



Universitetet  
i Stavanger

**UIS BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

<p><b>STUDY PROGRAM:</b> MØAMAS Business Administration – Master of Science</p>	<p><b>THESIS IS WRITTEN IN THE FOLLOWING SPECIALIZATION/SUBJECT:</b> Strategy and management / Strategi og ledelse</p> <p><b>IS THE ASSIGNMENT CONFIDENTIAL? No</b> (<b>NB!</b> Use the red form for confidential theses)</p>
<p><b>TITLE:</b> The leadership phenomenon: How can leadership be explored through an alternative leadership ontology by examining the implementation and implications of its framework?</p>	

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## SUMMARY

This dissertation aims to explore the leadership phenomenon through a framework and thought process that is different from the current leadership orthodoxy. The more traditional perception of leadership with leaders, followers and their common goals at the core is challenged by looking at leadership as producing DAC; direction, alignment and commitment. How can DAC be implemented in an organization? What are the implications? What does further exploration of the leadership phenomena through the DAC lens yield?

With a background that shows that leadership is poorly understood, this thesis reviews new and alternative literature of leadership practices. A study was conducted that aimed to answer these questions and look at DAC and how it would function in an organization. Empirical data was collected through interviews of employees in different positions in an international organization.

This dissertation has the world view of interpretivism. The analysis is a qualitative content analysis, and the data reveals that there are six main themes of relevance to the problem question. The findings suggest that DAC is problematic to visualize on a complete scale for employees of a large international organization, but that a DAC thought process is important on lower levels to give employees space and responsibility to develop themselves and develop smaller efficient teams. The findings also suggest that leadership culture and purpose support DAC implementation through different views from the respondents.

The last part of the problem question, exploring leadership through DAC was concluded to yield an understanding of the employees' scope and participation in leadership, as well as a personal perception that grasps the phenomena leadership in a more complete way than the tripod. Further conclusions yields support to an implementation of DAC despite findings of reluctance and limitations of the tripod, through a cultural approach and a liberation of the tripod mindset. The implications were concluded to be several elements, with both positive and negative outcomes. Positive outcomes were: being in possession of empowerment, yielding an increased sense of responsibility and ownership. The main concern was the responsibility paradox, where making everyone responsible ultimately can make no one responsible.

This dissertation recommends future students to develop problem questions early and combine quantifiable data with leadership studies. It further recommends practitioners to regard leadership through the DAC lens, consistently challenging the ontology.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was written as the final work of the MSc in Business Administration, with a specialization in strategy and management, at University of Stavanger Business School. The process has been challenging, yet very interesting and educational. The opportunity to explore such a timely yet under-researched challenge of leadership theory and practice has been a considerable motivational factor during the many hard and demanding hours devoted to this research. After analyzing the new leadership paradigm of the DAC ontology, we see further questions of DAC to be explored. Our wish is that this thesis can inspire others to further explore this field of leadership

This thesis would not have been possible without the contributions of some very essential people. We gratefully acknowledge the help of our two contact persons within TietoEvy. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the respondents who took time out of their busy and irregular workdays during these COVID-19 times to be interviewed while working from home. We were impressed by the insight and knowledge the respondents quickly gained of DAC. Last but not least, we would like to express our deepest appreciations to our supervisor, professor Rune Todnem By. With his enthusiasm, he has inspired, supported and challenged us, but not least given us highly valuable nudges in the right direction when needed.

Stavanger, June 15, 2020

Simen Fogstad Eielsen and Magnus Øvstebø

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

*“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth”*  
(Burns, 1978, p. 2).

Burns (1978) sheds light on a challenge in leadership theory with this claim. One may ask themselves how is it so, and why cannot researchers and practitioners agree on what leadership is, a phenomenon that is so widely accepted as something real? The focus of this dissertation is to further examine the term leadership, to explore alternative perspectives and ontologies, identify how alternative frameworks can be implemented in an organization’s daily work, and identify what implications such an implementation will cause.

When researchers disagree about the ontology of a phenomena, it speaks volumes of how the field is in need of further exploration, and to understand the problem at hand, one must understand the word “ontology”. Ontology is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (*Ontology*, n.d.):

1. the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.
2. a set of concepts and categories in a subject area or domain that shows their properties and the relations between them.

It is crucial to understand this term to understand the problem at hand. It is the second alternative of the definition of ontology that is utilized in this dissertation; the most appropriate definition when dealing with a phenomenon, such as leadership.

