

1 **Reimagining Emancipation in Norwegian Naval**
2 **Leadership Education and Practice —**
3 **A Reflective Practice Approach**
4

5 *Naval leadership education at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy (RNA) has*
6 *changed significantly over the past decades. In this paper, I examine some*
7 *personal experiential phenomena from a military perspective and possible*
8 *notions of, or differences in Norwegian naval leadership education past and*
9 *present. Firstly, the article relies mainly on the Brazilian educator and*
10 *philosopher Paulo Freire’s authorship as a basis for original and critical*
11 *reflections. Reflective practitioners use this process to modify and enhance their*
12 *understanding of professional practice. My initial approach in this article is*
13 *based on the reflective practice research method. “Which contributes to*
14 *educators’ professional development and personal growth”. But knowledge of*
15 *reflective methods alone is not sufficient. This article therefore also includes*
16 *results from a survey conducted at RNA. Thus, I have applied mixed methods.*
17 *There seems to be scarce research concerning Norwegian cadets’ subjective*
18 *perception of recent naval leadership education. Therefore, this paper may*
19 *shed new light on this leadership education from both learners and educators’*
20 *perspectives. It may also have relevance for civilian educators.*

21
22 **Keywords:** *Formation, higher education, liberation, military leadership,*
23 *oppression.*

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26 **Introduction**
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28 The purpose and goals of this paper is firstly to reflect on personal
29 educational experiences. Also, it aims to explore educational practice with
30 examples from a Norwegian naval military leadership educational perspective. As
31 I explore this, I refer to Gloria Jean Watkins aka bell Hooks (2010). She claims
32 that “learning requires openness and willingness to engage with new possibilities”
33 (p. 187). My own learning experiences have raised several questions in me. What
34 can I say about learning in a military leadership educational setting? Is it, for
35 example, stuck in former practice? Is it oppressive or liberating? I will therefore
36 firstly revisit my own leadership learning and education through critical pedagogic
37 lenses by engaging with Paulo Freire’s works (2000, 2005).

38 Thereafter, I will explore and discuss possible notions of, or differences in
39 Norwegian naval leadership education then and now. The latter has been
40 conducted by distributing an electronic questionnaire at the Royal Norwegian
41 Naval Academy (RNA). Thus, I have applied mixed methods (e.g., Wheeldon,
42 2010). Mixed methods is still developing and will do so for years to come
43 (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The mixed methods approach “can produce more
44 robust measures of association while explicitly valuing the depth of research
45 participants’ experiences, perspectives, and histories” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.
46 3).

1 Higher naval leadership education in Norway has changed significantly over
2 the past decades (Terjesen & Gjelsten, 2017. Author's translation). Akbari (2007)
3 suggests that reflective teaching will make teachers question clichés that they have
4 learned during their formative years and will also enable them to develop a more
5 informed practice. Reflective practice is a process of systematic awareness to self-
6 analyse and self-assess own practice in order to design new strategies that can
7 enhance teaching (Habib, 2017). As Norwegian commissioned naval officers are
8 also teachers for younger officers and NCOs,¹ this also applies to them. Probably
9 also for teachers in civilian higher educational institutions.

10 My experiences in naval leadership education began in 1982 and thus barely
11 preceded the arrival of Schön's (1983) explicit naming of "the reflective
12 practitioner" as a goal for education in the professions. Kolb (1984) draws
13 attention to the fact that when we want to learn from something that has already
14 happened to us, we need to recall our observations of the event and then reflect on
15 those observations in some way. Kolb suggests that we frame some action as a
16 result and that this possible course of action is seen as our 'learning'. This will
17 then inform any action we take resulting from the experience. Through this, I may
18 come to a deeper understanding of specific experiential phenomena I have
19 encountered.

20 Freire (2005) states: "Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the
21 oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not
22 gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through
23 their recognition of the necessity to fight for it" (p. 45). With this introduction, I
24 will reflect on some personal experiential phenomena as a commissioned military
25 officer, educator, supervisor, and leader by the concept of reflective practice
26 research (e.g., Habib, 2017; Lindseth, 2020). It is not my intention to either
27 challenge or question Freire but rather to have a dialogue with him. Applied
28 research, practically founded, is normal science, research which is based on the
29 prevailing paradigm without threatening it (Freely after Kuhn. In: Lindseth, 2020
30 p. 77).

