

# **Norwegian Teachers' Safety Strategies for *Friluftsliv* Excursions.**

## **Implications for Inclusive Education.**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers in friluftsliv (the Scandinavian equivalent of outdoor education and outdoor recreation) reflect upon their safety strategies in relation to pupils' friluftsliv abilities in the upper secondary school 'Sport and Physical Education programme'. This article is based on six focus group interviews of friluftsliv teachers. The analysis of the empirical material is inspired by John Evans's understanding of the concept of abilities as dynamic socio-cultural constructs and processes. In the findings, different challenges related to teachers' experiences of a general decline in pupils' winter friluftsliv abilities are identified. Furthermore, the article identifies and discusses challenges related to teachers' safety strategies, which led to both inclusion and exclusion of pupils. The findings in this study reveals a tension between important winter outdoor skills and inclusive friluftsliv.

**Keywords:** safety, friluftsliv, upper secondary school education, outdoor education, inclusion.

## Introduction

*Friluftsliv*, which occurs as a part of the schooling in Norway, has a strong tradition and has long been given a valued place in the Norwegian school system. For example, the Norwegian government claims that developing outdoor skills can strengthen pupils' educational development in the outdoors in general, as well as their abilities to handle outdoor challenges in a safe manner (Parliamentary Report no. 18, 2016; The Knowledge Promotion Reform, 2006). Both Norwegian and international research shows that fatal and non-fatal accidents in the outdoors occur from time to time, during both school and leisure time (e.g. Aadland, Noer, & Vikene, 2016; Dahl, Lynch, Moe, & Aadland, 2016; North & Brookes, 2017). In the school setting, *friluftsliv*, comprised mostly of young people, is vulnerable to accidents, requiring that teachers take certain safety measures during their outdoor lessons. At the same time, this setting gives teachers important possibilities to include all youth in developing outdoor skills. In this article, the focus is on safety measures taken by teachers during winter *friluftsliv*, including how and where lessons are conducted and the impacts of inclusion and exclusion of pupils in '*Friluftsliv*' in upper secondary school.

Inclusion, equality and adapted education are important principles and concepts in Norwegian education policy (Markussen, Froeseth, & Sandberg, 2011). Furthermore, Norwegian education policy documents emphasize that all pupils should have an equal opportunity to develop in an inclusive learning environment regardless of gender, age, geographical and cultural background (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). Thus, inclusive and adaptive practices are educational expectations when it comes to teaching *friluftsliv* in schools.

Although the ideology of inclusion is widely accepted at the political level, research highlights a discrepancy between political aims and pedagogical practice, both in Norway (Svendby & Dowling, 2013) and in other countries (Penney, 2002). Therefore, inclusion has

become a common feature of educational debates in physical education (PE) (Evans, 2004; 2014; Standal, 2016; Wilkinson, Littlefair, & Barlow-Meade, 2013).

Furthermore, questions about outdoor educational rationales, traditions and the philosophy of how and where outdoor programs are conducted have been much discussed internationally (Brookes, 2002; Lugg, 2004; Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Backman, 2011). Challenging assumptions about what constitutes outdoor education; these discussions particularly concern outdoor educational programs' investment in equipment, and their emphasis on technical skills and activities involving risk. Discussions such as these are raising questions of the pedagogical priorities of outdoor teachers. That said, in the Norwegian *friluftsliv* context, these discussions seem to be missing.

In an earlier study (Authors, 2017), we found that *friluftsliv* teachers highly value their pupils' feeling of safety on excursions. The former study also found that there seem to be large differences in teachers' safety preparations before excursions, as well as in their safety prioritisations and teaching of safety during excursions, as evidenced by the way teachers reflect on safety. However, what was left unexplored was how these safety reflections relate to teachers' ideas about their pupils' abilities and to the wider educational expectations of inclusive education. In this article, we address this knowledge gap by asking: How do teachers in '*Friluftsliv*' reflect upon their safety strategies related to pupils' *friluftsliv* abilities in the upper secondary school 'Sport and Physical Education' programme? The study is based on six qualitative focus group analyses of teachers' reflections on different safety strategies related to their experiences with pupil abilities in *friluftsliv*.

