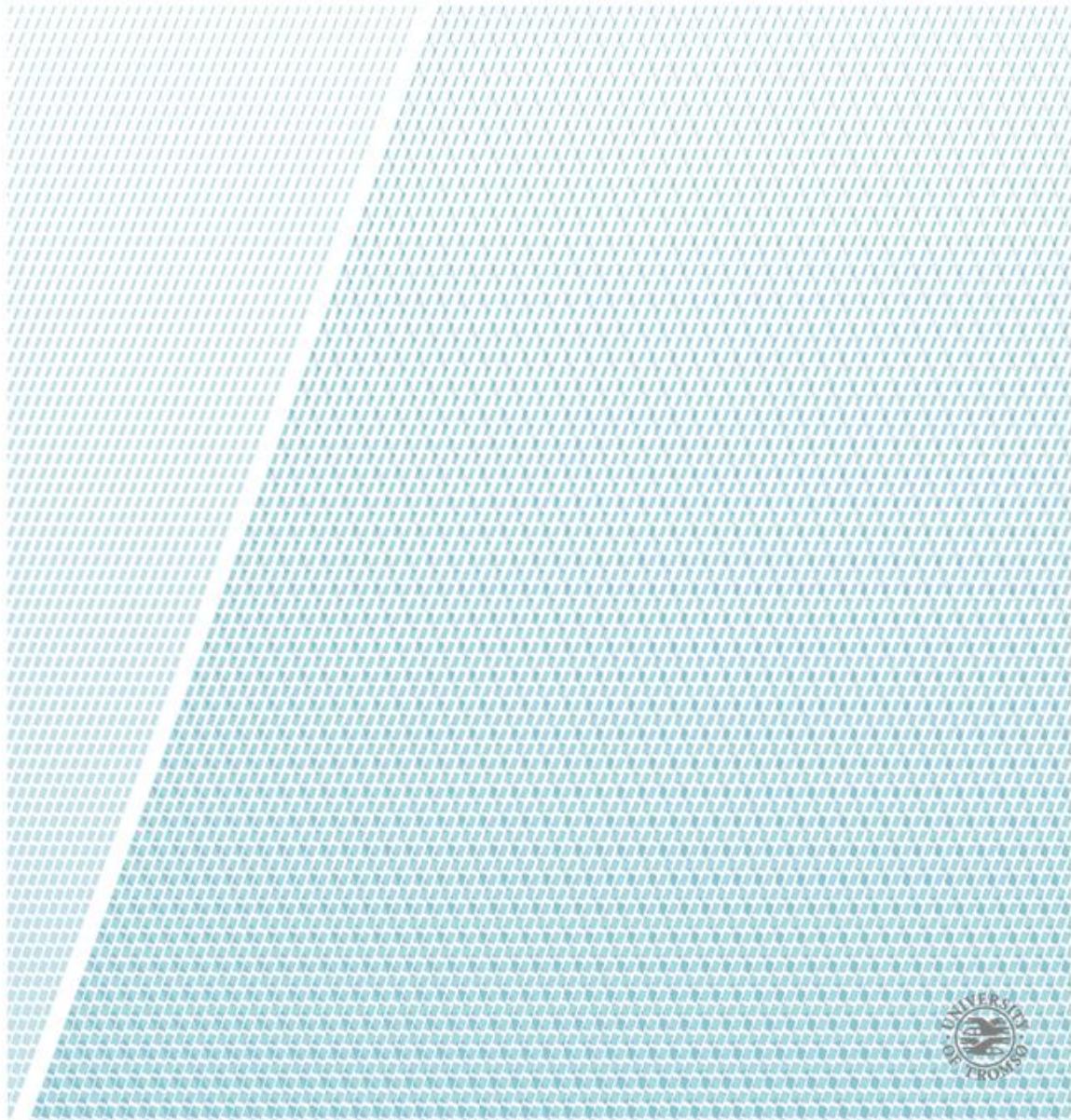


Towards a new contract?

Understanding school leadership in a distributed perspective

—
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Summary

Broadly, this master's thesis is about understanding how leadership in schools influences instructional quality. More specifically, it is concerned with *distributed leadership*, a concept that has grown more popular over the course of the last few decades and now occupies a strong position in theories about leadership.

The thesis is descriptive and asks the question: How is leadership connected to instructional quality distributed in one upper secondary school in Norway? To answer this question, empirical data were gathered through qualitative interviews with teachers and school leaders, and then analyzed in relation to three discrete elements:

- 1) four patterns of the distribution of leadership, which categorize leadership along two axes as spontaneous or planful, as aligned or misaligned.
- 2) three dimensions that leadership is situated in and/or can be understood through, the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive
- 3) three axes along which leadership is performed: the student-teacher axis, the teacher leader-teacher follower axis and the leader-teacher axis

The thesis provides a detailed analysis of the distribution of leadership in one school; as well, it attempts to place the findings at one school in the larger context of Norwegian education. The findings indicate the apparent need for a new term, *low-grade alignment*, and the thesis suggests that the distribution of leadership at the school in question can as a whole best be described as *spontaneous low-grade alignment*. However, patterns of distribution do vary some depending upon which of the three axes is observed, suggesting that it may be more useful to describe leadership distribution along the various axes than for the school as a whole.

The findings also indicate that leadership in the school was most strongly situated in the normative dimension. As well, they revealed that analyzing leadership in the school through each dimension provided relevant and useful insights into leadership distribution in the school, among them potentially changing leadership roles of teachers vis á vis students, their colleagues and school leaders.

Preface

This thesis is the culmination of nearly four years of work in a professional master's program. During this journey, theory and practice have steadily become much more intertwined, so much so that many of the theories that I now employ in my everyday work are no longer even visible to me, but have simply become a part of how I view the world.

My motivation for this project was born from a need I felt to better understand the leadership processes influencing classroom instruction at my school well enough. What steps could I take to encourage improvement of instructional quality at my school? When I learned of the theory of distributed leadership, my understanding of this question changed: to know what steps I should take, I first had to know more about the leadership steps that others were taking. This project is part of a quest to strengthen this analysis, to build a stronger theoretical understanding of what is happening at my school, to meld theory and practice so that my actions may have a greater chance of being productive.

Several "Thank you's" are of course in order. First, to the professors and other teachers at the national principal education (rektorutdanning) in Tromsø, in particular Siw Skrøvseth, Nils Ole Nilsen and Morten Brattvoll, who has also been my advisor on this project. You were fantastically accessible and encouraging. Thank you as well to my fellow students, both at the principal education and the master's program. I enjoyed learning from and with you. Thanks also to my employer, Finnmark fylkeskommune, whose support through both time and money made this project more achievable. As well, thank you to the teachers and school leaders who participated in this project. Literally, I couldn't have done it without you. And finally, the biggest thank you to my wife and children, who put up with stacks of papers and books and a slightly distracted husband and father over the last few years. I promise this is most likely the last master's degree I will take.

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1. Introduction

In my nearly 10-year career as an English teacher at an upper secondary school in the northerly province of Finnmark, Norway, I did not once have a conversation with my employer about the quality of my teaching. Nor did I ever receive a visit in the classroom or have a structured review of the most central element of my job: my performance in the classroom. Berg's term "The Invisible Contract" in which teachers and school leaders have a tacit agreement about each leaving the other alone certainly seemed to accurately describe my time as a teacher (Berg, 1999). Later, as a school leader myself, I began to wonder how to rewrite that contract in a way such that there could be a role for school leaders – and perhaps other teachers and students as well – in discussions about instructional quality. In other words, I was interested in how to work to deprivatize the practice of teaching. And I was certainly not alone in this aim. The move to deprivatize teachers' work appears to be a national effort if we look at some of the major topics that have emerged in the educational sphere over the last several years, such as the push for professional learning communities and a more collective approach to teaching, attempts to institutionalize instructional evaluation by students and increased responsibility placed on school leaders for student outcomes. The importance of this effort has been underscored by Viviane Robinson's benchmark work in which she defines ensuring instructional quality as one of the most important dimensions of school leadership that improves student outcomes (Robinson, 2014). However, there seem to be significant impediments to achieving change. As Camburn and Han note,

"Teachers are the ultimate brokers of change, and they may simply decide that change is not in their best interest, or they may make only surface changes to their practice that do not fundamentally alter the instructional experiences their students receive...Even though many believe that teacher collaboration can serve as a springboard for instructional change, persistent teacher isolation and norms of privacy are believed to stand in the way of significant collegial work" (Camburn & Han, 2009, p.26).

Through participation in the national school leader education program, I became familiar with the concept of distributed leadership, and my thoughts about how leadership is conducted, and about who performs that leadership, grew more nuanced. It became clear to me that relevant questions for a school leader to ask before he takes action are: Who at my school influences the quality of instruction? Who are the actors who exert influence over teachers' choices in the classroom and their understanding of what good instruction is? What role do school leaders have, what role do teachers' colleagues have, and what role do students have? In other words, a school leader might do well to ask: How is leadership distributed at my school?

These experiences form the background for this master's project. It is my hope through this project to cast a bit more light over how leadership connected to instructional quality can be understood. This project has a fundamentally instrumental perspective on the phenomenon. As a school leader, I am, ultimately, in search of what could be called "actionable intelligence": insight that can guide my actions. This work, though descriptive in nature, could perhaps contribute eventually to the development of a more prescriptive approach to the phenomenon. That is, it might be possible to change the question from "How is leadership distributed?" to "How should leadership be distributed?". As well, it is my hope that the analytical work involved in this study will sharpen my skills and provide a new framework through which I can understand my school, thereby enabling me to be a more effective school leader.

As mentioned above, this project is descriptive in nature; the phenomenon I will be looking to describe is distributed leadership. I will limit the focus of this description in two ways: First, I will narrow the scope of the study and describe leadership distribution in one upper secondary school in Norway. Second, I will not attempt to describe leadership related to all topics, but rather limit the description to leadership directly connected to instructional quality.

I will describe the distribution of leadership connected to instructional quality by looking at three discrete though interconnected elements:

- 4) four patterns of the distribution of leadership.
- 5) three dimensions that leadership is situated in and can be understood through
- 6) three axes along which leadership is performed

The primary research question of this master's project is: How is leadership connected to instructional quality distributed in one upper secondary school?

The secondary research questions are as follows:

- Which patterns of distribution can describe leadership that is performed between formal leaders and teachers, between students and teachers, and between teacher colleagues?
- In which dimension is leadership situated between formal leaders and teachers, between students and teachers, and between teacher colleagues? How does looking at leadership in each dimension affect how we perceive its distribution? How do the dimensions correlate with the three axes?

The following model provides an overview of the project:

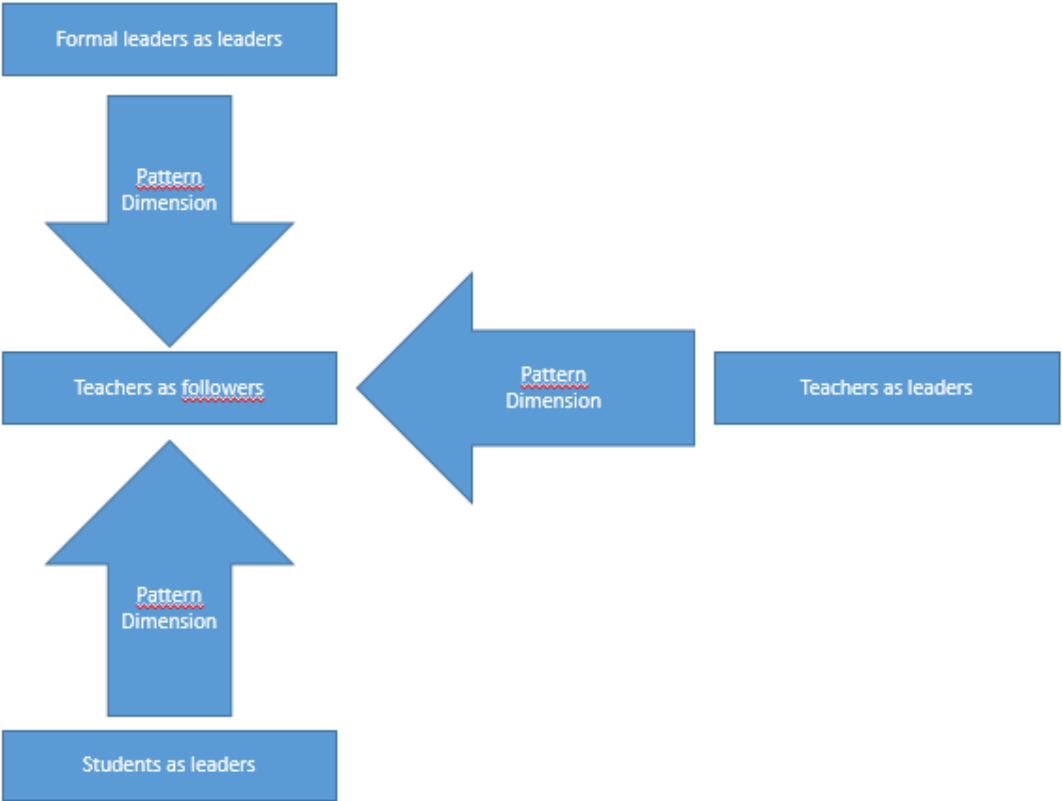


Figure 1. Project model

The arrows indicate the exercise of leadership and are placed along three distinct axes: the leader-teacher axis, in which formal leaders exercise leadership over teachers; the teacher leader-teacher follower axis, in which teachers exercise leadership over other teachers; and the student-teacher axis, in which students exercise leadership over teachers. I will be asking these three questions about leadership performed along each of these axes: Which patterns of distribution describe the exercise of leadership? In which dimensions is leadership situated? What do we see by looking at leadership in the different dimensions?

2. Theoretical foundation

The focus of this project is the distribution of leadership connected to instructional quality. In this chapter I will first develop a working definition of the term leadership, then present a discussion of the concept of distributed leadership. This discussion will include the presentation of the concepts of patterns of distribution and three dimensions in which leadership can be understood. I will then define the term instructional quality and look at a model for how leadership influences instructional quality. Finally, I will present a theoretical framework which attempts to combine the discrete elements into a more coherent whole.

2.1 What is leadership?

In her presentation of the concept of leadership, Robinson concludes that it has two primary elements: “First, leadership comprises goal-relevant influence – that is, those acts which take a group or organization closer to its goals. Second, the source of the influence is follower’s personal liking or identification with the leader, the leader’s goal-relevant expertise or the perceived legitimacy of his or her authority (Robinson, 2009, p.223). If we attempt to unpack the two elements of this definition, we can see that the first element is about the exercise of influence in such a way that it moves the group or organization in the direction of its goals. Here it is important to note that all acts that move an organization towards its goals, including routine actions, could in a way be defined as acts of leadership. However, as Katz and Kahn identify, leadership is more usefully conceived as being limited to somewhat more exceptional activities than the merely routine (Katz & Kahn, 1996). For Fay, leadership involves an element of change, an exertion of influence that moves the organization or group in the direction of its goals in some new way (Fay, 1987). This perspective underscores the importance of contextualizing the study of leadership: an activity in one organization could be perceived as routine and therefore not count as leadership by this definition; the same activity in another organization could be a new activity that influences actors in new ways. For my purposes, I will incorporate this understanding of leadership – that it involves some form of non-routine influence or change – in my use of the term.