Rost (1995) states there is no commonly accepted definition of the term leadership. Barker (1997) further presents one of the issues with leadership studies being that there is a conventional practice by leadership scholars to not define the term even though they are researching it. Bennis (2007) state, however, that there is a framework that supports leadership theory, and presents this leadership ontology: “Leadership is grounded in a relationship. In its simplest form, it is a tripod — a leader or leaders, followers, and the common goal they want to achieve. None of those three elements can survive without the

others” (2007, p.3). Drath et al. (2008) see this as a traditional perspective of leadership and coin it the ‘tripod ontology’. Several definitions of leadership (Rost, 1997; Burns, 1978; Chemers, 1997), although not commonly accepted, have in common that they share an ontological premise of a relationship revolving around the entities leaders, followers, and shared goals. By using this tripod perspective, its three entities – leaders, followers, and their shared goals – must be seen as the essential aspects of leadership, and practice of leadership should be seen as the practice of leaders, followers, and the goals they share together. This framework of the tripod is clearly visualized by the model of Drath et al 2008:

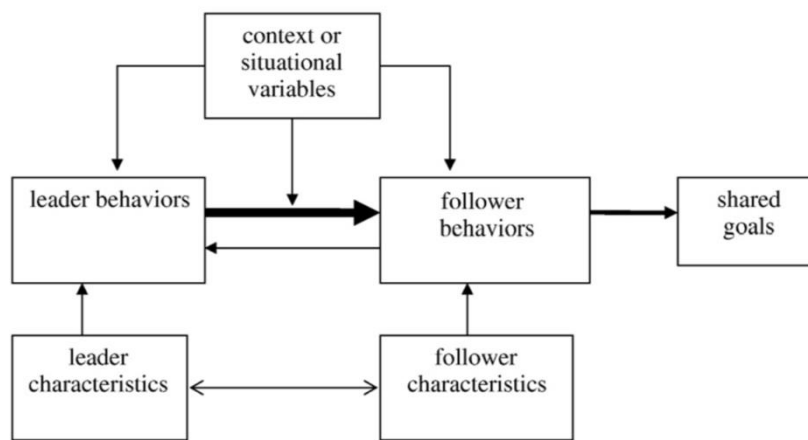


Figure 1: Framework based on the tripod ontology (Drath et al., 2008)

Even though Drath et al. (2008) fully acknowledges the tripod ontology, they see it as a more traditional perspective of leadership, and claim that there are some major limitations to it. They see a development in leadership theory with emerging areas such as shared and distributed leadership, applications of complexity science, and relational approaches, which calls for an equivalent development in the leadership ontology. The traditional leadership ontology, which is based on the tripod, is not well suited for understanding leadership in contexts that are collaborative and peer-like, which according to Drath et al. (2008) are increasing. Therefore, they present an alternative ontology, which they call the DAC ontology. Instead of focusing on the tripod entities leaders, followers, and shared goals, they present three leadership outcomes as alternative entities; direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC):

- Direction is about the agreement on what the collective tries to achieve together.
- Alignment is about the coordination, organization and integration of knowledge and work in a collective.



- Commitment is about members making the success of the collective as their personal priority, instead of their individual success.

What Drath et al. (2008) propose is a development in leadership ontology at the basic ontology level. With this new ontology, leadership can be discussed and acted out without referring to either leaders, followers, or common goals. The focus of this new perspective will be the production of direction, alignment, and commitment. Instead of looking at one individual in the role of a leader practicing leadership, the DAC ontology is about a group of people coming together to produce DAC. The DAC ontology is looking to explain “... how people who share work in collectives produce direction, alignment, and commitment” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 636). The idea behind this new way of thinking about leadership is that the DAC ontology will help leadership theory evolve, and to see it in a whole new perspective more suited for future emerging issues, questions and contexts. The framework is presented by Drath et al. (2008):

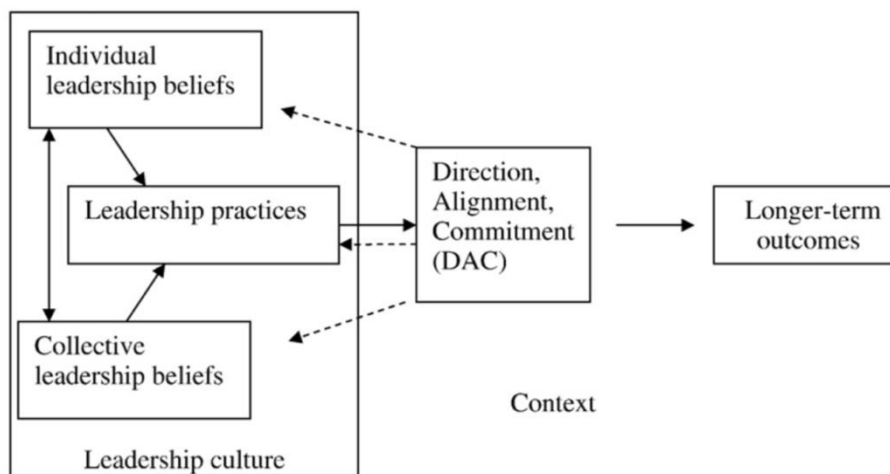


Figure 2: Framework based on the DAC ontology (Drath et al., 2008)

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of this dissertation is to further examine the term leadership, to explore an alternative perspective of leadership – the DAC ontology – and identify how a new ontology can be implemented in an organization’s daily work. Furthermore, it seeks to identify which implications such an implementation will cause. This led to the following research question:

*How can producing outcomes of DAC be implemented as leadership in the daily operations of an organization?*

This further leads to the following subordinate research questions:

*What might the implications of implementing DAC be?*

*What does further exploration of the leadership phenomenon through a DAC lens yield?*

The confusion, different frameworks and disagreements on an ontological level are of most interest to those working or thinking of leadership. Further exploration of the leadership phenomena through the lens of a new framework and ontology is necessary. The objective of this dissertation is to answer the research question through analysis of qualitative data.

