

# **FRILUFTSLIV IN THE NORWEGIAN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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# FRILUFTSLIV IN THE NORWEGIAN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

**Based on a national survey focusing on teachers and an analysis of the new national curriculum, we present in this paper an overview of the situation for friluftsliv in the Norwegian lower secondary school after the implementation of the new curriculum, (Lk-06), the *Knowledge Promotion Act*.**

## INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 2006 the Lk-06 replaced the L-97 curriculum. The objectives, quality framework, and subject curricula for primary and secondary education and training are the main contents of Lk-06.

The importance of friluftsliv is emphasized in Lk-06, mainly as a part of physical education (PE). In the English translation of Lk-06 the government has translated friluftsliv into *outdoor life*. We have chosen not to follow their terminology here, but adhere to ‘friluftsliv’.

Friluftsliv is one of three main subject areas in PE in lower and upper secondary school.

Lk-06 has led to a greater emphasis on assessment and its role in education. All subject curricula include competence aims, specifications of learning outcomes expected of pupils at various levels. These specifications of aims form the overall basis for assessment. Assessment for learning, focusing on goal-related feedback from the teacher as well as self assessment is emphasized (Arnesen, Nilsen & Leirhaug, 2009). But how will friluftsliv in schools be influenced by an increased concern with the measurement of goal attainment and the documentation of the process? The traditional approach to friluftsliv has been one of serendipity, excitement, and a sense of wonder – rather than one of attention to competence aims. Have the intentions and goals in friluftsliv changed in any direction from L-97 to the present? Are teachers going to take account of the new curriculum, or are they going to remain loyal to tradition?

According to Tordsson (1994) a change of meaning occurs when a phenomenon that has been part of the population’s leisure becomes component of academia or of a national curriculum.

An issue raised by Tordsson (1994) is what happens to a *wild flower* like friluftsliv when it meets the culture and the specific interests of academic or pedagogical institutions. This is an important issue because it is unavoidable that friluftsliv will undergo a transformation as it leaves 'nature' and enters the corridors and classrooms to meet teachers with their ideologies, definitions, curricula, and examinations. The contexts are dramatically different; therefore we are no longer speaking of the same phenomenon, even though some of the same activities are performed. It is no longer done just for pleasure; friluftsliv becomes a way to save the world, to wipe out 2000 years of dualistic thought, to enhance team building, to promote personal growth, to develop aesthetic awareness, to generate rehabilitation, and to create a framework for interdisciplinary learning (Aadland, Arnesen & Nerland, 2007). What happens then to fun and play, silence, freedom, contemplation, excitement, and the personal encounter with nature?

Friluftsliv is not an unchangeable textbook; the term must be filled with action, meaning, and value with each interpretation of the new aims, contents, and pedagogical approaches determined by the curriculum. Lk-06 is succinct and requires local interpretations; therefore friluftsliv will differ from school to school depending on each school or teacher. The concise character of Lk-06 leaves more room for interpretation than did L-97, providing the professional teacher greater room to manoeuvre, but offering little help for teachers with lesser competence and experience. Consequently this opens up for large differences when it comes to the individual teacher's practice of friluftsliv in the school setting.

## **METHODS**

The present work is based on results of a national survey of teachers, Skolefagundersøkelsen 09 (Vavik, Arnesen et al. 2010), and an analysis of the competence aims for friluftsliv in Lk-06 compared to those of L-97. The survey was conducted during September and October, 2008 with some supplements in January, 2009. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 222 items.

The main objective of the survey was to map curriculum teachers' usage and evaluation of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the context of their own lower secondary classroom practices in their respective schools. However, some of the questions

were concerned with friluftsliv, and the responses to these provided the data for the present analysis.

From the total teacher population in lower secondary school a 10% sample was randomly selected from each province in Norway. Out of the 2,360 teachers in the sample, 1,022 responded, resulting in a response rate of 43 %. Of the respondents, 77 were PE teachers working at 49 different schools. All provinces were represented among the PE teachers.

In principle each teacher was free to decide which school subject to focus on. Some form of coordination may have taken place at some schools to ensure as wide a coverage of subjects as possible. The consequence of this is the likelihood that the teachers choosing PE are those who identify themselves as PE teachers. The PE sample may therefore not be representative as such, but is rather a selection of PE specialists. This is supported by the informants reporting having an average of one full year of specialized PE teacher training. That is considered well above the true average level of PE education of all teachers responsible for PE in the schools.

