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Abstract: The research question in this article concerns how a competitive environment affects the learner (officer cadet's) personal leadership development and their relationship to their team and with future civilian foundations. More specifically, what are the possible learning effects of the "hidden" curriculum? This article investigates how a more than 250 years of leadership education provides new army officers with new skills and how such an environment may affect the cadets' leadership training. The paper builds on ethnographic data gathered during the three-year education program in most of the relevant practical locations and contexts. Findings regarding trust in their learning environment, cadets have reported scores of (Mean 2.83) on a 1 (low trust) to 5 (high trust) Likert scale, underpinning interviewdata regarding the lack trust in the academy and in their fellow cadets. Cadets also point out that competition has hindered their learning (Mean 2.50). These findings are interpreted in relation to possible negative effects stemming from internal competition and the evaluation system as a whole. The overall output of this system is a zero–sum game, and thus effects evaluative practices and learning processes. This study is of relevance to higher education officers responsible for designing learning environments.

Keywords: competition; trust; team; evaluation; vocational training; leadership education

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>...The last thing I felt after the last one and a half years of tactics and practical leadership is that there was very quickly harsh critique if it turned out badly, there was not much emphasis on learning. And there was not much room for error (Cadet informant).

Agon was the spirit (daimon) of contest among the Greek Gods and brother of Nike (Victory) (Atsma, 2000). In education contests can be motivating but one can also learn that superiority over others can be the token of success (Nicholls, 1989). Contests and rivalry will in our case; Vocational leadership training, - be related to a hidden core of the education, but not always outspoken or written down in the curriculum. Most of us can relate to it, in American war-movies and action-thrillers army officers can perform an authoritarian way leads others. This formulates social scripts (Mishler, 1981) that affects our thinking about self and others, but also the social interaction in-between students, between students and the NMA and between the military and society. In the army-action scripts it is of little use if the civilians possess higher degrees of education or central positions in society. Equal interaction based on trust falls short in such relationships - and does not seem to be necessary either. It will be as the military decides - interaction can be ordered. But it's on film, how is it in reality? Is it the case that military officers assume such a super-civilian role, for their own reasons, or are they trained for this? If so, this will affect the effectiveness of the cooperation between the

military and civilian systems when it matters most. In this study, we therefore examine whether the higher military education is adapted to the structures of modern Norwegian society where societal trust often is emphasized as a key feature (Klemsdal, 2009). A central premise in our study is that interaction and trust between the military system and society at large is necessary, so that together they can form an effective combined fighting force against any threats that may arise. In this study we investigate through a based on the educational and professional content at the Norwegian Military Academy.

Competitions between learners within educational practices and simulations can be seen as widespread and as a useful method to motivate students or groups of students and strengthen the collaborative learning within higher education (Lohmann et al., 2019). Pennington et al. (1943) advised that competition can increase motivation at the firing range. Kohn (1987) problematise competitions in learning by participations in sports since it can support antisocial behavior on the cost of sharing, helping, and cooperation.

Military educational practices can be interpreted as doctrine driven (Torgersen, 2008; U.S. Army Headquarters, Training and Doctrine Command., 1990), and vital in training is the development of autonomous teams, tightly coordinated and highly collaborative. To be able to combine forces, the Norwegian training doctrines are related to those of NATO and vice versa (Forsvarsstaben, 2019, p. 3). As an example, the case presented in this paper may have relevance to other military educationalists outside Norway, highlighting the problematic aspect of having individual reward systems and an emphasis on and a collaborative learning team at the same time. However, it can also be questioned if such an education is adequate to the army officer's central role in collaboration with their civilian counterparts in peace and in conflict. Hence, they need to communicate and develop relationships with civilian actors while contracting civilian personnel, interact in research projects and collaborate within the "total defence" when that is called upon. Such areas of collaboration is based mutual trust, developed over time or spontaneous (swift) trust (Bergh & Boe, 2018; Torgersen, 2018). The research question in this article is how a competitive environment affects the learner (officer cadet's) personal leadership development and their relationship to their team and the possible implication in collaboration with civilian foundations. More specifically, what are the possible learning effects of the "hidden" curriculum.

