

Abstract:

Title: Out of Sync?

Folk High Schools in a changing field

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Folk high schools have often been out of synchronisation: both behind the times and as pioneers, and always eager to keep up with their unique identity. There have been variations over time and simultaneously. Folk high schools are diverse. Folk high schools are economically vulnerable and dependent on external funding. Reduced governmental subsidies and new forms of governance introduced in the 1990s have challenged the institutionalized ways to consider and to run the Folk high schools. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate changes in institutional logic and identities over time.

As the title of this thesis, Folk High Schools in a changing field, suggests, one of the key concepts of the discussion is organizational fields. Organizational fields are perceived as organizations with common structures and aims, operating in a nonlocal environment, kept together by a common meaning system and the conviction that they need each other. The concept of organizational fields is one of the fundamental ideas developed within new institutionalism in organization theory. New institutionalism's focus has shifted from the individual organization to interaction between organizations and the environment. An organizational field is kept together by cultural frames or patterns of meaning. By employing the concept of organizational field as a tool it has been possible to analyze how the ideas and identities of folk high schools are constructed.

The results show that a comprehensive diversification of folk high schools has taken place. The schools have differentiated themselves over time and from each other in terms of their activities and owners. Their relations to the environment are increasingly based on business commissions. The results also show that the school's activities are increasingly short term focused and quickly carried out. This leads to new and more temporary relations. In the long term, this challenges the common meaning system and the very idea about folk high schools' uniqueness.