The second element that Robinson suggests as a key to understanding the concept of leadership is how leadership can be distinguished from other types of “goal-directed influence process such as force, coercion and manipulation” (Robinson, 2009, p. 222). Further, three types of influence process that qualify as leadership are identified. The first is connected to the personal qualities of the leader. Here, the follower likes the leader or somehow identifies

with him. I will from here on also refer to this influence process as based upon charisma. The second influence process is based on the leader's expertise. A leader with knowledge or competence that the follower does not have, can exert influence based on this disparity. The third leadership influence process is based on the leader's position. If the follower perceives the leader to occupy a position of legitimate authority, and if the actions of the leader are perceived as legitimate, then we can call that leader's actions leadership rather than coercion or manipulation.

2.2 What is distributed leadership?

The concept of distributed leadership has grown more popular over the course of the last few decades. One interpretation of the term's popularity is as a reaction to the predominance over the latter half of the twentieth century of leadership theories that focused on and thereby elevated the actions and characteristics of individual leaders (Harris, 2009). Whatever the case, the term has risen steadily in popularity and now occupies a strong position in theories about leadership (ibid, Halvorsen, 2014).

Several scholars have observed that distributed leadership has suffered from what Harris called a chameleon-like quality (Harris, 2009). He has written that the term's popularity has "meant that interpretations of the term can easily slide between" normative, descriptive, predictive and discursive positions (ibid). Spillane went even further, expressing concern that the term could risk "meaning all things to all people" (Spillane, 2006, p.102). Spillane has also called for greater precision in conceptualization of the term distributed leadership, complaining that "loose constructs" lead to "fuzzy research" (Spillane, 2015, p.277) Below, I will attempt to clarify the term as I employ it in this project so as to avoid such problems.

Distributed leadership can be understood as "a lens to understand leadership practice; it is a conceptual and analytical framework for studying leadership interaction (Harris, 2009, p.4). This framework has, according to Spillane's seminal work, two fundamental aspects (Spillane et al., 2004). These are the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader-plus aspect "recognizes that leading and managing schools can involve multiple individuals" (Spillane, 2009, p.49). Moreover, it is the acknowledgement that leadership activities are not limited to those formally designated as leaders. If we refer back to our definition of leadership, this means that 1) multiple actors – not just formal leaders – influence the organization in a way that creates change in the direction of the organization's goals, and 2) that these actors exert influence through charisma, through expertise or through positions of legitimate authority.

The practice aspect involves framing leadership practice as “a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation” (ibid). That is, in a distributed perspective, leadership cannot be understood by examining the actions of individuals, whether they are formal leaders, teachers, students or others. Rather, it is the analysis of the interactions between leaders and followers placed in a particular context that is of interest.

The following model from Spillane captures both the leader-plus and practice aspects:

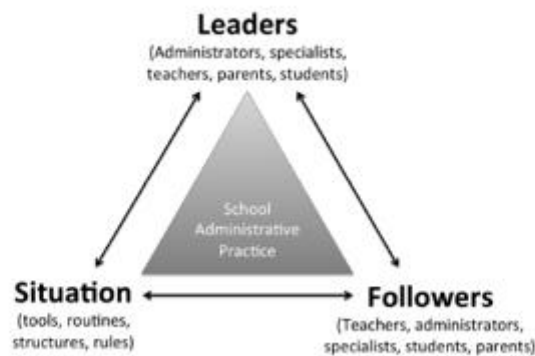


Figure 2. Spillane’s School Administrative Practice (Spillane, 2015, p.281)

In the model, we see that multiple actors can be defined as leaders and followers, and, significantly, that the same people can at times be leaders and at other times followers. This is the leader-plus aspect. We see also that leadership practice in a distributed perspective is about the influence exerted over other individuals, called followers, rather than the actions of leaders alone. As well, the significance of the artefacts that comprise the context in which influence is exerted, here called the situation, is made clear.

2.2.1 The designed organization and the lived organization

A significant clarification to make when discussing distributed leadership is between the designed organization and the lived organization. The designed organization refers to looking at “formally designated leadership positions,” whereas the lived organization is about the “day-to-day practice of leadership and management” (Spillane, 2009, p.60). These different ways of looking at the organization will have consequences for how one operationalizes the concept of distributed leadership. For example, one study by Camburn and Han looked at distributed leadership as it pertained to the role of formally designated “teacher leaders” (Camburn & Han, 2009). They concluded that “a plausible case can be made that distributing leadership to teachers can support instructional change” (ibid, p.42). In this study, the authors

are concerned with the designed organization; that is, they identify distribution of leadership by looking at the role of formally designated leaders. Their phrasing is illustrative of this point: leadership seems to be an activity that can be actively “distributed” by some actors, presumably formal leaders. Indeed, this notion that distributed leadership is about sharing the power is common. It has been, as Harris points out, linked to discussions of professional learning communities (Harris, 2009). She writes that “extending leadership beyond the principal” is important for the development of effective professional learning communities (ibid, p.13). Again, the image here is of the concentration of leadership among formally designated leaders, and the question is whether leadership should be shared with others; that is, should others be given leadership responsibilities formerly held by those designated as formal leaders.

Other studies have been more concerned with the lived organization, or a combination of both the lived and the designed organization. Spillane, for example, identified both elements of the designed organization by looking at, among other things, organizational charts, and of the lived organization by beeping leaders during the day and having them record who was leading the activities they were participating in, and by using questionnaires to teachers about whom they went to for advice (Spillane, 2009). The lived organization, then, is more concerned about what is actually happening, not what is formally agreed upon.

Looking at the lived organization reflects an understanding of distributed leadership as an analytical tool rather than as an expression of a normative or prescriptive preference. When focused on the designed organization, one can argue that formal leaders should give up more of their power, that distribution of power is an act. A review of research in the field by Mascall and others (2009), found that there seemed to be an assumption in much of the literature that distribution of leadership was somehow “good”, despite the fact that most research was descriptive in nature. When looking at the lived organization, one acknowledges that distribution is the nature of leadership and the interesting question is not what’s on the paper, but what is actually happening—the practice of leadership. As Robinson states, “The question is not ‘Who has leadership roles?’ or ‘Who performs functions that are assumed to be influential?’ but ‘Who has actually had an impact on others?’” (Robinson, 2009, p.224). This project will be focused on the lived rather than the designed organization.

2.2.2 Patterns of distribution

Much of the research into distributed leadership has been aimed at identifying how leadership is distributed in an organization. This effort to describe the phenomenon of distributed leadership in greater detail has produced the concept of patterns of distribution. Patterns of distribution can be understood as typologies for describing how leadership is distributed in an organization.

On a broad level, Gronn (2002) has suggested two basic forms for distribution of leadership, additive and holistic. As Harris writes, “Additive forms of distribution describe an *uncoordinated pattern* of leadership in which many different people may engage in leadership functions but without much, or any, effort to take account of the leadership efforts of others in their organization.” (Harris, 2009, p.17). By contrast, holistic forms of distributed leadership refer to “consciously-managed and synergistic relationships among some, many, or all sources of leadership in the organization” (ibid). In this dichotomy between holistic and additive forms, degree of coordination becomes a crucial criteria for distinguishing between forms of leadership distribution.

Moving on to more specific typologies, the following table based upon Bolden’s work provides a useful overview over ways that different scholars have conceptualized the idea of categories of distribution (Bolden, 2011, p.258):

Gronn	Leithwood et al.	MacBeath et al.	Spillane
-Spontaneous collaboration	-Planful alignment	-Formal distribution	-Collaborated distribution
-Intuitive working relations	-Spontaneous alignment	-Pragmatic distribution	-Collective distribution
-Institutionalized practice	-Spontaneous misalignment	-Strategic distribution	-Coordinated distribution
	-Anarchical misalignment	-Incremental distribution	
		-Opportunistic distribution	
		-Cultural distribution	

Table 1. Bolden’s overview of frameworks of distributed leadership

I have chosen to utilize Leithwood’s four patterns of distribution as the framework for this project (Leithwood et al., 2006). As I understand them, they offer a more complete description of the phenomenon as it exists in an organization in that they more explicitly encompass the *lack* of effective leadership in an organization than do the models of Gronn and Spillane. The benefits and challenges of this approach will be discussed more thoroughly below. As well, Leithwood’s patterns seem to be more rooted in the lived organization and not the designed organization than those of MacBeath.

Leithwood’s four patterns are created by the intersection of two axes, each of which captures a fundamental question of the distribution of leadership. The first is the axis of planfulness versus spontaneity; the second is that of alignment versus misalignment. When crossed, they result, as the figure below shows, in four patterns: *planful alignment*, *spontaneous alignment*, *spontaneous misalignment* and *anarchic misalignment*.

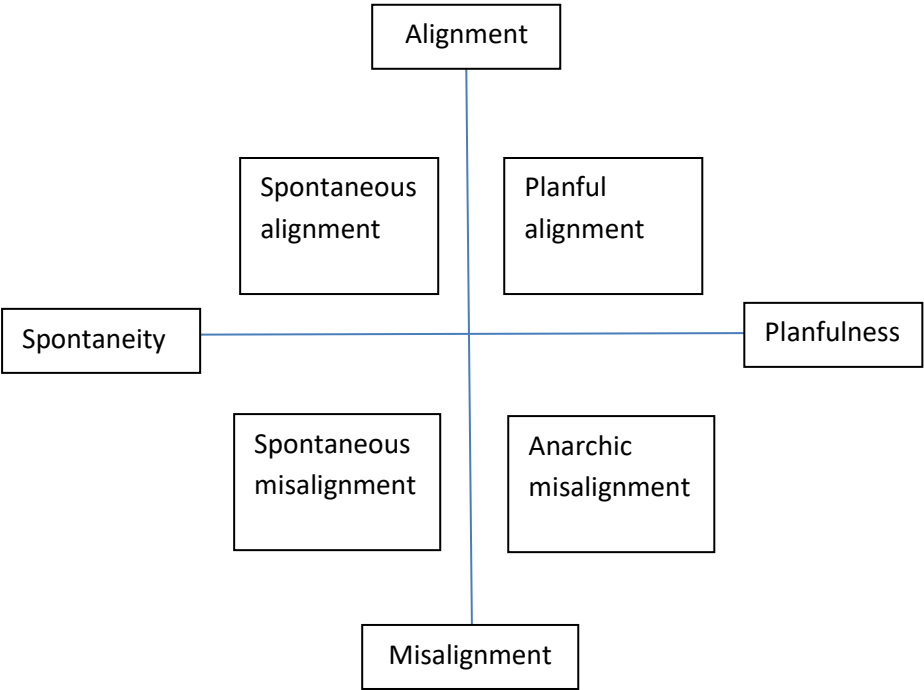


Figure 3. Leithwood’s patterns of distribution

The two categories at the top half of the model, spontaneous alignment and planful alignment, are characterized by a greater degree of *alignment*. Alignment can be understood as leaders and followers working together towards the goals of the organization. Alignment implies

then that leadership is distributed in such a way that it contributes to the achievement of the organization's goals. Put simply, those who exercise leadership are pulling in the same direction, those who follow them accept their leadership, and together, they move in the direction of the organization's goals; it is the successful attempt of the influence process called leadership. Though leadership is not synonymous with the absence of friction and disagreement, alignment suggests nevertheless that such friction results in a fruitful result.

The two categories on the bottom half of the model, spontaneous misalignment and anarchic misalignment, describe situations where there is *misalignment*. Misalignment means that the way leadership is practiced at the school does not lead to the achievement of the organization's goals; it is the unsuccessful attempt at the influence process called leadership. This could include, for example, leaders with agendas that are not congruous with the organization's goals or followers who reject or ignore leadership, or who reject the organization's goals. It is here we see that Leithwood's patterns differ somewhat from the others presented above. The other patterns are limited to descriptions of the forms that leadership can have. They are no doubt useful analytical tools, but they may be blind to elements of conflict, disagreement or ineffectuality in an organization because they do not have explicit terms to describe such situations. Leithwood, on the other hand, captures these situations in the term "misalignment". He asks the question, is it working or not, and provides a way to describe what is happening when the answer is no. In a way, we can see a link to Robinson's definition of leadership where she distinguishes between efforts at influencing people to act in the direction of the organization's goals and actually influencing them.

From a practitioner's perspective, such an approach seems more complete and therefore more useful; it captures what is actually happening in an organization. For the purposes of this study, however, it does present a challenge. For if we maintain a stringent definition of what leadership is – that it involves actual influence over other people in the direction of the organization's goals, not merely the attempt or intention to exert such influence – then one could argue that in situations characterized by misalignment, which is the non-fruitful distribution of leadership, then there is in fact no leadership being exercised. This is a potential weakness in pairing Leithwood's model with Robinson's definition of leadership. I have decided to weigh the benefits of practical insight more than the strict adherence to the definition of the term. This decision is based upon two factors: one, the research question asks how leadership is distributed in a particular organization – it is rooted in the real world;

and two, this project is part of a professional master's program – it, too, is concerned with the practical application of theory.

The categories on the left side of the model, spontaneous alignment and misalignment, present a situation where the distribution of leadership, whether it is productive or not, is not consciously planned or directed; it is *spontaneous*. Spontaneous misalignment will also be used to describe a situation characterized by the absence of effective leadership. That is, if there is little leadership activity connected to instructional quality, this will be considered spontaneous misalignment.

And finally, we have the categories on the right side of the model, planful alignment and anarchic misalignment, which are defined by a degree of *planfulness*. Both of these, despite the fact that many would not intuitively associate anarchy with planfulness, are characterized by a degree of conscious design or effort. Planful alignment would involve explicit efforts to coordinate and manage leadership in an organization. Anarchic misalignment, according to Leithwood's description, involves leaders actively rejecting influence about "what they should be doing in their own sphere of influence" (Harris, 2009, p.18). An example could be open or otherwise coordinated disagreement between departments with competing ideas of what the goals of the organization are. This active rejection involves a degree of planfulness; it is not accidental.

2.2.3 Challenges of operationalizing the term

The rise of a distributed perspective of leadership represents a divergence from previous frameworks for understanding leadership that were more focused on the actions of formal leaders, rather than the interactions between leaders of all kinds and followers of all kinds (Harris, 2009). Unclear or "fuzzy" conceptualization of the term distributed leadership has, as mentioned above, led to difficulties in operationalizing the term in studies. In an article from as late as 2015, one of the foremost researchers in this field, calls for more work in developing "study operations" about distributed leadership, which includes "the operationalization of theoretical or analytical ideas in the distributed perspective" (Spillane, 2015, s.289).

2.2.4 Critical viewpoints

While distributed leadership has gained popularity among many scholars, there have as well emerged a number of critical viewpoints. One of these critical viewpoints involves the role of power, more specifically the confluence of distributed leadership and democratic leadership.