1.1. The Case and the Context

Since 1750, the Norwegian Military Academy (NMA) has educated officer cadets for service in the Norwegian army and is the oldest higher education institution in Norway (Hosar, 2000). The purpose of the education at the NMA is to provide students with an individual 'Bildung process' [*dannelsesreise* in Norwegian], where each cadet must apprehend the necessary knowledge, skills, and general competencies (values) that are required of an army officer (Krigsskolen, 2017). There are ten subjects of which two are reckoned as core subjects. The two core subjects are named professional foundations (PF) [*profesjonsgrunnlaget* in Norwegian] and the leader and leadership development (MLD) course [*leder- og lederskapsutvikling* in Norwegian]. The PF subject cover the expectations and *demands of war*. On the other hand, the MLD contributes to the identification of the cadets' individual starting points and needs in terms of development related to the spheres of sociability, personal, and professional subjects (Krigsskolen, 2017). An identification of the gap between the starting point and the fully trained officer is stressed as important, and formulates the starting point of a humanistic Bildung-journey (Steinsholt & Dobson, 2011).

The division between PF and MLD can be seen as deeply rooted, and as a clash of realism and humanism in education. On various occasions, instructors and officers involved in the training repeatedly stated: 'In a war there is only one winner!' The quote is by the researchers interpreted legitimate hard means to prepare for the potential hostility of the military vocation. "Train as you fight" is another quote often overheard in conversations during the fieldwork, underlining a hard and competitive approach.

Besides the grades (A–F) given in the subjects, where the A- represent excellent and the F- a non pass. The NMA keeps track of the cadets in terms of their suitability to be military leaders [SML]

(paragraph 14.1 and 14.3 in the NMA regulations for education (Krigsskolen, 2014), and they are rated below norm, a little below norm, norm, a little above norm, and above norm.

Cadets who perform below norm have failed, and the school council advises the school principal as to whether the cadet can continue at the NMA or not. The other purpose of this system is to promote the *primus inter pares*, the best cadet in the cohort. This position is based on both exam grades and instructors' assessments, and which are recorded on a 'secret' Excel scoresheet by the officer who has a special responsibility for the cadet cohort. Inevitably, cadets are ranked from approximately 1 to 50 in this system, with some cadets struggling to reach a norm level, and others competing to be in the top ten or better.

1.2. Learning Outside the Learning Objectives

In a sociocultural perspective on learning the individual can be seen and understood in the light their surroundings (Lave, 1991). One of the leading educational scientists today, Gert Biesta (2004) argues that a student entering an education programme can learn or make valuable experiences outside the narrow frame of predefined learning objectives. He underscores that all teaching inhibits a risk of not obtaining all learning objectives (Biesta, 2015). Therefore, the unforeseen phenomenon is of importance both in the learning objectives, but also that the students train to cope with situations that is not planned. In such situations the contract with the learning objectives can be broken (Torgersen, 2015). On the other side, such situations will open learning processes that provides the student with leadership competencies that provides her/him with skills in handling unpredictable and complex situations when it matters the most. Central to this is learning processes based on individual reflections and awareness of relational processes where trust, involvement, and power free discourses during crisis (Torgersen, 2018). In the next paragraph we will investigate the extra-curricular learning within the concept of the hidden curriculum.

1.3. The Hidden Curriculum

According to the American education and curriculum researcher, Philip W. Jackson (1928-2015), the activity of teaching contains more than work with a defined curriculum, as the activity of the classroom contains elements of opportunistic behaviour. Jackson (1968, pp. 166–167) writes:

> As typically conducted, teaching is an opportunistic process. That is to say, neither the teacher nor his students can predict with any certainty exactly what will happen next. Plans are forever going awry and unexpected opportunities for the attainment of educational goals are constantly emerging…. Experienced teachers accept this state of affairs and come to look upon surprises and uncertainty as natural features of their environment. They know, or come to know, that the path of educational progress more closely resembles the flight of a butterfly than the flight of a bullet.

