

‘Friluftsliv’ and teaching methods – classroom management and relational thinking

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It is my intention in this short adaption mostly from one of the chapters in my master thesis work in educational science at the University of Oslo (2000), both to refer to what I look upon as some of the most important features and/or qualities regarding ‘friluftsliv’ and teaching – and to describe ‘friluftsliv’ in terms related to a model in Scandinavia often discussed as *a classroom management and relational thinking model*. This model gives us, too – a clear holistic approach as a way of leading people in the outdoors that quite some outdoor educators point out is both the most important factor for a leader in the group process during outdoor activities, and the most important component for such leadership.

Being Norwegian and raised into an outdoor tradition still looking upon ‘friluftsliv’ as “a way of recreating understanding for nature, of rediscovering the true home of mankind, A Way Home” – I have to point out that the word ‘friluftsliv’ for me has a much more limited use than ‘outdoor activities’, applying to activities in relatively untouched nature.

Rather than laying down fast rules for what the activities include, we can say that they show a respect for natural processes and for the realization of all life. They take place without the use of highly technical means of transport and they present a diverse range of challenges to the total person, and are an opportunity for emotional, physical, and intellectual engagement.

We might also get a feel for what ‘friluftsliv’ is by naming a few things it is *not*:

- *It is not sport*, in the sense of physical activity in a selfish, competitive way, staying fit to compensate for an otherwise unnatural and unhealthy lifestyle.
- *It is not tourism*, in the sense of the business and practice of rapid transport through different places.
- *It is not a scientific excursion*, teaching us about the physical processes in nature, collecting specimens of objective interest.
- *It is not a “trade-show”* style of grand outdoor expedition, featuring equipment, tourism, competitive adventures, and display windows for sponsors.
- *It is not outdoor activity*, in the sense of a safety valve for a fundamental against nature aggressive lifestyle. It is not meant to shore up our modern way of life, but to help us – as individuals and as a society – out of it.

‘Friluftsliv’ evokes such strong responses in Norwegian society because it evokes a *national* identity, a sense of really “belonging” to the land. It conveys *social* identity in a two-edged way, both as a “real” Norwegian and as a member of the upper class who must go *back* to nature. Finally, it conveys an *individual* identity in the same way that Nansen described, by paring a person built in the city down to some

sort of “essential” self.

In the Norwegian context, ‘friluftsliv’ is a living tradition for recreating nature-consonant lifestyles. It implies making friends with nature and passionately recreating free nature’s standing in our culture. It is an unselfish “I-Thou” relationship that tries to come away from the anthropocentrism of a nature-dissonant society.

What I regard as the most important features or qualities of ‘friluftsliv’ in relation to teaching methods or conveying methods are represented below by concepts and sentences such as:

- Bringing someone into the ‘friluftsliv’ field has to do with an intermediary activity in free nature; with this activity being deeply related to nature.
- In talking about ‘friluftsliv’ we should focus on the “fumbling and tumbling” – meetings with nature, being part of it, merging with nature, and experiencing adventure; journeying a higher state of nature consciousness.
- Taking someone out in nature the ‘friluftsliv’ way also have to do with cautious practice; acting and dressing oneself with respect to the actual weather, using tools and equipment only as means in finding one’s way, managing the over-nights, and benefitting from teamwork; all of this contributing to a safety margin.

The classroom management and relational thinking model described by Bjørndal and Lieberg.

This model is frequently used in Norway as a model for didactic analysis. It was first introduced and described by Bjørndal and Lieberg in 1975. Their model was developed as a consequence of experiencing various existing models for target-guided planning and organization related to teaching. They found that models initiated by school authorities seldom gave practising teachers assistance of value in everyday practical teaching; in what they termed as “didactic situations”. Bjørndal and Lieberg wished to formulate a new tool that could give an improved focus on the reflective process the planning for teaching should be. Their work produced a model with this crystal-like hexagonal structure, and very often named the *didactic relation model* (figure 1):

The six edges in the model are, named from the top and clockwise: Goals, Framework, Methods, Evaluation, Content, and Ability by participants.

In addition to being a tool for systematic reflections upon every didactic situation, making the teacher more sensitive and self-critical, Bjørndal and Lieberg also wished to give the teacher more responsibility for each teaching situation. They viewed the teacher as an original and creative person; not just a functionary implementing the official curriculum.

Taking the ‘friluftsliv’ features and qualities presented al-

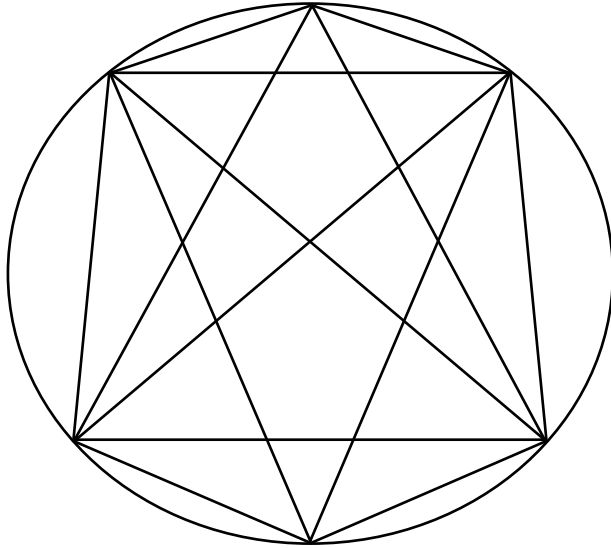


Figure 1. The didactic relation modell (Bjørndal & Lieberg, 1978)

ready, into a modified Bjørndal and Lieberg model, I will present a useful framework for planning, preparation – and performing leadership as well – in ‘friluftsliv’.

The features and qualities I will take explicit into the modified model are as follows:

- Free nature near at home
- Use of tools and equipment characterized by their simplicity
- Important teacher qualifications, such as: Perceiving skills, knowledge, conveying skills
- What the actual group has been taught or has experienced related to ‘friluftsliv’ before
- Being out in the nature in a way that correspond to each participant’s abilities/skills
- Having a security margin

- Taking participants (pupils) out in nature in a cautious way, acting and dressing with respect to the actual weather, using tools and equipment, finding one’s way, managing over-nights, and benefitting from teamwork
- Other qualifications.

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