### ***'Friluftsliv' in the Upper Secondary School 'Sport and Physical Education' Programme***

The context of this study is the school subject, '*Friluftsliv*', in the Norwegian upper secondary school 'Sport and Physical Education programme' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education

and Training, 2016). This programme is one of fourteen elective educational programmes in Norwegian upper secondary school. Another educational programme offering *friluftsliv* in the upper secondary school curriculum is the ‘Specialization in General Studies’ programme. Here, *friluftsliv* is a part of the mandatory ‘Physical Education’ course. In addition, some schools provide ‘*Friluftsliv*’ as an optional course.

In the ‘Sport and Physical Education’ programme, the ‘Activities’ subject offers three mandatory courses, ‘*Friluftsliv*’, ‘Sport Activities’ and ‘Basic Fitness Training’, which are taught for a total of 140 hours per year (The Knowledge Promotion Reform, 2006). During its three-year study programme, the ‘*Friluftsliv*’ syllabus requires pupils to participate in outdoor activities rooted in both the local and national *friluftsliv* culture. The syllabus includes overnight trips in different natural settings, such as woodlands, high mountain areas or by the sea. Although the syllabus does not specify types of environments, activities, teaching methods or the number of excursion days, research shows that popular activities include canoeing, biking, mountain hiking, overnight winter excursions in mountains and mountain-based cross-country skiing (Dahl et al., 2016). Schools offer between 3-48 days of *friluftsliv* teaching during the three-year programme, including 2-20 days of overnight excursions in tents, bivouacs or snow caves (Dahl et al., 2016). In the third year, the ‘*Friluftsliv*’ syllabus focuses on safety issues, including first-aid training, risk management practice and simulated rescue operations, as well as planning and implementing excursions during different seasons (The Knowledge Promotion Reform, 2006). Overnight mountain-based winter expeditions are not a mandatory part of the syllabus, but seem to be popular activities to teach, possibly since these activities are related to national cultural practices and traditions of winter *friluftsliv* (Gurholt, 2016). Overnight mountain-based winter excursions are often carried out as part of the upper secondary school ‘Sport and Physical Education’ programme (Dahl et al., 2016).

## **Conceptual framework: Inclusion and Different Pupil Abilities**

In this study, we used Evans's (2004) understanding of ability as the conceptual framework through which we made sense of our empirical material. Evans questions current understandings of ability in the field of PE, contending that it is equated with biological talent: 'Ability tends to be characterized as a one-dimensional, static entity, one among many fixed or incremental attributions' (Evans, 2004, p. 99). Evans (2004) also draws on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1990) and Richard Bernstein (2000) to suggest an alternative understanding of ability as a 'dynamic, socio-cultural construct and process' (Evans 2004, p. 99).

Referring to Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus, Evans (2004) recognizes the habitus of children as a set of learned cognitive, embodied dispositions and deep structures of actions and beliefs acquired in classed and cultured environments. Children's habitus are influenced by the resources of their families as well as what other social spaces invest in movement and play, among other factors. This, in turn, leads to differences in children's physical capital (embodied competences with cultural value), perceived and interpreted as socially constructed abilities that children bring to school. However, Evans (2004) argues that the pupils' abilities are not traits connected primarily to the pupils themselves. It is a relation that appears between the pupil and the teacher through the teacher's own embodied practices and values, their doxas or beliefs and their cultural 'reading' of the pupils (Evans, 2004; Standal, 2015b). Formed and influenced by this, the teacher will recognize and value certain types of physical and cultural capital, which the pupils brings to PE, while at the same devaluing other types of capital.

Evans (2004) argues that inclusive teaching requires well-educated teachers who are aware of which pupil abilities they value, to avoid the establishment of difference and exclusion in the teaching process. His view reflects that inclusive teaching requires teachers who focus on

each pupil's personal development and learning in PE instead of their talent measured against that of other pupils (Standal, 2015b).