Gronn, Hartley and Hargreaves and Fink, among others, have identified that whereas democratic leadership would involve significant power-sharing with stakeholders (teachers, parents, students and others), distributed leadership has, so far, not involved such democratizing strategies (Gronn, 2009; Hargreaves and Fink, 2009). Hartley writes of the appropriation of distributed leadership, saying

The emergence of distributed leadership is very much a sign of the times: it resonates with contemporary culture, with all its loose affiliations and ephemerality and it is yet another sign of how the public sector purports to legitimate policies by appeals to the new organizational forms within the private sector.... But what it is to be distributed remains very much within the strategic parameters and targets set by government. It is the teachers, not the strategy, which are available for distribution. Hierarchical forms of accountability remain (Hartley, 2007, p. 211).

And looking to Finland as an example of a more democratic system, Hargreaves and Fink make the following observation:

“The hardest questions about distributed leadership are moral and democratic ones. What kind of distributed leadership do we want, and what educational and social purposes will it serve? Are such forms of leadership merely more subtle and clever ways to deliver standardized packages of government reforms and performance targets in easily measurable areas like literacy that have more to do with expedient politics than with sustainable educational change? Or, like Finland, can distributed leadership be a key principle in a coherent and inclusive democratic consensus that joins the entire community in the pursuit of a compelling social vision?” (Hargreaves and Fink, 2009, p.191).

The difference between distributed leadership and democratic leadership, then, as Gronn notes, is genuine (Gronn, 2009, p.212): “...having regard to the interests of policy-makers and the powers that be, distributed leadership continues to be politically palatable as a normative possibility...whereas democratic leadership, for the most part, is still considered *outré*” (ibid). The Norwegian context, in particular at the upper secondary level with its history of active teacher councils (*lærerråd*), lies most likely somewhat closer to Finland than other, more hierarchical structures that Hargreaves and Fink observe as the norm.

Similarly, Bolden observes that a number of scholars have noted that research on distributed leadership “takes insufficient consideration of the dynamics of power and influence in which it is situated” (Bolden, 2011, p.260). While leadership may be distributed, that does not necessarily entail changes in the distribution of power.

Gronn is further concerned with the role of power and distributed leadership, specifically that a “Romance of distributed leadership” will replace the fascination with individual agency and

leadership types that dominated the field towards the end of the 20th century (Gronn, 2009, p.214). He calls therefore for a hybrid approach to studying the phenomenon of leadership that looks at leadership as a mix of distributed leadership, here defined as “pluralities of persons” exerting influence, and what he calls focused leadership, meaning situations where “one individual’s influence could be said to predominate” (ibid, p.213). While this distinction is certainly useful, it could perhaps be argued that approaches looking at the lived rather than the designed organization would encompass both focused and distributed elements of leadership.

Robinson is also concerned that distributed leadership has taken on a normative aspect based on a theory of power; more specifically, that “Distributed leadership is seen as desirable because it counters a concentration of power and authority in the hands of the principal or senior management team” (Robinson, 2009, p.229). Further, she calls for work that links distributed leadership to student outcomes, writing that “If distributed leadership is to be educationally credible, it needs a normative theory that is firmly grounded in its educational consequences for students, rather than in its consequences for staff relationships” (ibid). In other words, there is a need for a student-centered, prescriptive approach.

2.3 Three dimensions in which leadership can be understood

In a 2015 article, Spillane suggests that one way to understand how leadership influences instructional practice is “to borrow from new institutional theorists who identify three ways in which institutions structure practice—regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive (Spillane, 2015, p.287). Here, Spillane refers to the work of, among others, Scott, who calls these three dimensions the three pillars of institutions (Scott, 2014, p.59). Together, acting in “interdependent and mutually reinforcing ways,” these elements form “a powerful social framework” (ibid). Put simply, they are a way to sort what goes on in organizations. And while they are closely related and interdependent, Scott argues that “more progress will be made at this juncture by distinguishing among the several component elements and identifying their underlying assumptions, mechanisms and indicators” (ibid). And it is certainly to this effect that Spillane suggests employing these elements; they are a way to structure and conceptualize the aspects of practice that are being influenced by leadership and the mechanisms through which influence is being exerted (Spillane, 2015).

Let us now look more specifically at these three dimensions. The regulative dimension involves “the capacity to establish rules, inspect others’ conformity to them, and, as

necessary, manipulate sanctions—rewards or punishments—in an attempt to influence future behavior” (Scott, 2014, p.59). Scott argues that regulative systems are characterized by three factors: 1) obligation, meaning “the extent to which actors are bound to obey because their behavior is subject to scrutiny by external parties, 2) precision, meaning “the extent to which the rules unambiguously specify the required content, and 3) delegation, or “the extent to which third parties have been granted authority to apply the rules and resolve disputes” (ibid, p.60). The logic of the regulative element is instrumental, and the emotions associated with it are, in the case of non-compliance, fear, dread and guilt, and in the case of adherence, relief, innocence and vindication (ibid, p.62-3). The regulative element can include both formal and informal rules, inspectors and sanctions.

The normative element is less concerned with rules and more concerned with values and norms. Values can be understood as “conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviors can be compared and assessed”, while norms “specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends” (ibid, p.64). Normative systems both place constraints on behavior by making clear what is unacceptable, and “empower and enable social action” (ibid). Normative systems are characterized by the logic of appropriateness, and the emotions associated with them are respect and honor, and shame and disgrace (ibid).

The cultural-cognitive element is perhaps the most elusive of the three. It can be understood as “the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and create the frames through which meaning is made” (ibid, p.67). Institutions are then, “sedimentations” or “crystallizations” of meanings (Berger and Kellner, 1981, p.31). The cognitive aspect recognizes that meaning is created through individual cognitive processes in which we interpret the world by attaching meaning to actions; the cultural aspect recognizes that external cultural frameworks shape these cognitive processes (ibid). There is an aspect of the subconscious in this element. Indeed, the logic of the cultural-cognitive element is orthodoxy; the underlying ideas of actions are perceived as sound and correct, and people do things because “other types of behavior are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as ‘the way we do things’”(ibid, p.68). One way then to understand the cultural-cognitive element is as a template or script for our behavior, a play that we are performing. The emotions associated with the cultural-cognitive element are certitude and confidence when in alignment with prevailing beliefs and confusion and disorientation when not (ibid, p.70).

The following table provides an attempt to summarize these three dimensions:

	Summary	Logic	Emotions
Regulative	Concerned with rules, inspecting conformity and sanctions	Instrumentalism	Positive: relief, innocence, vindication Negative: fear, dread, guilt
Normative	Concerned with norms and values	Appropriateness	Positive: respect, honor Negative: shame, disgrace
Cultural-cognitive	Concerned with the formation of meaning and shared conceptions	Orthodoxy	Positive: certitude, confidence Negative: confusion, disorientation

Table 2: the three dimensions

It is at this point necessary to connect these three dimensions more closely with the topic of this project, namely leadership. It will be recalled that leadership has been defined in point 2.1 as being based on one or more of three sources: 1) some form of affinity between the leader and follower, also here called charisma 2) the leader’s expertise and/or 3) the leader’s legitimate authority. It is certainly possible to classify leadership activities based on these three sources as situated in the regulative, normative and/or cultural-cognitive dimensions. While one may more immediately associate for example the regulative dimension with coercion rather than leadership – that is, compelling adherence to rules through fear of consequences – it is certainly also possible to conceive of a situation in which an actor conducts leadership within that dimension. For example, a leader’s perceived authority might ensure compliance, as might a liking of the leader. For the purposes of this project, the focus will be on leadership in these dimensions to the exclusion of coercion.

2.4 What is instruction?

The primary research question of this master’s project is limited to distributed leadership as it pertains to the quality of instruction at upper secondary schools. It is necessary then to define the term instruction. While many efforts at conceptualizing instruction have focused primarily on the activities of the teacher, some scholars “have conceptualized instruction differently, recognizing and foregrounding its distributed, situated, and collective nature as a practice” (Spillane, 2015, p.283). Ball and Cohen identify three elements that together constitute instruction: teachers, students and material technologies, such as books, equipment and the intellectual ideas being taught (Cohen and Ball, 1999). Teachers and students,

through interaction with and about material, co-produce teaching. To understand instruction, then, is to acknowledge that it is “a function of the interaction among elements of the instructional unit, not the sole province of any single element” (ibid). As well, factors outside the classroom can form a context that influences instruction. Spillane’s adaptation of Ball and Cohen’s model captures this understanding of instruction:

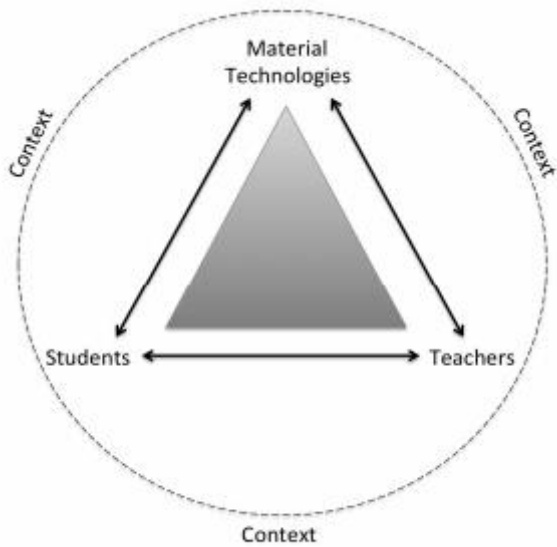


Figure 4. Instruction (Spillane 2015 p.283)

2.4.1 The connection between distributed leadership and instruction

For the purposes of this project, it is necessary to elucidate how distributed leadership can be understood to influence instruction. To do so I will borrow from Spillane’s work, which is a combination of two of the figures presented above.

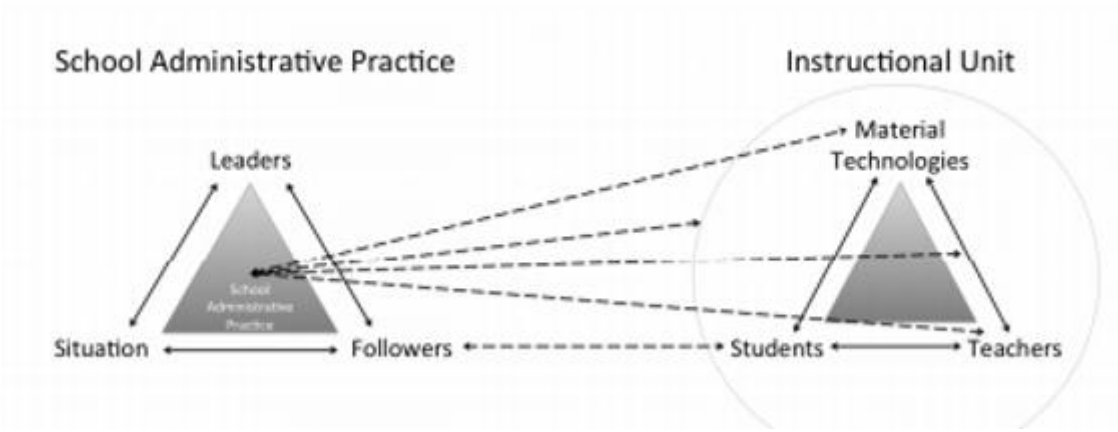


Figure 5. School administrative practice and influence on instruction (Spillane, 2015, p.284)

Here we see that Spillane envisions a situation where leadership, which he calls school administrative practice, can influence each of the components that together comprise instruction. This influence process is in this project also described as leadership connected to the quality of instruction; that is, it is an attempt to somehow make instruction better. Exactly what better means, or whether such strategies would actually result in better instruction, is not here the issue. Rather, we are concerned with leadership efforts related to teaching practice.

The result of leadership, in which a leader influences a follower, can manifest itself in any one of the component pieces of instruction. For the purposes of this study, I have focused on effects on teachers and not directly upon material technologies and/or students.

2.5 A new analytical tool

Describing how leadership is distributed in a school requires a thorough analysis of the school in question. Indeed, one way to perceive the phenomenon of distributed leadership is as an analytical tool for describing how leadership is exercised in a particular organization (Halvorsen, 2014). This project can be understood as an attempt to explore this idea further by constructing and employing a new and perhaps more refined tool for analyzing the distribution of leadership in an organization.

To construct this more refined theoretical and analytical framework, I have started with Leithwood's patterns of distribution and superimposed two other elements: First, I have distinguished between leadership along vertical and horizontal axes. Specifically, I have looked at leadership between leaders and teachers, between teacher leaders and teacher followers, and between students and teachers. I have applied this framework to each of the four patterns identified by Leithwood. In addition, I have attempted to distinguish between the dimensions in which leadership is exercised, using Scott's work on organization theory. This adds another layer of analysis, classifying leadership as existing in the regulative, normative or cultural-cognitive dimensions. The figures below provide a visual representation of the component parts converging into one coherent framework.

Spontaneous Alignment	Planful Alignment
Spontaneous Misalignment	Anarchic Misalignment

Figure 6: Leithwood's patterns of distribution (Leithwood et al., 2006)

	Spontaneous Alignment		Planful Alignment	
L-T				L-T
TL-TF				TL-TF
S-T				S-T
L-T				L-T
TL-TF				TL-TF
S-T				S-T
	Spontaneous Misalignment		Anarchic Misalignment	

Figure 7: Leithwood's patterns of distribution divided along vertical and horizontal axes.

L-T = Leader-Teacher

TL-TF = Teacher Leader-Teacher Follower

S-T = Student-Teacher

	Spontaneous Alignment			Planful Alignment			
	R	N	C-C	R	N	C-C	
L-T							L-T
TL-TF							TL-TF
S-T							S-T
L-T							L-T
TL-TF							TL-TF
S-T							S-T
	R	N	C-C	R	N	C-C	
	Spontaneous Misalignment			Anarchic Misalignment			

Figure 8: Leithwood's patterns of distribution with axes and with dimensions.

R = Regulative

N = Normative

C-C = Cultural-Cognitive

The last figure, figure 8, combines all three elements -- Leithwood's patterns, three axes and three dimensions -- providing a more nuanced framework for identifying how leadership is distributed. Instead of two elements, planfulness and alignment, allowing four possible classifications, there are now two additional layers for analyzing the distribution of leadership, resulting in 36 categories, nine within each of the four original classifications, for classifying and understanding the distribution of leadership. This makes it possible to develop a more complex understanding of the phenomenon as it exists in a particular context. For example, one might classify the distribution of leadership as planful alignment along the

leader-teacher axis, while along another axis, it could better be described by another pattern. Further, one could identify how leadership is exercised in the various dimensions, for example finding leadership situated in the normative dimensions along a particular axis.