The concept of the hidden curriculum in the process of understanding education is related to the unexpected and the unforeseen (Torgersen, 2018), and can be used by an educational researcher to grasp the learning not prescribed in the official curricula. However, there is an underlying assumption that if vital issues are not addressed by the formal curriculum, the cadets may learn by the from what Jackson (1968) denotes as the hidden curriculum. We will use this metaphor to address some of the potential learning and unexpected outcomes of the Bildung-journey (Gurholt, 2008) encountered by the cadets.

The main source of evaluation (Jackson, 1968, pp. 20–21) in a school comes from the teachers (instructors), and they continuously make judgements and communicate their assessments to students. Some of the assessments are hidden from the learner (the cadets) when the teachers (instructors/trainers) at the NMA form groups and discuss cadet performances. A part of these discussions also relates to what and how to communicate the teacher evaluation to the learner. Such hidden assessment can convey that the role of the clown (Darsø, 2011), who asks questions that cannot be answered or proposes different solutions to practical approaches, is minimised. This is

underpinned by research on character strengths among officers and cadets, where creativity is low on the list of priorities (Boe, Bang, et al., 2015).

Communication and 'samhandling' can be seen as vital in leadership (Arnulf, 2012; Torgersen, 2018), but also the ability to work and perform in teams. Posner and Kouzes (1988) underline that a leader's ability to enable and motivate others to act, to foster collaboration, and to get the support of their peers are all important factors related to success.

Being educated as an army officer is an important and all-encompassing activity that takes place at the NMA during a cadet's education. Officer development is the NMA's concept of leadership development for cadets being educated at the NMA. Officer development is consequently the NMA's comprehensive formation process of developing leaders for the Norwegian Army and is a central theme in all activity at the NMA (Boe & Hjortmo, 2017; Boe, Bomann-Larsen, et al., 2015).The starting point for officer development at the NMA is based upon the definitions of leadership and leadership development described in *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (McCauley et al., 2010). Here, leadership is defined as the process of producing direction, alignment, and commitment in collectives. Leadership development expands a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. Leadership thus revolves around the development of competencies to direct leadership processes by virtue of being in leader roles, both formal and informal (Boe, 2015). This all seems fine in theory, but there may be a difference between theory and practice at the NMA, as there seems to be a hidden curriculum and evaluation taking place, in addition to the theoretical concepts and guidelines that the NMA is supposed to be governed by.

Also, contributing to the practices at the NMA, role models are linked to the cadets' own leaders, culture, and practice (Boe & Holth, 2015). This narrows what is valid practice and can enforce a self-driven power structure and a one-dimensional understanding of how leadership should be performed, where only people within this culture can be seen as participants. Magnussen et al. (2021) have argued that the risks of this NMA practice are related to organisational narcissism and a possible distorted reality orientation, where the NMA fails it's given educational tasks related to the needs of society and the future demands of war. In addition, a hidden curriculum, as well as a one-dimensional leadership understanding, may enforce the challenges with what is regarded as acceptable behaviour among the cadets. Also, in a situation of evaluation and the after-action review (AAR), altruistic behaviour and motives can be pressurised. The AAR-process in military systems represents some of the most significant mappings of knowledge when it comes to lesson learned/learning from failure in training or operations. AAR forms the basis in detailed improvements of PF, MLD and technological concepts (Torgersen, 2008).

In addition to the learner being evaluated, the cadets also contribute to peer evaluation during and AAR's and other formal and informal situations, where the performances of the cadets are under scrutiny. Evaluative situations can be recognised by both ambiguity and choice (March & Olsen, 1982), concerning dilemmas on whether to praise or criticise fellow cadets' actions. Such deliberations among cadets can contain considerations concerning loyalty to the group or cohort of cadets, and/or obedience to the system and the military profession and credo. If not naïve, then different levels of rationality and rather complex variations of the prisoner's dilemma, can if played well, optimise the players' performances as a group.

