**The New Learning Organisation:**

**PART II - Lessons from the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy**

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**THE NEW LEARNING ORGANISATION:**

**PART II - LESSONS FROM THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN AIR FORCE ACADEMY**

**Abstract**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper - PART II - is to present the lived experiences of Sensuous Organisational Learning drawn from the educational practices and learning culture of the Norwegian Defence University College, Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy's (RNoAFA) approach to growing (Military) leaders.

**Design/methodology/approach**

Consistent with MacIntosh et al.’s (2012) dialogical exchanges the authors present the relational and intersubjective nature of meaningful dialogue between the co-authors that provides scope for integrative stories of practice. The resulting illustrative example of the New Learning Organisation, is an account of the learning experienced. Hence, this paper is presented neither as a traditional empirical paper nor as a self-disclosing or even auto-ethnographic account. Instead, it is one of a series of research outputs from innovative research collaboration between the authors all committed to “practising knowing”.

**Findings**

The *Sensuous Organisational Learning – 8As framework* explains how *Attentiveness, Alertness, Awareness, Appreciation, Anticipation, Alignment, Activation* and *Agility* form an integral part of the educational strategy that enables the RNoAFA to respond to the wider Educational Reforms and Modernisation programme of Norwegian Defence. The RNoAFA is presented as an illustration of how the *New Learning Organisation* serves the common good if *Institutional Reflexivity* and *High Agility Organising* were key aspects of the *Learning Leadership* it fosters.

**Research Limitation/Implications**

Consistent with MacIntosh *et al’s* (2012) dialogical exchanges provide scope for integrative stories of practice. We present here the relational and intersubjective nature of meaningful dialogue between the co-authors. The resulting illustrative evidence are an account of the learning experienced and captured as a case study that is founded on more systematic scientific empirical research that underpins these accounts. However, this paper is not presented as a traditional empirical paper nor a self-disclosing or even auto-ethnographic account. Instead, it is one of a series of research outputs from an innovative research collaboration between the authors all committed to ‘practising knowing’.

**Practical Implications**

The *New Learning Organisation* promoted here focuses on responsible action to serve the common good. Investing in Institutional Reflexivity becomes critical in continuing to broaden the ways of being and becoming. As individuals, communities and organisations, that comprise the institution (in this case Norwegian Defence) grow and elevate their practical judgements to serve the common good the capacity to engage in reflexive critique heightens organisational agility and leadership.

**Social Implications**

Embedding care as the essence of learning not only enables accepting mistakes and owning up to these mistakes, but reinforcing the strength of character in doing so demonstrating what it means to be resilient, flexible and ready to respond to the VUCA. This is what permits *High Agility Organising* to foster learning on an ongoing basis driving the commitment to continually renew operational and professional practices. By focusing on how the common good can be better served, the *New Learning Organisation* cares to pursue the higher purpose that social actions must serve.

**Originality/value**

Advancing leadership as a personal, relational and organisational quality supported by an orientation towards practising goes beyond single, double and triple loop learning. In doing so the *Learning Leadership* that drives the *New Learning Organisation* energises *Attentiveness, Alertness, Awareness, Appreciation, Anticipation, Alignment, Activation* and *Agility.* This paper marks a new chapter in Organisational Learning research and practice by demonstrating the value of sensuousness as a foundation for improving the practical judgements across professional practices.

**Keywords:**

Learning Organisation, Organisational Learning, Sensuousness, Learning Leadership, Institutional Reflexivity, High Agility Organising

**Introduction**

In this second part, we extend beyond a conceptualisation of the *New Learning Organisation* to provide an illustration. We reiterate that the common good remains the core ‘mission’ of the *New Learning Organisation*, because we want to elaborate that in attending to the VUCA (*Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity* and *Ambiguity*, Bennett and Lemoine, 2014) conditions such a ‘mission’ shapes the ways of knowing and acting of both individuals, communities and the organisation as a whole. We illustrate this ‘mission’ in the way the Norwegian Defence University College, Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy (thereafter RNoAFA) as an educational institution, has been navigating the VUCA conditions of the recent Modernisation and Educational reforms in Norwegian Defence. As this analysis will also show, the RNoAFA, with this mission to serve the common good, it organises its approach to educating (Military) learning leaders across its faculty, officers and cadets. This approach to organising leadership education actively demonstrates organisational leadership in the Defence sector nationally and internationally (in NATO) in response to such VUCA conditions.