### **1.3 BACKGROUND OF CHOICE**

Many people are likely to get associations to great and famous leaders when thinking about leadership. One might think of historical successful army chiefs, prime ministers and presidents ruling countries, or business magnates with a number of successful companies on their resumes. According to Rost (1997), the words leader and leadership were used as synonyms throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which has led to people thinking that leaders – the individuals – are the only ones executing leadership. This leads to a challenge of the ontology of leadership - what is leadership? What are the implications of a new ontology and how can it be implemented?

Bennis (2007) and Drath et al. (2008) state that there is a framework common for most literature regarding leadership. This framework is called the ‘tripod’, based on Bennis’ (2007) description of leadership as a relationship which consists of three entities – leader(s), followers, and shared goals – three elements that cannot exist without the others.

However, there are groups with members working together where there are no appointed leaders, and collectives where there are no vertical hierarchy. Why does this function? Is it possible for a group of people to attain their aims in effective ways without relying on one individual leader to make all decisions and set the course? Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff (2010) argue that if leadership theory is to move beyond the traditional ontology of a leader-

centered perspective, this deeply rooted tendency of seeing leadership in the guise of individual leaders who move followers in the direction of common goals, must be challenged. They further advocate a redefinition of leadership as organized processes and practices by interacting people, and that the view of interaction must steer clear of thinking of formal leaders and their thoughts and actions.

Drath et al. (2008) present an alternative perspective of leadership – a way of discussing and even acting out leadership without talking about leaders or followers.

They acknowledge the tripod ontology and the impact it has had on leadership theory.

However, they argue that it certainly has its limitations, especially if the literature is to be able to remain going forward and still be relevant as the term leadership is developing.

Furthermore, they call for a shift in the leadership paradigm to match the development at the leadership ontology level and thereby present the DAC ontology as a better fitted alternative.

The DAC ontology sees the leadership outcomes direction, alignment, and commitment (referred to as DAC) as more fitting entities than those of the tripod. Direction means a common understanding of the vision, mission, goals, and strategies of a collective or group; alignment means effective coordination; and commitment means to put individual interest aside and prioritize the collective interest (Eckert & Drath, 2009).

By carrying out a perspective that sees leadership as something that springs out from leaders as its main source, one will derive effective leadership simply from highly skilled leaders, which to a big extent limits how one sees leadership (Eckert & Drath, 2009). Drath et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of all partaking roles, and instead focus on the outcomes, as a way to understand leadership as something the entire collective or group achieve together. According to the DAC framework, leadership is produced as a result of the shared work of the members of a collective, and their everyday practices which results in producing leadership outcomes – DAC. Seeing that leaders alone are not sufficient for producing leadership, this new ontology accounts for the wide diversity in those social interactions that produce leadership outcomes.

In the leadership literature, the concepts of shared and distributed leadership have emerged throughout the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gronn, 2002; Day, Gronn, Salas, 2004; Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006). Shared leadership is processes of leadership carried out by all members of a group or collective, rather than by designated individuals (Ensley et al., 2006).

The tripod ontology is not well suited for understanding leadership in such peer-like and collaborative contexts (Drath et al., 2008). As a result of these emerging contexts, the need for an ontology that can treat leadership without speaking of leaders and followers can therefore be said to be much needed.

Furthermore, for leadership to be able to develop, the traditional tripod ontology would call for leaders to develop (Brungardt, 1996; Rost, 1993). However, if leadership also can be seen as contexts where there are no formal roles of leaders, there is a need for an ontology that can treat leadership development without the leader-centric perspective.

#### **1.4 LIMITATIONS**

This dissertation aims to illuminate the term leadership and the main appraisal is that the research revolves around the business environment with data collected from an IT-company: TietoEvyry. A limitation of this dissertation is that the information is primarily collected from one firm. The goal is to cover as much ground as possible from this firm and gain a clear view from the workforce.

The dissertation will not look at leadership through the traditional lens where the individuals - people in the formal appointed roles of leader and follower - and their common shared goals are the key elements. Although the DAC ontology certainly acknowledges the tripod and the contribution it has had on the development of leadership literature hitherto, this dissertation focuses on the alternative leadership framework explored by Drath et al. (2008), as a way to meet the new demands for this theory going forward. This dissertation will refrain from discussing leadership in light of the tripod, but the exploration of the phenomenon is dependent on views from employees in different positions.

As this dissertation is conducted over a relative short time span, this is considered to be a relevant factor in regards of how deep the research can go. Jackson and Parry (2011) address this issue and present one response to this by concentrating on leadership on the lower hierarchical levels of a company, where one might find more cooperation. The focus is therefore limited to a few specific employees, both of formal leader roles and without formal leader roles. It is also limited by not including top management employees.