This new analytical framework, while more nuanced, is complex and perhaps a bit unwieldy. In order to get a better grasp of it before utilizing it to look at one particular school, I attempted to describe what one might expect to find in each of the 36 boxes. These descriptions are based on my over 15 years of experience in Norwegian schools, and while they are certainly not exhaustive, they did provide a fleshing out and a sorting through of the ideas which made it easier to begin structuring the empirical data. In other words, the descriptions made the exercise of looking at an actual school somewhat more deductive in nature, a strategic choice to simplify the use of such a complex tool. As well, the choice between describing leadership as planful or spontaneous, as aligned or misaligned, invariably requires the use of a comparison, either to other schools or to some established baseline. This tool provides that baseline. Not each of the 36 possible boxes has equal descriptive power. For example, we would not expect the regulative dimension to be strongly descriptive of patterns characterized by spontaneity. That said, I have attempted to describe what one might find in each possible configuration.

My characterizations of distributed leadership in these 36 boxes are below divided into four tables, one for each of Leithwood’s patterns.

1. Planful Alignment

Planful Alignment	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Leaders as leaders	Leaders enforce rules, mandates and/or control mechanisms for ensuring good teaching, which are perceived by teachers as legitimate. Examples include evaluation forms, use of teaching evaluations in pay negotiations, result-oriented evaluations and certification systems. Leaders follow clear procedures for dealing with inadequate performance which are accepted by teachers as legitimate. Leadership	Leaders clearly communicate notions of what constitutes good teaching, for example through best practice norms for effective teaching or mission statements. Leaders use these in meetings and conversations with teachers, who accept these as legitimate. Leaders give organized feedback, both criticism and praise, but such feedback is not strictly connected to sanctions or rewards.	Leaders explicitly clarify, shape and define their roles in ensuring quality instruction vis a vis teachers. They argue for and work for the legitimization of their role and their leadership practice. Teachers accept leaders’ roles.

	may be primarily based on authority.	Leadership may be primarily based on expertise.	
Teachers as leaders	Teacher leaders give structured feedback to teacher followers in formalized peer-review systems. Teacher leaders give feedback to teacher followers based on the learning results of their students. Teacher leaders give corrective feedback to other teachers based for example on student feedback; this practice is deemed legitimate by teacher followers.	Teacher leaders, who may have formalized titles, communicate expectations of adherence to best practice norms or mission statements to teacher followers, for example when evaluating or planning instructional units; this happens in established arenas, such as staff meetings or guidance sessions. Leadership may be primarily based on expertise and charisma.	Teacher leaders explicitly clarify, shape and define their roles in ensuring quality instruction vis a vis teacher followers. Teacher leaders argue and work for the legitimization of their role and their leadership practices. Teacher followers accept the roles of teacher leaders.
Students as leaders	Students evaluate instruction in a systematic manner. Their evaluations have consequences for teachers, for example for salary development or career advancement. Students register complaints about teaching quality based on adherence to explicit standards. Teachers accepts these practices as legitimate.	Students give feedback on instructional quality in a structured manner and with the goal of achieving school aims rather than for example a desire for easier or more entertaining classes; this feedback is used as a formative tool rather than a summative judgement. Students communicate expectations of adherence to norms through for example “Teacher of the year” awards and the equivalent. Students comment on public ranking systems, such as “Rate my teacher”, based on the school’s goals and standards.	Students explicitly clarify, shape and define their roles in ensuring quality instruction vis a vis teachers. They argue and work for the legitimization of their role and their leadership practices. Students may exercise this leadership through for example student democracy initiatives. Students’s roles in regards to instructional quality are accepted by teachers.

Table 3: Playful alignment

2. Anarchical Misalignment

Anarchic Misalignment	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Leaders as leaders	Leaders employ rules, mandates and control mechanisms for ensuring good teaching and/or unevenly enforce them, though teachers reject the use of such mechanisms. Complaints about teaching quality are	Leaders have notions of what constitutes good teaching that are in conflict with the school’s stated best practice norms or mission statements, and/or teachers actively reject leaders’ notions of what constitutes good teaching. Leaders are not perceived	Leaders and followers disagree about each other’s roles in working for instructional quality. Teachers may not accept or may challenge the authority of leaders to determine teaching quality, or, conversely, they may desire greater

	handled formally and often result in conflict.	to have expertise about instructional quality, nor do they have a charismatic position in relation to teachers.	leadership. Leaders may openly disagree with stated organizational goals.
Teachers as leaders	Teacher leaders and teacher followers openly disagree about rules, mandates and control mechanisms.	Various teacher leaders may have competing, perhaps mutually exclusive conceptions of what good teaching is and/or teacher leaders reject the school's stated norms or mission statements. Teacher leaders compete in exercising influence over teacher followers. Teacher leaders are not perceived as experts.	Teachers openly disagree on the roles of teacher leaders in working for instructional quality. Some consider teaching a collective practice, while others consider it a private practice. There are disagreements along these lines.
Students as leaders	Students use unsanctioned methods to rate or give feedback to teachers. Teachers reject students' feedback; as a result, student complaints go most often to formal leaders rather than directly to teachers.	Students and teachers clearly and consistently have different conceptions of what constitutes good teaching. These differences are manifested in complaints that find little resolution.	Students experience a lack of agency in questions about instructional quality. Teachers reject their role, for example by suspecting them of having ulterior motives or of being unable to give relevant feedback. This is an open point of contention.

Table 4: Anarchical misalignment

3. Spontaneous Misalignment

Spontaneous Misalignment	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Leaders as leaders	Rules, mandates and control mechanisms for ensuring good teaching do not exist, or leaders do not enforce them. Leaders do not employ a formalized system of teacher evaluation. Leaders may employ rules, mandates and control mechanisms in an uneven or unpredictable fashion.	Leaders do not express norms actively or effectively. Disagreements between leaders and teachers about norms of good teaching exist but are rarely explicitly expressed and do not create fault lines in the school. If there are mission statements or best practice descriptions, they have a weak position. Leaders are most likely not considered to have expertise about instruction.	Leaders and followers disagree about each other's roles in working for instructional quality, though they do not express their disagreement. "The silent contract" and privatized practice reign.
Teachers as leaders	Systems for colleague evaluation do not exist or may exist but are not effectively implemented. Feedback between	Teacher leaders give feedback unevenly or sporadically and without reference to best practices or mission statement. Teacher	Teachers disagree on who can determine what good teaching is. Some teachers work collectively,

	teachers is sometimes but not always communicated.	leaders may avoid giving feedback to teacher followers. Teacher followers seldom seek feedback or assistance on their own initiative. Teachers do not recognize each other as experts.	while others work individually. This is not a point of contention in the collegial group.
Students as leaders	No structured system for evaluation exists. Student complaints are handled somewhat informally. Students use unsanctioned and informal methods to rate or give feedback to teachers. Student feedback on teaching quality is unstructured.	Students and teachers may have different conceptions of what constitutes good teaching or there may be few arenas in which students can exercise leadership over teachers. Students may distribute rumors about teacher quality or express apathy about feedback due to a lack of faith that it will make a difference.	Students are not fully recognized as a legitimate voice in contributing to instructional quality. Teachers may claim they do not know what effective teaching is or are suspected of having ulterior motives.

Table 5: Spontaneous misalignment

4. Spontaneous Alignment

Spontaneous Alignment	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Leaders as leaders	Rules, mandates and control mechanisms may exist but leaders do not enforce them regularly. No formalized or routinely practiced system for teacher evaluation. Regulatory control is expressed only in some, perhaps extreme situations.	Leaders and followers share to a large degree notions of what constitutes good teaching, though these are either not explicitly described or, if they are explicit, leaders do not actively utilize or refer to them in meetings, guidance sessions or other arenas.	Leaders and followers are in tacit agreement about each other's fundamental roles in working for instructional quality. Such roles are not expressly defined. Leaders' participation in ensuring instructional quality is perceived as legitimate.
Teachers as leaders	Rules, mandates and control mechanisms for ensuring quality instruction exist but are not applied evenly or regularly, though they can be applied effectively.	Teacher leaders have high status based on perceived though not defined notions of the quality of their teaching. Teacher leaders communicate expectations through cooperation within tacitly accepted frameworks, for example through ad hoc collective planning and evaluation of instruction and generally share notions of what good teaching is.	Teacher leaders and followers are in tacit agreement about each other's fundamental roles in working for instructional quality. To be a teacher involves collective work on instructional quality, though this is not explicitly expressed.
Students as leaders	Rules, mandates and control mechanisms exist but are not applied	Students and teachers share notions of what constitutes good teaching, though these	Student feedback, through for example dialog or formative

	evenly or regularly, though they can be applied effectively.	are not explicitly defined. Students have effective, though not necessarily clearly defined, ways to communicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction that are legitimate in the eyes of teachers.	assessment, is a well-integrated and fully accepted element of teaching practice, though it is not expressly defined or the result of a conscious strategy.
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Table 6: Spontaneous alignment

3. Study design

The primary research question of this master’s project is how is leadership connected to instructional quality distributed at one upper secondary school in Norway.

The secondary research questions are as follows:

In which dimension is leadership situated between formal leaders and teachers, between students and teachers, and between teacher colleagues? How does looking at leadership in each dimension affect how we perceive its distribution? How do the dimensions correlate with the three axes?

The secondary research questions are 1) Which patterns of distribution can describe leadership that is performed between formal leaders and teachers, between students and teachers, and between teacher colleagues? 2) In which dimension is leadership situated between formal leaders and teachers, between students and teachers, and between teacher colleagues? 3) How does looking at leadership in each dimension affect how we perceive its distribution? 4) How do the dimensions correlate with the three axes?

On the most fundamental level, this project is an attempt to describe a school by looking at how a particular phenomenon, leadership, exists in that school. Such an effort requires the contextualization of the phenomenon, and would call for an intensive methodological approach which is interested in the real world – a school in this case – and uses appropriate theoretical concepts to understand that world (Jacobsen, 2013). At the same time, the phenomenon which I am using to understand the school, distributed leadership, is not itself fully understood. On top of that, as explained in point 2.5, I have combined an existing typology, Leithwood’s patterns of distribution, with two other ways to classify the phenomenon, namely vertical and horizontal axes and dimensions, creating a new way of conceptualizing the phenomenon. As a result, this project is also an attempt to more

thoroughly understand the phenomenon of distributed leadership itself. Such a goal would call for the use of a more extensive methodology that separates the phenomenon from its context, for example by comparing the phenomenon across various schools.

The dual nature of this project – on the one hand the effort to understand the school by describing the distribution of leadership in it, and on the other hand the effort to better understand what the concept of distributed leadership is as it exists in all schools – has consequences for the choice of methodological strategy. I first envisioned a project that would compare distributed leadership across schools through the use of a questionnaire, a quantitative option that would employ a thinner, less contextualized understanding of the phenomenon in an effort provide insights into differences between schools. This effort, I thought, could perhaps eventually allow these differences to be linked to student outcomes, thereby opening the possibility of moving from a descriptive to a prescriptive role for the phenomenon of distributed leadership. In the end, however, I went another way: I became most interested in acquiring a thicker understanding of the phenomenon. As Spillane suggests, there is still work to be done conceptualizing the term distributed leadership (Spillane, 2015); this study is an attempt to contribute to that end.

The project can be categorized as a case study. According to Yin, a case study has two primary, defining aspects:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
 - a. Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
 - b. the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
2. The case study inquiry
 - a. copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
 - b. relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
 - c. benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009, p.18).

Looking at the first aspect, we see that this effort is indeed concerned with a phenomenon as it exists in a particular context, and, as the phenomenon itself is not fully understood, the boundary between phenomenon and context is indeed blurry.

Let us take the second aspect point for point. First, we see the question of variables. As a descriptive study, there are not dependent and independent variables as there would be in an experimental study. However, we can consider the study as an attempt to describe the

distribution of leadership by looking at three primary elements, which in some future study could serve as independent or dependent variables: distribution pattern (hereunder degree of planfulness and degree of alignment), axis (leader-teacher, teacher leader-teacher follower, student-teacher) and dimension (regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive). Other variables could also be used to describe the phenomenon of leadership distribution, for example sex or age of teachers, or school size or organizational structure. As such, we can say that more possible variables exist than data is being gathered on.

Secondly, the complexity of variables suggests the need for multiple sources of evidence. In this study, empirical data will be gathered from several sources, primarily a variety of teachers, but also school leaders. While there is not great variation between these sources, the complexity of the project does indeed necessitate relying on several sources.

Thirdly, the case study should utilize previous theoretical propositions to steer data collection. Clearly, as was elucidated upon in the chapter on theoretical foundations, this project does indeed build on the theoretical work of others.

3.1 Application of a new analytical tool

The collection and analysis of data in this study is structured around the analytical framework presented in point 2.5 in the chapter on theoretical foundation. To review, this framework allows for a new way to classify the distribution of leadership by combining three discrete elements: Leithwood's patterns of distribution, vertical and horizontal axes, and dimensions. While it would have been possible to apply this new, thicker theoretical description of the phenomenon directly to a comparative, quantitative study, I believe the validity of such an effort would be in question. While the analytical framework I have developed is merely the result of combining disparate elements that have all been connected to distributed leadership, the particularities of the framework have not been tested or explored, and need to be analyzed first in the real world context before they can be lifted from their context. As a result, I decided upon a more intensive, qualitative approach, attempting to describe the phenomenon more thoroughly while at the same time attempting to better understand the school. To place this approach in context with other attempts at describing the phenomenon of distributed leadership, it can be illustrative to look at two other attempts at doing so, one by Mascall and one by Louis et al.

As part of a larger survey designed to understand the connection between patterns of leadership distribution and academic optimism, and later to be able to correlate academic optimism with student outcomes, Mascall used a survey to identify which of Leithwood's patterns of leadership best described a school (Mascall, 2009). This survey consisted of one question for each pattern. This approach, I would argue, employs a thin description of the term distributed leadership and of the various patterns of leadership. By contrast, Louis et al. took an approach which allowed a much thicker description of the phenomenon. They conducted a three-year longitudinal study of leadership distribution involving comparative case studies of six secondary schools (Louis et al., 2009, p.163). These two studies can be seen to represent two counterpoints along the spectrum of thin-thick descriptions of the phenomenon. My study, which is much smaller in scope, takes a position somewhere between these two approaches.

3.2 Method

To answer the research questions in this project, I performed the following steps:

- selection of one upper secondary school
- selection of informants
- conduction of interviews
 - o five interviews with a total of 10 teachers based on a questionnaire
 - o one group interview with three school leaders based on a questionnaire
- analysis of the data using the aforementioned analytical tool as well as my insight as principal

3.2.1 Selection of school

As a student in a professional master's program where one admissions requirement is employment in the education sector, it has always been essential for me to connect my studies to my professional life and my role as a principal at an upper secondary school. Originally, I assumed that this role made conducting research on my own school if not impossible, at least difficult. As a result, I originally planned on looking at another upper secondary school. However, as I realized that the conceptual understanding of the phenomenon of distributed leadership was more of a thicket than I had first assumed, and that there was work to be done in developing a richer understanding of the concept, I began to see the possible benefits of being a well-placed observer. In other words, the benefits of an emic approach seemed

stronger than those of an etic approach. While my position as principal certainly presents a number of significant threats to validity, threats which will be addressed below in point 3.3, it also means I am uniquely situated to attain valuable insight into the phenomenon. In particular, it involves, possibly, that informants will open themselves in a way they may not to an outside observer. The opposite is certainly also true, as will be discussed in 3.3. As well, there can be a certain hermeneutical advantage. That the informants and I “speak the same language”, as it were, means that I am situated to grasp the contextual references they make in the interviews.

