



Abstract

Northern Scholars lecture

Professor Birger Løvlie,

Date of lecture: 17 January 2008

Venue: Faculty Room South, David Hume Tower, George Square

Lecture Title: “*Norwegians Studying Education in Nineteenth Century Scotland*”

After 400 years under Denmark, Norway got its own constitution in 1814. The rest of the century is understood as a process of building a nation. Among all that needed to be improved was the school system. The elementary school had been formed at the time of pietism, mainly to secure an ability to read and write as a preparation for confirmation. Higher education was an option only for children of the most wealthy, and based on the latin tradition.

In 1853, a man who became the most influential person in the history of schools in Norway, Ole Hartvig Nissen, was granted a scholarship from the government that made it possible for him to go to Scotland to study the school system. When he came home, he wrote a long report about his studies, a report that was followed up by laws that reformed the schools substantially.

Some years later we can see other pioneers in teacher education, men like Asbjorn Knutsen and Henrik Kaarstad travelling to Scotland for the same reason. Coming back to Norway, they tried in different ways to improve the education of teachers for the elementary schools according to what they had observed on their journeys.

All these men were closely connected to church life in Norway, but unlike much of the clergy they were political liberals and they saw a need for a more secular school in that sense that the school should be less controlled by the clergy. Coming to Scotland they observed another country where the churches were deeply involved in education, but with a much broader perspective on learning. Coming from a land with an official religion, they could also study how a free church involved herself in education for all.

Both elementary and higher education underwent several reforms during the last part of the 1800s. My lecture will be an attempt to show how and to what extent these changes were results of Scottish studies. One question to be discussed is whether it was easier to implement a basic education for all in Norway than in Scotland because of the more egalitarian culture in Norway.