Through this analysis, we elaborate earlier calls in the Defence sector more broadly of the importance of education in cultivating the learning that ensures readiness, resilience and ability to respond to the VUCA conditions that define the nature of Defence internationally. We echo Haugrud *et al.* (2001, p. 66) calling for “more innovative methods for employing existing [educational] systems [so] that the military … become[s] a learning organization able to adapt to changing environments. The catalyst for that transformation must be education”.

We show in this paper, how the RNoAFA as an educational institution has been strengthening its distinctive focus in supporting the growth of (Military) leaders by cultivating not only individual and collective reflection but also *Institutional Reflexivity*. As we elaborated in PART I, *Institutional Reflexivity* focuses on cultivating critique such that self and situational awareness become a precondition to acting responsibly. Integral to fostering critique is also character development (Boe, 2015). In other words, it focuses on cultivating the character qualities/virtues that underpin the strength (military) leaders as professionals demonstrate when faced with VUCA conditions (Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2018). This is where we also recognise the organisational leadership of the RNoAFA demonstrated in the *High Agility Organising* that underpins the response to the current Modernisation programme, which we also explicate.

The accounts of the RNoAFA’s educational practices in developing *Learning Leadership* are presented by the educators that reflexively explicate the design principles and strategic priorities underpinning the RNoAFA’s educational strategy and overall learning culture. We clarify at this juncture that this paper is not presented as a traditional empirical paper nor a self-disclosing or even auto-ethnographic account. Instead, it is one of a series of research outputs from an innovative research collaboration between the authors all committed to ‘practising knowing’ (MacIntosh *et al.*, 2012). The collaborative learning partnership that brings together the authors in the varying roles as military officers, academics in the RNoAFA and international scholars, is testament to the collective commitment to explore learning differently. We have produced this paper jointly, sharpening up in the process our individual and collective learning as we practised what we present as the *New Learning Organisation* and illustrate through the *8As - Sensuous Organisational Learning Framework* (Attentiveness, Alertness, Awareness, Appreciation, Anticipation, Alignment, Activation and Agility) we explained in PART I.

Consistent with MacIntosh *et al’s* (2012) account of dialogical exchanges as providing the scope for integrative stories of practice, we present here the relational and intersubjective nature of meaningful dialogue between the co-authors. The resulting anecdotal/illustrative evidence are themselves an account of the learning experienced and captured as a case study that is founded on more systematic scientific empirical research that underpins these accounts. In this respect, we offer an innovative way of capturing and communicating our learning both in theorizing and critiquing our collective learning practice taking stock of our respective and shared learning practices (Cunliffe, 2002; Orr and Bennett, 2012).

And precisely because this is a dialogical exchange, that has unfolded over the last 3 years and has been supplemented by independent empirical research, we offer this paper as an innovative research outcome based on a rigorous and reflexive critique of our collective learning practice in producing it. In doing so, we recognize the distinctive nature of the RNoAFA in preparing the Military leaders that the Norwegian Defence needs. Yet, we also feel that there are relevant insights other organizations beyond the Military sector or the Norwegian context can draw on the learning practices that are detailed in this paper. In this respect, the *8As – Sensuous Organizational Learning Framework* - is presented beyond the focus on the *Learning Leadership* practices of the RNoAFA, even if the latter are utilized to exemplify the 8As framework in action in the ways it supports *Institutional Reflexivity* and *High Agility Organising*.

In the sections that follow, we illustrate some of the *Learning Leadership* practices in the RNoAFA integral to supporting the development of *Sensuous Organisational Learning*, so as to realise the current programme of Modernisation and associated Educational reforms that reflect the VUCA conditions in the Norwegian Defence Sector.

**VUCA in Norwegian Defence**

In this section we account for the VUCA conditions that a major Modernisation programme in Norwegian Defence creates, and the way the associated Educational reforms are worked with. We outline these reforms first to provide the current contextual conditions before illustrating how the educational approach of the RNoAFA, whilst being transformed due to these reforms fundamentally retains the commitment to critique supported by learning practices that embed systematic *review, reflection* and *reflexivity* as an integral part of the process of *Learning Leadership*.