The school selected is an upper secondary school in the province of Finnmark. The school has both vocational and general studies lines, offering a total of 8 distinct educational programs in the following fields:

- Building and construction
- Design, arts and crafts
- Electricity and electronics
- General studies
- Health and social care
- Restaurant and food processing
- Service and transport
- Technical and industrial production

The school has a little more than 400 students and 115 employees, approximately 70 of whom are teachers.

3.2.2 Selection of informants

A critical question in deciding how the phenomenon of distributed leadership should be operationalized is “Who should provide evidence of distributed leadership—leaders, followers, or both?” (Spillane et al., 2009). If we return to the discussion of the designed versus the lived organization (point 2.2.1), it will be recalled that Robinson argued that the measure of leadership should be whether the object of the influence process was in fact influenced (Robinson, 2009). In other words, one should consider if leadership has been exercised by looking at the follower; otherwise, you may observe the intention to lead rather than actual leadership. By this logic, teachers should be the primary sources, and indeed, the bulk of the interviews were conducted with teachers. I conducted one interview with leaders as well in order to attain a slightly broader perspective on the phenomenon.

Another fundamental question is which organizational level is most appropriate or will give the desired insight into the phenomenon. The primary research question of this project asks how leadership is distributed in one particular school. A school can be considered a collective unit, meaning that it is composed of various units, which are themselves composed of various sub-units and finally individuals (Jacobsen 2013, p.91). The school in question is divided into three distinct departments, each with its own leader and, to a certain degree, its own traditions and culture. These departments are further divided into smaller units, called sections, along subject lines, each with its own designated teacher leader. One would certainly expect to find variation in the phenomenon within the school as a whole, as well as within each department and each section. So the question emerged whether to select informants from across the entire school, from a particular department or from a particular section. Based upon my knowledge of the school, I suspected to find the greatest variation on the departmental level. As a result, I decided to organize the interviews along departmental lines, conducting group interviews with a selection of teachers from each department. These teachers represented various sections within each department. This decision allowed greater insight into the phenomenon along the leader-teacher axis.

It would have been possible, and would certainly be interesting, to describe the distribution of leadership in terms of other variables, such as sex, experience, or subject area. However, for the course of this project, I have decided not to focus directly on these. I have attempted to reduce threats to internal validity by selecting informants across these other variables. At the same time, the informants were not selected randomly. They represented a cross-section of the population in that they represented the various sections and had a variety of teaching experience. As well, I selected, when possible, both men and women to be informants, though two of the three departments have predominantly teachers of one sex.

3.2.3 Interviews

The interviews I conducted with the teacher groups were structured in the following way: participants first answered individually a questionnaire with 17 questions, answering most often along a five-point scale from agree to disagree (see attachment 1). These questions then formed the basis for the interview.

The intention in structuring the interviews in this way was twofold: First, I wanted to mitigate the possible imbalance in power that exists when a principal interviews teachers at his own school. By turning the interview into a group process, which was the case in two of four

interviews, I intended to tilt the power dynamic more in favor of the teachers. Second, I wanted to encourage the expression of varying points of view. I wanted to ensure that the interviewees would not adjust their answers to conform to the thoughts of their colleagues, and the mechanism of having first answered the question individually aided this effort. The interviews could be considered to be semi-structured in nature, as they were based on a set of questions, but I did pursue lines of inquiry that opened during the interviews and I did ask follow-up and clarifying questions. (Jacobsen, 2013).

The interview with the leaders was also conducted based on the same questionnaire, but with an additional two questions. For some questions, leaders were encouraged to answer based on what they thought their teachers would answer. This questionnaire may be found in attachment 2.

3.2.4 Analysis of the data

As mentioned above, the data were analyzed using the analytical framework presented in chapter 2. Taking each of the three axes separately, I asked the following three questions:

- Is the practice of leadership characterized by planfulness or spontaneity?
- Is the practice of leadership characterized by alignment or misalignment?
- How is leadership situated in the three dimensions?

The descriptions for each of the 36 boxes in the analytical framework were helpful in distinguishing between the different categories. At the same time, variations and adjustments to my preliminary descriptions are precisely what can produce greater insight into the phenomenon of distributed leadership. As a result, this created a well-known hermeneutic challenge: I needed to rely on my predictions of what I would discover to steer my inquiry; at the same time, I needed to free myself from my predictions to discover new insights.

3.3 Validity

A primary question of any research project is whether or not it measures what it purports to measure; that is, is the study valid or not? The goal of this project is to find a way to describe the phenomenon of distributed leadership as it exists in one particular school. In designing and executing the project, I have identified and attempted to mitigate possible threats to validity.

As mentioned above, it is possibly problematic that I am conducting research on my own school. As principal, I have a position of certain power, and the answers that teachers give in interviews may be altered by this relationship. It is for example conceivable that teachers will attempt to give what they perceive to be the “right” answer, possibly skewing the answers in favor of for example greater planfulness and alignment than if teachers had reported in other ways. Indeed this topic of what the “right” answer is did actually arise in one of the interviews, leading to some laughter among the informants. The fact that this issue came up explicitly, and the fact that it was collectively dismissed and laughed at, indicates to me that the answers were most likely not significantly affected by the power relationship at play. However, that possibility does exist and cannot be fully controlled for. As mentioned above, I did attempt to structure the interviews in such a way as to reduce this threat to validity. As well, it should be noted that I was for nearly 10 years a teacher at the same school, so many of the informants have been colleagues. As well, for some of that time, I served as union representative, a position which is based upon a level of confidence. As such, I would contend that there exists a certain amount of trust between them and me.

When it comes to interviewing the leaders, the possibility that the power relationship influences answers is perhaps stronger. I have direct responsibility for the leaders, and it is likely that their inclination will be to meet what they perceive to be my intentions. Again, the likely bias will be towards greater planfulness and greater alignment, two factors which leaders may tend to exaggerate from their perspective. The interviews with the leaders, it is significant to note, are a type of control. The primary focus of this project is the experience of teachers as followers; they are the primary informants. The interviews with the leaders and students are complementary and can express discrepancies between intended leadership and actual influence.

It is also significant to mention that this problem of how the relationship between researcher and interview subject may affect the results exists no matter the nature of the relationship. A teacher may, for example, be less inclined to open up to an unknown researcher. In short, both emic and etic approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages. I have selected a more emic approach and attempted to be as transparent as possible about how this may effect the data. This question of distance or closeness to the informants is unavoidable in research: the burden upon the researcher is to reflect upon and make as transparent as possible how his or her role can affect the results (Jacobsen, 2013).

Another possible threat to the validity of the study is the strength of the analytical framework I cobbled in order to analyze the data. This framework is not a tested tool that has been analyzed or critiqued by others; as such, it can more easily contain flaws which could skew the results.

The exercise of leadership is, according to the definition at use in this project, based upon a personal affinity between leader and follower, the perception of expertise in the leader, and/or a perceived position of authority. It is a threat to the validity of this study if not each of these bases is equally observable through the chosen methods. That is, if the method is better suited to gain insight into the exercise of leadership based upon authority rather than personal affinity, then this could affect the validity of the results. There will be a more thorough discussion of this issue in the conclusion (point 5.1.3).

Another factor that affects the validity of the study is the sample size. I interviewed roughly 14% of the teachers at the school. These teachers were not selected randomly, but were chosen for their representativeness (see 3.2.2).

3.4 Reliability

One significant element that can be of consequence for the reliability of this project is timing. Organizations are in constant change, and this study only captures a picture of the organization at one particular time, a snapshot of one particular moment. This can be problematic because it is certainly conceivable that the data may be colored by other events happening contemporaneously. For example, if the school were undergoing significant changes in its organizational structure (it is not), one might expect to register a more explicit discussion of roles. Such a finding could skew the results in favor of greater planfulness in the cultural-cognitive dimension. As well, annual variations may affect the results. These interviews were conducted in February and March, a period when formally structured, yearly discussions are held between leaders and teachers. The timing here may exaggerate teachers' experience along the leader-teacher axis. As well, teachers have recently been working with the results of the annual student questionnaire, further coloring the temporal context for the project. A longitudinal study could mitigate these risks but is not possible given the resources and scope of this project. All this taken into account, it is important to state that, while the roles of teachers, school leaders and students have certainly changed significantly over the course of the last decades, I would not expect variations in the experience of the distribution of leadership in the short term to be the most important elements in describing the

phenomenon. However, they do of course represent a shortcoming in the reliability of the project.

Another element that could affect the project's reliability is my role as principal. It is certainly possible that another researcher would elicit other responses from the informants, or interpret responses in other ways, thereby weakening the reliability of the project. This weakness must be measured up against the increased insight that is possible for a well-situated actor to attain. The possible effects of my position in relation to the informants will be taken into account in the discussion of the results.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The fact that I am studying my own school can also open for ethical challenges. It is for example conceivable that, in my pursuit of a good master's project, I could misuse my position to apply pressure on participants to participate in the study. To mitigate the possibility of such a situation, I made clear in invitations to the interviews that participation was completely voluntary and secured informed consent.

Another possible ethical pitfall is that I could prioritize my own ambitions instead of the welfare of the students and teachers at the school. This could happen if I for example decided to pay overtime to teachers who participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and unremunerated.

Perhaps the most significant possible ethical problem is if I used the information gathered during the interviews in other situations, for example in discussions about performance and compensation of the informants. This challenge is not easy to mitigate, but it should be noted that while I do have the top executive position at the school and direct responsibility for the leaders that were interviewed, I do not have direct responsibility for the teachers that were interviewed. As such, I am somewhat insulated from those processes.

The informants in this study are anonymous. In order to consider whether the data in this project were sensitive in nature and thereby required reporting in to the control authority, I used the test on the website of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). The results showed that such reporting was not necessary.

3.6 Generalizability

The results of this project are not immediately generalizable to other schools. The research question is intentionally limited to one particular school, and the research method attempts to describe the phenomenon as it exists in the particular context of that school. As such, the results cannot be considered representative of a larger group. Case studies are most often not particularly generalizable.

At the same time, there are perhaps elements of the work that can be of value beyond the particular school that I have studied, particularly the contribution to the conceptual understanding of the phenomenon of distributed leadership. As well, the analytical framework I constructed could conceivably serve as tool for other schools and other contexts. A school leader, for example, who wonders as did I about the distribution of leadership when it comes to the quality of instruction, could use the framework as the basis for his or her own evaluation.

4. Analysis of empirical data

Below I will analyze the data gathered through the various interviews. The analysis will be oriented around the three axes: student-teacher, teacher leader-teacher follower, and leader-teacher. I will start the analysis of each axis by identifying 1) elements of planfulness versus spontaneity, followed by 2) a discussion of whether the distribution of leadership was characterized most by alignment or misalignment, then 3) a discussion of how leadership was situated in the three dimensions, and finally 4) a short discussions of conclusions for this axis. It is important to note that instances where there is a void of leadership related to instructional quality will be categorized as being characterized by spontaneous misalignment. See chapter 2.2.2 for a more thorough discussion of this decision.

4.1 The student-teacher axis

Along the student-teacher axis, we are attempting to observe and describe how students exercise leadership over teachers. That is, we want to know how students influence teachers in ways that contribute to higher quality instruction.

4.1.1 Planfulness or spontaneity?

There was in general little indication that students exercised leadership with teachers in a planful fashion. While some teachers mentioned that they had occasionally employed schemes that opened for student leadership, there was no evidence of any structured, systematic, intentional mechanism at the individual, sectional, departmental or school wide level through which students could exercise leadership connected to instructional quality. There were two main exceptions. One was the nationally mandated student survey, which some teachers reported was a channel for them to receive feedback on their teaching. This survey is conducted once per school year, and teachers work in groups to analyze the results. The data from the survey are not linked to individual teachers, and only a portion of the questions are related to instructional quality. Most often it is the homeroom teacher rather than the various individual teachers who involves students in discussions based on feedback in the survey. Department leaders confirmed the absence of a coordinated or systematic approach to opening for student leadership beyond the student survey.

The other exception was a biannual conversation between teachers and students about the students' progress in the class. A few teachers also mentioned this arena as a way for them to receive feedback that influenced their teaching, making this an arena where students could exercise leadership about instructional quality.

The overall impression from an analysis of the data is that students' leadership connected to instructional quality is more characterized by spontaneity than planfulness. Two arenas for exercising influence were identified by some teachers, suggesting some degree of planfulness. At the same time, most did not mention these fora, and instead spoke of irregular, indirect and diffuse interaction with students about the quality of instruction. The response of one informant, when talking about how students' roles affect his judgement of the quality of his instruction, summarizes many of the responses:

...when I walk out of the classroom it's either direct feedback or a gut feeling, which is based on the students' signals. For me it's a gut feeling that determines whether a period has been good or not.

4.1.2 Alignment or misalignment?

Most teachers describe a situation where they seem to share notions of what good teaching is with students, which would indicate a degree of alignment and a situation in which students' leadership in this area is largely legitimate. Questions posed to school leaders about

complaints functioned as a kind of control of this description. Their answers would suggest that, while there are complaints, there is indeed not widespread dissatisfaction among students. This would support the observation that leadership is in alignment along this axis. Complaints were largely linked to a limited number of teachers, suggesting that at the school level at least, there is a degree of alignment. It is important to reiterate that alignment is not synonymous with harmony, but it is characterized by a fruitful, productive relationship, one in which the actors view each other as legitimate. So students may complain, but alignment along this axis would result in the resolution of these complaints between students and teachers. Student complaints that rise to the school leader level, on the other hand, would suggest a lack of arenas for students to effectively exercise leadership, and thereby a greater degree of misalignment.

There were, however, also indications of misalignment. As mentioned above, interviews with leaders revealed that complaints from students, though limited, were not uncommon. And one teacher, when asked whether teachers and students shared an understanding of what good teaching is, said the following:

We have a culture in our department where students often run to the department head. We are not good enough at communicating with students about it. We lack communication with students about what is expected of teachers, what is expected of students, what good teaching is.

It is also important to note that, as the quote above suggests, the school can also perhaps be characterized by the absence of leadership along this axis. That is, students may not be exercising much leadership when it comes to instructional quality. Indeed, based on the research methods I have utilized, I was unable to find significant measurable leadership exercised by students over teachers when it comes to instructional quality. What is “a lot” or “not much” is of course a relative question, underlying the importance of a baseline for comparison.

It is possible that students exercise leadership in ways that are not visible through the chosen research methods. For example, it is possible that students exercise leadership through charisma in immediate and subtle ways in the classroom. For example, if I consider my own teaching experience, I would suggest that a desire to please and impress students, in particular those students I had an affinity for, drove me to work harder and improve my instruction. Such leadership, while perhaps effective, might be largely subconscious and difficult for teachers to articulate. Other research methods, such as observation, would perhaps be more

effective. As a result, and in accordance with my interpretation of Leithwood's patterns in which, as explained in point 2.2.2, I use spontaneous misalignment to describe a situation with a lack of leadership in an area, we must describe the situation at the school as characterized primarily by misalignment.