Evans work (2004; 2014) has spurred some interesting research about PE in general (Croston, 2013; Hay & Macdonald, 2010). An overall focus on abilities, inclusion and safety perspectives in *friluftsliv* and outdoor education related to upper secondary school has not, to the best of our knowledge, been discussed. However, inclusion and abilities in outdoor education is a developing research theme in relation to disabilities, gender, minority groups and social class (Brodin, 2009; Humberstone, Brown, & Richards, 2003; Crosbie, 2016). Brookes (2002) and Lugg (2004) have examined the values underpinning outdoor education in Australia and questioned the skill-focused activities often offered in remote areas. They seek to 'educate in a more inclusive and responsive manner' (Lugg, 2004, p. 8). Backman (2008; 2011) has investigated *friluftsliv* in Swedish upper secondary schools; like Evans (2004; 2014), he uses Bourdieu (1990) and Bernstein (2000) in his theoretical perspectives. He found that pedagogic discourses relating to *friluftsliv* in Swedish upper secondary school PE are dominated by teaching practices focused on wilderness settings, risk involvement and specific *friluftsliv* equipment (Backman, 2011). In the light of Brookes's (2002), Lugg's (2004) and Backman's (2008; 2011) research into outdoor education and *friluftsliv*, Evans's perspectives should be useful in the current context when researching the socio-cultural aspects of safety in *friluftsliv*.

## **Method**

The aim of this article is to examine the influences of teachers' safety strategies on inclusion and exclusion of pupils in upper secondary *friluftsliv*. For that purpose, we have conducted a focus group interview study with teachers.

### ***Participants and procedures***

Focus group interviews were undertaken with the aim to encourage safety reflections through dialogues between the teachers (Hallkier, 2010; Wilkinson, 1998). Six schools were selected from the regions of south, west, central and north Norway. The aim of the selection was to include diverse experiences and reflections on accidents and safety in the teaching of *friluftsliv* (Collins, 2010). We choose to include relatively large schools of 250–300 pupils in order to ensure that the schools had sufficient *friluftsliv* teachers available to participate in each focus group interview (Hallkier, 2010).

A total of 41 *friluftsliv* teachers between the ages of 27 and 61 participated in the qualitative focus group interviews. There were 17 female and 24 male participants from six schools, including pilot interviews from the first two schools. The pilot interviews were deemed to be of such quality that we included the interview from pilot school 2 in its entirety, and some parts of the interview from pilot school 1. The reason for this is that only parts of the interview guide were changed after the first interview. Between five and eight teachers took part in each focus group, after signing a consent form, which ensured anonymity in all written presentations. Six focus groups from six different schools were considered sufficient to reach data and theoretical saturation (Collins 2010). The project received ethics approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) in June 2015.



Each interview commenced with the presentation of a *friluftsliv* accident already familiar from the media. This particular accident was used as an interviewing tool to allow teachers to compare and discuss their own safety strategies. Through the teachers' evaluation of this accident, important reflections regarding their own safety practices were evoked. In this way, an attempt was made to make the interview situation safe and comfortable, avoiding excessive focus on the teachers' own accident experiences, which could, by its nature, provoke ambivalent views and emotions. Open-ended questions regarding the teachers' safety practices before, during and after a *friluftsliv* excursion with pupils were given priority during the interview. Furthermore, several focus group participants reflected on recent changes in pupil skills and abilities in relation to safety issues without the interviewer bringing up this theme.

All interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours. The first author conducted and transcribed the interviews alone (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Throughout the interviews, and immediately after, notes were made analysing group interaction and the relevance of the interview questions. Between some of the focus group interviews, some minor adjustments to the interview guide were made.

### ***Data Analysis***

The qualitative data from the focus group interviews was analysed using a step-by-step theme-based approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, the transcribed data was subjected to a thorough reading, based on an inductive data analysis. In total, 52 coding categories were created. This analysis focused on the vocabulary used by the teachers and their understanding of various safety-related issues (Hagen & Gudmundsen, 2011; Thagaard, 2013). Furthermore, this was a dialectic process. The interpretation process was influenced by the assumptions, choices, terminology and categorisations of the first author during the analytical process (Cohen et al., 2011). Specific quotes of interest were assigned to categories, followed by a