***The Modernisation of Norwegian Defence***

New Public Management (thereafter NPM) is a common term for a wide range of principles and methods for organizing and managing in the public sector globally. The assumption is that if the public sector was more similar to the market, the resources would be allocated more efficiently and the inhabitants (customers) would be more satisfied. Whilst the introduction to NPM is associated with the emergence of new liberalistic political orientation attributed to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the late 1980s, several countries have applied principles from across the political spectrum (Lane, 2000; Hood, 1991). Typical characteristics of NPM according to Christensen and Lægreid (2002, p. 31) are: a distinction between politics and administration, removing hierarchy, letting leaders lead, performance and result steering, competition and market, efficient resource utilization and users as the epicentre of attention.

Whist NPM is recognised as the most important idea transforming the public sector (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2005) more generally, some commentators (e.g. Røvik, 2010) argue that the core issue focuses on eliminating bureaucracy and allowing greater flexibility. This orientation towards flexibility is consistent with the wider movement beyond the public sector and is aligned with efforts to develop High Reliability Organisations (thereafter HRO, Weick and Sutcliffe, 2015) as we discussed in PART I. The connection we want to make here between NPM and HRO is the way these ideas can help us appreciate the context of the Norwegian Air Force and the Aviation sector (both Civilian and Defence) more broadly. Before we elaborate this we need to account for the current modernisation programme.

The main principles of the current ‘competence’ reform as introduced in Parliament Proposition 73 S (2011-2012) and made further concretely as a focus on ‘Competence for a new time’ in Parliament Proposition 14 (2012-2013), is to create a ‘Defence of our time’. Norwegian Defence Forces are considered as a ‘competence-based’ organisation with diverse competence needs through the individual education systems of the respective specialist branches – Army, Navy, Air Force, Special Forces. The Norwegian Government aims to reform the Defence Forces’ education system in a way that takes care of the very nature of the military professional education and ensures competence founded on relevant and good military education delivered in a cost-effective manner.

A review of the education system was notified in the competence announcement (Parliament Proposition 14, 2012-2013). The Norwegian Government sought through the proposition to create better conditions for quality in education, facilitate a more robust academic environment, strengthening research-based education and at the same time free resources. Several of the measures recommended are also featured in previous long-term plans. The Norwegian Government has emphasized that the Defence Forces’ education system needs to be harmonized in line with the structural reform in the Higher Education Sector (Parliament Proposition 18, 2014-2015). By collecting the resources to fewer but stronger educational institutions, the ambition is to create more robust academic environments and better scientific research.

The purpose of the new education system is to supply the Defence sector with professional competence given the associated restructuring in the Military Officer’s Corps with the introduction of two career paths: The Officers (30% - OFs, who would be in charge of the overall planning and leading), and the Specialist ranks (70% - ORs, who would take care of systems and personnel on a daily basis). This is explicated in the Parliament Proposition 151 S, (2017) as follows:

*The present education system of The Armed Forces appears to be fragmented, costly, with complex management lines and often small and vulnerable professional environments. This changes the centre of gravity in the education system for professional and functional education. A future distribution between Officers (30 %) and Specialists (70 %) would affect the level of professional education for both categories.”* (Parliament Proposition 151 S, 2017, p. 23).

This new career structure reflects a major cultural change in Norwegian Defence and has implications for the Defences’ educational system both in delivering this change and sustaining the competence development necessary. The main priorities of the educational reforms as outlined in Parliament Proposition 151 S (2017) are:

1. To create a concentrated education system
2. Prioritize military core competence
3. Provide common education
4. Greater demand-tested and flexible education
5. More civil co-operation, however, with fewer suppliers
6. More openness (i.e. compare the quality with other educations making the education system part of the “Student Barometer”)
7. More robust professional environments

In practice, this means that educational institutions across the Defence Sector in Norway were, before the reform, spread over 16 geographic locations, and comprise of 6 schools which provide basic command education, 5 accredited colleges which deliver more than 10 bachelor degrees, an accredited college that provides Master’s degree, and 10 vocational colleges providing professional and functional education. The education system included in 2015: 20 Master's degree students, 66 staff students, 619 bachelor students, of which 495 war school cadets (Parliament Proposition 14, 2012-2013).

In short, the educational reforms as part of the wider programme of Modernisation are not only a major change initiative that calls for consolidation in the number of educational institutions, staff and other resources. It is a moment in history defining the future character and not only competence of the Defence Sector in the Military professionals it grows. It is here where *Learning Leadership* emerges as the challenge and opportunity. We explore this in the context of the Norwegian Air Force.