## **1.5 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE**

The first chapter after the introduction treats the relevant previous research that led to the problem question. This chapter explains the views on leadership and how theorists argue what leadership is. Furthermore, the ontology is at center, where DAC and the tripod are the main frameworks.

The method of this dissertation is explained in chapter 3. This chapter presents the research paradigm, research methodology, research method and the data collection. Trustworthiness and ethics of the assignment is also clarified in this chapter.

In chapter 4, the findings are presented. These are the results of the interviews. The chapter further analyzes the findings, comparing these to the relevant theories. By utilizing qualitative collection, the analysis will look at the findings through an explorative design.

At the end of this dissertation, a summary leads to conclusions and justified recommendations for further research.

## **1.6 SUMMARY OF INTRODUCTION**

The introduction chapter looked at the background for this dissertation, why the field is in need of more research, and what the purpose and focus of this dissertation is. It further presented important definitions and explanations of the ontology and raised questions of how it can be implemented and what the implications are. The research question is then presented, based on the given focus and problems, as well as the sub-questions to complement it.

Through the literature frameworks and primary research through interviews, this dissertation aims to explore the leadership phenomenon through the lens of DAC, looking at implementation and implications of a new ontology.

## **2 CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

Burns (1978) mentions that leadership is one of the most researched fields in the world. This means that the literature review of this thesis is limited to theories that entail the discussion of the ontology of leadership. The literature was chosen and reviewed based on its critical value to the framework and thought process of leadership, where the tripod and DAC frameworks are central. The need for a new framework is enhanced by the work of Drath et al. (2008). The tripod and commonly accepted idea of leaders, followers and common goals is the first subject explained. It is important to understand what previous theory generally agrees on. This acceptance is then challenged by Drath et al.'s (2008) theories of a new framework. It will be evident that these studies of leadership are necessary to further discuss the phenomenon. This is explained by the aspects of DAC and the lens in which the leadership phenomenon is viewed. Furthermore, a concept both DAC and the tripod can be strongly associated by, the work of Kempster et al. (2011) explains leadership as purpose. This is research where both leaders and followers/collaborators align their telos and inner acceptance as a path to execute leadership.

### **2.2 THE DOMINANT LEADERSHIP ONTOLOGY**

The dominant leadership ontology is to view leadership as part of three elements. Bennis expressed this ontology: "Leadership is grounded in a relationship. In its simplest form, it is a tripod — a leader or leaders, followers, and the common goal they want to achieve. None of those three elements can survive without the others" (2007, p.3). While this cannot be seen as a definition of leadership, it must be seen as the basis of the term, and an expression of commitment to the three essential entities that must be referred to when discussing leadership: leaders, followers, and shared goals. However, not only does discussing leadership mean that one must also talk about these three entities, but in the same manner does it mean that the practice of leadership is also about the practice of leaders, followers and the goals they share together. Drath et al. (2008) coin this perspective the 'tripod ontology'.

Previously, leadership has not had a commonly accepted definition (Rost, 1995). Barker (1997) presents an issue with leadership studies as there is a conventional practice by leadership scholars to simply not even define the term.

However, some theorists have made up their own definitions of the term. Burns (1978) distinguished leadership from leaders and described leadership as one of the least understood phenomena in the world, despite his claim that it was also one of the most observed phenomena. He defined leadership as:

“... the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 425).

Burns (1978) implied that leadership is a relational aspect, which should be seen as something different than leaders, in which the focus should be leader traits, skills and behavior. By using this definition, Burns contributed to the continued focus on the relationship.

Many, and perhaps most, of the definitions of leadership focus on the three entities of the tripod. Rost (1997) defines leadership as: “(...) an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.” (p. 11), and changed his initial definition by substituting the word ‘followers’ with ‘collaborators’. Burns’ (1978) definition distinguished the entities: “(...) the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons (...) in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (p. 425). According to Chemers (1997), most theorists and researchers will agree on leadership being defined as “(...) a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (p. 1). These different definitions, and many more with them, have in common that they share the same ontological premise – a premise that leadership as a notion involves three main entities: leaders, followers, and shared or common goals.

The three entities of the tripod can be seen as three legs that functions as the foundation of leadership. The leader leg is the one that has been the focus of leadership theory for most of the time, and early leadership theory saw leaders as the main component, in which they were both the carriers and sources of leadership. This can be linked to Rost’s peripheral elements, where he discovered in an extensive analysis that researchers discuss leadership without defining it (Rost, 1991). There has been developed a common understanding of an idea that

leadership consists of the actions and behaviors of leaders; and according to Drath et al. (2008) this idea is so deeply rooted in leadership theory that it is virtually unquestioned.