Since this is an online survey on ICT the possibility cannot be discounted that teachers with ICT competence and interest are overrepresented.

The statistical analyses have been carried out in SPSS.

## **RESULTS**

### **A comparison of aims and values**

The 'core curriculum' segment has not changed with the introduction of Lk-06; the same overarching ideals and values form the foundation for education. Here we find guidelines for developing the spiritual, creative, working, liberal-educated, socially and environmentally aware sides of young people, all leading to *the integrated human being*. Some components are obviously of greater interest than others in the context of friluftsliv, but all of them still lay the premises for how the subject curricula are to be interpreted. But will teachers comply with these ideas and terms when they are confronted with the demands of the subject curriculum with its competence aims and objective assessments? It is stated clearly in the advisory paper concerning changes in the national assessment guidelines now being considered by the

appropriate bodies, that the core curriculum importance in pupil assessment is reduced. These two facts combined might lead to a lesser emphasis on, e.g., ecological awareness compared to what matters in Lk-06; competences which can be counted and measured.

*The Quality Framework for Schools* is summarized in *The Learning Poster*, which contains a list of only eleven points stating obligations toward the pupils. None of them is of particular interest for friluftsliv, but what *The Learning Poster* replaces is important: The 30 page long so-called *bridge* in L-97, informed schools, among other things, on the extent to which they were expected to use different teaching methods such as problem based learning and theme organized learning. This is now up to the schools to decide, and the amount of time spent on these types of methods probably decreases as emphasis is shifted towards measurement and documentation. Friluftsliv has traditionally been oriented towards less quantitative, progressive pedagogical methods. These perspectives can be supported by the fact that the survey shows a 0.451 ( $p < .01$ ) correlation between time devoted to friluftsliv and time spent using theme based and interdisciplinary work.

*Subject Curriculum PE* has been slashed from ten to three pages and the numbers of competence aims has been reduced correspondingly. In lower secondary school the number of competence aims in friluftsliv has dropped from thirteen to three. It is beyond doubt that such a reduction has the potential to change friluftsliv, but in what direction?

Here are the actual objectives from the two curricula:

### ***L -97***

#### ***Grade 8 Outdoor adventure activities. Pupils should have the opportunity to***

- *acquire knowledge and experience of various ways of using the local environment.*
- *gain experience of excursions in open or snow-clad terrain, for instance hiking, bicycle trips, skiing, and skating trips*
- *learn life-saving techniques in the water.*
- *practise using clothes as aids to staying outside, and be able to carry out life-saving jumps, bringing ashore, lifts on land, heart compression, and full cardiopulmonary resuscitation.*

([http://www.udir.no/L97/L97\\_eng/physical/phy12.html](http://www.udir.no/L97/L97_eng/physical/phy12.html))

**Grade 9 Outdoor adventure activities. Pupils should have the opportunity to**

- *experience contact with and closeness to nature by planning and carrying out an overnight trip.*
- *develop understanding of how vulnerable and how strong nature is.*
- *learn to plot and follow a compass course and orient themselves outdoors with the help of a map.*

[http://www.udir.no/L97/L97\\_eng/physical/grade9.html](http://www.udir.no/L97/L97_eng/physical/grade9.html)

**Grade 10 Outdoor adventure activities. Pupils should have the opportunity to**

- *experience being outdoors during the winter.*
- *undergo exciting and challenging experiences.*
- *have aesthetic experiences.*
- *learn to assess terrain with a view to choosing safe routes, economising with their own strength, moving safely, and protecting the environment.*
- *learn about factors that can trigger snow avalanches and about life-saving in connection with snow avalanches.*
- *practice making emergency bivouacs and lean-tos and experience contact with and closeness to nature by planning and carrying out an overnight trip.*

[http://www.udir.no/L97/L97\\_eng/physical/grade10.html](http://www.udir.no/L97/L97_eng/physical/grade10.html)

## **Lk-06**

**Competence aims after Year 10 (covers 8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> grade) – Outdoor life.**

**The aims for the education are that the pupil shall be able to**

- *practise various forms of outdoor life in different natural environments.*
- *orient themselves using maps and a compass in varied terrain, and elaborate on other ways of getting their bearings.*
- *plan and carry out trips in different seasons, including staying the night outdoors.*