***The Norwegian Air Force Context***

To connect the focus on NPM and the current educational reforms jointly calling for greater efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness to change, we need to ensure we do not miss the direct link these characteristics have to High Reliability Organisations (HRO). At the most basic level, the idea of HRO has originated from the air traffic control of an US aircraft carrier. In particular, LaPorte and Consolini (1991) describe an organization that was bound in military hierarchy, but within the operation room shifted to a more flexible and agile set of organizing principles based on a flat hierarchy. The person seeing a challenge is in a position of giving an order or correcting the behaviour of a person regardless of rank.

This is what distinguishes also the RNoAF from other branches of Norwegian Defence. As Maaø (2005) explains, the Norwegian Air Force is heavily based on competence and the content of the mission and that this establishes who is leading and not necessarily the rank an officer has. This principle is not exclusive to the Norwegian Air Force. Donnithorne (2010) explains similar characteristics in the practices of the US Air Force where technology orientation, being self-aware and seeking autonomy, being individualistic and future oriented are key characteristics.

Such organisational culture orientated towards readiness, reliability and we will add reflexivity, steers the development of air power military leaders who typically are elite and agile, value expertise over rank, maintain low distance between leaders and those who are led, shift teams regularly and operate with clear procedures (Maaø, 2005).

These characteristics of the Air Force context as part of the NPM, help explain why the Norwegian Air Force offers an interesting example of a modern organization where *High Agility Organising* is also driven by ‘intention-based’ leadership (Torgersen and Steiro, 2009). This is reflected in the doctrine where the German ‘Auftragstaktikk’ known as ‘Mission Command’ aims to address the discrepancy between plans and the chaos of war. This problem with warfare is what Clausewitz (1832/1976, p. 119) termed ‘friction’ a discrepancy between the plan and what was actually happening in the battlefield (Gross 2016; Vandergriff 2006).

‘Intention-based’ leadership means that all assignments must be seen in light of the ends the mission seeks to serve. In this, the significance of decentralized decisions and task solving is based on the practical judgement (phronesis) of the commander. Information about *what* and *why* is far more important, than information about *how* (Chief of Defence, 2012; Norwegian Defence University College, 2014).Hence, the commander would form an ‘intent’ of the mission providing a framework and guidance. Yet, the personnel on the ground delivering this mission need to understand it well such that they can improvise on the battlefield to fulfil the mission and also exploit opportunities that occur from the friction (Murray, 2011; Shamir, 2011). Friction then becomes the culture of flexibility promoting the capacity to question how the intended plan is to be executed.

This notion of questioning may sound paradoxical in a context like the military which is known for its doctrine of ‘Command and Control’ supported by discipline both in obeying the guiding rules as well as, the capacity to execute instructions given, whilst also exercising practical judgement. And yet, consistent with Clausewitz’s account of ‘friction’ it is such tensions that enable the extensions in the actions taken and the modes of learning and knowing that support such acting. This agility in generating possibilities for action wouldn’t be limited to military organisations or the Norwegian Air Force. We would argue that in a VUCA world control and compliance are replaced by agility and flexibility to adjust.

Therefore, we would suggest that ‘Intension- based’ leadership is also called for in navigating through the current programme of Modernisation in the Norwegian Defence. And it is here where we provide an account of the *Sensuous Organisational Learning* that the RNoAFA has been adopting in fostering *Learning Leadership, Institutional Reflexivity, High Agility Organising*.

**The RNoAFA approach to Learning Leadership**

To illustrate the *Sensuous Organisational Learning* that underpins the RNoAFA’s approach to *Learning Leadership* we account for three main levels: Firstly, we illustrate the learning culture that characterises the mode of living and working for all its staff. Secondly, we explicate *Learning Leadership* as an educational approach in the way the RNoAFA as an academic institution educates Military leaders (in the cadets and officers that participate in its programmes). Thirdly, we illustrate the role and approach to *Learning Leadership* that the RNoAFA plays in the wider educational reforms as one of a range of organisations as part of the Norwegian Defence. These multi-level (individual, community, and organisation) accounts of *Learning Leadership* not only explicate *Institutional Reflexivity* as a Military innovation. They set the foundation for demonstrating how *Institutional Reflexivity* contributes to the *Sensuous Organisational Learning* (through the 8As – *Attentiveness, Alertness, Awareness, Appreciation, Anticipation, Alignment, Activation* and *Agility*) which in turn form the basis of the *High Agility Organising* that we suggest here can inspire other organisations in other sectors to consider as a response to the VUCA conditions they operate in.