4.1.3 Dimensions

The regulative dimension is concerned with rules and sanctions. Students at the school are not endowed with any formal avenues for levying sanctions. They can and do register complaints about teaching, but these are most often not based on the violation of a rule, but rather a breach with what is appropriate according to an understanding of what good teaching is. There are certainly a number of laws protecting students' school environment and directing teachers' behavior, but these are not often an explicit part of discussions between students and teachers about instructional quality. For example, there are laws that mandate how and how often students receive feedback, and though a few informants did mention these activities, the fact that these are required by law was not referred to. In sum, we can say that students' leadership connected to the quality of instruction appears to occur primarily in the normative dimension.

In the cultural-cognitive dimension, a surprising contradiction was observable. All informants recognized the legitimacy of the student voice in shaping instruction; most saw them as the ultimate judges of the quality of instruction. For example, one informant believed that students were the ones who could and would act to put an end to inadequate teaching by levying complaints. However, many teachers found it difficult to effectively access this voice and apply it to improve the quality of teaching. In other words, teachers experienced that there was or must be something to gain through feedback from students, but they were unsure as to how to get at it. Many expressed a suspicion of motives, for example that students will choose the easiest, least demanding instructional strategy, or a suspicion of a lack of expertise, expressed as a concern that students don't know what they need. This seeming contradiction – students are legitimate and important sources of information and can thereby take a leadership role with teachers, but at the same time students are unable or unwilling to take this role – suggests that the role of students vis á vis teachers is perhaps changing in such a way that there is now a larger expectation about student involvement in the classroom. This could be a new orthodoxy emerging. This interpretation is supported by the rise of expectations of

student involvement observable in the national student survey and national plans (Kunnskapsdepartement, 2015-16).

The following extract from one informant summarizes this sentiment. When asked whom the teacher goes to when experiencing a pedagogical challenge in the classroom – to a colleague, a leader, students or no one – one teacher gave this answer.

I think automatically that it's the students one should go to first. But I don't. I said that I go first to another teacher, then to the leader, then the students. But instinctively I think that one should start there [with the students]... But if I do it, if I ask what they think, I almost never get an answer. Or if I do get an answer, I hear that we should watch more movies or not work too hard, or other things that I don't think are reasonable answers. So that's why I don't want to involve them from the start, even though I think that they are the source, that I should start there.

4.1.4 Conclusions about the student-teacher axis

As we see from the analysis above, the distribution of leadership along the student-teacher axis cannot be neatly defined by one pattern alone; there are elements of both planfulness and spontaneity, of alignment and misalignment. As well, the distribution of leadership looks different depending upon which dimension we use as lens. To be able to land on a single description of the distribution of leadership, one must weigh the degree to which each criteria is present. That is, for example, while there are both elements of planfulness and spontaneity, we must ask which seems to best describe the overall situation. A key question here becomes where exactly to draw the line between planfulness and spontaneity, between alignment and misalignment. There will most likely be some level of planfulness around the quality of instruction, but how little planfulness must there be before we classify the situation as spontaneous? Similarly, there will almost certainly be some level of leadership that suggests alignment, but when do we say that there is so little leadership being exercised that the situation is best described as misaligned? In the end, this becomes a question of developing a norm: what do we expect of planfulness and alignment in upper secondary schools? As this is, to my knowledge, the first study of this kind in Norway, there is no available data to provide a comparison, and in any case, as explained in point 2.1, what is leadership in one school may not be leadership in another. As such, the descriptions in the analytical tool I have constructed must provide the baseline. When measured against this baseline, I reach the following conclusion:

Axis	Pattern
Student-teacher	Spontaneous misalignment

Table 7: Student-teacher pattern

Dimension	Observation
Regulative	Weakly situated
Normative	Strongly situated
Cultural-cognitive	Possible challenges to the role of the teacher vis á vis the student

Table 8: Dimensions and the student-teacher axis

4.2 The teacher leader-teacher follower axis

Along the teacher leader-teacher follower axis we are concerned with how colleagues exercised leadership upon each other. This may occur in established arenas for cooperative work, or in informal interactions. How does their collective work contribute to better instructional quality?

4.2.1 Planfulness or spontaneity?

As along the student-teacher axis, there was little in the empirical data that suggested a large degree of planfulness in regards to leadership connected to instructional quality. When asked about whether teachers shared notions of what good teaching is with both students, other teachers and leaders, all but one informant referred to an unarticulated, largely shared notion of what was good. Only one informant mentioned in-service days when teachers had discussed and articulated what made for good instruction. One informant, when asked whether teachers share an understanding of what good teaching is, answered:

...I have a kind of notion that when I talk to other teachers in this department and in other departments, I think we are pretty much in agreement about what it takes, though I can't be specific about what it is. I have a kind of communal feeling that we speak, like, the same language when we think about teaching.

If work with instructional quality were highly planful, one would perhaps expect to find a vocabulary for more clearly articulating ideas of what good teaching is, that norms or rules were perhaps explicit and formulated in for example descriptions of best practice.

When asked about systematic work to improve instruction, most informants responded that this work is for the most part not done systematically. Some cooperation with teachers in

two-teacher approaches, was described as systematic, but also here there were variations dependent upon individual teacher preferences or chemistry between the two teachers.

Other responses indicated barriers to systematic, cooperative work. Some informants argued that good teaching depends primarily on the subject; that is, what is good teaching in one subject is not the same as good teaching in another subject. A view such as this could prohibit leadership from occurring by severely limiting the number of colleagues who are perceived as legitimate potential leaders. Some informants also suggested that good teaching varies entirely upon the student group, such that what constitutes good teaching in one group is not necessarily good teaching in another group. Both of these viewpoints could conceivably hinder planned collaborative work and legitimize an atomized, privatized approach to the job that would resist or preclude the exercise of leadership.

4.2.2 Alignment or misalignment?

There were very few signs of misalignment among teachers when it comes to instructional quality. All informants clearly expressed that they viewed many of their peers as having valuable expertise. Most informants, when discussing shared notions of good teaching and cooperative work on improving instructional quality presented a picture of harmonious collegial cooperation. The few exceptions where misalignment was detectable were related to attitudes to specific teachers, most often that they were not viewed as having expertise. Informants reported that in such situations, any disagreement was avoided by cutting out cooperation rather than through confrontation. As discussed in the preceding point, collaborative work which can open for leadership to occur, is largely not systematic or planful, and is in most instances defined and directed by the teachers themselves. As well, there are few articulated descriptions of what good teaching is; the terms do not seem to be clearly defined. These factors can conceivably contribute to an avoidance of and a smudging over of differences that could lead to conflict. As a result, one could conclude that the situation is one in which, to some degree at least, the leadership that is exercised between teachers is not characterized by friction or engaged professional discourse, but by harmonious, collegial nudging. Leadership that could arise through a more arduous discussion in which teachers challenged each other is less apparent, though through my experience at the school, I know that some of this kind of activity exists as well.

It is possible to categorize such a situation characterized by collegial nudging as a form of alignment: teachers do exercise some leadership over each other, nudging each other towards

the school's goals. Perhaps the term *low-grade alignment* could capture the essence of this phenomenon. Such low-grade alignment may insulate against misalignment (spontaneous or anarchic) by softening the edges of any conflicts or by allowing actors to avoid disagreement. It is conceivable that such a situation could also preclude some collaborative work that, while perhaps heated or uncomfortable, could also be productive for the organization.

It would also be possible to describe such a situation as a lack of influence between teachers or a disengagement from arduous cooperation and thereby a lack of leadership. As such we could conceivably characterize the distribution of leadership as misalignment.

4.2.3 Dimensions

Not surprisingly, there was almost no activity along the teacher leader-teacher follower axis within the regulative dimension. The tools of regulative activity are most often the domain of formal leaders, not colleagues, and I did not expect to find much in this "box." There was, however, one interesting example of teachers operating in the regulative dimension. One teacher told how he and several colleagues had written a letter to school leaders expressing their concern about another teacher who was grossly underperforming in the classroom. So, despite the fact that no established regulative tool lay at their disposal, when a colleague's actions sufficiently challenged teachers in the normative and cultural-cognitive dimensions – what he is doing is not appropriate; he is not one of us – they did take a regulative action. This would perhaps indicate that a certain minimum standard does exist, and that when a teacher is perceived to have dropped below it, other teachers will take regulative measures to remedy the situation. Though the teachers in this case did not exercise leadership directly with the underperforming teacher, they did enable, and indeed compel, other, formal leaders to act. As a result, they did exercise leadership over the formal school leaders.

Leadership along the teacher leader-teacher follower axis appeared to be most strongly situated in the normative dimension. Though there are formally recognized teacher leader roles for each primary subject area, there was no mention of these formal teacher leaders as resources when it came to working to improve the quality of instruction. This would suggest that leadership is based on expertise and/or charisma rather than authority. Indeed, teachers indicated that they had preferred partners, though these were not decided based on position, but based on perceived expertise, often associated with experience, and/or a good working relationship. As such, leadership between teacher leaders and teacher followers at this school could be understood as strongly situated in the normative dimension. Those who do things as

they ought to be done earn the respect of their colleagues and are best in position to exercise leadership, regardless of positional authority.

As mentioned above, those teachers who were perceived as good teachers were in a position to exercise leadership; several informants associated being a good teacher with experience. This association is best understood by considering it in the cultural-cognitive dimension. It is a shared conception that more teaching experience means that you are in a position to exercise leadership over other teachers. Similarly, there was a general perception that teachers from the same subject areas were the ideal partners for improving instructional quality. This is perhaps a typical preference among teachers, particularly at higher levels of education.

Some resistance to cooperative work on instructional quality was evident in the interviews. This resistance could hinder the exercise of leadership between colleagues. For instance, some informants focused on the logistical difficulties that limit cooperative work. One informant seemed to defend the lack of cooperative work by pointing out that it simply was not possible to evaluate or plan *all* teaching lessons cooperatively, though such an overambitious model of collegial cooperation had not been suggested. It is possible to read this exaggeration as a defense of existing roles in the face of growing expectations of collaborative work. Just as we saw in the cultural-cognitive dimension along the student-teacher axis, teachers may be experiencing and trying to cope with changing roles. Where once teachers worked largely on their own, they are now expected to work more collectively. From this perspective, we could say that there is some degree of misalignment—a disagreement about roles—between teacher followers and teacher leaders.

4.2.4 Conclusions about the teacher leader-teacher follower axis

As the preceding analysis shows, there seems to be little playful leadership between teacher leaders and teacher followers. As a result, we can clearly classify the distribution of leadership as spontaneous. In general, the distribution of leadership related to instructional quality seemed to be mostly characterized by alignment, though here the situation was less clear. There were elements of misalignment, including the lack of leadership; as well, the character of the leadership seemed to prize harmony higher than arduous debate, perhaps creating what I chose to call low-grade alignment.

When it comes to dimensions, leadership was clearly more situated in the normative than the regulative dimension. And in the cultural-cognitive dimension, we could again see evidence of challenges to the role of the teacher.

Axis	Pattern
Teacher leader-teacher follower	Spontaneous low-grade alignment

Table 9: Teacher leader-teacher follower pattern

Dimension	Observation
Regulative	Weakly situated
Normative	Strongly situated
Cultural-cognitive	Possible challenges to the role of the teacher vis á vis other teachers

Table 10: Dimensions and the teacher leader-teacher follower axis

4.3 The leader-teacher axis

The leader-teacher axis is about how formal school leaders influence teachers to perform better in the classroom. The primary, though not universal, arenas mentioned were yearly conversations between teachers and leaders, classroom observation and informal or ad hoc conversations. Are school leaders more than administrators?

4.3.1 Planfulness or spontaneity?

Informants reported both elements of planfulness and spontaneity. Planfulness was visible in the form of yearly development conversations, which roughly half of the informants referred to. These conversations are not reviews in the sense that they are formal evaluations of teaching performance, though several informants referred to the conversations as arenas where leaders communicated expectations about teaching quality.

Some teachers also told of classroom visits followed by conversations in which feedback was given, though they were largely unable to reproduce specific feedback on quality of instruction that had been formative for them. This situation opens up the question of whether observation can be classified as leadership if it did not actually involve influence, though it is also conceivable that the influence was subtle and difficult to articulate. The majority of informants reported never having had a leader observe them in the classroom, some having been employed for more than 15 years. All three leaders who were interviewed reported that they had observed teachers and given feedback; one of them did this systematically with all of

the teachers he was responsible for. Observation by the others was most often in connection with following up student complaints. It is most likely that the informants were not among the teachers who had been observed.

Most informants reported that their leaders had expectations for the quality of their teaching, but, as in the case with colleagues, they did not readily articulate specific elements of these expectations. One informant did however mention departmental meetings as an arena where the leader communicated norms that affected his classroom instruction. Another said that there was an expectation that teaching should be good, that the end product should be that the students learn, but said that there was no specification as to in what way it should be good.

In summary, there are clearly some elements of planfulness in the exercise of leadership along this axis, specifically the yearly conversations, and, to a limited degree, observation and meetings. However, most of the informants did not experience systematic, planful contact with their leader about teaching. Taken as a whole and in relation to the analytical tool, I would conclude that spontaneity seems to be the better descriptor.

4.3.2 Alignment or misalignment?

Department leaders were for the most part not identified as pedagogical leaders, but primarily as administrators necessary to lay the groundwork which makes good teaching possible. As such, school leaders are, based on the feedback from the informants, largely unable to exercise leadership based upon a perception of expertise. It should be mentioned that it is possible that other teachers, in particular those who have been followed up based upon student complaints, may have a different perception of leaders' expertise. However, those interviewed did not. One teacher, when asked about whom he went to for help with pedagogical challenges, put it this way: "To ask a leader about good teaching? I don't think I have ever done that. About a pedagogical challenge, I have never done that." And another said:

My leader plays a role, but not necessarily in the form of direct feedback about my teaching. But in tying everything we do together and pushing us forward and preparing everything we need so that our teaching is as good as possible. When I get stuck in the classroom, it's not my leader I go to for help.

Such statements would indicate a pattern of misalignment in that there is little contact between teachers and leaders about the quality of instruction. At the same time, it must be

noted that almost all informants reported experiencing clear expectations from their leaders about the quality of their teaching. Here, then, would be a sign of alignment. If we analyze this situation more closely, we may get greater insight into the nature or quality of this leadership.

Let us assume that this expectation of good teaching is a form of leadership, that it does in fact influence teachers to perform well. Since department leaders are generally not considered pedagogical experts, this leadership must be based upon either or both of the other bases for leadership, namely authority and/or charisma. It certainly does seem possible that leaders exercise leadership here based upon the authority of their position. This leadership does not seem to directly influence many daily pedagogical decisions. Instead, it seems to function as a kind of organizational substructure or framework contributing to motivate teachers to perform better. Leaders, based on their role alone, form perhaps part of a set of expectations that, taken together, drive teachers to maintain a high standard of teaching. I was not in this study able to sufficiently identify how charisma may open avenues for leadership influence, though I would imagine that it does. See point 5.1.3 for a more thorough discussion.