[http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte\\_lareplaner\\_for\\_Kunnskapsloftet/englis h/Physical\\_education\\_subject\\_curriculum.rtf](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloftet/englis h/Physical_education_subject_curriculum.rtf) )

As shown above the part of the new curriculum devoted to the subject is minimized, focusing on concrete goals where goal attainment can be measured. The severe cut in the subject curriculum for friluftsliv shows that Lk-06 focuses on skills and measurable goal achievement, but the number of skills has been strikingly reduced and the standards have been lowered. Aims connected to the aesthetical dimension which we find in the L-97 cannot be found in the Lk-06 and the same is true for aims connected to the experience of nature. This

shows that Lk-06 has reduced the content and changed the values of friluftsliv in a technical direction.

The same principle of specifying objectives while limiting the overall scope can be seen in all the subject-specific parts of the curriculum, thus facilitating the measurement of achievement. Considering the traditional emphasis on qualitative dimensions in subjects in general and in friluftsliv in particular, the new plan constitutes a change of direction towards quantifiable abilities, leaving the aesthetic appreciation of features of nature, social learning, and interdisciplinary understanding in the background.

**Friluftsliv following Lk-06: Results from the survey**

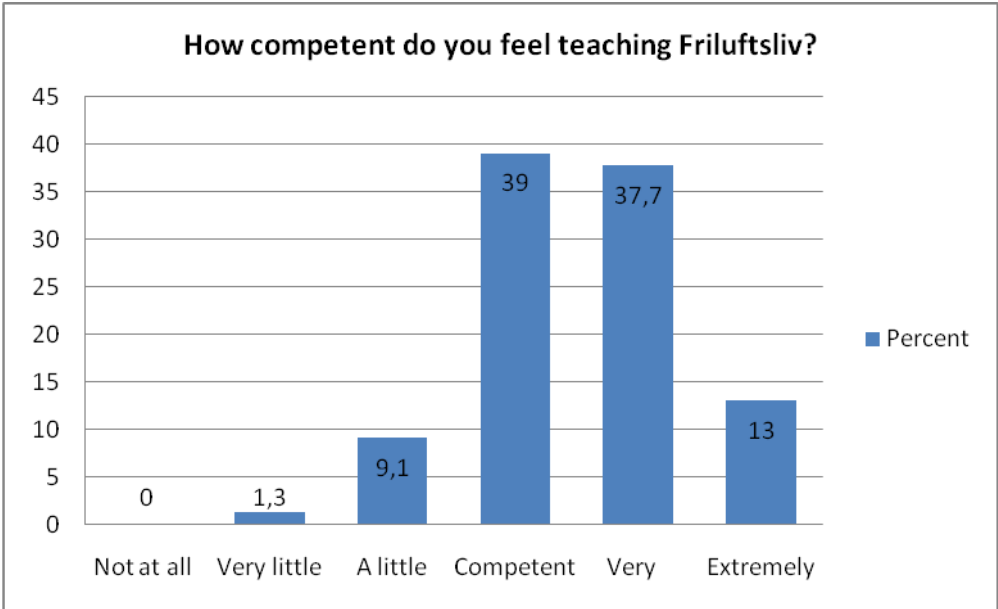


Figure 1: Self perceived friluftsliv competence.