***Living, Working and Learning in the RNoAFA.***

*Learning Leadership*, for the RNoAFA is not a ‘theme’ that forms part of its distinctive focus to educating leaders. It is a way of living, working and learning. As an educational institution it has grown both in its approach to fostering learning amongst students as much as it fosters learning and leadership among staff. The RNoAFA operates as a community of interdisciplinary practitioners with diverse expertise. A key characteristic of the people who constitute the RNoAFA is the way they are each valued for their contribution irrespective of rank/seniority. This orientation embraces diversity and celebrates heterogeneity. This in everyday practice means that critique is a way of living and working. Staff at the RNoAFA have strong community rules that promote mutual respect, collaborative work and trust in the education process they collectively create. Within that spirit staff celebrate, critiquing each other and their practices and recognise the value of reflexive critique as central to ongoing learning individually and collectively.

As an illustration of this, it is openly acknowledged that a healthy tension has historically existed in the two academic departments (Air Power and Leadership) that constitute the core of the education of military leaders that the RNoAFA delivers. Staff pliably account and engage in interdisciplinary debate over the design and delivery of the various programmes the RNoAFA is responsible for. They recognise however, in themselves and in each other sources of bias that colour their perspective and when it comes to identifying ways of serving the common good they develop interventions that enable them to break any deadlock.

An example of *Institutional Reflexivity* at the level of the RNoAFA as a community of (educators) interdisciplinary practitioners is the way for example the recent Modernisation has created an environment of uncertainty and insecurity especially due to the cuts in resources, including staff numbers. As would be expected these changes were met with more than a fair share of critique (not merely scepticism). Regular weekly meetings led by the RNoAFA senior leadership team provided the Commandant the opportunity to ensure that all staff had a voice and could openly ‘air out’ (speak up/express) their views, especially disagreements. In what often can be intense sessions, all staff feel safe expressing their vulnerability in light of the reforms. However, these fora, are also used to enhance *attentiveness* to how this vulnerability may stand in the way of learning and exploring how to do things differently. By formulating a number of strategic priorities in addressing the educational reforms, the RNoAFA is not only inviting all staff to be actively involved but to be also more *alert* and *aware* of how previous tensions between departments can be overcome.

An early outcome of this process of collective learning results in the restructuring of the RNoAFA and the creation of one new department – Air Power Leadership - that synthesises the previous two. That does not mean that tensions are resolved. As would be expected in the redesign of the RNoAFA’s educational programmes, tensions emerge in the perceived balance that can be struck between air power and leadership content of the revised interdisciplinary modules. Staff acknowledge and account for their *appreciation* of other’s perspectives even if they strongly disagree with them, given their disciplinary expertise. However, even if this results in conflict this is treated as a state of *activation*. By recognising the underlying care that underpins the critique of different disciplinary perspectives, this allows greater *alignment* in the respective interests of different members of the new joined department despite their established *awareness* of interdisciplinary differences. What emerges is a greater focus on *anticipating* the negative impacts of failing to do so. This promotes the collective *agility* to continue to explore ways of identifying the golden mean that balances not only the interests of members of the new department, but the Academy as a whole and its role as a critical player in the educational reforms.

This approach to living, working and learning together to serve a higher purpose than personal interests is founded on a principle and ethos of care and mutual respect. Such ethos permeates also the pedagogical corner stones on which leadership education rests.

***Educating Learning Leadership in the RNoAFA***

The Norwegian Air Force is currently undergoing a historic organizational change and maintaining the focus on leadership development in times of major changes is an invitation to revisit the pedagogical foundations on which the leadership education rests. The current Modernisation programme envisions that by 2024 there will be major investments in and change of all flying platforms, implementation of new technological equipment, as well as, a new command system, and, last but not least, a new educational system. Senior leaders in the RNoAFA, recognise the need to ensure that this programme of change does not neglect the human processes integral to realising these changes. In the education of new officers it is therefore, important to ensure knowledge of organizational learning and change to lead through the unknown, and yet leadership in VUCA conditions is perhaps the only stable and unchanged aspect of leadership education in the RNoAFA (as indeed in other Military branches in Norwegian Defence).

