

## Synopsis

### A comparative study on the nature of contemporary Personal and social development schemes by the use of the outdoors. **Norway / UK**

The UK and Norway have a long lasting tradition as role models in the pursuit of Outdoor activities throughout Europe. Already in Victorian times the UK, saw the use of the ‘character factory’ of public schools foster personality and team-spirit by the use of the outdoors. Kurt Hahn and the Outward Bound movement have influenced the development of the current British Outdoor Education Movement. In contrast, Fridtjof Nansen and a Norwegian culture heavily carved by the harvest-tradition of the Norwegian peasants, visiting British mountaineers and the deep ecology movement of the 1970s influenced the Outdoor traditions of the Norwegian *Friluftsliv*.

Both countries offer contrasting insights into how their specific culture affect attitudes toward wilderness, its exploration and the relation of the ‘self’ and its relationship to ‘others’ within Personal and social development schemes (PSD).

The scope of this research seeks to investigate and compare a subsection of Outdoor Education focussing on personal and social development by the use of the Outdoors. The terminology used in the UK is *Adventure Education*, whereas the Norwegian term *Friluftsliv* is applied.

The study focuses on a discourse of the antecedents and the relationships to its current practise. Furthermore, the thesis is presented as a scrutiny and juxtaposition:

- at the level of a socio-cultural investigation
- at the level of a case study I and case study II

Specifically, it attempts to scrutinize the **internal** influences of its socio-cultural antecedents through time by way of using a literature-study.

This study draws together two approaches – interpretive case study methodology within education research and an interpretive hermeneutic approach to literature- study and review of key documents from the cases and data generated by interview.

The preparatory and definitional stage of the study entails an initial examination of the **internal influences** such as political, historical and cultural factors that have given shape to the current practise of Outdoor Adventure Education schemes.

Secondly, the research survey focusses on what is happening now (How and Why?) through a cross-cultural case study (**case-study I**). The sample selection process was guided by ‘reputational case selection’ criteria which represent examples of ‘best practice’ chosen at

- OB center Loch Eil Scotland
- Øytun Folkehøgskole, Northern Norway

The **case study I** is summarized through a “thick description” of the nature of the scheme and the underlying principles expressed through the practitioners view. In a further step the findings are compared and contextualised with their relationship to the past.

In an ensuing step **case study II** attempts to shed light into the current **external** influences, such as trends (marketforces) and political parameters on a wider national level in both countries.

The study shows that the antecedents of the Outdoors movement is multi-faceted and culturally embedded as a specific phenomenon carved through its political and social historical background in each country. Furthermore, the findings show that the “city-bound” philosophy of anglo-american approaches to Outdoor –education, where learning experiences are transferred to daily life, contradict the norwegian ‘classical Friluftsliv- tradition, which is based on a deep-ecology-philosophy. The different underpinning principles carve distinctive contemporary Outdoor Education practises in the UK and Norway. It shows that the approach to Personal and Social development is more **explicit** in its practice in Britain and in its nature of provision considerably more implicit in its Norwegian counterpart. The study raises questions on how the trend of globalisation should influence national approaches to PSD schemes.