31 However, there is one particular incident that deserves attention. In 1986, the
32 Vassdalen disaster happened, where 16 drafted soldiers were killed in an
33 avalanche. At that time, leadership in the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) was
34 mostly order-based. To put it somewhat extremely, you were to follow orders and
35 not question them. This changed dramatically after this tragic disaster (e.g., NOU
36 1986:20; 1991:19). Luckily, one might say, the disaster spawned a wide-ranging
37 debate. The debate eventually resulted in what is called the reform of the
38 Norwegian military leadership, which addressed the organizational structure of the
39 military, its organizational culture, procedures, and leadership ideals. The solution
40 to the above-mentioned challenges was the leadership philosophy,
41 *Oppdragsbasert Ledelse* (OBL/mission command). This, in turn, would also
42 influence Norwegian military leadership education (e.g., Kjellevold Olsen, 2017).
43 Probably for the better by introducing broader participation and acceptance of
44 voice (Hirschman, 1970) in decision-making and leadership processes. Even if this
45 paper has a slight list towards military education, it may still have relevance for

¹Non-commissioned officers.

1 both military and civilian teaching practitioners in the sense that it may put their
2 own practice to the test of reflection.

3 The following section deals with a literature review and short descriptions of
4 essential concepts for this paper. The next sections discusses Naval Leadership
5 Education in Norway including original and critical reflections. Thereafter, the
6 following sections discusses communities of practice and methodology, and
7 survey results. The last sections provides a general discussion with educational
8 implications, followed by recommendations, limitations, and acknowledgements.

10 **Literature Review**

11 **Reflective Practice Research**

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15 Reflective practice may be regarded as one of the ways that professionals
16 learn from experience to understand and develop their practice (Jasper, 2003). The
17 concept of reflection and the reflective practitioner has exerted a strong influence
18 on the development of professional education (Clegg et al., 2002). According to
19 Ginsburg (1988), reflective practitioners use this process to modify and enhance
20 their understanding of professional practice. But knowledge of reflective methods
21 alone is not sufficient. There must be a union of skilled method with attitudes (Van
22 Manen, 1996).

23 **Communities of Practice**

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26 Communities of practice (CoPs) have been described by Wenger (1999) and
27 others as a type of informal learning organization. The CoP was originally
28 developed to provide a template for examining the learning that happens among
29 practitioners in a social environment (Li et al., 2009). They suggest that the CoP is
30 still an evolving concept. Wenger's description seems, therefore, to apply to both
31 military learning and practice communities because learning and practice are
32 inextricably intertwined.

33 **Naval Leadership Education in Norway**

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37 Norwegian naval officers have been educated and formed at the Royal
38 Norwegian Naval Academy for more than 200 years (Terjesen & Gjelsten, 2017.
39 Author's translation). RNA educates military officers for the Norwegian Navy.
40 Role models at the RNA are linked to their own formation (bildung) (e.g. Klafki,
41 2007), culture, and practice. Leadership is also thought critical to innovation in
42 schools (Spillane et al., 2007). Role models may be regarded as liberators or
43 hindrances in a military "Community of Practice" (CoP) (Wenger, 1999).
44 Midshipmen² (also called cadets) are a part of such a community through four
45 years of learning and bildung processes. These processes may also be considered

²Officer Candidates at RNA.

1 to take place in a community of learning (CoL) (Chapman et al., 2005). Both CoPs
2 and CoLs are thus significant arenas for learning military leadership. The RNA
3 provides both arenas. Through four years of academic studies and extensive
4 leadership education, training, and practice, Norwegian midshipmen are formed
5 into professional CoPs and CoLs, at least in theory. I will therefore explore this
6 further.

7 Norwegian military professionalism can be regarded as our professional
8 identity and constitutes a set of preferred goals, values, and attitudes in the
9 organization (Johansen, 2019 pp. 139–140. Author’s translation). The military
10 professional culture in Norway was first commented on in the Chief of Defences’
11 foreword to the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine (FFOD) in
12 2007. It has since gained a cultural foothold which is frequently referred to
13 (Johansen, 2019, p. 139. Author’s translation). The concept or understanding of
14 Norwegian military professionalism has also changed significantly after the above-
15 mentioned version of FFOD was published in 2007 (Lunde, 2021).

16 Professional identity development, such as through the exploration of
17 possible new identities (Ibarra, 1999) or self-awareness processes (e.g., Hall,
18 2002), occurs over the course of time. The development of professional identities
19 occurs as a natural by-product of a progression through each career phase
20 (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005). Career research has found that people actively
21 develop their identities through acquiring the ability to process feedback about the
22 self and achieve self-awareness (Hall, 2002). At the RNA, midshipmen learn about
23 effective military leadership through studies of literature and practical training. In
24 this sense, they have an opportunity to engage in fruitful conversation and critical
25 reflection with their peers and teachers about multiple aspects of their dawning
26 professional identity. Because, in *The Basic Pedagogical View of the Norwegian
27 Armed Forces* (2006), it is stated that one of the main purposes of military
28 education is to develop “a critical reflective professional competence with the
29 personnel” (p. 17. Author’s translation). This coincides with Schöns (1983)
30 explicit naming of “the reflective practitioner”.