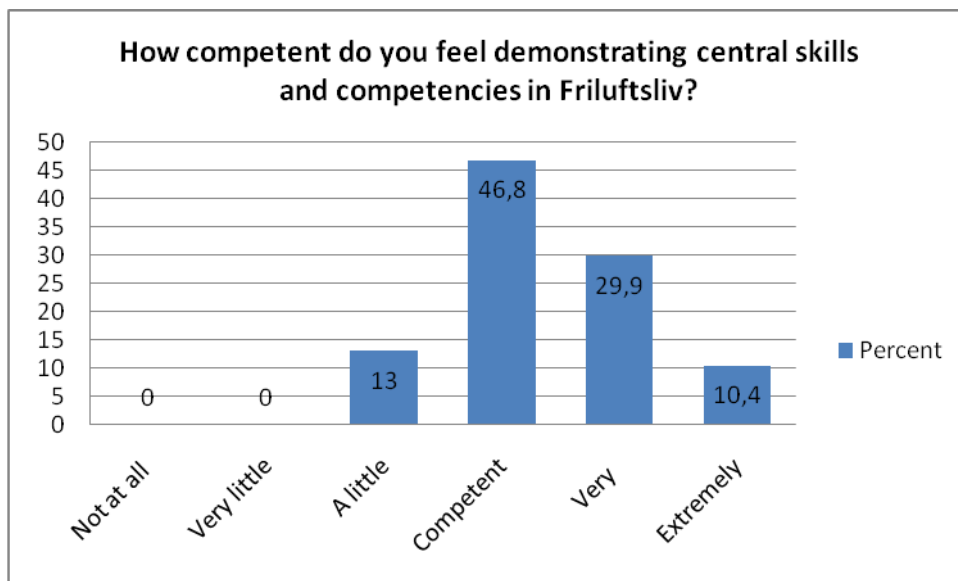


Figure 2: Reported competence demonstrating central skills and competencies in friluftsliv.

The majority of teachers in PE feel that they are highly competent to teach friluftsliv (Fig.1). They also state that they have strong competence in demonstrating central skills in this subject (Fig.2). One explanation of this high competence among PE-teachers teaching friluftsliv is that many of them participate in friluftsliv in their leisure time (81.9% Fig.3). However, many (64.4% Fig.4) also feel that they have medium to very large needs for supplementary training in teaching friluftsliv.

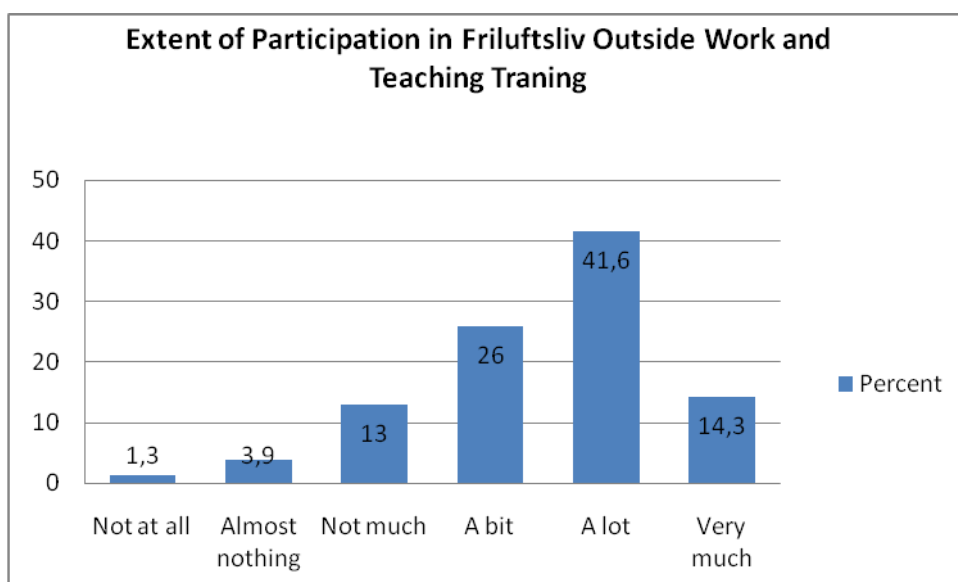


Figure 3: Reported participation in friluftsliv during leisure time.