The dilemma showcases the challenges of obtaining both objectives of performance and safety. Strategies that mimic the others, tit for tat, did well in the experiments and simulations of the dilemma in social play, however these were vulnerable to disturbances or defective moves. The remedy for this is pro-social behaviour and generosity (Molander, 1985). If playing games involving winning or losing, the contest for internal ranking among the cadets with regard to perceived trust can be seen as an important factor in the learning environment.

In this article, reported effects of unexpected learning outcomes that were experienced by cadets will be discussed in the light of the hidden curriculum, the gaming theory of the prisoner dilemma (Tucker, 1983), creativity, and leadership in team development. At the end of the study, some educational implications will be suggested.

2. Methods

This article uses data from the research project 'Practice Makes Mastery?' The research project is registered at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Project number 35059). The data were collected at various NMA practice sites used during the three years of officer development and training. The project's ontological starting point is how exercises, as a learning landscape (Kvale & Nielsen, 1999), affect officer cadets.

2.1. Ethnography

This research uses an ethnographic approach, with a greater emphasis on observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1987) of the cadets' learning and exercise activities than on participation. The data stems from field notes, photos, and semi-structured interviews of eight cadets. The cadet enters the learning structure based on the individual, team, class, and cohort. One researcher (the corresponding author) followed the cadets on their practice field, but did not have what Patton (Patton, 2002, s. 340–341) calls an 'inner perspective'. The researcher took the role of onlooker. In all situations while observing, the researcher retained his civilian 'outdoor' clothing, and was easy to spot among all the green uniforms. The fieldwork followed the pathways of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), with an emphasis on 'natural' settings and open-ended conversations. The second and third authors of this research article did not participate in the fieldwork but contributed to the analysis.

The contingent of cadets that were the initial 'object of inquiry' consisted of 51 males and 5 females. Their ages ranged from 20 to around 30 years. Out of this cohort, which was followed on all their exercises, a group of eight cadets, four female and four males, were interviewed. Four interviews were conducted with each cadet: During their first week, and then at the end of first-, second- and third year. The key informants were chosen using such criteria as diversity of years in service, gender, military branch, and age.

The research involved also qualitative and quantitative questionnaire (Creswell, 2014). Just after graduation, an online survey was distributed, and we received 18 responses from the 54 participants (two cadets were relegated or quit during the three-year programme). Why 36 of the cadets is lacking from the survey can be related to the e-mail distribution - "spam-filters", and cadets possible perceiving the study as insignificant of or of general survey fatigue. This is not investigated further.

2.2. Analysis

Before the final questionnaire were distributed three out of four interviews with the cadets followed was conducted. During the final stage of fieldwork, the "hidden curriculum" of cadet learning emerged. Several informants addressed the significance of the issues of team and trust related to the 1-50 ranking of cadets. This was then integrated in the final interviews and questionnaire. All interview data were transcribed in MS Word for Windows and collected in the analysis program MAXQDA 10. In this program, the interview sets from the last year of education were sorted into 'competition', 'team', and 'trust'. After the initial coding, the second and third researcher reread and refined the content of the initial coding. Then, the first researcher reread the coded material and made the final excerpts.

2.3. Validity and Reliability of Findings

Caused by the relatively low number of respondents (18 out of 54), the results give an indication of how some of the cadets (though not all) experience the effects of competition and trust, and because of this, they may contain a negative bias. It is possible that the ones who are happy do not bother to reply. The translation (Patton, 2002) from Norwegian to English in this article presented a challenge. It affected aspects such as faction versus fiction and the validity of texts (Czarniawska, 2004), including the communicative validity of the findings and translations. In order to retain both intention and meaning, the interview excerpts were kept in their 'original' Norwegian form together with the English translation in earlier drafts of the article. This allowed us to preserve the Norwegian

voice. Some Norwegian expressions are enclosed in parentheses and remain in the article. Photography provides researchers with the opportunity to relive the observed situations with the distance of an onlooker (Patton, 2002). Questions about the transferability and generalisability of the findings are limited by their 'similarity and fittingness' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, s. 124). These limitations may be important when we address issues with implications for military training, leadership development, and learning in commensurate situations.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

This research relies on informed consent from adult participants and was conducted according to the rules and regulations provided by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Project number 35059). Information about the scope and ethics of this research was given to the cadets on their second day at the NMA at Tollbugaten 10 (T10) in Oslo, Norway. Anonymity was secured by keeping interviews and name lists on a separate, password-protected server. One cadet withdrew from participation in the project; no reasons were given or asked for.