31 As military educators, we are therefore obliged to liberate our students. As
32 Freire (2000) puts it: “We should devote ourselves humbly but perseveringly to
33 our profession in all its aspects: scientific formation, ethical rectitude, respect for
34 others, coherence, a capacity to live with and learn from what is different, and an
35 ability to relate to others without letting our ill-humor or our antipathy get in the
36 way of our balanced judgment” (p. 24). The RNA’s leadership philosophy (2009)
37 states this: “Counselling and systematic reflection play a key role in achieving
38 cognitive and emotional maturity” (p. 8. Author’s translation). Also: “An essential
39 pillar in cohesion is trust...The importance of trust and how trust is built and lost
40 is, therefore, a necessary part of officer education” (Ibid. pp. 58–59). These quotes
41 may well illustrate which reality the RNA operates within. However, that has not
42 always been the case. Let me exemplify.

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44

My Naval Leadership Education — Original Reflection

The purpose of this section is to elaborate and reflect on my experiences with military leadership education at the RNA and later as a commissioned officer. Some made lasting impressions. RNA was not entirely what I envisioned. Let me first point out: Some of our military teachers were also class teachers. That is, some of them also oversaw certain administrative and managerial tasks in addition to being teachers. However, they were also role models in the sense of having higher ranks, such as Lieutenant Commanders and above. In other words, they had positional power (e.g., Van den Brink & Steffen, 2007). In this sense, there were dominance relationships between ‘us’ and ‘them’. At the RNA, we were mostly instructed to follow orders without questions. We were, however, somewhat sceptical of some of our military teachers. Others, however, could engage us in fruitful dialogue, conversations, and discussions. I am grateful for that. I recall one of our class officers in our second year who was relatively strict and uncompromising in his behaviour. By pulling rank instead of engaging us in meaningful dialogical learning activities, he imposed his own narrow views on us, which we were not happy with. He oppressed us instead of liberating our hearts and minds. I will again return to Freire (2005): “the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human” (pp. 65-66). Were we not supposed to become a better version of ourselves at the RNA?

As “oppressed”, we did not tolerate his actions. Because “when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection. In this sense, the praxis is the new *raison d’être* of the oppressed” (Freire, 2005, p. 66). His actions as “oppressor” became, for us, a possibility to engage in liberating actions. At that time, in 1984, this was unheard of. I believe, as Freire, that he did not trust us to be reflective students. Still, “It is necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason. Whoever lacks this trust will fail to initiate (or will abandon) dialogue, reflection, and communication, and will fall into using slogans, communiques, monologues, and instructions” (Ibid.). That was exactly what he did. He imposed his ‘reality’ on us in the same way as he probably mirrored the society at that time. As Freire exemplifies:

- (a) the teacher teaches, and the students are taught;
 - (b) the teacher knows everything, and the students know nothing;
 - (c) the teacher thinks, and the students are thought about;
 - (d) the teacher talks, and the students listen—meekly;
 - (e) the teacher disciplines, and the students are disciplined;
 - (f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply
- (2005, p. 73).

I shall return to what happened next. As I mentioned, we were not at all happy with his oppressive actions. So, we decided to take swift action. Our class wrote a note to the RNA's management, in which we explained our concerns about

1 this officer and his teaching and leadership methods. We were concerned that they
 2 were unsound. I recall this: We were initially met with a sort of indulgence. You
 3 couldn't really mean this? He was, after all in their view, a highly respected
 4 officer. In our opinion though, he loved control, and in the act of controlling, he
 5 killed life (Freely after Fromm, in Freire, 2005 p. 68). But, "though I know that
 6 things can get worse, I also know that I am able to intervene to improve them"
 7 (Freire, 2000 p. 53).

8 What was at stake? It was our very conscientização (critical consciousness).
 9 For us, as for Freire (2005), this was about learning to perceive social
 10 contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (p. 35).
 11 As such, we were maybe rebels in our time. First, however, we asked the
 12 management for a joint meeting with our class. As they had received our note, we
 13 confronted them with our concerns. As we expected, the management did not
 14 believe us. I remember one of my classmates standing up in response and shouting
 15 something like this: "Well, you weren't here were you! But we were, and we tell
 16 you the truth!" The room fell cold and silent. Nevertheless, our note and the
 17 meeting afterwards spawned a few significant changes to our life at the RNA. We
 18 experienced enhanced dialogue, contrary to mere instruction or indoctrination. We
 19 also noticed that older midshipmen became more lenient in their dealings with us
 20 younger ones. We could simply notice a change in attitude towards us. I will
 21 connect this to Freire (2005) again: "Human beings are not built in silence, but in
 22 word, in work, in action-reflection" (p. 88). By means of a totality of reflection
 23 and action, we were no longer afraid.