Most informants stated that they did not know if inadequate teaching was tolerated at the school or not. Some stated that they assumed measures were taken, while others experienced that poor teaching existed and that little was done about it. Based upon the teachers' responses, it is difficult to conclude whether there is alignment or misalignment. Interviews with school leaders, however, revealed that all the leaders had at least attempted to influence underperforming teachers. My experience as principal would indicate that these efforts have at times been productive, that they have in fact influenced teachers' instruction, and thereby be qualified as leadership. It would have strengthened the study to have interviewed teachers who had received complaints about their experiences.

In summary, there is evidence of both misalignment and alignment, albeit what could perhaps be described as low-grade alignment (see point 4.2.2). To land on one description is challenging, but I believe the broadness of responses that indicated a harmonious relationship with the leader about the quality of instruction tilts the scale to alignment.

4.3.3 Dimensions

There was very little evidence that leadership was strongly situated in the regulative dimension. Most informants did not know what happens when instruction is inadequate. Many assumed there were regulative consequences, though none mentioned the routines for student complaints about teaching that were developed the previous school year. This indicates that leadership along this axis is not strongly connected to sanctions. However, again, the study did not gather information from teachers who had been followed up specifically as a result of complaints. These teachers may experience something else.

While there was no mention of specific rules connected to instructional quality, there are of course a whole set of laws and rules defining what can and cannot be done in the classroom. There are national laws ensuring students' rights in connection with the quality of instruction, for example, laws about evaluation practices or special education, though no teacher mentioned any kind of sanction for violating these laws nor talked of instructional quality in terms of national nor school-based rules. As such, we cannot say that leadership is strongly situated in the regulative dimension.

We can, however, conclude that leadership is clearly situated in the normative dimension. Informants reported for the most part that it was important for them that their leaders perceived them to be good teachers. This would indicate that leaders' expectations translate to leadership in the normative dimension. Teachers experienced a sense of honor or respect because of the expectations of their leaders.

All respondents said that it was important that leaders were or had been teachers. This belief is somewhat difficult to understand when one considers that teachers are not considered pedagogical experts or resources: One might ask why it is important that they have been teachers if their pedagogical expertise is not in demand. One answer might of course be that leaders are better able to organize and support teachers' activities when they understand them, that it is a practical benefit. It is also possible that the respect and approval that leaders communicate is more legitimate when they are also teachers. Looked upon in this way, they have more legitimacy when expressing what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior, which is leadership in the normative dimension.

If we look at the cultural-cognitive dimension, we see, again, that the role of department leaders was largely defined as an administrative one rather than a pedagogical one. A leader

must understand the workaday challenges a teacher has, though he was not a primary resource for help when questions about instructional quality arose. Not one respondent wanted more involvement from their department leader in regards to their instruction, though a few did acknowledge that a larger role for leaders that involved observation in the classroom could be productive, if frightening. And while no informant expressed a desire for less involvement, there was one informant who explicitly and clearly opposed more involvement in the classroom, at least as defined as a school walkaround, expressing a distaste for and distrust of such strategies. Here was evidence of the potential of anarchic misalignment should roles be changed or challenged. For their part, the leaders recognized that their role was primarily viewed as administrative supporter, but wanted a larger role in regards to instructional quality.

4.3.4 Conclusions about the leader-teacher axis:

In the preceding analysis, we see that leadership along this axis can not be easily understood in black and white terms. There are aspects of both planfulness and spontaneity, alignment and misalignment. However, with that in mind, we can land upon perhaps the most dominant features. In that case, we see the following:

Axis	Pattern
Leader-teacher	Spontaneous low-grade alignment

Table 11: Leader-teacher pattern

Dimension	Observation
Regulative	Weakly situated
Normative	Strongly situated
Cultural-cognitive	Leaders are not perceived as pedagogical experts

Table 12: Dimensions and the leader-teacher axis

Leadership along this axis seems to be most strongly situated in the normative rather than the regulative dimension. Analysis through the lens of the cultural-cognitive dimension reveals a situation of general agreement about roles, though not without the contours of some potential friction lying for the most part under the surface.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Below follows a discussion of the findings, including efforts to place them in the larger context of the Norwegian educational system. As well, I will attempt to provide a clear answer to the primary and secondary research questions.

5.1 Patterns of distributed leadership

The original research question for this project was the following:

How is leadership connected to instructional quality distributed at one upper secondary school?

A key factor to clarify in approaching this question is how strong of a lens we should put in the microscope. That is, is it most useful or even possible to describe patterns of leadership at the school level? Or is it more enlightening to focus upon the various axes, as I have done? Or perhaps one could also look at the departmental level or even smaller, at the individual level. There is, of course, no one correct answer; it depends upon what one wishes to observe.

Regardless of which lens we put in the microscope, the exercise of identifying patterns necessitates reference to a baseline norm: a description for each parameter and a clarification of where the borders between the categories lie. That is, where is the line between alignment and misalignment, between planfulness and spontaneity?

To supply this baseline, I created an analytical tool with descriptions for each pattern based upon my knowledge of upper secondary education in Norway. This is an attempt to contextualize the use of the patterns. This work would perhaps ideally have been based upon observations from several upper secondary schools so that the patterns would better capture the context of upper secondary education in Norway today. It would then be possible to compare my school to others.

That the analytical tool is distilled from my own, limited experience, is a potential threat to the validity of study, though one which I hope to be sufficiently transparent about. At the same time, as was described in point 2.1, it must be remembered that the exercise of leadership involves a non-routine influence or change, a situation in which actors behave in new ways. This means that what is leadership in one school (or within one school) may not be leadership in another. As such, the descriptions of the categories should perhaps be based upon the particular context of the organizational unit being studied, in this case the school.

At the school level along the three axes, and in terms of Leithwood’s patterns, I found the following results:

Axis	Pattern
Leader-teacher	Spontaneous alignment
Teacher leader-teacher follower	Spontaneous alignment
Student-teacher	Spontaneous misalignment

Table 13: Results along the various axes

5.1.1 Degrees of alignment

It was my impression that Leithwood’s patterns were perhaps a little too blunt an instrument to describe what I saw. As the analysis in the previous chapter explains (points 4.2.2 and 4.3.2), I found it useful to express the *degree* of alignment or misalignment. This was particularly necessary to express what I seemed to observe along two of the axes: not the complete lack of leadership, which would be qualified as misalignment, but rather leadership with a very light touch. A “light touch” include limited arenas for leadership, low or diffuse expectations and avoidance of disagreement. I deemed it incorrect to ignore this leadership and qualify the pattern as misalignment. At the same time, the term alignment, as defined by my description in the analytical tool, seemed to indicate a stronger presence of leadership activity. I landed on the term “low-grade alignment” to express such a situation. With that in mind, the observable patterns are now these:

Axis	Pattern
Leader-teacher	Spontaneous low-grade alignment
Teacher leader-teacher follower	Spontaneous low-grade alignment
Student-teacher	Spontaneous misalignment

Table 14: Results along the various axes, with low-grade alignment

5.1.2 Pattern at the school level

If one were to describe the pattern of leadership at the school level, ignoring the various axes, we could easily categorize the school as spontaneous rather than planful. It would be more difficult, however, to define it as chiefly characterized by misalignment or alignment, as there are clearly elements of both. If we take into regard that there was more leadership activity, as observed in this study, between teacher leaders and teacher followers and between teachers

and leaders than between students and teachers, then we can weight those axes more, and perhaps describe the school as a whole as characterized by spontaneous low-grade alignment.

Level of analysis	Pattern
School	Spontaneous low grade alignment

Table 15: Schoolwide results

5.1.3 A potential blind spot

Leadership in this study is defined as influence processes that move the organization towards its goals (see point 2.1). Further, these influence processes are based upon expertise, authority or charisma. One possible threat to the validity of the conclusions of this study is that it may have been designed to better capture leadership practice based upon authority and expertise, than upon charisma.

Influence processes based upon charisma may be subtle and largely subconscious. They may also overlap with authority and expertise. For example, teachers may have a personal affinity for a leader based, at least partly, upon that leader's expertise. Indeed, there is most likely most often a blend of factors working together in influence processes, making it at times impossible to identify the discrete bases of these processes. The effects of charisma on our actions are perhaps more difficult to articulate than impressions of expertise or authority, and therefore more difficult to measure in qualitative interviews. Other methods, such as observation, may be more effective in studying the role of charisma (see point 4.1.2). As well, it is my uninformed assumption that other fields, especially perhaps psychology, may be useful in shedding light on influence processes where charisma is a significant factor.

This potential blind spot in the research would not affect the designation of the school as spontaneous; influence processes based upon charisma that remain unarticulated in interviews are almost certainly not planful, but spontaneous. The role of charisma in leadership processes could, however, affect whether the school be described as aligned or misaligned. My assumption is that influence processes based upon charisma would push the organization in the direction of more alignment. Informants painted a picture of harmonious relationships with students perhaps indicating, in the main, that interpersonal relationships were characterized by affinity rather than its opposite. If this is correct, my results may be skewed towards less alignment than is actually the case.

5.2 Dimensions

As a secondary question, I have been interested in how the distribution of leadership can be understood by looking at it in relation to what I have called three dimensions: the regulative, the normative and the cultural-cognitive. I have asked two main questions: in which of the dimensions is leadership situated in, and, more broadly, what can we understand about the distribution of leadership by considering it in terms of the different dimensions?

In the course of this project, it became clear that it seemed both possible and useful to distinguish between leadership in the regulative and normative dimensions. Leadership practice – the actual acts – could be categorized as having a regulative or normative character. For example, the expression of somewhat vague yet measurable expectations for the quality of instruction that teachers reported feeling fall clearly into the normative rather than the regulative dimension. So the question of in which dimension leadership is situated, seemed well suited to distinguish between regulative and normative strategies and experiences.

The cultural-cognitive dimension provided different insights. It was not possible to neatly describe leadership influence processes as being situated in the cultural-cognitive dimension. The exception would perhaps be explicit efforts to clarify roles, for example the role of students vis á vis teachers. Instead, considering the distribution of leadership in terms of the cultural-cognitive dimension gave access to more underlying factors affecting the exercise of leadership. Most interestingly, as will be discussed below, this perspective seemed to give insight into some of the shifting fault lines which seem to lie under the surface of Norwegian upper secondary education today.

5.2.1 Regulative or normative?

It was largely possible to categorize leadership activities as regulative or normative in character; as a result, it seems also possible to describe the distribution of leadership in a school as primarily regulative or normative in nature. Quite clearly, and not surprisingly, leadership connected to instructional quality in the school was much more situated in the normative rather than the regulative dimension. A notion of what is appropriate, of norms and values, was much more observable than an approach characterized by rules and sanctions. As mentioned in the analysis (point 4.3.3), there do in fact exist a number of rules and regulations that are important for the quality of instruction. Rules about formative assessment or special education are two examples from the national level; there are also local rules and regulations.

And yet actors at the school studied did not seem concerned with compliance with these rules in order to ensure high quality instruction; rather, ideas about what was good teaching were anchored in an understanding of what worked with students and were much more broadly, and, at this school at least, vaguely defined.

There is some evidence on the national stage that a more regulative approach is on the rise. The recent national debates about teachers' freedom to choose instructional methods themselves versus adopting the methods chosen by the school or district (Nordahl, 2015) could open the door for a more regulative approach to leadership in which teachers are expected to comply with rules about specific teaching methods. This would represent a more instrumentalist approach to leadership connected to instructional quality than has traditionally been the case in the Norwegian context.

5.2.2 The cultural-cognitive perspective

This particular debate about the tension between regulative and normative strategies could be considered a fault line in the current context of school leadership and can perhaps be best understood by looking at it through a cultural-cognitive lens. The role of teachers for a very long time has been that they are best positioned and uniquely qualified to decide the most effective teaching methods based upon the particular subject, students and framework. Teaching was an art, and teachers were best able to judge its effectiveness (Dahl et al., 2016). This was the orthodoxy of schools. As this position has been challenged by the growing prevalence of scientifically tested teaching methods, and by attempts at greater influence from formal leaders, the landscape has grown more cluttered and actors are perhaps somewhat disoriented. The very conception of what it means to be a teacher is up for debate. This is a debate not just about what is good and bad teaching, but who decides and how it is decided. The emerging new orthodoxy may be a migration from the term evidence-based to evidence-informed teaching; this would involve a change from the *freedom* to choose your own methods to the *responsibility* to choose the best methods (Kunnskapsdepartement, 2015-16; Alver, 2018).

To a large degree, the question above is about whether the work of improving instructional quality is individual or whether it involves collective work along different axes. That is, put simply, is teaching a private affair or a team effort? Below, I will look at how a cultural-cognitive perspective of this project highlighted related fault lines along the three axes.

The changing role of teachers vis á vis students is perhaps best understood by considering it in the cultural-cognitive dimension. Several teachers in this study expressed a sense that students had an important role to play in raising the quality of instruction, yet they were unsure as to how to effectively involve the students, how to unlock that knowledge (see point 4.1.3). This apparent contradiction – yes, they should form more of the teaching, but no, I don't see how they could do it – could be a sign of a new orthodoxy emerging. Indeed, student involvement in the development of effective teaching methods – which is a form of leadership – seems to be on the rise. In recent years, self-evaluation, student involvement and feedback to the teacher seem to have grown in importance. The rise of assessment for learning in the national discussion and in the consciousness of teachers involves including students in new ways. As well, metacognition is a significant element of the coming educational reforms in Norway (Kunnskapsdepartement, 2015-16) As students are expected to better be able to reflect over their own learning, it is reasonable to assume that this will allow them to better and more explicitly participate in a dialogue with teachers about what works in the classroom. This would entail a new distribution of leadership. The interviews of teachers in this study could be said to provide a snapshot of the changes taking place in Norwegian education in terms of the roles of students.

Another fault line that became exposed by looking at this study in a cultural-cognitive perspective is along the teacher leader-teacher follower axis. Other studies have shown that teacher collaboration in Norway may be plentiful but not effective in improving instructional quality (Dahl et al., 2016, p.164). This seems also to be the case in the school studied. All teachers interviewed indicated that they believed their colleagues had expertise they could learn from. At the same time, most reported spontaneous, casual and often selective and strictly voluntary collaboration to improve instruction. There seemed to be an accept among most teachers that this is how we do things here, and a sense that organizational factors limited other forms of cooperation, thereby hindering the emergence of arenas for leadership. Only one informant expressed a specific desire for more regular, professional collaboration. School leaders, on the other hand, work to encourage this type of work in professional learning communities.

The cultural-cognitive perspective can also yield valuable insights when applied to relationships along the leader-teacher axis when it comes to instructional quality. In the introduction to this project, I mentioned the invisible contract, a situation in which teachers and leaders tacitly agree to leave the other alone. This contract is best understood in terms of

the cultural-cognitive dimension; it describes the accepted orthodoxy that has defined roles over time. Results from this project indicate that teachers are not interested in challenging this orthodoxy. As explained in point 4.3.3, not one teacher expressed a desire for greater influence from her leader on her teaching. While a few did acknowledge that greater involvement could perhaps be useful, they reported that they would prefer the status quo, which, for these teachers in particular and for the majority of the respondents, involved little to no hands-on, direct contact about the quality of instruction.

