what could be perceived as a conscious choice towards a Grundtvigian heritage in the two schools’ reification process.

The signs of what could be interpreted as a shift towards a Grundtvigian heritage are most clearly witnessed when the schools reify their pedagogical values. The documents characteristically combine traditional religious reifications with Grundtvig’s pedagogical ideals, integrating these with relational reifications. In describing the schools’ central pedagogical values in terms of religious communication, the documents exclusively use relational reifications. When reintegrating traditional religious values, the texts connect these to Grundtvig and the pedagogical ideals of the early folk high school movement.

**CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY**

The discussion shows a line extending from the historical overview through the presented research to the value documents of the two schools.

The schools’ presentation of central values can be considered a reification process, in Wenger’s terminology. Negotiating the meaning of their practices, the schools reify values that are perceived as central to these practices. In the categorisation of the reified values, the text analysis concludes that the documents focus on relational reifications. As the schools reintegrate traditional religious values, these are characteristically bridged or translated by using relational reifications and connecting these to Grundtvig’s legacy. In present-
ing their schools as religious pedagogic institutions, the value documents use relational reifications taken from the folk high school heritage. The schools’ religious practices are interpreted by reifications taken from the pedagogic and religious references to Grundtvig.

This study has set out to answer how Christian folk high schools redefine their role as religious institutions. In the value documents of the two folk high schools, this is done by reintegrating traditional religious values and translating or bridging these to relational reifications. These relational reifications are chiefly taken from the pedagogic heritage of the folk high schools and from Grundtvig as their primary source. The documents contain few (if any) references to the pietistic heritage of the Christian folk high school movement. In the historical dissension concerning the anthropology of Grundtvig and Hauge, the values reified by the documents must be viewed as closer to those of Grundtvig. This could be interpreted as a sign of a shift in how the two schools interpret the ideals connected to their organisational affiliation.

In their study of the movement, Knutas and Solhaug point out the lack of academic research on the Norwegian folk high schools (2010:16). Therefore, many other areas could be mentioned as possibilities for further study. It would be interesting to determine whether the results presented in this article could be considered representative of the other 25 folk high schools organised in the NKF. To verify this, a broader study of the values held by the NKF schools would be significant. The research discussed in this article focuses on the reification of values in the folk high schools. In Wenger’s theory, this is one part of what he calls «the duality of meaning», the second part being the area of participation (1998:62–71). The practices of the folk high schools and how students and the staff participate in these comprise an area of research that would complement this study.

REFERRED VALUE DOCUMENTS

REFERENCES


Røyseng, Sigrid (2014) «Hva er kulturpolitikk og kulturpolitisk forskning?» Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidskrift, nr. 1/2014 vol. 17