24 As for dialogue and action-reflection, we may consider this as an act of
 25 creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person
 26 by another (p. 89). That is exactly what we did; we transformed a perceived
 27 'reality' into something different and better—for many. We reclaimed our right to
 28 speak our word and thus engaged in the liberation of ourselves and our fellow
 29 midshipmen. Dialogue was considered imperative in this and necessary for such
 30 an achievement. Dialogue was simply an existential necessity; it imposed itself as
 31 the way by which we achieved significance as human beings (Freely after Freire,
 32 2005 p. 88). To express this feeling, I quote Ellis "Red" Redding: "We were the
 33 lords of all creation"³. But how may all this relate to a military community of
 34 learning? I will in the next section critically reflect on some issues regarding my
 35 military leadership education. According to Dewey (1933), reflection is aimed at
 36 dealing with a confusing or problematic situation. My reflections are therefore
 37 relevant for shedding light on naval leadership education past and present.

38 39 40 **Critical Reflections**

41
42 The term 'learning community' became popular among educators in the 1990s
 43 (Graves, 1992). Communities of learning (CoLs) can be regarded as a collection of
 44 individuals working in close proximity, sharing a common purpose and passion—
 45 a desire to learn (Collarbone, 2001). This may well apply to cadets at the RNA.

³Quote from the film: The Shawshank Redemption, 1994.

1 Because people learn material faster and have a better attitude towards learning
2 material when they learn in a participative environment (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978;
3 Bruner, 1986). At the RNA, midshipmen are together most of their time on
4 campus or at sea. Learning in such a community, the person who is being taught
5 may therefore also be formed in this process. Critical reflections calls to into
6 question the power relationships that allow, or promote, one set of practices
7 considered to be technically effective. It assumes that the minutiae of practice have
8 embedded within them the struggles between unequal interests and groups that
9 exist in the wider world (Brookfield, 2009). Formation, as I mentioned earlier, is
10 firmly embedded in the Norwegian military leadership education. This was not
11 entirely the case before the Vassdalen disaster.

12 In 1982, when I was admitted to the RNA, I had one and a half years of
13 previous military service as a private, a corporal, and later briefly as a platoon
14 NCO. In this period before RNA, I encountered several different personalities and
15 educational environments. Being a learner, who I was—and still am, I am
16 continuously in the process of acquiring new knowledge. This new knowledge
17 cannot simply be directly transferred to the learners. By recognizing only the
18 explicit character of knowledge, we underestimate the true effort required to
19 transfer knowledge (Roux et al., 2006). Therefore, the transfer of knowledge can
20 be regarded as a collective process in which the educator and the student engage in
21 fruitful dialogue. Or, as Freire (2005) puts it: “The teacher is no longer merely the-
22 one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who
23 in turn while being taught also to teach” (p. 80).

24 I find it difficult to impose anything on others. I can only tell others of my
25 experiences. They are and will always be mine and can thus never be challenged.
26 By merely imposing existing structure and views on the world, we cannot achieve
27 true learning. We cannot engage in “the hypocritical formula, “do as I say, not as I
28 do” (Freire, 2000 p. 39). I believe military teachers in higher educational
29 institutions are obliged to liberate themselves and those they educate. This must be
30 paramount for all officers regardless of where and when they serve. “Since
31 liberation must be a permanent condition, dialogue becomes a continuing aspect of
32 liberating action” (Freire, 2005 p. 139).

33 I seek enlightenment through learning in a sense somewhat similar to how
34 Freire (2000) states: “Why not, for example, take advantage of the students’
35 experience of life” (p. 36). Engaging in both my own experienced phenomena and
36 their own perceptions, through dialogue, They and I may come to a deeper
37 understanding of different implications of multiple perspectives of the experienced
38 world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it (Freire, 2005, p. 88).
39 Also, “by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by
40 which they achieve significance as human beings” (Ibid.). This, I believe, signifies
41 the dichotomy between the ‘narrower’ banking education, which resists dialogue,
42 and a dialogical approach in which the dialoguers engage in critical thinking.
43 Critical thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than
44 as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but
45 constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved (Ibid.
46 p. 92).