write-up of a 20-page thematic analysis. This led to the establishment of new theoretical codes inspired by theories discussing abilities, inclusion and democratisation (Evans, 2004; Odden 2008; Standal, 2015a). The textual analysis in this phase focused on dominant, contradictory and paradoxical issues in the data, leading to a reduction in the number of codes. Initially, the analyses were primarily focused on issues regarding safety. As it became evident that the teachers' reflections also concerned pupil exclusion from excursions for safety reasons, the authors became interested in the themes of inclusion, exclusion and *friluftsliv* abilities. To strengthen the reliability of the study, the research process has been transparent and open for comments from the co-authors. To promote an open interpretation process, the design of the interview guide, coding, analysis, results and the conclusions have been continually discussed and jointly evaluated by the authors (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

## **Results**

The findings presented in this paper reveal several aspects of teachers' safety reflections in the teaching of *friluftsliv* in the 'Sport and Physical Education' programme at the upper secondary school level. The results are presented along the following themes:

- Teachers' reflections on present and former pupils
- Teachers' safety strategies in *friluftsliv*
- Dilemmas of tradition, safety and inclusion

### ***Teachers' Reflections on Present and Former Pupils***

During the interviews, several teachers reflected on their experiences regarding changes in their pupils' behaviours and interest in *friluftsliv*. They compared their present pupils to pupils

they had taught seven to fifteen years ago. These interview reflections were especially related to the teachers' experiences with their pupils' decreasing interest in *friluftsliv*:

Today's generation of pupils just sit inside, they do totally other things than go for a hike in nature, which is what is happening in all parts of Norway (T5, S5 [Teacher 5, School 5]).

Reporting what they perceived as a change in pupils' *friluftsliv* behaviour, the teachers pointed to a decline in *friluftsliv* skills and lack of *friluftsliv* experience in general. Some teachers argued these changes were due to a general decrease in the time that youth spend on outdoor activities in their childhood, leading to upper secondary school pupils having limited experiences of exposure to cold and bad weather:

Some youth today are not used to experiencing cold temperatures, because we are living in such a modern technological society, so they are never exposed to it [cold temperatures] (T1, S1).

Not even as a child or in kindergarten, do they [our pupils'] experience the feeling of discomfort (T2, S1).

Other teachers mentioned these changes through analysing the pupils' missing outdoor equipment. Compared to present pupils, former pupils had several sets of skis and reasonable bikes available for the excursions. The lack of basic, but important, equipment seemed to frustrate some teachers, with pupils having trouble handling equipment, like skis, tents and stoves. Experiencing a decrease in the pupils' physical strength and endurance as well, the teachers seem to be forced to focus on the development of pupils' basic *friluftsliv* skills:

The youth today do not have skis nor bikes, they have nearly no equipment at all. The last 7-8 years, I think the pupils have changed a lot. Both concerning the pupils' outdoor skills and their physical fitness, the equipment they own and how interested

they are [in *friluftsliv*]; all this has changed. Today they will enter [school] with a much lower level [in *friluftsliv*] (T5, S5).

Our focus today is basecamp, to make a camp, to put up a lavo [aboriginal Sami tent], to make a tent camp, to use a stove, to make different fire types, to orientate with a map and a compass, to dress functionally (S3, T2).

These findings indicate that the teachers understand the pupils' present *friluftsliv* abilities in light of processes of cultural change in society in general. In addition, the teachers seem to focus on how to develop the pupils' practical and physical skills during excursions.

### ***Teachers' Safety Strategies in Friluftsliv***

Several teachers stated that they had undertaken strategies to adapt their teaching and safety measures to their experiences of cultural change among their pupils. These strategies were based on their desire to include all pupils in their teaching. One example involves some teachers describing a hiking trip with their pupils. Previously, mountain hikes were more casual, less planned and further from help (in case of accidents), forcing the groups of teachers and pupils to be far more self-reliant if an accident occurred. The teachers stated that planning and excursions have changed and increasingly are adapted to the current pupils:

We planned much longer hikes before, walked much further, carried back packs longer, so today we adapt our teaching to the current pupils we have, based on our many experiences. I had not dared to hike across [name of mountain area] with our pupils today, as we did with the pupils we had in former times (T4, S2).

