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# Interpretations of Patterns and Actors in the Lapp Fund Documents

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The “Lapp Fund” (“Finnefondet” in Norwegian) was one of the main economic instruments in the norwegianization policy implemented by the Norwegian state towards the Sámi and Finnish speaking population in Norway (Dahl, 1957. Eriksen & Niemi, 1981, Minde, 2003). It was established as an extra grant in the state budget in 1851. After 1921 the budget post was given a more anonymous name, but it was operative up to the 1950s (Eriksen & Niemi, p. 48-61. Dahl, p. 124-125.). The Lapp Fund’s formal purpose was to strengthen the educational system, and especially the teaching of Norwegian language, in Sámi and Finnish areas of Northern Norway. Among the measures that were financed by the Fund were building of schools, among them 49 boarding schools (from 1905 and onwards), houses for the teachers, roads to the schools, printing of schoolbooks, often with double Sámi-Norwegian or Finnish-Norwegian texts, religious books in Sámi or Finnish, poor relief for parents and children, payment for boarding and lodging for families housing pupils, scholarships for both pupils and teachers and what has been most common known, extra payment for teachers who worked in areas with a mixed ethnic population (Finns-Sámi-Norwegians) (Dahl 1957, Eriksen & Niemi, 1981).

Over the years the norwegianization policy came to affect all parts of the society, from the individual to state level in sectors like schooling, health care, agricultural policy and foreign policy. Eriksen & Niemi (1981) defined this as a policy of assimilation where “the state and the majority population tries, by using the institutions of the state, to diminish the feeling of identity and unity of the minority” (p. 24, my transl.). The policy was implemented through different methods, some of them encouraging and supporting, like extra wages to teachers and the printing of double-texted schoolbooks and religious books (Tvete 1955). Other measures were more negative and were forced on the Sámi and Finns, many of them presented in a succession of school instructions between 1862 and 1899. Eriksen & Niemi (1981) characterize the instructions, together with the Lapp Fund, as “the most important formal instrument for the norwegianization in the schools”(p. 49, my transl.). The instructions were printed decrees that stated in detail how the norwegianization policy was to be carried out by the teachers in the classrooms, and it was distributed to every teacher and leaders of the school boards in Finnmark. The first decree came in 1862 and was rather liberal, it gave openings for the teacher themselves to decide to which extent they wanted to use Sámi-, Finnish- and Norwegian language in the classroom. But in 1880 a more restrictive instruction was launched. Helge Dahl (1957) says

The instruction of 1880 laid the ground for the norwegianization endeavour for decades. It deserves to be called the Magna charta of the norwegianization period” (243, my transl.).

The 1880-instructions stated where and under which conditions children were allowed to talk Sámi and/or Finnish in the schools and what kind of teaching methods the teachers should use to promote norwegianization. The instructions also regulated the use of double-texted books and the use of Sámi/Finnish religious books in the schools, like the bible, catechism, collection of sermons, Luther's writings etc.

In this article I will discuss the challenges researchers face when studying the Lapp Fund documents in the archives: How can these documents be read and interpreted today? What is the relationship between first-hand archival studies of the Lapp Fund documents and secondary sources? The amount of recorded documents dealing with the norwegianization policy and the Lapp Fund is enormous, split up in various private, local, municipal, regional, governmental and official state archives. The archival documents exist in many different forms: private and official letters, instructions, architectural drawings, accounting books, pamphlets, decrees, religious books, pictures, etc. During the long period that the Lapp Fund was in function the archival technology and systems underwent a profound change. From the beginning hand-written documents were probably stored in flat files, which made retrieval a laborious process (Yates, p. 34). From around 1900, the typewriter, duplicators and flat files came into use, we got a focus on scientific management and taylorism, and new technology made retrieval in the archival systems more efficient (Yates, p. 39). No research has been done on how the technological development in information systems has affected the Lapp Fund, and how the archival documents could be interpreted in relation to this change.