1 Turning to the RNA again, two purposes of leadership development are not to
 2 think and act “correctly” but instead to “be in a space without foothold” (Freire,
 3 2000, p. 69). Leadership training programs can be defined as programs that have
 4 been systematically designed to enhance leader knowledge, skills, abilities, and
 5 other components (Day, 2000). Also, “A learning environment characterized by
 6 support, where the counselled feels safe enough to try the insecure and is allowed
 7 to fail” (Ibid.). “To learn effectively demands that one involve oneself totally in
 8 new experiences, openly without biases” (p. 70). However, are we not all biased in
 9 one way or another, either cognitively and/or emotionally? What complicates it
 10 further is the fact that we are all different. That is, all midshipmen also learn
 11 differently (e.g., Pashler et al., 2008). This is so even if the RNA strives to
 12 “improve them to create a future reality” (p. 72). Again, this calls for an enhanced
 13 understanding of perceived limitations. Which implications lie then for military
 14 communities of practice?

15 16 17 **Military Communities of Practice** 18

19 As Wenger (1999) describes, the CoP can be regarded as an entity bounded
 20 by three interrelated dimensions: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared
 21 repertoire. Mutual engagement represents the interaction between individuals that
 22 leads to the creation of shared meaning on issues or a problem. Joint enterprise is
 23 the process in which people are engaged and working together towards a common
 24 goal. Finally, shared repertoire refers to the common resources and jargon that
 25 members use to negotiate meaning and facilitate learning within the group (Li et
 26 al., 2009).

27 As stated in the RNA’s leadership development philosophy: “Man is learning
 28 by constructing his knowledge in interaction with his environment”. Also, “Man
 29 plays therefore an active and decisive role in developing, organizing, and apply
 30 knowledge” (p. 68. Author’s translation). This again fits with the basic
 31 pedagogical view of the Norwegian Armed Forces (FPG), which states that
 32 “learning is an interactive process that consists of interpreting, integrating, and
 33 adapting new knowledge to the knowledge you already have” (p. 4. Author’s
 34 translation). Also, “Learning takes place in a context, in the interaction between
 35 people, in the meeting with texts and other sources and in confrontation with
 36 concrete relationships and situations. Here the participants must be open for an
 37 active exchange of views and dialogue” (Ibid, p. 5).

38 Let me therefore elaborate. Firstly, let me return to one of the main goals of
 39 FPG, which is to “develop a critical reflective professional competence with the
 40 personnel” (2006, p. 9. Author’s translation). Alternatively, put in other words, the
 41 goal is to create reflective practitioners. This demands, as Freire (2005) states,
 42 “Dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical
 43 thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication
 44 there can be no true education” (pp. 92-93). Secondly, if we, as military teachers,
 45 are to liberate our students’ perceptions of their practical reality (as we should,
 46 author’s note), we must also engage them in fruitful conversation and dialogue to

1 create shared meanings on issues or problems. Thirdly, by facilitating joint
2 enterprises, we must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in
3 their action, reflects their situation in the world. (Ibid., p. 96).

4 My experiences at the RNA differ somewhat from the above. I mean, for one
5 reason that we were subjugated as uncompleted beings. As such, we may also
6 claim that we were unable to decide for ourselves, unable to objectify either
7 ourselves or our activity, lacking objectives which they themselves have set, living
8 "submerged" in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a "tomorrow"
9 and a "today" because we existed in an overwhelming present (after Freire, 2005
10 p. 98). As nascent practitioners, this was problematic because we were, as Freire
11 also states, "Humans, ... because they are aware of themselves and thus of the
12 world—because they are conscious beings—exist in a dialectical relationship
13 between the determination of limits and their own freedom" (Ibid. p. 99). This
14 leads me to the next section of this article, which is a study concerning some
15 perspectives on recent naval leadership education at the RNA. The next qualitative
16 research section therefore expands on and complements my initial reflections.

17 18 19 **Methodology**

20 21 **Participants and Design**

22
23 Qualitative methods help provide rich descriptions of phenomena. They
24 enhance understanding of the context of events as well as the events themselves.
25 Thus, qualitative research not only serves the desire to describe; it also helps move
26 inquiry toward more meaningful explanations (Sofaer, 1999). The present study
27 includes a sample of cadets⁴ at the RNA by gathering individual responses from
28 them. A total of 53 cadets at the RNA were asked to participate; a total of 45
29 cadets completed the questionnaire (a response rate of approx. 85%). The research
30 questions were designed using an amended or Likert-type scale (Chen, Lee, &
31 Stevenson 1995; Grandy 1996; Warmbrod, 2014). A Likert-type scale consists of
32 a series of statements defining and describing the construct's content and meaning
33 (Warmbrod, 2014). The specific research questions were developed and designed
34 based on three normative documents which both educators and learners at the
35 RNA were supposed to be familiar with; The Basic Pedagogical view of The
36 Norwegian Armed Forces (2006), The leadership and Training Philosophy of the
37 Royal Norwegian Naval Academy (2009), and The Norwegian Chief of Defence's
38 view on Leadership (2012).