The purpose of developing ‘mission-based leadership’ in the Armed Forces is, inter alia, to better deal with uncertainty and to meet an unknown future with greater agility. This necessarily implies that the education of officers must include training and development of the ability to create solutions; maintain self-awareness and situational awareness and form a comprehensive understanding, as well as exercising independent decisions and translating plans and intentions into action. With this, the Armed Forces have chosen a decentralized command system, which mean that “*the one with the best situational awareness should be able to act flexibly and independently, but in line with the commanders’ intention”* (Chief of Defence, 2012, pp. 6-7; Norwegian Defence University College, 2014, p. 166). These are complex processes which require leadership that emphasizes collective effort with good cooperative and relational skills to create common/shared-sense of: 1) what to do (direction), 2) why it should be done (commitment) and, 3) how to do it (interaction).

These principles reinforce the framing of *‘Learning Leadership’* (Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2018; Antonacopoulou, 2018) as ‘a window to inner learning’, ‘relational process’ and a ‘labour of love’ and are manifested in the approach of growing leaders and leadership in the RNoAFA. Beyond creating a learning environment based on trust, the focus is orientated towards development rather than assessment and evaluation. An informal tone (e.g. addressing each other by first name) between educators and learners, despite the formality otherwise of standard operating procedures (e.g. wearing military uniform) permeates day-to-day interactions.

A set of pedagogical practices that promote *theory,* *practice* and *reflection* form key dimensions of the Educational strategy. The theoretical perspectives that inform the education of leaders in the RNoAFA have a broad and interdisciplinary scope. Subjects such as: history, political science, international politics and law, language, statistics and technology, pedagogy, psychology and organizational development, and of course military tactics, strategy, and method of operation are all integral theoretical foundations. These foundations are extended in a range of learning fora, be they classroom based practical arenas, exercises or exams and other progress reviews. Consistent with the RNoAFA’s primary goal to train officers and leaders able to perform air operations, addressing the main characteristics of air power - height, speed and range - the approach to leadership development promotes ‘practice’. This is used in its double meaning as both applying the learning into action, as well as practising to refine aspects of action (Antonacopoulou, 2008). Here, military exercises are a particularly prominent arena for practice and practising where the focus is especially on building the *agility* to act, by *anticipating* conditions that could call for changing the original plan. This by implication, calls for greater *activation* to see the connections and strive for *alignment* of competing priorities where possible.

The third principle is reflection where the emphasis is on a variety of ways that encourage developing *attentiveness* to experiences and *alertness* to the lessons they present. The growing *awareness* is not only limited to situational issues, but the way one personally responds to these circumstances embedded in specific situations. This extends awareness to a level of *appreciation* that enables the *activation* to not only steer actions, but do so in arenas of practice where leadership emerges as a stance as much as an intention. For example, every practical arena/military exercise entails debriefing and reflection weaved throughout and not only at the end of the process. Reflection is not only recognised as a process that draws learning out of the practical arena, on an individual level, group level, as well as, the organizational level. It is also a practice that demands refinement such that it extends beyond merely a review of what has been done, how and why.

Consistent with the discussion in the first section, the focus is to cultivate reflexivity and this goes beyond reflecting on one’s and other’s assumptions, perspective and critically reassessing how one responds. Instead, reflexivity is about simultaneously experiencing VUCA conditions with the capacity to define courses of action both as an insider, familiar with the intricacies and as an outsider who can see the holistic impact of various action strategies. This capacity for reflexivity demands practise too and the various arenas for reflection include systematic activities throughout the education in the RNoAFA in using a variety of methods to foster reflection individually and collectively. Specifically, reflection is practised when writing in logbooks. Each cadet writes about their own role(s) and process during the theoretical and practical arenas of education. These reflections are centred on questions such as: what happened, what was experienced, what is the learning and how does this learning impact leadership in a military context? This logbook writing serves as the basis for the cadets’ Leadership Philosophy - a self-reflective summary of three years of officer development that will be completed at the end of last year. Educators also conduct regular reflective discussions with each other and with their cadets (both planned and ad-hoc).

At the organizational level, the focus of the reflection is directed towards the relevance of the exercise or theory for real situations in peace, war and crisis. Here, a meta-focus is used where students consider their own organization and their own learning environment up against how a real organization/department should establish a learning focus. The emphasis here is also learning to organise reflection practice where leaders embed review, reflection and reflexivity as integral to their leadership practice. Therefore, sharing experiences, giving and receiving feedback and building relational trust (feeling safe being vulnerable, Antonacopoulou, 2018) become critical expressions of leadership practice in the RNoAF.