### **The Lapp Fund in Scholarly Literature**

When referring to the norwegianization policy in general, and the Lapp Fund in particular, scholars in Norway tend to fall back on two standard academic works: Helge Dahl (1957) "Skolestell og språkpolitikk i Finnmark 1814 – 1905" ("Educational- and language policy in Finnmark 1814-1905", my transl.) and Niemi and Eriksen (1981) "Den Finske fare – sikkerhetsproblemer og minoritetspolitikk i nord 1870-1940" (The Finnish menace. Boundary problems and minority policy in the North 1870-1940). The last one discusses how norwegianization of the Finns and Sámi were a part of Norway's foreign policy in the north. The state authorities feared that especially the Finns, and to some degree the Sámi, should associate themselves too closely with Finland. To "make" them "Norwegian" was seen as one solution to this problem. The work by Helge Dahl is a thorough archival study of the whole period from 1720-1905 with a focus on the educational sector. Both books are impressive works and Dahl's book is a tour de force that no researcher in this field can let unnoticed. Maybe that is why these books have become so frequently used as secondary sources on the subject. In addition to these two works, one other must be mentioned: Baard Tvette (1955) "Skolebøker for samebarn i Norge fra

Thomas von Westen til i dag” (“Schoolbooks for Sámi children from the period of Thomas von Westen until today, my transl.). Tvette’s book is a ”hovedoppgave” which in the Norwegian academic system can be scaled between a PhD and a master thesis. Tvette had been a priest in Lebesby between 1935 - 1948, a municipality with a mixed ethnical population, and later he worked as a teacher in Finnmark (Lund 2009). He places a special emphasis on the production of schoolbooks and religious books, many of them in Sámi, Finnish or with double texts (Norwegian – Sámi or Finnish), and explores how these books were used in the schools (Tvette, 1955). He shows how doubled texted books allowed the teachers to use ”the foreign languages”, as they often were called in official documents, to a larger degree than what was intended by the authorities. The printing and use of these books diminished through the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect his work is more detailed than Dahl’s, and an important secondary source for book historians, educational researchers, documentalists and others who want to study this period. Since Tvette’s work never was published, it is not much known or cited. Dahl’s and Eriksen & Niemi’s more academic works were to become the standard work on the norwegianization period and Lapp Fund, while Tvette’s text, a combination of deep empirical thoroughness and personal engagement, only was read by a few who knew about him and his work. No comprehensive works have been written on the Lapp Fund after these. A search on the word “finnefondet” (“the Lapp Fund”) at the university libraries search page gives 6 hits. The Lapp Fund has been discussed in many minor works on the norwegianization policy, but Dahl and Eriksen & Niemi are still the standard reference works on the subject. Henry Minde (2003), professor in Sámi history at the University of Tromsø, has from the 1980s and onward published a succession of articles on the subject of norwegianization. His words confirm this observation:

My account of the Norwegian policy in respect of the Sámi in the years 1850/1940 will be based largely on Eriksen and Niemi’s book, but will, to a certain extent, be supplemented and modified with subsequent historical research (p. 124).

Minde points to the fact that few in depth monographs has been written about the consequences for the children in the norwegianization processes in the schooling system, although the general processes of norwegianization was described by anthropologists and educational researchers in the 1960s and 1970s. (Eidheim, 1970, Hoëm, 1976, Paine, 1965.)

The social anthropological paradigm on the norwegianization has not resulted in any comprehensive monograph of the consequences of the assimilation process. This is probably an indication of how complex and taboo-ridden the subject is, at any rate among the most exposed

groups, those who underwent the most painful experiences (Minde, 2003, p.125).

This may partly explain why the Lapp Fund has not been the focus of a complete and thorough study yet. But Minde, unintentionally, presents us with an illustration of the problematic status of the research concerning the Lapp Fund, when he discusses the consequences of the school instruction of 1880. The instruction gave detailed directives on how the language policy towards the Sámi and Finnish pupils was to be carried through in the classrooms: pedagogical methods, what books to use, how to meet the pupils that could not understand Norwegian, the desirable attitudes of the teachers towards norwegianization, etc. (Dahl, 1955, p. 115-116). Minde (1983) concludes that the instruction

Stated that all Sámi and Kven children were to learn to speak, read and write Norwegian, while all previous clauses saying that the children were to learn their native tongue were repealed. Teachers who were unable to demonstrate good results in this linguistic recodification process or “change of language”, as it was called, were not given a wage increase ( p. 127-128).

Minde here confirms a belief that has coloured the public debate and popular literature about the Lapp Fund, that some teachers were denied money from the Lapp Fund while others were rewarded for their effort to learn their pupils Norwegian. My research on the Lapp Fund for the period 1901-1904 shows that of 110 applicants everyone is given the wage increase (Grenersen N.d.). This observation finds support in Dahl (1955) who confirms that the Lapp Fund from the very beginning was regarded as a general wage increase for the teachers that had served in special districts for a period of 5 (later 2) years (Dahl, p.125).