School leaders were seen first and foremost as administrative facilitators rather than pedagogical experts. While school leaders acknowledge that they do function primarily as facilitators, they also desire a more pedagogical role and work to build one. Responses from the informants indicate that this development may not be welcomed by all. Such a change involves of course changes in the distribution of leadership. Here it is possible to imagine several possible outcomes. Stronger moves to adjust the distribution of leadership could possibly shift alignment from low-grade to high-grade, that is from a less to a more intense and immediate form of alignment; in contrast, they could also lead to anarchical misalignment if teachers actively rejected such initiatives.

As discussed in point 4.3.2, the basis for leaders' ability to lead when it comes to instructional quality seems to be authority and/or charisma rather than expertise. As a result, one strategy to redistribute leadership connected to instruction and make a place for leaders in that arena, may be to establish and make visible their expertise in the field. If they are seen as experts, as pedagogical resources, their ability to exercise leadership may improve. In other words, the drive towards more pedagogical leadership in a context of distributed leadership can indicate a shift from leadership based upon authority to leadership based upon expertise.

5.3 A useful approach?

As stated in the introduction, part of my motivation for conducting this project is that it yield insights that are useful in my position as principal. Following are my impressions from that perspective.

5.3.1 Is it useful to analyze the distribution of leadership along the various axes?

Analyzing the distribution of leadership at the school level seems too broad. It is much more useful, from the perspective of the principal, at least, to break the school down along the three axes. At the school level an important question was "Are we satisfied with how we work

together to improve instruction?” By considering the axes, we can more easily define the actors. We may then ask: “Are we satisfied with the role students have in influencing teachers to improve instruction? Are we satisfied with the way teachers work together to improve instruction? Are we satisfied with the role leaders have in improving instruction?” The answers may of course be different along each axis, as will the strategies for effecting change.

5.3.2 Is it useful to distinguish between the three dimensions?

Being able to shift between the regulative, the normative and the cultural-cognitive perspectives can be useful from the principal’s point of view. The cultural-cognitive dimension holds great power as an analytical perspective, while the normative and regulative dimensions can be more closely linked to strategical choices to achieve aims. Let us look at an example to illustrate this argument.

We have at my school an institutional goal to strengthen the development of effective professional learning communities. Put more plainly, we want to improve how teachers work together to improve instruction. While we didn’t frame it such at the time, this goal emerged as the result of an analysis of how leadership is distributed between teachers. The underlying reasons for the distribution of leadership could be understood by considering established roles and practices, by looking at who we are and how we do things. This is the purvey of the cultural-cognitive dimension.

But when it comes to designing strategies to redistribute leadership along this axis, it can be useful to distinguish between regulative and normative approaches. My experience so far suggests that a combination of both approaches is necessary. As mentioned above, regulative strategies do not have a strong presence in my school; I suspect this is the case for most schools. As a result, purely regulative strategies designed to enforce conformity to rules or procedures, would breach established cultural norms. Lax enforcement of such regulative strategies could lead to a pattern of spontaneous misalignment, while more thorough enforcement could result in a hardening of fronts and anarchic misalignment. On the other hand, an entirely normative approach could be ineffectual. Established roles developed over many years may persist despite superficial agreement about values and what is appropriate.

For example, as part of our efforts to increase collaborative work related to instruction, teachers at the school recently identified the need to work more collectively, across subject

areas, on how we teach students to write well. The leaders at my school have pushed for and supported this effort based upon normative arguments, encouraging teachers to cooperate in such a way that will benefit students. We have argued that this type of collaboration, which involves a change in the teacher role from lone actor to professional team player, will result in better results for the students. Teachers have largely agreed. At the same time, our experience is that it is also necessary to have a regulative approach to this work. It may be necessary to enforce that teachers do in fact adhere to the agreed upon instructional strategies, to expect conformity through more instrumentalist approaches.

5.3.3 Is an understanding of patterns of distribution useful?

The goal of this project has been to identify patterns of the distribution of leadership at one school. This work was largely based upon Leithwood's patterns of distribution which plot along two axes: planfulness versus spontaneity and alignment versus misalignment.

Understanding leadership in a school as planful or spontaneous may allow for strategic insights. The intuitive action may be to assume that planfulness is preferable to spontaneity, despite the fact that there is currently no conclusive evidence of a link between it and better outcomes. However, greater planfulness may also have its limits. Steps towards increasing planfulness may result in pursuing regulative strategies such as establishing rules that are to be followed. An overly regulated workday may not be effective; it may diminish feelings of agency and make teachers bridle against efforts at leadership rather than embrace them. Being aware of the planful-spontaneous spectrum can conceivably aid leaders in finding balanced approaches.

Placement along the alignment-misalignment axis measures whether efforts at leadership are successful or not. By definition, alignment seems preferable to misalignment. As a result, whether the school is characterized by alignment or misalignment is not the relevant question. Rather, the question is whether there is enough alignment, and what can be done to create more. This explains the need for more nuanced descriptions of the type of alignment that exists in a school. To attempt to describe the type of alignment I observed, I developed the term *low-grade alignment* (see point 4.2.2). Its counterpoint, *high-grade alignment*, could also be useful.

5.4 The way forward?

This project has had two primary aims: a practical aim to allow me and perhaps other practitioners to do their jobs better by sharpening our analytical skills, and a theoretical aim to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of distributed leadership. Let us look at these now and how this project might relate to future efforts on each front.

This project is most likely unique in that it combined discrete elements: 1) three axes along which leadership is exercised, 2) Leithwood's patterns of distribution and 3) three dimensions in which leadership is situated and can be understood. As the discussion above indicates, from the perspective of a practitioner of school leadership, I find this combination useful. Not surprisingly, a more refined, nuanced analytical tool makes broader approaches seem too clunky. I have gained a better understanding of influence processes in my school. Whether this approach can be useful for other practitioners is unclear. It may be so complicated as to be unwieldy and inaccessible. Perhaps, though, elements of the approach, for example looking at leadership along distinct axes or distinguishing between normative and regulative practices, can be readily adopted by others working in the field. If this work could be relevant for others, it would most likely be for practitioners in the Norwegian context. For another piece of this project has been to apply theories of the distribution of leadership to the context not just of my school, but to connect lines to the broader context of upper secondary education in Norway today.

Whether this work could contribute to the theoretical understanding of distributed leadership is unknown. Ultimately, one goal in the field might be to move from descriptive to prescriptive work, to bridge the gap between patterns of distribution and student outcomes. In order to do so, we must have a better, less "fuzzy" understanding of what distributed leadership is and how it can be described. My effort to contribute to this understanding employed the use of Leithwood's patterns of distribution. Based upon my interpretation of these patterns, they may not have a useful role in making the jump to a prescriptive, normative theory of distributed leadership. The distinction between alignment (leadership distributed in a way that results in people being influenced) and misalignment (leadership distributed in a way that does not result in people being influenced) is a significant one, and is useful for the practitioner of school leadership. However, this distinction itself does not provide greater descriptive insight into what these patterns that do or do not work actually look like. The remaining question of planfulness or spontaneity would provide some

descriptive power; perhaps some of the other typologies mentioned here in point 2.2.2 would hold more. As well, the three dimensions used in this study are useful for describing and categorizing the distribution of power, in particular as regulative or normative in nature.

Distinguishing more clearly between leadership based upon expertise, authority or charisma could also be useful. For, as Scott argued for the usefulness of separating between the three dimensions despite their obvious interrelation (see point 2.3), more could perhaps be gained at this point by better understanding the differences between these three factors than by looking at them as parts of an integrated whole. For example the discussion in this study (point 4.3.2) that school leaders may exercise leadership primarily based upon authority and/or charisma rather than expertise, could be a useful insight.

Further, it is also my experience after conducting this study that it may be problematic to employ Robinson's definition of leadership when attempting to distinguish between patterns of the distribution of leadership that do achieve the organization's goal of improving student outcomes and patterns that do not. For everything that does not work, that does not further the organization's goals, is according to her definition not in fact leadership. This could lead to confusion and the possible conflation of terms: Patterns of the distribution of leadership that do not improve student outcomes, would no longer be patterns of the distribution of leadership, but patterns that describe the distribution of the *attempt* at leadership. This is certainly a useful distinction, and one that returns us to the usefulness of sorting between alignment and misalignment. But this confusion of terms illuminates the need to match definitions in a less "fuzzy" way.

In conclusion, I believe I have sufficiently answered the questions that I set out to answer: I have gained a clearer understanding of how leadership is distributed at one school in Finnmark, both in terms of patterns, dimensions and axes. The project has perhaps primarily been of use to me as a practitioner of school leadership, though it is also my hope that it could in some way possibly contribute to greater understanding of the phenomenon.

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List of attachments:

Attachment 1: Interview questions and guide for teachers

Attachment 2: Interview questions for leaders

Attachment 3: Receipt from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data

Attachment 1: Interview questions and guide for teachers

	Question	Envisioned insights	Follow up
1	For the most part, it is the teacher who decides if his/her teaching has been good or not.	Reveals degree of alignment and clarity of roles. High score shows possible misalignment in C-C dimension. Disagreement can show anarchic misalignment.	Disagreement among the informants can be explored. Roles of leaders, teachers and students can be pursued.
2	Teachers at this school share an understanding of what good teaching is.	Reveals alignment in the normative dimension, possibly the regulative dimension. Planfulness can also be revealed. Horizontal axis.	How do you know that? What is your answer based upon?
3	I work systematically to improve instruction together with other teachers.	Reveals alignment and planfulness along horizontal axis.	How often? How is this work organized? Why/why not? Are there roles in this work?
4	When it comes to teaching, I have a lot to learn from my colleagues.	Reveals strength in the normative dimension. Can expose patterns of cooperation and degree of planfulness.	Do you have an idea about who the good teachers at this school are?
5	When I experience a pedagogical challenge in the classroom/lab/workshop, I usually -figure it out myself -ask a colleague for help -ask my leader for help -work with the students to figure it out	Reveals alignment. Reveals horizontal/vertical axes. Reveals amount of collaborative work.	Why? Do others ask you for help?
6	A good school leader should be a good teacher.	Reveals if expertise is important. Can reveal alignment, especially in C-C dimension.	Why/why not? Is your leader a good teacher?
7	My leader has clear expectations for my teaching.	Reveals alignment along leader-teacher axis. Reveals regulative or normative dimension.	How are these expectations communicated? How do you react to them?
8	My leader plays an important role so that my teaching can be good.	Can reveal roles, legitimacy in the C-C dimension. Reveals alignment along the leader-teacher axis. Planfulness revealed.	Is this role defined? How? Do you talk about this role?

		Regulative and/or normative dimension	
9	Student feedback is important for the quality of my teaching.	Reveals alignment along the student-teacher axis. Can reveal planfulness. C-C dimension.	Why or why not? How do you get and work with feedback?
10	At this school, there is a systematic way to get feedback from students about teaching.	Reveals alignment along student-teacher axis. Reveals planfulness. Reveals regulative dimension.	How and how often? What kind of feedback is it? How is the feedback used?
11	At this school, students and teachers share an understanding of what good teaching is.	Reveals alignment. Normative dimension. Planfulness.	How do you know? Is it an explicit understanding? How is it communicated?
12	When students complain about teaching, they just do it to get better grades.	Reveals alignment along student-leader axis. Regulative dimension. Legitimacy in C-c dimension.	Do they complain for other reasons? Are there a lot of complaints? How are they handled?
13	At this school, teachers and leaders share an understanding of what good teaching is.	Reveals alignment. Normative dimension. Possibly regulative.	How do you know?
14	My leader has observed me in the classroom and given me feedback on my teaching.	Reveals alignment along the leader-teacher axis. Planfulness. Legitimacy in C-c dimension.	How often? Is it systematic? Do you have criteria or topics that you use?
15	Inadequate teaching is not tolerated at this school.	Reveals alignment. Can reveal planfulness, regulative strategies.	What happens? Who does what?
16	It is important for me that my leader thinks I am a good teacher.	Reveals alignment along the leader-teacher axis. Normative dimension.	Why? How is this communicated? How do they know?
17	I would like my leader to -give me more feedback on my teaching -have less influence on my teaching -do as he/she does today	Can reveal alignment. Legitimacy in the c-c dimension.	Why?

Attachment 2: Interview questions for leaders

	Question
1	For the most part, it is the teacher who decides if his/her teaching has been good or not.
2	Teachers at this school share an understanding of what good teaching is.
3	Teachers work systematically to improve instruction together with other teachers.
4	When it comes to the practice of teaching, teachers at this school have a lot to learn from each other.
5	When teachers experience a pedagogical challenge in the classroom/lab/workshop, I think that they usually -figure it out themselves -ask a colleague for help -ask me for help -work with the students to figure it out
6	A school leader should be a good teacher.
7	I have clear expectations for teachers' teaching.
8	I play an important role so that teachers' teaching can be good.
9	Student feedback is important for the quality of teachers' teaching.
10	At this school, there is a systematic way to get feedback from students about teaching.
11	At this school, students and teachers share an understanding of what good teaching is.
12	When students complain about teaching, they just do it to get better grades.
13	At this school, teachers and leaders share an understanding of what good teaching is.
14	I have observed teachers in the classroom and given them feedback on their teaching.
15	Inadequate teaching is not tolerated at this school.
16	It is important for me that teachers know that I think they are good teachers.
17	I would like to -give me more feedback on teachers' teaching -have less influence on teachers' teaching -do as I do today
18	Teachers at this school share concerns about the quality of other teachers' teaching.
19	When students are dissatisfied with a teacher's teaching, they take it up directly with the teacher rather than with me.



Resultat av meldeplikttest: Ikke meldepliktig

Du har oppgitt at hverken direkte eller indirekte identifiserende personopplysninger skal registreres i forbindelse med prosjektet.

Når det ikke registreres personopplysninger, omfattes ikke prosjektet av meldeplikt, og du trenger ikke sende inn meldeskjema til oss.

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at dette er en veiledning basert på hvilke svar du selv har gitt i meldeplikttesten og ikke en formell vurdering.

Til info: *For at prosjektet ikke skal være meldepliktig, forutsetter vi at alle opplysninger som registreres elektronisk i forbindelse med prosjektet er anonyme.*

Med anonyme opplysninger forstås opplysninger som ikke på noe vis kan identifisere enkeltpersoner i et datamateriale, hverken:

- direkte via personetydige kjennetegn (som navn, personnummer, epostadresse el.)
- indirekte via kombinasjon av bakgrunnsvariabler (som bosted/institusjon, kjønn, alder osv.)
- via kode og koblingsnøkkel som viser til personopplysninger (f.eks. en navneliste)
- eller via gjenkjennelige ansikter e.l. på bilde eller videoopptak.

Vi forutsetter videre at navn/samtykkeerklæringer ikke knyttes til sensitive opplysninger.

Med vennlig hilsen,

NSD Personvern