The second leg of the tripod is the follower leg. Attention to the role of the followers grew towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly through the work of Burns (1978), who emphasized how leadership cannot be separated from the needs and goals of followers. Rost (1993) advocated that there had to be done a reimagining of leadership development, as he saw leaders and followers as equal. He argued that a radical shift in the paradigm of leadership was much needed to be able to cope with leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paradigm that dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which Rost called the industrial paradigm, was outdated according to him, and leadership scholars should focus on a new paradigm – the postindustrial paradigm (Rost, 1997). The industrial paradigm is all about the individual, the leader, while the postindustrial paradigm is centered on leadership as a relationship. Furthermore, other works also brought the perspective of leadership as a relationship between charismatic leaders and followers into the literature (Burns, 1978; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Hater & Bass, 1988).

Goals which are held common or shared among the leaders and followers is the third leg of the tripod, and the entity that has received the least of attention, as goals, how they emerge and how to reach them has not been in focus to a great extent (Drath et al., 2008). However, as followers gained more and more attention in the literature, it also became more common for some, such as Rost (1997), to see the shared goals of the leaders and their followers as an important aspect. Burns (1978) saw the fundament of the relationship between leaders and followers as the interplay of actors who come together with different levels of motivation, power and skills, in the quest for a common or joint purpose.

### **2.2.1 Limitations of the traditional leadership ontology**

Drath et al. (2008) emphasize that there are some major limitations with the tripod. There is no doubt that the previous leadership literature has had real and significant effect on how leadership has been practiced. Bennis (2007) states that it is definitely true that people have been able to change the lives of millions of people and also reshaped the world through leadership, and Drath et al. (2008) certainly acknowledges this. However, they examine some aspects regarding leadership theory that are appearing, and which are clear examples of how



the tripod ontology is limited when it comes to how leadership theory is developing. The development of leadership theory requires an equivalent development in the leadership ontology, because of the following emerging leadership theory areas: shared and distributed leadership; applications of complexity science; and relational approaches (Drath et al., 2008).

Shared leadership is a concept that does not fit together with the formal roles of the tripod – the leader and the followers. Shared leadership is dependent on influence being exchanged back and forth among peers, and such influence takes place in two different ways in teams – either through the practice of the traditional vertical leader or through the source of team itself (Cox, Pearce & Perry, 2003, as cited in Drath et al., 2008). By seeing the team itself as one of the main sources of influence one also identifies an inter-relating system of individuals as an origin of leadership, as it takes not only leaders but also interaction within the group to create leadership influence. Drath et al. (2008) point out that shared leadership in this context means a social process of interactive and collective influence, and not leadership being passed on between the individuals in a group. The distinction of leader and follower that is so fundamental to the tripod is almost wiped out by the notion of shared leadership, and there becomes a need for a new ontology that includes both vertical and shared leadership (Drath et al., 2008).

Gronn (2002) sees leadership studies as divided into two dualisms - the leader-follower and the leadership-followership dualisms - and they are not backing alternate ways to divide leadership tasks. He introduces the thought of seeing the leader-follower dualism at one end of a continuum, an end he calls focused leadership (only one individual with the status of leader), and distributed leadership at the other end. Distributed leadership can be seen as a holistic concept where the behavior that constitutes the unit of analysis is concertive action, instead of the collection of the individual behaviors. Concertive actions can, according to Gronn (2002), be identified as spontaneous collaboration, intuitive understanding which over time is developed among close working peers, and the arrangements of distributed actions as in self-managed teams. Such a holistic concept of leadership also highlights the limitations of the narrow concept of the tripod.

Complexity leadership theory sees leadership as something that is too complex to be described simply as individuals' behavior, but instead as complex interactions of many forces (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). By seeing leadership in the perspective of

complexity, the three legs of the tripod do not accumulate in leadership, as there is no certainty that the actions of the leaders and the following response from the followers leads to the product of leadership (Drath et al., 2008). This complexity perspective points to the limitations of the tripod as there may seem to be other aspects than the three legs that comprise leadership.

In addition to the concepts of shared and distributed leadership, and complexity leadership, there is according to Drath et al. (2008) another approach to leadership that is emerging: relational theory. They present this as a theory that sees knowledge and competencies as derived not from the minds of individuals, but in the ongoing relationships - the collectives are not just the aggregate of the partaking individual actors but something far more than that. Leadership practices might develop from the practice of a single dominant leader, to a practice based on mutual influence being exchanged within a group, to a practice based on mutual transformation (Drath et al., 2008). Seeing leadership in the lens of relational theory removes the notion of leaders and followers as something indispensable, but instead "... local-cultural ideas that are socially constructed for the purpose of providing a basis for social cooperation" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 641). The relational approach sees the tripod terms of leader, follower, and shared goals, as not permanent, but instead their meaning is frequently framed and reframed dependent on which context or time they reside.