39 The questionnaire underwent initial revisions following suggestions by the
40 head of military leadership at the RNA. Following additional feedback from
41 professors at the RNA, final revisions were made to the survey. No data
42 concerning age, gender, etc. was collected. Thus, the survey was completely
43 anonymous. Participants completed an anonymous survey consisting of 16
44 statements. Two example statements were "Operative leadership is often discussed
45 between us cadets" and "I am very familiar with mission command (OBL)". The

⁴Military students at the RNA = midshipmen.

1 scale had seven response alternatives ranging from alternative 1-strongly agree to
2 alternative 7-strongly disagree.

3 4 **Procedures**

5
6 The research committee at the Norwegian Defence College University
7 (NDUC), the RNA, and the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) approved
8 the study (NSD-ref. 954463). After final revisions of the survey questionnaire,
9 RNA provided additional comments about the survey's validity. As such, one
10 might claim that the survey was satisfactory piloted. Before data collection, we
11 prepared an informed consent procedure. The RNA and the participants received
12 written information about the study's main purpose and were informed that
13 participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. They were
14 also assured that individual results would only be used in this specific research
15 project. Also, consent was embedded in the questionnaire.

16 Data from the cadets at RNA was collected after they had finished,
17 respectively, two and three years of extensive team-based leadership training. Data
18 from the cadets at RNA was collected three months before the students completed
19 their education programs. During their training, all respondents rotated in roles as
20 leaders and followers in fixed teams and participated in numerous joint exercises
21 and group sessions. These activities provided them with thorough knowledge of
22 each other in leadership roles and as team members (e.g., Olsen et al., 2021). They
23 also have extensive theoretical education in military leadership.

24 The next section contains results from a qualitative survey at RNA.
25 Qualitative data analysis is a process of the description, classification and
26 interconnection of phenomena with the researcher's concepts (Dey, 1993). First,
27 the phenomena under study were described as precisely as possible. I then needed
28 to be able to interpret and explain the data. Also, a conceptual framework needed
29 to be developed and data classified. After that, concepts were built and connected
30 to each other. In this way, the research questions were aligned with the overall
31 purpose of the present study.

32 33 34 **Results**

35
36 Survey results are listed in Table 1. Each question had two extremes, at 1 and
37 7, respectively, as mentioned above. My main purpose for the research was to
38 explore today's cadets' subjective perceptions of their leadership education and
39 what the RNA emphasizes and/or practice. The second purpose was to explore
40 their perception or the notion of formation (bildung). Another aim was to assess
41 their knowledge or understanding of mission command (OBL). It is, therefore,
42 necessary to categorize the survey questions. In Table 1, the questions are
43 therefore clustered.

44 The first and principal category is the cadet's perception of leadership
45 education, as stated in questions (Q) 3, 7–9, 12–14 and 16. The second category is
46 the cadet's knowledge and understanding of RNA's leadership philosophy, as

1 stated in Qs 1, 2, and 10. The third category is the cadet's perception of any
 2 connections between RNA's education and practice, as stated in Qs 4, 6, and 11.
 3 Qs 5 and 15 refer to their perceived effects of being a cadet at the RNA. This
 4 concerns the extent to which the cadets perceive being measured according to their
 5 leadership qualities and whether they perceive being "bound" or inhibited by
 6 existing leadership praxis. Subsequently, I found the following:

7 Their general perception of leadership education stands out fairly clearly. A
 8 high percentage of the cadets perceive that leadership education, to a high degree,
 9 is characterized by openness, the emphasis on reflection and learning, and the
 10 freedom to think for themselves (Q 7-9). The cadets also perceive high degrees of
 11 compliance between theory and practice in the educational setting, independent
 12 thinking, and freedom and independence (Q 12-14). When it comes to teaching
 13 operative leadership (Q 3), the responses become somewhat different, indicating
 14 that they are more unsure of this. Q 16 indicates clearly that the cadets perceive
 15 that it is emphasized that they are to become reflective practitioners. Regarding
 16 knowledge and understanding of RNA's leadership philosophy, the cadets
 17 perceive a good understanding of RNA's leadership philosophy but seem to be
 18 more unsure about whether the leadership philosophy is often a theme in the
 19 tuition—that is, the teaching—at the RNA (Q 1-2).

20 A high percentage perceive a very good understanding of OBL (Q 10).
 21 Regarding the perception of connections between RNA's education and practice,
 22 approx. 55% of the cadets perceive it to be a significant correlation between
 23 RNA's leadership education and its practice (Q 4). The cadets often discuss
 24 operative leadership between them, and they seem to agree with the statement that
 25 OBL is often practised at the RNA (Qs 6 and 11). The responses regarding
 26 perceived effects of being a cadet (Qs 5 and 15) indicate that approx. 50% of the
 27 respondents seem to be measured by their leadership qualities. Approx. 1/3 of the
 28 cadets seem to be somewhat bound or inhibited by existing leadership praxis.