3. Findings

Within a sociocultural framework of learning landscapes (Kvale & Nielsen, 2003) a learner (apprentice) is evaluated by how their work is being used [*bruksevaluering* in Norwegian] and the consequences of their learning output [*konsekvensevaluering* in Norwegian]. At the NMA, the latter can also be seen as accepted tacitly by the cadets where there are the realistic credos and the *demands of war*. In the following, cadets' reflections on relegation (being expelled from the education at the NMA), trust, and competition will be presented.

In the e-mail survey, several cadets expressed that the primary outcomes from the NMA gave them the chance '*to have faith in myself*', and to be '*self-reflective*', while understanding others and caring. One cadet emphasised his need '*to keep a professional identity. This trade demands a lot from us, and to identify with the profession is important in order to grasp our own role in a bigger picture*'. These quotes nuance learning outcomes in relation to what other cadets points out. One cadet expresses their learning outcomes this way: '*Keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer. [*There is*] much jealousy, envy, bitterness, and rumours.*' This quote indicates that there is something that the cadet experiences or learns that lies outside the formal curricula, specifically the hidden curricula. Another cadet wrote:

> To judge other people's true motives and intentions. Sad, but still true. Instead of creating fantastic communities of mastery, the NMA sets the cadets in opposition to other cadets, and the cadets against the instructors. This does something to the learning environment, and I think it will affect us all in the years to come.

This cadet informs us that, within the learning environment, there is something about the organisation of learning that creates tensions between the cadets, and between the cadets and the school. In the in-depth interviews cadets reflect upon the evaluation and relegation system.

3.1. Cadet Reflections on Relegation and Assessment

> One cadet we have called Felicia reflects on evaluation among her peers.
>
> Yes, it is just not fair. If he is thrown out (from the NMA), then X should be relegated also. He is better, but he got fewer opportunities to prove himself. Some just stay below the radar, others put their heads up and it gets it chopped off.

Felicia reflects that some of the cadets are not treated fairly, but also that some cadets manage to cope, and do not undergo the same scrutiny as others. The system is not perceived as fair. Felicia continues and makes reservations about her viewpoints:

> There has been a lot of talk among the others in my cohort, and I feel it is not always fair. The evaluation of some of the cadets which is here or not here anymore. I haven't perceived as fair. But there are also probably a lot of things that I do not know.

The assessment and evaluations are not always perceived as transparent by the cadets. This can be due to secrecy, but also due to potentially unclear criteria and personal bias. In an interview, a cadet we have called Karl elaborates on the personal touch or differences among the NMA instructors, but also on how 'second opinions' can be prejudiced. The cadets need to fulfil and pass some obligatory practical leadership tasks. These tasks may vary in duration and complexity. Karl reflects:

> It is obvious to me that I have experienced differences between instructors (mentors) in what is evaluated as a pass or fail. I have also felt that if a cadet has been struggling, and there is a hearsay in the system that this cadet is struggling and is getting warnings, and is given a new instructor/mentor, I do get a feeling that they are slaughtered unnecessarily. They are looking to see if the cadet makes 'the mistake' and 'yes he did'. So, when it is said to get a fresh look—it is not very fresh. I have experienced that in an order meeting that I felt went okay, but you know that the cadet has received a warning, he is slaughtered straight away.