An important part of the norwegianization effort was also the extra wage from the Lapp Fund for teachers who worked in the transitional districts.. The provision concerning this in the resolution of January 25. 1853 was so generally shaped that the teachers correctly could perceive this as (...) having a fair claim on a yearly extra wage (...). (Dahl, p. 124. My translation).

“Transitional districts” were areas pointed out by the government as districts where the norwegianization policy had best chances of success. Later a succession of instructions (1862, 1870, 1880, 1899) drew up the limits and aspirations of the norwegianization policy, but none of them stated that the Lapp Fund was meant to be used as an extra incentive on the level of the individual teacher (Dahl, p. 262 – 266). But following the instruction of 1880 the office of the regional director of schools for Troms and Finnmark sent a

circular letter to the priests in the chosen districts and emphasized that the “spirit and intentions” of the instruction must be followed, and that the teachers, if they were to be granted extra wage, had to attach a detailed statement describing how the instructions were fulfilled (Dahl, p. 244). Written statements from the teachers seems to be a general requirement from 1882 and onwards. The intention in the circular letter was probably never followed up, maybe with some few exceptions (Eriksen & Niemi, p. 51-52 ). But a hypothesis can be that this letter of intent contributed to the prevailing view that economic support from the Lapp Fund as a rule was given only to teachers that followed the “spirit and intention” of the instructions. A comprehensive research of the period from 1880 to 1900 is needed in order to give an informed answer to this question. One other work on the norwegianization policy must be mentioned. Kaisa Maliniemi (2009) has studied correspondences within the local municipal administrations in archives in two North-Norwegian multicultural municipalities (Nordreisa in the county of Troms and Kistrand in the county of Finnmark) in the period 1867-1911. She found altogether 360 documents in Sámi or Finnish languages (Maliniemi, 2009, p. 15-16). Since no archivist had written or reported about this before she was very suprised. In her own words

Before beginning the archival work, I had assumed that finding any documents written in minority languages would be an important achievement. After just 2 months, I would hold an amazing cultural treasure in my hands: over 240 documents in the Kven language and 120 in the Sámi language dating from the period 1860–1910. Since I was not the first person to go through these files, I could not understand why the existence of this treasure was unknown to the public. How was it possible that the researchers using these records, and the archival professionals processing and describing them, had overlooked these materials? (Maliniemi 2009, p. 15-16)

Maliniemi concludes that documents concerning minorities are overlooked, and thus silenced, in Norwegian archives from Sámi and Finnish municipalities. She asks for research using new theories and models, because “[e]ven though many researchers today are critical of ethnocentric representations of minorities, many still use old scientific literature as a source” (p. 25). We need to go through the archives once again, look at the old documents through the lens of new scientific methods and reinterpret them in a perspective that lets the minorities’ own voices be heard. The norwegianization policy was not exercised on a passive Sámi and Finnish population, it was a situation of political struggle between an oppressive state regime and a population that mobilised and fought back with the means they found proper.

## **Reviewing the Lapp Fund Documents**

In my current research on the Lapp Fund archives I have looked into the teachers' applications for extra wage from the Lapp Fund for the period autumn 1901 – spring 1904, 110 applications altogether (Regional State Archives in Tromsø). The applications for 1901-1903 are individual and hand-written, while in 1904 the school director introduced pre-printed standardized forms with columns for teachers names and the municipality s/he is employed in. The terms for being permitted financial support from the Lapp Fund are stated as such: Permanent employment in the chosen districts / At least five years of service in the district<sup>1</sup> / Teaching in upper division (“storskolen”) or lower and upper division together. In a horizontal column these categories are assembled: Born/time of duty/place of work/ what school district/what school division/how many weeks in each division/children's language/remarks. The column “remarks” gives some space for the teachers' personal comments on their work, but not much compared with the unlimited space when writing personal applications by hand. In the material I have looked through, these hand-written letters could vary from a couple of sentences with no arguments of their efforts to teach their pupils Norwegian, to letters with two compact pages of arguments and attachments with detailed marks about the pupils achievements in Norwegian. There is no research on the Lapp Fund where the standardization of the application from 1904 is discussed. The questions that need to be asked is why the application forms were printed and standardized and why everybody seeking money from the Lapp Fund during this period got their applications granted?