29 Variants of the self-report method are numerous and can be organized in a
 30 number of ways (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). The most important limitation of the
 31 present study may be that the data are self-reported. Thus, future research should
 32 attempt to expand upon this study, for example, by using a follow-up qualitative
 33 study which investigates what the teachers at the RNA perceive. Thus, exploring
 34 eventual differences. In that way, maybe obtaining an updated and expanded
 35 insight into recent naval leadership education.

36
 37 *Table 1. Answers Provided by Cadets at the RNA*

General Perception of the Leadership Education at RNA							
	<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Alt. 2</u>	<u>Alt. 3</u>	<u>Alt. 4</u>	<u>Alt. 5</u>	<u>Alt. 6</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
Q3	2,2 %	8,9 %	40 %	35,6 %	11,1 %	2,2 %	0 %
Q7	2,2 %	6,7 %	15,6 %	24,4 %	33,3 %	11,1 %	6,7 %
Q8	4,4 %	0 %	4,4 %	17,8 %	24,4 %	33,3 %	15,6 %
Q9	2,2 %	8,9 %	6,7 %	15,6 %	40 %	22,2 %	4,4 %
Q12	0 %	6,7 %	15,6 %	28,9 %	40 %	8,9 %	0 %
Q13	0 %	8,9 %	6,7 %	11,1 %	37,8 %	31,1 %	4,4 %
Q14	4,4 %	11,1 %	13,3 %	22,2 %	40 %	6,7 %	2,2 %

Q16	0 %	2,2 %	13,3 %	15,6 %	31,1 %	24,4 %	13,3 %
Knowledge and Understanding of RNA's Leadership Philosophy							
Q1	0 %	8,9 %	11,1 %	17,8 %	37,8 %	22,2 %	2,2 %
Q2	6,7 %	8,9 %	35,6 %	33,3 %	13,3 %	0 %	2,2 %
Q10	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	22,2 %	44,4 %	33,3 %
Perception of Connections Between RNAs Education and Practice							
Q4	13,3 %	8,9 %	22,2 %	33,3 %	20 %	0 %	2,2 %
Q6	4,4 %	13,3 %	11,1 %	31,1 %	31,1 %	8,9 %	0 %
Q11	6,7 %	11,1 %	13,3 %	20 %	35,6 %	8,9 %	4,4 %
Perceived Effects of Being a Cadet							
Q5	2,2 %	11,1 %	35,6 %	24,4 %	24,4 %	2,2 %	0 %
Q15	0 %	2,2 %	15,6 %	51,1 %	20 %	6,7 %	4,4 %

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Discussion

Similarity and difference are fundamental to cognition⁵ (Simmons & Estes, 2008). I did suspect to find at least some differences given the time span between then and now. The results from the survey strongly indicate that the cadets seem to have a good knowledge and understanding of what is stated in RNA's leadership philosophy, the basic pedagogical view, and the Norwegian joint operational doctrine. These normative documents include independent thinking, reflection, and freedom of thought. As Freire puts it, "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" (2005, p. 79). These initial results may therefore indicate that the cadets experience to a certain degree a kind of liberating leadership education.

The cadets perceive a significant correlation between RNA's leadership and its teaching and practice. The latter result can be related to what Freire prefers to call "cultural action for freedom", about which he asserts that its goal must be to "conscientize" the people to awaken their critical consciousness (Eder, 1988). One might therefore claim that the RNA and their military students have adopted a timelier leadership education and praxis aligned with modern management/ leadership literature. This may signify a turn towards enhanced adaptivity. Which also may encourage the cadets to have a more constructively critical approach to both CoPs and CoLs in which they are a part of.

The above was not exactly the case in the 1980s when, among many things, these documents did not exist. In there lies a significant difference. We were more instructed or indoctrinated by our military teachers. We mainly were supposed to take for granted what our teachers taught us without asking too many critical questions. In that sense, we experienced what Freire calls "The banking concept". The students are not called upon to know but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher (Freire, 2005, p. 80). In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those

⁵The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.

1 whom they consider to know nothing (Ibid., p. 72). However, we decided to
 2 liberate ourselves without our military teachers' knowledge and understanding of
 3 liberating teaching methods. Much to their surprise at the time. This signified for
 4 us a turn towards a more flexible way of approaching becoming military leaders.
 5 The results in the present study however clearly indicates that flexibility and
 6 adaptiveness has become much more present in recent naval leadership education
 7 in Norway.