We rushed into it earlier [the excursions]; we were often in 'deep water'. So we have adjusted our teaching largely, adapting it to the pupils we have today, both what matters is how we [increasingly] take care of safety, how we give attention to the

pupils' wellbeing and how we try to motivate the pupils joining the excursions (T5, S2).

Wishing to adapt their teaching to their current pupils, this seems to force the teachers to explore new safety strategies. Instead of prioritizing long hikes in unfamiliar mountain areas with heavy backpacks, several teachers plan shorter excursions in less demanding and more familiar terrain. In addition, the *friluftsliv* camps are planned close to mountain huts and near available transport for safety reasons. By choosing less challenging and, therefore, safe locations for their excursions, the teachers seem to prioritize the development and inclusion of different kinds of pupil abilities:

It is about the way we build up the pupils' abilities; they can do many wrong things 'out there' without anything happening [naming a local place by the lake]; we plan the excursions so the pupils have a safe place for experiencing mistakes. It doesn't matter if they bring a back-pack with an [heavy] iron pan and four kilos of chicken and one and a half-litres of soda water [laughter from teachers] (T1, S3).

On our excursions, we have different variations to choose between, so that in the first year [in upper secondary school] we have both a canoe excursion and a mountain hike, and then the pupils that cannot canoe for physical reasons, if they cannot swim, then they can hike instead. As well on our bike excursion in the second grade, we plan two different routes on that excursion, and the same in the third grade (T2, S2).

In this way, the teachers prioritize pupil safety by adapting their excursions to different ability levels, giving the pupils different options on excursions. They still seem to express an understanding of pupil abilities as connected to the pupils' experience, physical performance and skills. At the same time, they seem to use adapted teaching as a strategy and a practical solution for solving the different safety challenges they experience in their teaching.

Adapted teaching as a safety strategy seems to work well for many of the teachers who were interviewed. However, some teachers have dilemmas when prioritizing pupil safety.

### ***Dilemmas of Tradition, Safety and Inclusion***

When various safety issues were discussed among the teachers, mountain-based winter *friluftsliv* was mentioned as especially challenging. They experience winter as a season where there is a higher risk of accidents, mentioning hypothermia, storms and avalanches, among other factors. Despite these risks, many teachers consider cross-country ski excursions and overnight snow cave excursions in the mountains as important and prioritized parts of teaching *friluftsliv*:

We have had this snow cave excursion since I started working here. We have a big tradition for it here, since 1987, and the pupils are prepared. They know that in their second year we will sleep in the snow (T2, S1).

If somebody should do it [teach the pupils some winter *friluftsliv*], if somebody should teach it to the pupils, it should be us, I think (T4, S1).

We, as teachers, are committed to give the pupils on the Sport and Physical Education programme an experience of an overnight sleep [in a tent or snow cave] during winter time (T3, S1).

Even though winter excursions are not explicitly required in the syllabus (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2016), all interviewed focus groups mentioned them as a very important part of the teaching programme. They seemed to interpret mountain-based winter excursions as an essential part of *friluftsliv* in general, and a big part of its traditional and cultural foundation. Since they have a large desire to transfer this part of the tradition to their pupils, they agree to teach *friluftsliv* in demanding environments during wintertime, even

though they face a genuine dilemma when experiencing large variations in pupils' *friluftsliv* abilities and cultural backgrounds in each class:

There is a lot of variation in a class, how much experience they have [with *friluftsliv*], how many excursions they have participated in with their parents when they were small children; some pupils have never participated [in excursions with their parents] (T2, S1).

Some pupils have no experience with the outdoors at all, being outside in general or doing cross-country skiing or carrying a heavy ruck sac. Nevertheless, the strong pupils can handle it, and the ones that are interested in this [can handle it], but we have pupils who cannot [handle it], especially football players [laughter from the rest of the teachers] (T6, S3).

Some are good [in *friluftsliv*], then you have a large group in the middle, and then you have some pupils who are extremely bad [at *friluftsliv*]. The largest group is the one in the middle, and with some teaching they can join [a winter excursion], but not immediately. Moreover, you must not forget we have immigrants too, if somebody from [a country in Africa] participates in the class, he had never participated in a snow cave excursion before, if I can say it like that (T6, S2)?