Part of the answer might be found by a closer look at the role of the energetic regional director of education for Finnmark County, Bernt Thomassen (director 1901 – 1921). His role as a central actor in the norwegianization policy is much debated among scholars (Dahl, p. 319-328, Eriksen & Niemi, p. 58-61, 113-125, Grenersen, 2011, Tvette, p. 225-239, Zachariassen, p. 36-46, 93-114). Thomassen was a very skilled bureaucrat. He had been a leader of the Board planning a new public library in Trondheim (Norway's second largest city) in 1901, and we can assume he knew about Dewey and scientific classification and efficient management. Through the standardization of the applications he probably wanted to make the document circulation connected to the Lapp Fund more efficient. A hypothesis can be that by using the Lapp Fund to increase the wages for all teachers he tried to create a collective spirit, a corps d'esprit, among the teachers, and subdue critical voices to the norwegianization policy. Thomassen knew, from his predecessors and from his own communication with the teachers, that the attitude towards the norwegianization policy varied both among the teachers and parents (Dahl, p. 225; Tvette, p. 225 – 226). He engaged himself in public debates about the norwegianization policy and the Lapp Fund, and the most known among these

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<sup>1</sup> Number of years demanded in service varied over the years.

are a heated debate in “Norsk Skoletidene” (The Norwegian School Gazette) with Isak Saba during the winter 1906-1907 (Greneresen, 2011, Zachariassen, p. 90-96). Isak Saba was a Sámi teacher in Finnmark, and in the public debate he and a group of other politically engaged Sámi, attacked the norwegianization policy for denying Sámi children education in their own mother tongue. In 1906 he became the first Sámi to be elected to the Norwegian Parliament, his stand in the norwegianization debate probably won him many Sámi votes (Zachariassen, p. 47-80, Eriksen & Niemi, p. 115). Thomassen, and others, experienced that there was an official Sámi opposition to the norwegianization policy and that this opposition now had its spokesman and some support in the Norwegian Parliament (Eriksen & Niemi, p. 115, Zachariassen, p. 102). The Sámi paper *Sagai Muittalægje* was established in 1904 and published articles with a critical view on the norwegianization policy, and we know that Thomassen was very aware of political articles on the schooling policy written in this paper (Zachariassen, p. 59-63). My hypothesis is that Thomassen saw the problematic situation that could occur if the teachers got too divided on the question of norwegianization. In 1904, as a main speaker at the first teacher union meeting in Finnmark, Thomassen first criticizes the way the norwegianization policy was carried through, but then declares that the poor results do not come from lack of will from the teachers, but from insufficient wages. In order to increase the wages he wants to close down “fripllassordningen” ( “The free tuition system”, my transl.) at Tromsø teaching college. This free tuition system had for decades supported teachers economically on the premise that they obliged themselves to work in Finnmark for a defined period. Although most of the students gaining access to the “fripllassordningen” were Norwegians, it had also been a road for Sámi and Finnish born youth to educate themselves to teachers. (Zachariassen, p. 88-89). Through all these years School director Thomassen and his predecessors suspected that Sámi- and Finnish born teachers (there were fewer of the latter) did not have the right “national disposition” and that they in reality used their mother tongue in the class rooms to a larger degree than what the instruction permitted.

Thomassen, and maybe also his predecessors, understood that they would run into too much trouble if they treated the teachers individually, denying some the wage increase while others were paid well off. It could have split the teachers in two oppositional camps and the opponents might have strengthened their position vis-à-vis the authorities. Instead Thomassen worked out from a principle he himself formulated as “steady forward, without haste, but also without hesitation” (Eriksen & Niemi, p. 59). Eriksen & Niemi says about Thomassen that “there can be no doubt about his social consciousness in his work with school issues” (p. 114). The modernization of the schools in Finnmark was his life project, but he also shared the predominant view among the political and administrative elite that Sámi

culture and language was doomed and that it would melt into the Norwegian culture over a few decades.

### Conclusions and Future Study

The norwegianization policy in general, and the Lapp Fund in particular, is in need of new research. The classical works of Dahl and Niemi & Eriksen need to be supplemented through research that looks at the norwegianization and Lapp Fund archives with new methodological lenses. I share Kaisa Maliniemi's (2009) view that the Sámi and Finnish ("Kven") minorities (who often was the majority in the local municipality) are portrayed as too passive and as victims of a national and regional policy, and that their struggle for political power has been silenced. My own research of the Lapp Fund documents shows that new layers of meaning can be uncovered when the documents are read more closely. It is also important to analyse the documents left by those in charge of the norwegianization policy. Bernt Thomassen has been described as efficient policy maker through his position as school director for twenty years. A reading of his letters, correspondence and the photos he took of the newly built schools show a multifaceted and ambivalent person occupied with the modernization of the schools of Finnmark. Maybe his motivation was modernization rather than norwegianization? We need new perspectives on how these documents can be interpreted.

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