***Organisational Leadership in Norwegian Defence***

Members of the RNoAFA are active contributors in shaping the Modernisation programme in Norwegian Defence assuming a range of leadership roles. The learning that is generated in these contributions is fed back in the RNoAFA’s organisational practices as discussed earlier. However, what may be different is the approach of organisational leadership that the RNoAFA delivers in these activities. For example, staff members from the RNoAFA were integrated in all the key working groups designed as part of the educational reforms. They were directly experiencing VUCA conditions in navigating through these reforms especially given the very constrained time limits; unparalleled demands for cost reduction and reduction of personnel; unclear guidance as to what the new officer role in the Norwegian Defence Force should be; ever-present desire to outsource education that could be purchased on the civilian market, etc.

A key contribution of the participation of RNoAFA staff in the various working groups, was urging the working group members to engage in critical reflection of key concepts and basic educational components that were the dominating feature of large parts of the educational reform. Simultaneously, and in contrast, different elements of the officer's education, not least leadership development, were largely discussed between colleagues at the RNoAFA, through open dialogue and discussions in groups of professionals characterized by openness and critical reflection. Staff members who met in the educational reform key working groups therefore, knew the arguments and values that represented the RNoAFA collective perspective and by so doing, they had support to pose important questions for the educational reforms.

For example there were tensions in the working groups related to the value and importance of leadership as an academic field in the education of military officers. Without overselling its influence, the staff members of the RNoAFA played a significant role in arguing that leadership is indeed an academic field in and by itself, which deserves equal resources for research and development as other key academic disciplines within the new military education system. As it turned out, these very basic premises for military leadership education in the Norwegian Defence Force appear to have been re-established and, at least for now, are largely uncontested.

The RNoAFA’s organisational leadership has not been limited to the contributions in the planning and redesign of the educational reforms. It has also recognised the need to systematically learn from the previous educational practices that have served well the Norwegian Defence and has embarked on a major research programme capturing systematically the experiences and insights of educators and learners of the process of growing leaders and leadership in the educational practices of the RNoAFA. By engaging members of the Ministry of Defence, as well as educators in other parts of the Norwegian Defence education system, the study has also fostered a collective learning platform promoting those who are less close to the educational practices to better appreciate the impact of the education reforms.

The *Institutional Reflexivity* that the organisational leadership of the RNoAFA presents as outlined in the previous paragraphs, can also be illustrated through two other major initiatives that have been running for nearly 20 years and have been established as learning activities across the Defence Forces. Both activities are designed to support Organisational Learning practices that inform improvements more widely in the Norwegian Defence. The first activity comprises of two annual conferences; the Annual Leadership Conference and Air Power Seminar which are open to all members of Norwegian Defence Forces as well as, invited partners in NATO. These conferences each lasting usually 2-3 days are designed as learning spaces – where debates, workshops, invited presentations by internal and external speakers in the Defence and Civilian world support the sharing of ideas and knowledge.

One of the main objectives of these conferences is to ask questions about established military practices. Here, the RNoAFA fosters critique across the Air Force’s departments and across the branches of Norwegian Defence in an effort to cultivate greater *agility* and *alignment* of operations. These Conferences have become a reflexive meeting arena for senior leaders in the Armed Forces, Politicians and Defence Agencies to grow greater appreciation of the conditions that affect practical judgements including the current Modernisation programme. In fact, the conferences have been an *activation* space for deliberating the fundamentals of professionalism across the Defence sector prompting a greater *attentiveness* to the conditions that affect ‘mission-based leadership’ and *alertness* to the implications that heightened *awareness* the NPM presents. These conferences promote greater trust and openness in the Defence sector as an organization and maintain low distance between leaders by bringing top executives and younger military leaders together to jointly reflect on important topics for the Defence Forces at large.

The second initiative that the RNoAFA leads across Norwegian Defence, is the ‘Mentor program’ which promotes life-long leadership development, especially for senior leaders (currently at Colonel Lieutenant and Colonel levels). The purpose of the program is to help develop a leadership culture in the Defence Forces characterized by the desire for continuous learning, constructive feedback, clear communication, openness and trust as integral to *Institutional Reflexivity*. Such *Learning Leadership* is important for increased operational power, enhanced security, performance improvement and amplified relational competence all considered integral to *High Agility Organizing*. The mentors that contribute to this program are the top leaders in the Armed Forces (Flag commanders and Generals). The aim of the mentor program is to act as a systematic arena of exchange of experiences and practising reflexivity for senior officers. A reflexive approach underpins the conversations between senior officers on the program, dyadic discussions between mentors and mentees, and half-day seminars for mentors only. Throughout the program, discussions critique a variety of topics in everyday professional practice. Top leaders across the Norwegian Defence are invited to share their experiences, concerns, challenges and successes and then participants can ask questions about anything that may affect the role of military leaders at the highest level. This program contributes significantly to openness and trust at the highest level as essential to be sustained across the Defence Forces.