The teachers seem to use two main strategies to deal with the dilemma of wanting to hold on to the strong tradition of teaching Norwegian *friluftsliv* while faced with variations in pupils' *friluftsliv* experiences. One strategy is to adapt teaching to the different pupil experience levels by changing the location where the teaching is implemented. By planning snow cave excursions close to well-known places a short distance from the school, or not far from available huts, roads or trains, they attempt to include all their pupils safely, even though some pupils are still struggling:

I think we all feel safer when we participate in excursions we have former experience with from the past, we can anticipate different scenarios that can occur because this place is well known to us, and we have experience with the kind of equipment that will be used for the kind of activities we do here (T1, S1).

We know that if the pupils don't function well during the autumn excursion, when the temperatures are mild, then we know that there can be a risk [of accidents] related to these pupils on our winter excursions [...] We choose excursions in places we feel safe. It is rare we do not know the place; it would be more risky to choose unknown places like [name of place]. We choose tough terrain and conditions, but we know the places, that is what makes it safe (T5, S5).

Meanwhile, other teachers choose a different safety strategy, trying to minimize the risk of incidents arising when inexperienced pupils are involved. Trying to achieve an accepted level of safety, the teachers accept that some pupils do not participate in winter excursions. This is often self-exclusion, chosen by the pupils themselves:

This can be the reason that our excursions are going so well; that, on every excursion, there are three or four pupils in each class who do not participate. They make various excuses; some even get a sick leave. As teachers, we would have a better feeling if we were able to bring all of them, but it can be everything from anxiety regarding skiing or feeling anxious about doing *friluftsliv* or that they are top athletes anxious about getting ill (T3, S2).

The excursions are compulsory, all teaching is compulsory, most of the activities are, but then there are some pupils who do not participate, and we have to deal with it, but we don't have police authority, right? (T2, S2)

Even though some pupils choose not to participate in some of the excursions, a few teachers



attempt to force the pupils to participate in excursions by demanding they participate in the missing excursions together with pupils in the lower grades:

We tell the pupils that if you do not join an excursion in first grade in secondary school, then you have to join this extra excursion when you start second grade with the first grade pupils. So all our pupils have to join all the excursions [...] and if they do not want to join the excursions, then they have to participate with me or [name of teacher] the weekend afterwards [laughter from all the teachers] (T1, S2).

Unlike these teachers, and perhaps more surprisingly, other teachers ask some pupils *not* to participate in winter excursions, to ensure the safety of the pupil group as a whole:

It is like this: If we are in doubt about some pupils not having enough experience or they need equipment, then we tell them that they cannot join the excursion. We have a low threshold to tell them that they cannot join (T3, S6).

Compared to what we taught earlier during the first years I worked here, I think that there is a much lower threshold to tell the pupils not to join [our excursions] today.

You do not need to join; not everybody needs to join (T8, S6).

I was teaching on a [combined] paddle and mountain excursion lately, three days in total, and there were a lot of pupils participating [on this excursion] that we couldn't have brought with us on our next mountain-based winter excursion, maybe three, four, five [pupils that we would have to exclude]. I think they do not have enough equipment, not enough experience [to be able to participate], it would never work well (T5, S2).

According to these teachers, this strategy of exclusion occurs based on the teachers' careful assessment of the pupils on previous excursions. The teachers who mention this do not seem to look at it as a challenging dilemma, but as a natural choice when they reflect on their safety

judgements in general. They exempt pupils based on the pupils' inadequate handling of equipment or lack of equipment, their lack of physical abilities and previous *friluftsliv* experiences. The teachers interpret the inadequacy of pupil abilities as a potential safety hazard. Not having the financial possibilities to use extra teachers to support these pupils, pupil exclusion seems to be a measure some teachers take to ensure the safety of the group.