In Karl's opinion the evaluation and relegation processes can be seen in the light of scapegoating. There is one cadet under scrutiny, and the rest are 'off the hook'. However, the AAR and the learning feedback is not all dark. A cadet we have named Nils reflects on the feedback situations: 'No, some instructors are quite good at making out the most important parts. They see the whole process form when the order is given, and they point out my 'repetitions' and in a way the most critical errors. And then I feel it is very good. And when they tell me what I am working well with they give me something I can use later.' As Nils reflects, evaluations can be received as valuable if attention is given to the cadets' whole process, and if references to other learning situations they have experienced are also given. However, not everything is always rosy according to Nils, as he continues:

> But then there are just too many instructors that feel they have to say something just to say something. And if there are three or four instructors that provide feedback, they end up [getting] into many details. They also comment on things that we have no learning prerequisites for to address. It could be parts of my plan that are missing. Sometimes it is the order given that gives the premise for that mistake, and it ends up with too much feedback and too much information. I don't learn anything from that.

In this quote, Nils notes that the amount of feedback and information given in the AAR needs attention. Another cadet we call Beate points to the positives of direct feedback:

> During the combat fatigue course I received specific feedback that I did not have time to address before shooting course 5 in the final year when I had X (head instructor). I tried to jump over a trench, and somebody shot me from the side, and I lay there on my side playing dead. X then stands over me and yells at me. It didn't affect me emotionally or anything because I didn't feel very much, but it was like; hey okay, ah, I shall not run like that, I need to move around it. (Laughs).

After this verbal feedback she reflects on why this fault occurred. Beate continues: *Everybody had run over and across things, so the people I have been modelling are not perfect either, but this was what I have learnt. But it was kind of nice to get the clear answers: this is not the way to do it, this way is*. To be provided with clear answers and advice was appreciated by Beate. However, all mistakes are not dealt with in earlier sessions had hampered her learning, and probably also that of other cadets in the cohort. This can influence the level of trust between cadets and the NMA.

3.2. Trust and Competition

According to the psychologist Eric Homburger Erikson (1968), basic trust is vital in development and learning. Inspired by Erikson, and the observed variations of positive feedback in AAR by the researcher, the competitive nature observed at the NMA got the researchers' attention. Variations on questions which all started 'Do I have complete trust in…?' were asked in the survey provided to the graduated cadets. A 1–5 Likert scale was used. Table 1 provides an overview of the questions and answers related to the trust that the cadets perceived in their learning environment.

Table 1. Perceived trust in the people and in the cadets' learning environment (n=18).

To what extent do you agree with the following statements	M	SD
1. I have complete trust in my fellow cadets	3.11	.83
2. I have complete trust in my instructors during exercises	3.22	1.06
3. I have complete trust in company commanders	2.94	.90
4. I have complete trust in the NMA	2.83	.92
5. I have complete trust in my learning group/squad?	4.17	.79

Scale ranging from 1 (fully disagree)–5 (fully agree).

In the learning culture and structure at the NMA, learners report on varying degrees of perceived trust (M= 2.83 to 4.17) in their environment. The results are from only18 out of 54 cadets, but when carefully interpreted, the data reveal that there is a breach of trust between the learners and the NMA. The results follow a *proximo distalis* pattern, whereas the close unity of the learning group got a mean 4.17 with little spread, and the NMA and its mentors and instructors had less positives, but a higher spread. Besides the variations of feedback received on more or less identical performances, trust can be affected by the cultivated weight of competition.

3.3. Primus Inter Pares

On the first day of observation when the cadets were introduced to the research project, they also presented themselves to each other. The most striking impression on the researcher present at that time was that several cadets underlined their own competitiveness, and some also mentioned their gambling. One interpretation of this is that it is a culturally safe behaviour. In a competitive 'elite' school like the NMA, the cadets are told they are the best on their first day of training. Competition is seen as natural and is used by the NMA to motivate (Magnussen & Boe, 2017). Table 2 presents the results of questions relating to the effects on learning using a scale ranging from 1 (fully disagree) to 5 (fully agree).

Table 2. Effects of competition/ranking on the learning landscape.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements	n	M	SD
1. Does competition/ranking among the cadets facilitates learning	(n=15)	2.87	1.19
2. Has competition/ranking among the cadets enhanced my development/learning	n=16)	2.50	1.27
3. Is the ranking of us as cadets motivating	(n=17)	2.76	1.30

Scale ranging from 1 (fully disagree)–5 (fully agree).