**Conclusions**

We have sought to illustrate the *New Learning Organisation* in the educational practices of the RNoAFA in this paper, by focusing on the *Sensuous Organisational Learning* that underpins them. Moreover, we have sought to demonstrate the way the core principles of *Institutional Reflexivity, High Agility Organising* and *Learning Leadership* are embedded in the educational practices of the RNoAFA as well as, learning culture in the way faculty, staff and cadets engage in living and working. We have embedded these principles and practices in the VUCA conditions of the Modernisation programme in Norwegian Defence and its associated educational reforms. We outlined these reforms first to provide the current contextual conditions before illustrating how the educational approach whilst being transformed due to these reforms fundamentally retains the commitment to critique supported by learning practices that embed systematic *review, reflection* and *reflexivity* as an integral part of the process of *Learning Leadership*. We extended our analysis beyond personal and relational leadership development to show the organisational leadership the RNoAFA demonstrates in its approach to foster *High Agility Organising* through *Institutional Reflexivity* across the Norwegian Defence at this critical juncture of Modernisation and reform.

By bringing the *8As Sensuous Organisational Learning Framework* to life in the ways of knowing, acting, being and becoming that underpin the *Institutional Reflexivity, High Agility Organising* and *Learning Leadership* within the RNoAFA, we aim to go beyond previous accounts and frameworks that explain the Learning Organisation on the basis of key characteristics elaborated in Part I. Of course, we recognise the value of characteristics previously promoted, as there will always be a need for ‘Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, and Team Learning’ (Senge, 2006), just as much as there will be a need for ‘Clarity of purpose, Holistic people experience, Thriving Ecosystem, Agile, digital infrastructure, Continual engagement and Intelligent decision making’ (Daly & Overton, 2017). However, what we have sought to make the case for is that unless the ‘mission’ of the Learning Organisation is to serve the common good, these characteristics in and by themselves will be unlikely to sustain the kind of learning necessary across levels.

We made the case for *Sensuous Learning* underpinning the *New Learning Organisation* we propose here, because we wanted to show the value of embracing critique, tensions and VUCA. We therefore, suggest that in expanding and orchestrating sensations as intuitive insights *Sensuous Organisational Learning* goes beyond mental models and existing knowledge when navigating the unknown. It enables instead, staying engaged with the everyday practices using *sensibility, sensitivity* and *sentience* to work with VUCA.

In this respect, the key lessons that we derive from the RNoAFA as the added value contribution in promoting this as an illustration of the *New Learning Organisation* are:

1. The need to invest in *Institutional Reflexivity* to continue to broaden the ways of being and becoming as individuals, communities and organisations that comprise of the institution (in this case Norwegian Defence) continue to grow and elevate their practical judgements to serve the common good.
2. Embedding care as the essence of learning not only enables accepting mistakes and owning up to these mistakes, but reinforcing the strength of character in doing so demonstrating what it means to be resilient, flexible and ready to respond to the VUCA. This is what permits *High Agility Organising* to foster learning on an ongoing basis but also lessons that may not be easily distilled in a confusing VUCA context to be arrested and embedded in the commitment to continually renew operational and professional practices.
3. Advancing leadership as a personal, relational and organisational quality supported by an orientation towards practising goes beyond single, double and triple loop learning. In doing so the *Learning Leadership* that drives the *New Learning Organisation* energises *Attentiveness, Alertness, Awareness, Appreciation, Anticipation, Alignment, Activation* and *Agility.*

By sharing through this paper some of its *Learning Leadership* practices, the RNoAFA is not presented as a role model of the *New Learning Organisation*. Instead, it is a living testament of what it takes to work through the challenges of learning differently to serve the common good. This means that to serve a higher purpose beyond the typical efficiency and effectiveness targets, the focus must necessarily be on the practical judgements that reflexively critique not only assumptions and perspectives, but elevate differences to the capacity to make a difference collectively. This is what the RNoAFA strives to do when it fosters *Sensuous Organisational Learning* both as part of the Norwegian Defence and NATO. Our hope is that this will inspire other organisations and not only within the Military sector to explore *learning with a difference*.

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