## **Discussion**

The focus of this article is to explore how teachers in '*Friluftsliv*' reflect upon their safety strategies related to pupils' *friluftsliv* abilities in the upper secondary school 'Sport and Physical Education' programme. Our findings in this study indicate that many of the teachers have observed some cultural changes among their pupils, including a decline in their physical skills and amount of *friluftsliv* experience compared to former pupils. A decline in youth outdoor skills and experiences seems to be a general trend, locally and globally (Clements, 2004; Karsten, 2005; Skaar et al., 2016). Furthermore, the findings show that many teachers are changing their own focus and attitudes on safety as compared to former excursions, with the teachers saying they are now taking more precautions in regard to the length, duration and location of excursions. Their safety strategies seem to lead to both inclusion and exclusion of pupils.

By modifying the content of the excursions, many of the teachers are using adapted teaching as a practical instrument to solve their safety challenges, choosing safer, optional and shorter excursions in local and familiar areas. These teachers seem to have realized that, by continuing to involve their pupils in challenging natural contexts and environments, accidents can easily occur. By changing some of the locations of the excursions and their traditional ways of teaching, they seem to be following the international trend of questioning the taken-for-granted ways of doing things in the outdoors. In this way, these teachers are also

challenging the underpinning concepts and values of risk, place and activities in an outdoor educational context (Brookes, 2002; Lugg, 2004; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). They are focusing on inclusive personal development and learning in the outdoors, adapting their teaching to include all pupils irrespective of differences and abilities. They use simpler forms of natural contexts and local places in their teaching practices, trying to include a variety of skills, equipment and experiences.

Other teachers, however, do not seem to interpret *friluftsliv* abilities as shaped by socio-cultural contexts. The interviews imply that these teachers do not problematize the dilemma of pupil exclusion, and thus do not seem to reflect on their own *friluftsliv* values or habits, or the way they interpret abilities as certain skills and experiences (Evans, 2004; Standal, 2015b). Evans (2004), on the other hand, sees this process of judging pupil abilities as socially constructed, and not as something connected only with the pupil. Social class, gender, ethnicity and values in society influence the way we interpret abilities in general as well as in the field of *friluftsliv* teaching. As such, it is also as an outcome of socio-cultural processes. By not reflecting on these perspectives, the teachers risk excluding some of their pupils (Evans, 2004; 2014).

Our findings show that some teachers implement planned mountain-based winter excursions without all of their pupils participating, and without problematizing this as a dilemma. They seem to accept pupil exclusion for safety reasons either being initiated by themselves or by the pupils themselves. Abilities seem to be understood and used as a basis for selection, giving some pupils access to certain winter experiences in the outdoors to which not all pupils are invited. In light of recent research showing differences in participation in *friluftsliv* in relation to social class—with lower income families participating less both in *friluftsliv*, in general, and in winter *friluftsliv*, in particular—excluding some pupils from participating in winter excursions is problematic (Parliamentary Report no. 18, 2016).

It seems, however, to be a paradox that most of the teachers interviewed continue to conduct overnight mountain-based winter excursions instead of choosing other learning environments, places and seasons in response to the large differences in the outdoor abilities of today's pupils. Conducting these mountain-based winter excursions, although they are not required in the syllabus (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2016), may have to do with cultural and unquestioned doxas among the teachers (Bourdieu, 1990). Justified by their own role as cultural bearers of the Norwegian traditional winter *friluftsliv*, teachers seem to feel responsible for teaching mountain-based winter skills to their pupils despite their experience with winter as a high-risk season for accidents to occur. Possibly initiated by the cultural influences of Nansen and Amundsen's national identity-building winter expeditions (Gurholt, 2016), teachers seem to regard these traditions as valuable even today.

Consequently, teachers keep carrying out mountain-based winter excursions in order to teach what are seen as important cultural traditions and skill sets in a country characterized by long winters. Instead of challenging them as what seems to be exclusionary social and cultural practices (Evans, 2004), asking how important the activity is itself, teachers interpret these skills and traditions as important practises that should be maintained in a rapidly changing society. We would therefore suggest that there is a tension between holding onto cultural identities, pupil safety and processes of inclusion / exclusion, which influence pupils' opportunities to learn in *friluftsliv*.