In Table 2, some of the cadets are clearly disagreeing with the potential positives, however this view is contested by some of the other participants in the survey. The results indicate that elements of competition have not been experienced as beneficial for all cadets, and it is perceived as a negative factor in their learning environment. The SML and the use of the 'secret' spreadsheet and a competitive learning culture can be interpreted, after the initial weeks, as fixed. If one cadet exceeds another cadet, leapfrogging them on the spreadsheet, the other cadet is losing their place in the zero–sum game which is created by internal ranking.

3.4. Feedback, Trust, and Competition

As noted earlier, there seem to be variations in the feedback given on different exercises. The cadet whom we called 'Nils' reflects thus on the variations between the different years of study:

> The last thing I felt after the last one and a half years of tactics and practical leadership is that there was very quickly harsh critique if it turned out badly, there was not much emphasis on learning. And there was not much room for error.

In this quote Nils points to the potential harshness of the educational culture of the NMA. He claims that there was an emphasis on playing it safe. He reports a shift in the final years, where the cadets on one of the exercises run the command school. He continues:

> But I felt, especially when we run the command school that there was an emphasis on learning. If you make a mistake, it doesn't count as much, because you have learnt from that and it will be fine the next time. It is a matter of who is in charge.
>
> I: That the tactician's got a firmer grip?
>
> Nils: Yes, and one thing is the wording you use. Before the fear of failure was greater, and that fear is not as big the last year because you are not cut down if you fail. Now it is more like 'good, then you have learnt something. You are attending the NMA to learn'. I remember hearing that [in] the third year. It was the first time, the third year. I got the question '[Instructor] Nils, do you know the difference between this and that? [Nils] - No. [Instructor] - Okay, then I will tell you. [Nils] - Sorry I did not know. [Instructor] No - but that is perfectly fine. You are here to learn.' It was like what? I hadn't heard that before. So now I feel we can lower our shoulders a bit in the last year. The instructors have withdrawn a bit and given the cadets more responsibility. I can be a little bit more myself now.

In this quote Nils reflects on changes in the learning environment from what we suggest is in the realms of realism, towards a humanistic approach, with less emphasis on making the mistakes matter in the final year. Until then, there has been an emphasis on avoiding mistakes and play-acting, hiding who they 'are'. A part of this can be seen considering the SML ranking and the spreadsheet. The cadets are sorted into the top ten, the middle, and the 'bottom ten'. The perceived hostility of the learning environment and the instructors' role in the training was experienced by a cadet we have named Klara when she was sick and could hardly perform. She reflects on her relationship with her official mentor/instructor:

> He was my mentor [in the] last year. The whole year had passed by, and I was acutely aware that he had lost his faith in me. He didn't think I would make it at all. It showed in everything he said and did. As a matter of fact, he said it directly. During one of the exercises, I was sick. Couldn't speak a whole sentence without stopping (laughs), I didn't work at all. That was the first time he said something nice to me. He then came over to me and said, 'I really hope you don't pull out of the programme, because I think you are a fine cadet, and I really want you to continue at the NMA'. He put his arm around me and told me he wanted me to continue. It was the first time he had said anything positive to me. It was also the first time he had shown a human side. That he really cared. That he was not only standing on the outside of our team and shouting if anything went wrong.

In this quote Klara reflects on the lack of positive feedback and that some 'mentors' openly tell cadets that they cannot complete the course. Together with elements of distrust, an emphasis on competition and avoiding mistakes provide the learners at the NMA with insights from a hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968). We will discuss these findings and their possible implications next.