### **2.3 TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP ONTOLOGY**

Drath et al. (2008) claim that the traditional leadership ontology, based on the tripod, is turning out less and less suitable for understanding leadership in peer-like and collaborative contexts, which they see as increasing contexts. They call for a development of leadership theory that is matching the development at the level of leadership ontology and present an alternative ontology – the DAC ontology: direction, alignment, commitment. Instead of focusing on the entities leaders, followers, and shared goals, they present the three leadership outcomes as alternative entities:

- direction: agreement on what the collective tries to achieve together
- alignment: coordination, organization and integration of knowledge and work in a collective
- commitment: members making the success of the collective as their personal priority, instead of their individual success

Drath et al. (2008) propose a development in the leadership terminology at the basic ontology level, and instead of focusing explicitly on leaders, followers and shared goals they argue for a shift in the focus so to involve the production of direction, alignment and commitment. In order to attain organizational achievements, these three outcomes (DAC) are elements that facilitate members of a group coming together and doing so in an effective way. The DAC ontology is not about one individual in the role of a leader practicing leadership or making leadership happen but is about a group of people coming together to produce DAC. While the tripod is looking to explain who the leaders are and further how they interact with their followers to realize their shared goals, the DAC ontology is looking to explain "... how people who share work in collectives produce direction, alignment, and commitment" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 636). The idea behind this new way of thinking about leadership is that the DAC ontology will help leadership theory to evolve and be better suited to focus on new issues and questions.

It is important to clarify that the DAC ontology acknowledges previous leadership theory and the tripod as a foundation to further build on. In this alternative way of seeing leadership, the traditional theory is simply reframed as knowledge regarding people with the roles of leaders and followers, and how they might interact in order to produce DAC. Therefore, this chapter will present frameworks for both the tripod and DAC ontology to show where there are similarities and how they can be compared.

The framework based on the tripod ontology is presented in figure 1.1, and is based on the works of Drath et al. (2008). The difference in size of the arrows that are connecting 'leader behaviors' and 'follower behaviors' indicate the influence between them, and that there is an asymmetrical influence. Leaders influence followers more than followers influence leaders. This influence further leads to realizing shared goals. Leaders and followers are constituted of their characteristics and behaviors, and leader characteristics and follower characteristics influence each other independently of the asymmetrical influence. The context, or the variables, of the leadership situation is considered an independent aspect, and has impact on both leaders, followers, and how they interact within the group.

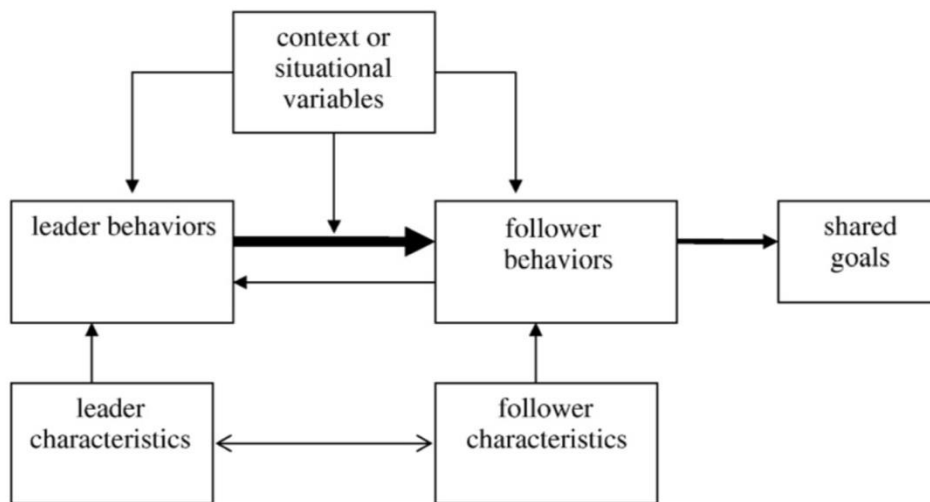


Figure 3: Framework based on the tripod ontology (Drath et al., 2008)

The DAC framework is presented in figure 1.2. The main focus of this framework is the DAC output and how it is produced. The first thing one might notice is how this framework is based on beliefs which leads to practices as means to producing DAC. The leadership beliefs of the individuals are related and linked to the leadership beliefs of the collective of the group. The leadership practices are the leadership beliefs put into action (Drath et al., 2008). The leadership beliefs can be compared with the characteristics of leaders and followers of the tripod framework, while the leadership practices can be compared with the behaviors of leaders and followers. However, as Drath et al. (2008) put it, it is important to clarify that they are only *comparable* to the mentioned elements of the tripod framework, and not ‘the same as’. Producing DAC *can* be a result of leaders and followers influencing each other, but is not dependent of it, as the production of DAC can be attained through several alternative leadership beliefs and practices.

DAC production is considered a short-term criterion for effective leadership. Reaching the desired goals through asymmetrical influence – the immediate result of leadership in the tripod framework – is considered only one of many long-term outcomes which leadership is contributing to attain. For the DAC framework, leadership is seen as “... a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition for achieving the longer-term purposes and goals of a collective, such as adaptation, sustainability, the flourishing of certain values, the achievement of certain outcomes, or simply success.” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 642). Producing DAC is not the final result, but a way of reaching the longer-term outcomes of leadership.