However, it is important to stress that teachers are caught in a difficult situation in this matter: not only do they see themselves as carriers of a *friluftsliv* tradition, but they are also expected to implement a curriculum that puts a high demand on them and their pupils. On the other hand, the teachers interviewed have clearly expressed that they are pressed for resources in terms of equipment and personnel. In other words, our point is not to blame teachers for teaching practices that either are exclusionary or allow self-exclusion from trips. What we

want to highlight is the dynamic interplay between the requirements of the curriculum, tradition, teachers' doxic understanding of *friluftsliv* and pupils' *friluftsliv* experiences and habitus.

From an international perspective, the findings from our study can be seen in the context of the development of a larger safety focus in outdoor education (Potter & Dymont, 2016). Both international and Norwegian outdoor activity providers maintained varying safety practices in the 1950s–1970s (Horgen, 2016). Through the emergence of international safety policies, risk management recommendations and legislation, outdoor education 'is responding to a socio-cultural shift towards greater safety awareness and practices' (Dymont & Potter, 2015, pp. 8-9). The teachers in this study emphasized their current safety-focused strategies, choosing well-known locations, shorter excursions and adapted teaching; some teachers even exclude pupils for safety reasons. It seems that teachers are thereby following the current trend of stricter safety-focused teaching, as a part of both the Norwegian and international trends (Dymont & Potter, 2015; Horgen, 2016).

Swedish PE teachers' dominant pedagogic discourses on *friluftsliv* (Backman, 2011), focusing on remote wilderness settings and specific equipment, are interesting in this context. When Norwegian teachers point to the importance of mountain-based winter activities, it is just not any kind of nature experiences they value. The teachers choose to teach activities that are geographically or culturally remote from many pupils' earlier outdoor experiences, characterized by performances in high mountain areas, which demand certain abilities and equipment. These kinds of outdoor activities were regarded as especially important in a period featuring identity building in the Nordic countries at the beginning of the 19th century (Gurholt, 2016; Lundvall, 2011; Tordsson, 2002). One might question whether these specific kinds of outdoor activities are still important to pupil development, as the cultural and geographical contexts of outdoor education have been questioned internationally (Brookes,

2002; Lugg, 2004; Wattoo & Brown, 2011). International discussions about what kinds of outdoor teaching practices restrict or increase the pedagogic potential for pupils' outdoor development point to issues such as wilderness settings, equipment, technology and skills as requiring close consideration (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012; Beedie, 2000; Brookes, 2002; Brown, 2006; Brown & Fraser, 2009; Lugg, 2004; Michaels, Backman, & Lundvall, 2016; Thomas, 2005; Wattoo & Brown, 2011). In line with these discussions, this study highlights how teachers can experience conflicting pressures from outdoor traditions and contexts, pupil abilities and safety considerations, which are central to safe and inclusive outdoor teaching practises, in the years to come.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

Exploring how *friluftsliv* teachers reflect on their safety strategies related to pupils' outdoor abilities in the upper secondary 'Sport and Physical Education' programme provides an important insight into teacher reflections on pupil abilities today and how teachers handle different safety challenges. The teachers in this study evaluate their pupils as having less outdoor experience and skills, and a lack of outdoor equipment compared to their previous pupils. Through the present analysis, it is clear that teachers respond to safety challenges in two different ways. First, through a change in their teaching, adapting their methods to current pupil abilities; second, through excluding or accepting the self-exclusion of some pupils.

Based on the findings of this study, we argue that there is a need for a national discussion about the importance developing mountain-based winter excursions skills in upper secondary school 'Sport and Physical Education' programme and in school in general. By encouraging teachers to challenge their doxas of the necessity of teaching mountain-based winter excursions, and instead choosing less challenging and more locally based winter teaching

environments, it may be possible to promote teaching that is more inclusive and more relevant to today's pupils. However, if mountain based winter skills are considered as central in a national education perspective, it should then be supported by more teaching resources, which may prevent pupil exclusion or winter accident from occurring.

This study has drawn on general theories of safety and accident prevention in outdoor education as well as theories of socio-cultural perspectives related to inclusion, exclusion and adapted teaching. The present findings actualise a much-needed discussion of what kind of outdoor education we should offer in school, questioning the importance of the activity itself as well as asking who determines the activity. It invites a discussion on whether practices that align with national identity can be re-examined when they conflict with core educational expectations of inclusion.

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