4. Discussion

One key finding is that there may exist a diversion between the learner's "inner" contextualisation of the experiences made at the NMA. This contextualisation may differ from the official NMA discourse (Säljö, 2001). Hence, learners entering the NMA can be provided with educative experiences outside what is in the curriculum (Biesta, 2004) and official speeches. Such experiences can be related to a variety of evaluative practices and can be reported as spurious. The system creates its favourites, and they are strengthened throughout the learning processes. The cadets perceived as less competent are fighting a continuous uphill battle. In 1943, in the book *The Psychology of Military Leadership* (Pennington et al., 1943, s. 96) the motivational effects from competition were underlined. It is fair to suggest that this view still exists (Magnussen & Boe, 2017).

The role of the clown (jester)(Darsø, 2011) is not wanted by the system. If your performances in different practical leadership tasks does not match the instructor's view of right or wrong solutions,

the cadets are in peril of getting a negative evaluation. This may hamper innovative solutions, behaviour, and thinking. The result of this can also be possibly seen in the low importance the cadets attach to creativity, simply stating that it is not seen as an important character strength for a military officer (Boe, 2015). From this perspective, the system can be seen to be reproducing itself through narcissistic behaviour(Hatch & Schultz, 2002) where the clever action is the one that offers a physical and mental match of instructors' personalities and ideals.

The relegation axe looms above the learners, and in our view, keeps possible systemic critique at bay. Other ways of thinking and acting, in the learning culture of the NMA that has been described, can be problematic to the students. Creative task solutions, too much individuality, or asking questions addressing what we do not know (Darsø, 2011) can be seen as less street smart. However, an incremental factor can be that the cadets' placement in the one to fifty ranking can also make it less likely that weaker cadets receive more praise than (in this system) the ones who merit it. The learning outcomes from this can be seen as training to survive in the army's organisational jungle. You learn to survive in the system. This can be observed to be in harsh contrast to the Bildung journey and humanistic ideals of self-realisation (Maslow, 1994).

Trust can be important in 'tit for tat' games (Ayres & Braitwaite, 1992; Six, 2013). The system of a one to fifty approach together with sometimes unclear evaluation criteria, may weaken some of the cadets' trust in the NMA and the potential good will of the system. Different sides of the learning environment can be seen as conflicting. Hardliners with a realistic approach can make the cadets perform. Hence, if a cadet excels among their peers, others are sinking on the spreadsheet. This can be problematic in teamwork and team behaviour, and can cause alliances to form where subtle, and always positive peer evaluations are provided in the AAR. The competition "output" can harm the collaboration between the different forces of naval, air and ground. More particularly can reduced trust in education harm collaboration with their civilian counterparts, politicians and other nations army where interpersonal competencies can be vital. However, it remains open as to how long the butterfly of humanistic ideals can dodge the bullets of the hardliners and the 'realistic approach'. How can the humanistic behaviour and learning reported in the third year gain influence?

5. Educational Implications

One take-away for educational leaders that emerges from this basic research is related to a less biased feedback culture and finding ways of promoting excellence, other than by a 1–50 ranking approach. A different take-away is that the lack of trust towards the educational institution itself may be reflected within the military vocation and organisation. The NMA represents more than 250 years of tradition, and possibly mirrors the vocational army culture. Thus, the potential problems with trust at the NMA can also be found in the vocational context. The leadership culture enhanced in training at the NMA does not necessarily promote creativity and individuality, with the risk that the fear of failure overshadows the needs of innovation, and the social inclusion between civilian and military collaborations. Hence, this training can also have a negative effect when former army officers are employed by civilian associations or companies. The root cause of this potential learning outcome can be related to the hidden curriculum enforced by the NMA. As this study has identified, and to the best of society, during war, crisis, and major challenges where collaboration between the military and their civilian counterparts are needed, several aspects of higher military education need revision.

6. Limitations

Since this research was performed more than five years ago, the study programs of the three army academies, The NMA, The Norwegian Naval Academy and the Norwegian Airforce academy have been reorganized. There is now a common introductory training program emphasizing joint collaborations between the branches. Yet, the baseline culture of this "new" training are relating to the military training culture identified in this article. In other words: The problems from the hidden curriculum can even be escalated. Further limitations are that this article are based on a single cased study and do not say anything about how officers training are performed in other nations military acidemias.

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