The DAC framework has a different perspective on what is considered leadership than the traditional tripod framework. All actions being taken by the individuals, the interplay between them, and how they systematize, in a collective group, which aims to produce DAC is considered leadership practice. Drath et al. (2008) emphasize that not all social interactions within such a collective can be said to constitute leadership. The decisive factor is that those interactions are present with their main reason being to either target or intend the production of DAC.

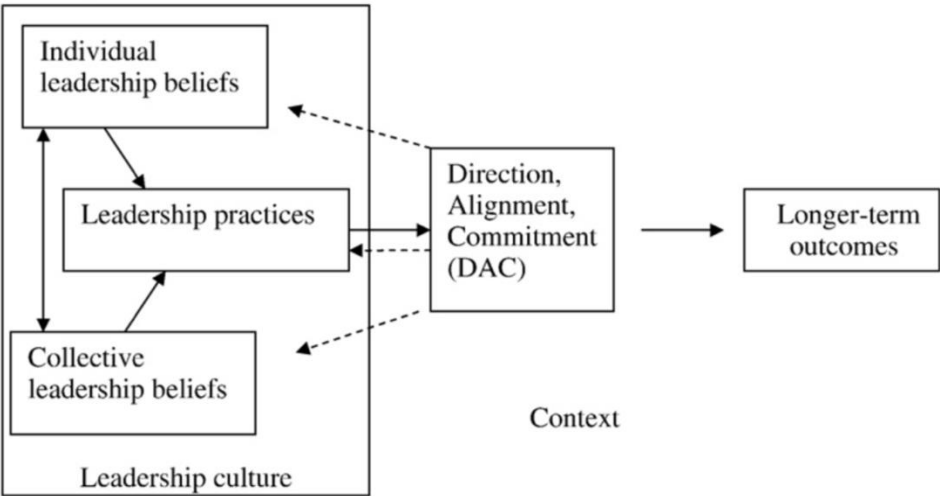


Figure 4: Framework based on the DAC ontology (Drath et al., 2008)

**2.3.1 Essential aspects of the DAC framework**

In order to be able to further discuss leadership in the lens of the DAC framework, it is necessary to present the most essential elements and how Drath et al. (2008) see them constituting this framework. The broad outlines are presented in table 2.1. One of the more important aspects regarding leadership is arguably culture. The phenomenon of culture is one of many terms that most people have a commonsense notion of, as they find themselves to be a part of one, yet might find difficult to define. Eckert and Drath (2009) describe leadership culture as a pattern of basic shared assumptions, the beliefs, that a collective must apply and also teach to new members for the collective to be able to produce DAC. Schein (2010) presents a definition of the culture of a group, which aligns with the way culture is seen in the DAC framework, as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learns as it deals with its problems, and that is taught to new members as the right way to deal with those problems.

Drath et al. (2008) state that the DAC ontology integrates across cultures, and that an ontology where the outcomes are in focus facilitates a common ground to fathom leadership in different local cultural environments. Whereas leadership in the tripod perspective must be re-interpreted when crossing cultures, since the concepts 'leaders' and 'followers' might be seen and used differently for different cultures, the DAC perspective facilitates a culturally neutral way of seeing leadership while still letting different beliefs and practices differ by the cultures.

However, Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) state that implementing such an unfamiliar leadership ontology into an organization might see resistance in members who do not share the imperative leadership beliefs and practices for producing outcomes of DAC, which sometimes makes it inevitable to replace those existing members.

Leadership beliefs		Leadership practices		Leadership culture			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analogous to characteristics of leaders and followers of the tripod</li> <li>• must be seen as dispositions to behave and not as state of mind</li> <li>• should be seen as a web of beliefs, as single beliefs must be supported and condoned by other beliefs (Quine &amp; Ullian, 1978, cited in Drath et al., 2008).</li> <li>• dismissing beliefs can lead to extensive ripple effects because of the web structure (changing one belief means changing many others as well)</li> <li>• the more the beliefs are substantially supported by other beliefs, the more stable the web</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership beliefs put into action</li> <li>• behaviors of the collective enactments, not individual behaviors</li> <li>• organized as webs in the same manner as beliefs</li> <li>• all leadership practices targeting production of DAC are equally important</li> <li>• a group's overall pattern of behavior can be seen as leadership practices, even without formally appointed leaders (a limitation of the tripod)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the pattern of approach a collective has to DAC production</li> <li>• webs of leadership beliefs and practices constitute leadership culture</li> <li>• leadership culture, and not individual leaders, is the origin of leadership</li> <li>• conducting changes in leadership must be done by changing the beliefs and practices of <i>everyone</i> involved in leadership culture, not just for those in authority positions</li> </ul>			
Leadership context		DAC (outcome)		Feedback		Longer-term outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• context and leadership are interdependent elements</li> <li>• contextual factors (e.g. technology, values, competitors, time and place etc.) are essential for beliefs and practices related to producing DAC</li> <li>• should be understood as a comprising component of leadership beliefs, practices, culture, DAC, and long-term outcomes</li> <li>• context is not as limiting for DAC as it is for tripod, so DAC may be better suited for future development of leadership theory</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the three outcomes of DAC can all be produced on their own, not depending of any of the two others</li> <li>• however, the effectiveness of DAC depends on the extent all three of them are combined and working together</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the result of DAC production is an obvious learning possibility</li> <li>• feedback related to practices: finding better ways to implement current practices/using different practices without changing fundamental beliefs</li> <li>• feedback related to beliefs: changing practices will mean to change the beliefs as well, since practices are based on beliefs</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAC can be framed as an end in itself, on a shorter-term</li> <li>• the longer-term criteria, however, is the attainment of the purposes and longer-range goals of the collective</li> <li>• more factors than simply producing DAC (e.g. contextual elements like technology, competitors, social changes, historical events etc.) counts in the longer-term</li> <li>• DAC is a necessary aspect of obtaining longer-term outcomes but not sufficient</li> </ul>	