8 What I found surprising in the survey results was that as much as one third of
 9 the cadets responded that they were bound or inhibited by existing leadership
 10 praxis, and "only" 50% seemed to be measured by their leadership qualities. I
 11 expected a much higher percentage, and I find this somewhat paradoxical. Why?
 12 Because RNA's leadership education should emphasize measuring the cadet's
 13 abilities to perform as leaders. This is clearly stated in RNA's leadership
 14 philosophy. Also, in their praxis as military leaders, they will be measured by
 15 leadership qualities every year. This may be related to their seeming to be more
 16 unsure about whether the leadership philosophy is often a theme in the tuition at
 17 the RNA. The paradox also includes that they perceive a significant correlation
 18 between RNA's leadership education and its practice. This may coincide with the
 19 banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students
 20 extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits (Freire, 2005). In
 21 this sense, I also find similarities between my own leadership education at the
 22 RNA and today's cadet's perception. The above mentioned paradoxes are
 23 therefore interesting for further investigation.

24 Lastly, in this section, I will draw attention to Paulo Freire's *raison d'etre* of
 25 libertarian education. He states that education must begin with the solution of the
 26 teacher-student contradiction by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that
 27 both are simultaneously teachers and students. The ground is prepared when we
 28 consider that much of this thinking is found in the documents mentioned above,
 29 even if the results from the survey indicate that this is only partially fulfilled. The
 30 RNA seems to be on the right track but still not quite there yet. Therefore, the
 31 RNA should pursue the positive track it is on, and further develop both leadership
 32 teaching and praxis to fulfil today's needs for leaders who are flexible-minded and
 33 adaptive.

34 35 36 **Conclusion** 37

38 Does the investigated leadership education then and now differ in any way?
 39 The present study investigated the cadet's subjective perception of their leadership
 40 education at the RNA. There are differences, but also similarities. In addition, in
 41 this paper, I have also reflected upon some personal experiences at the RNA. I
 42 have investigated through a short questionnaire some perspectives concerning
 43 "modern" or updated military leadership education at the RNA. An institution
 44 which I attended a long time ago. The purpose of this was to explore certain
 45 aspects of education and practice through the eyes of the beholders, the cadets.

1 Questions regarding edification (formation or bildung, author's remark) and
2 operative leadership have been to some extent also explored.

3 When one experience is made the subject of concrete, critical, and theoretical
4 reflection, one can open clarifying perspectives and sometimes lead to astonishing
5 insights (Lindseth, 2020, p. 100, author's translation). As we shift back and forth
6 among perspectives, we may bring different elements of a situation to salience and
7 highlight different features of the world. We must put our own practical
8 knowledge to the test. As Lindseth (2020) claims, if we want to understand the
9 connections in life, we need inner evidence (p. 96), that is, insight into connections
10 (p. 89).

11 I will also point out that this paper's introductory research methodology
12 originates first and foremost from reflective practice research and must not be
13 confused with or compared to "evidence-based research" derived from natural
14 sciences, which is conveyed through randomized controlled trials giving
15 quantitative data (e.g., Larivière et al., 2006). Reflective practice research arises
16 from the ideas of evidence-based practice (e.g., Kvernbekk, 2015, 2018). My
17 initial approach to this paper lies, therefore, within the field of humanities, its point
18 of departure in the experiences of the researcher - me.

21 **Recommendations**

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23 To further develop this area it may be helpful to supplement the initial survey
24 findings with a follow-up qualitative study. This may further articulate the
25 conceptual and empirical contributions, and to explicitly connect those
26 contributions to work already published in the present study. A follow-up study
27 should investigate what the teachers at the RNA perceive. Also, the findings
28 regarding the survey questions may seem somewhat superficial. Participants can
29 be interviewed for in-depth analysis of their views. I believe this would broaden
30 both learners and practitioners understanding of each other's perceptions. In
31 addition, a longitudinal study which expands on this initial study, may provide
32 even more precise and complementary answers. In this way, therefore also
33 obtaining a broader insight into recent naval leadership education in Norway.
34 Leadership education and practise is still full of undiscovered intricacies and
35 paradoxes.

38 **Limitations**

39
40 There are limitations to the present study. Firstly, there are a limited number
41 of research questions which may indicate that not every aspect of naval leadership
42 education are scrutinized. Surveys often also suffers the limitation of forcing
43 respondents into particular response categories, thereby limiting the range of
44 respondents (Simon & Goes, 2013). Also, the respondents were not chosen
45 randomly. Thus the results cannot be generalised to the rest of the student
46 population (Schuster & Powers, 2005). Lastly, another limitation of the present

1 study may be that the data are self-reported. According to Devaux & Sassi (2016),
 2 people are often biased when they report on their own experiences. Therefore, any
 3 inferences must be made with caution.

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