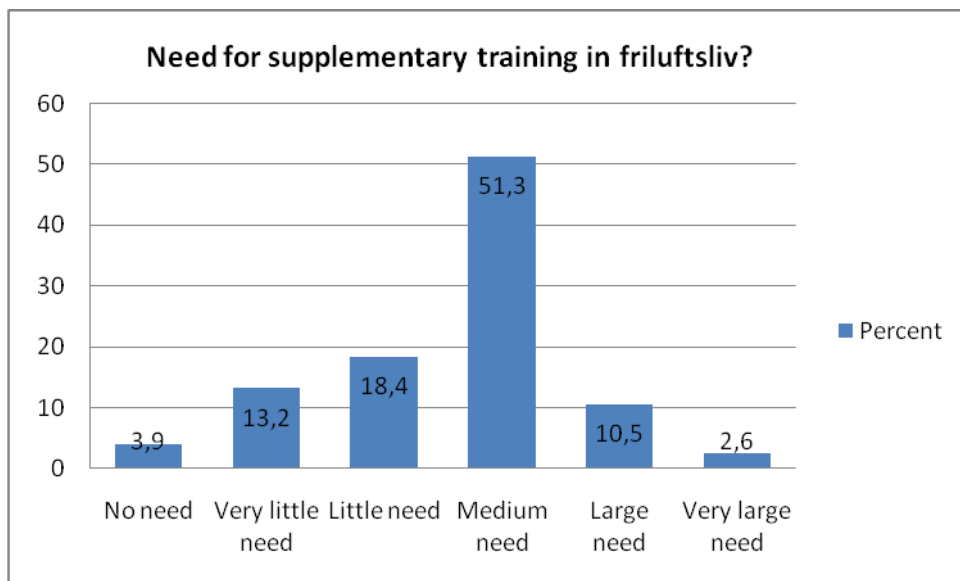


Figure 4: Reported need for supplementary training in friluftsliv.

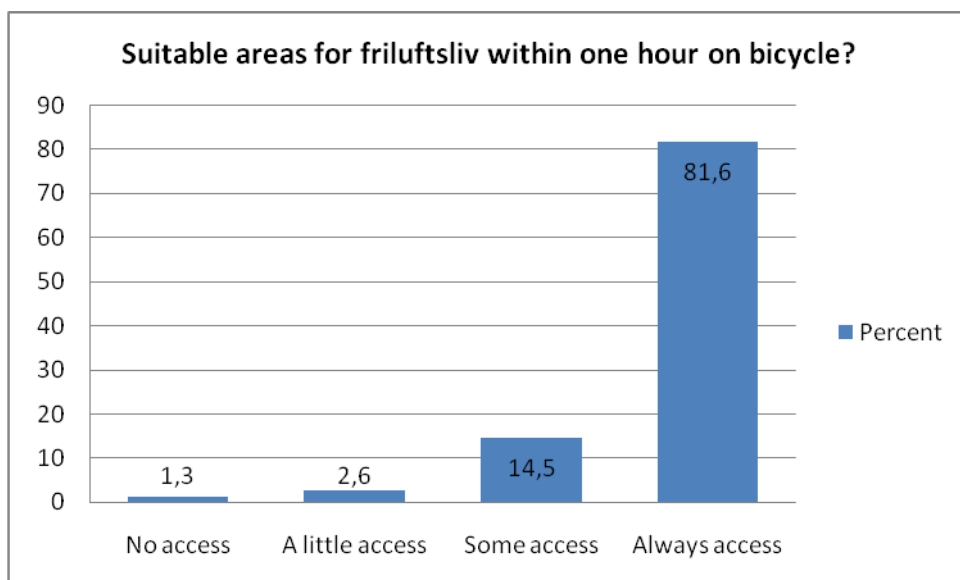


Figure 5: Reachable areas for friluftsliv within one hour on bicycle.

Norwegian teachers report having good access to suitable areas for teaching friluftsliv. As many as 81.6% (Fig.5) report they can reach suitable areas for friluftsliv activities within one hour on bicycle. Viewing the amount of time spent on this main subject area in PE shows that 63.1% of the teachers spend as little as 0-4 class hours on friluftsliv, 23.3% spend from 5-9 hours, and just 13.7% spend more than 10 hours on friluftsliv during a year (Fig.6)

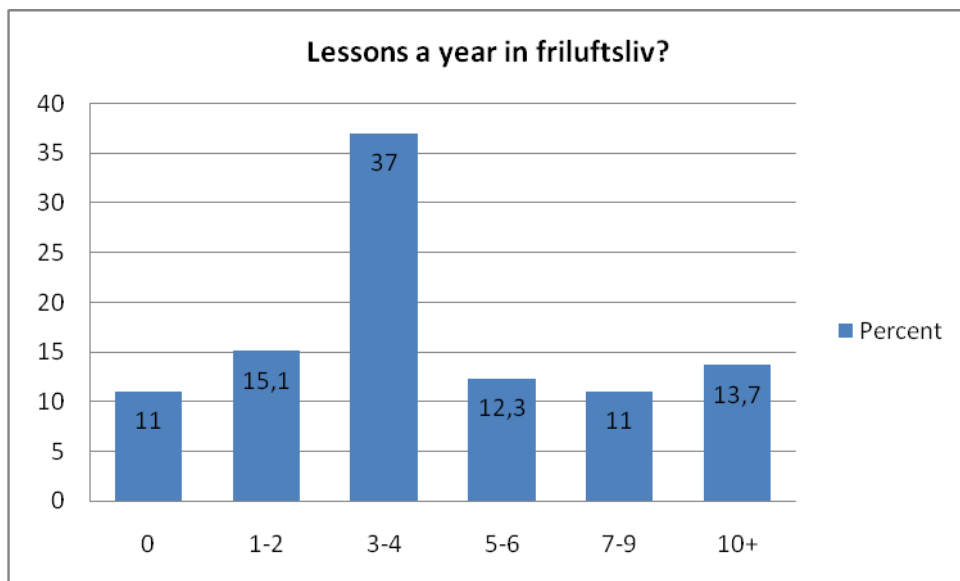


Figure 6: Friluftsliv lessons taught during a year.



Figure 7: Overnight trips in friluftsliv.

Despite a clear competence aim after grade 10 in friluftsliv stating that the pupil shall be able to conduct overnight trips in different seasons (Lk-06), only 53.4% of the teachers take their pupils on outdoor trips that include staying overnight (Fig.7).

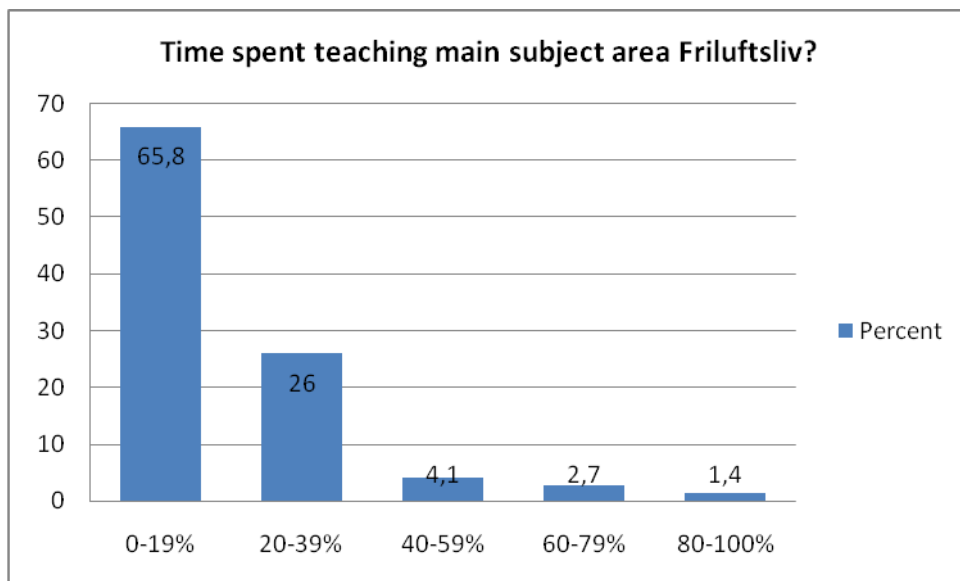


Figure 8: Time spent teaching main subject area Friluftsliv?

Figure 8 shows that 91.8% of the teachers spend less than 40% of their teaching time in the PE main subject area of Friluftsliv. In comparison, 83.7% report spending more than 40% of their teaching time in the main subject area of Sport (Fig.9).

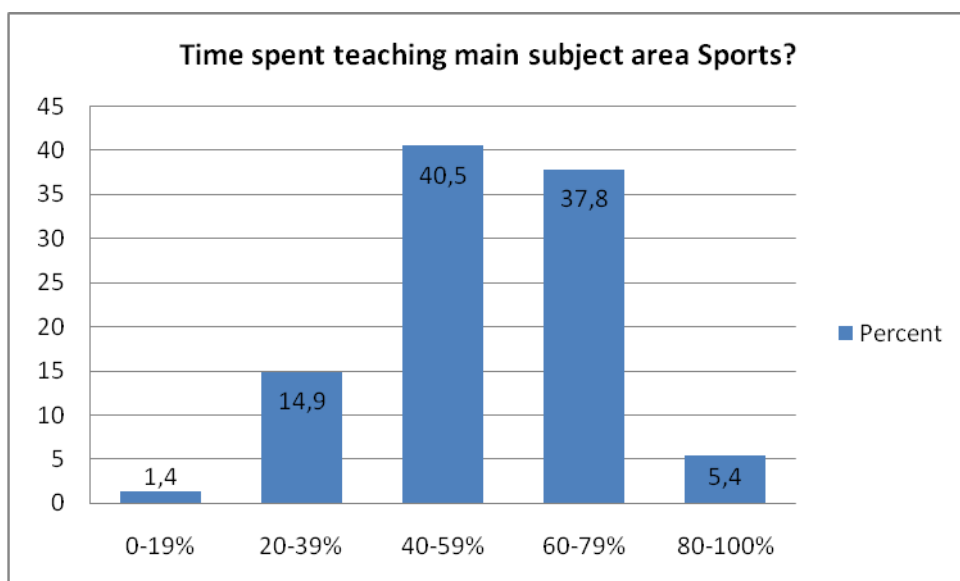


Figure 9: Time spent teaching main subject area Sports?

## DISCUSSION

Over 80% of the teachers report that they have suitable areas nearby their school and high competence and skills to teach friluftsliv. So why do they not they spend more time teaching this main subject area? Part of the answer to this question may be found by viewing the

amount of time spent teaching the other two main subject areas in PE: Sports & Dance and Activity & Lifestyle. The analysis of the data from the survey appears to indicate that though teachers spend few lessons on friluftsliv subjects, they devote many lessons to sports subjects – an indication that teachers do not pay much attention to the subject curriculum for friluftsliv in PE. As a result pupils are not given the opportunity to reach the competence-aims in friluftsliv after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Evaluation of the previous national curriculum from 1997 (L- 97)**

Examining the evaluation of PE after L-97 shows similar tendencies for friluftsliv as found in our survey. That evaluation (Jacobsen et al., 2002) showed that friluftsliv had a clearer place and a more binding form in PE. However, other factors such as the teachers' subjective interpretation of the subject, their experience, the physical framework of teaching, and equipment factors were more important for actual lesson practices than was the national curriculum. The inquiry also showed that PE teachers preferred traditional sports to more pedagogically oriented aims, and that nature experiences had low priority. The PE teachers with the highest degrees valued sports higher than PE teachers with lesser education. According to Jacobsen et al., the possibility should not be discounted that the teachers' own education may function as a *hidden subject curriculum*.

### **One step forward or two steps back?**

There is no doubt that friluftsliv is strongly emphasized for PE both in the L-97 and in the Lk-06 national curricula. Our survey showed that some structural factors are favorable for friluftsliv, since suitable areas can be reached within an hour on bicycle, and the teachers also feel they are competent and have adequate skills to teach this subject. Even though these factors are favourable, few teach friluftsliv in physical education. One of the reasons for this failure to reach the competence aims after grade 10 in this main subject area is that teachers seem to favour various sports activities and use most of their PE lessons on such endeavors (Fig. 9). It is not an easy task to change this disposition amongst PE teachers since the evaluation from L-97 showed that it was the best educated PE teachers who tended to down-rank friluftsliv and teach it the least.

## **Final thoughts**

The fact that few teachers offer friluftsliv, along with the reduced content and change of values in the national curriculum for friluftsliv, indicates that greater attention should be devoted to the nature context of PE teacher education in order to address a growing deficiency in this area.

Teacher education needs to address the fact that the ideas of the core segments of the curriculum are valued above the competence aims, influencing the work done in Norwegian schools. Dealing with this issue might reduce the impact of the instrumental direction of friluftsliv within Lk-06. Future qualitative studies should investigate the consequences of this dimension of the Lk-06.

Another challenge within teacher education is to spend more time in the outdoors, giving the students good professional models that can be implemented in the reality that they meet as teachers. However, this is not sufficient to alter the inferior position friluftsliv holds in PE. The whole scope of the PE curriculum needs to be taken seriously, not only sports, in order to improve the current imbalance between the national curriculum and what actually is happening in the schools. This is a responsibility of teachers, principals, and the Norwegian Ministry of Education. We speculate that an important issue that needs to be addressed is to change how schools organize their days, weeks, terms, and years. Lack of flexibility might be a major reason why many teachers do not teach friluftsliv.

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