Table 1: Essential elements of the DAC framework (adapted from Drath et al., 2008)

### **2.3.2 Concerns regarding DAC**

Being that the ontology of DAC is an alternative framework and a relatively recent addition to leadership theory, this is not yet a heavily debated perspective. However, there are some concerns about such a way of thinking of leadership. Climates of empowerment are suggested through research to have a positive effect on job performance, like for instance by encouraging initiative taking and ownership, according to Carsten et al. (2010). They still argue that work systems and structures that facilitate empowerment, like for instance self-managed teams, might struggle in encounters with workers who principally are passive in contributing to the collective.

A concern of Crevani et al. (2010), regarding the DAC ontology, is that instances of absent, failing or diverging leadership practices might be overshadowed and neglected by the focus it has on the beliefs and practices engendering successful outcomes of DAC. Furthermore, another concern is that the main focus this type of leadership has on the consensus approach, might disregard the differing perceptions and disputes that is likely to appear in a large and diverse group (Crevani et al., 2010; Lindgren, Packendorff & Tham, 2011).

Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) point to the fact that if not approached in the right way, practicing leadership in such a collective manner as in the DAC framework can generate some form of a chaotic state and ever-lasting meetings. They furthermore warn about the lack of accountability, where making everyone in a group responsible might turn into no one taking responsibility.

### **2.3.3 Leadership as practice**

The view DAC has on shifting focus away from the individual leader aligns with the essence of Raelin's (2016) call for a shift in the paradigm in the field of leadership studies, which he calls the 'leadership-as-practice' (referred to as L-A-P) movement. L-A-P sees leadership as something that exists through practice, and not something that springs out from the traits, skills and actions from an individual leader, or follower. Raelin (2016) describes a practice as coordination of effort between members who together, and through their own rules, choose those outcomes they seek to achieve. Furthermore, L-A-P is about the accomplishments of people who collaborate rather than the thoughts and behaviors of individuals. This perspective sees the people exercising leadership as not residing outside of leadership but as ingrained



within it, and that identifying leadership calls for a look to the practice within which it takes place (Raelin, 2016).

**2.3.4 Practicing leadership in the lens of the DAC framework**

Whereas the tripod ontology focuses mainly on the roles of leaders and followers, the DAC ontology focuses on which beliefs and practices that facilitate for members of collectives who share work to produce DAC. This ontology reaches wide and quite general, and its basic question covers all leadership questions from the tripod ontology as they are of a narrower perspective than the general perspective of the DAC (Drath et al., 2008). This is another factor that goes to show that the tripod theory is more limiting than the DAC theory, and that DAC can be better suited for future leadership development and its emerging questions. Whereas the tripod perspective treats leadership development as the development of individual leader’s competencies (Brungardt, 1996; Rost, 1993), the DAC perspective of leadership development is not limited to developing individuals in roles of leaders. McCauley and Fick-Cooper (2020) argue that when assessing the effectiveness of a group’s success, one needs to take a whole systems perspective rather than an individual leader perspective. Furthermore, they point out that while formal leaders are important parts of the system, they must only be considered one of the components in the multi-faceted and dynamic process of producing DAC. Empowering workers to act out leadership might engender a positive effect in which it means more workers seeing themselves as creators and initiators (Drath, Palus & McGuire, 2010).

	Tripod	DAC
Leader development vs. leadership development	Often seen as the same, as leader and leadership are used as synonyms. Often sees the leader as the one and single individual who executes leadership (Drath et al, 2008; Rost, 1997).	Distinguishes leader development from leadership development, because each can occur without the other.
Leader development	Often referred to as leadership development.	Developing one’s individual competencies with respect to taking on a leader role. Can occur without developing the leadership culture, and thereby without developing the leadership.
Leadership development	Development of individuals’ skills and competencies, often synonymous with leader development (Brungardt, 1996; Rost, 1993).	Development of the collective in which leadership takes place – developing beliefs and practices, and thereby the leadership culture. Can occur without developing people in leader roles, but <i>not</i> without individual development. Can occur in peer-like settings and self-managed teams, as DAC calls for no leader or follower roles.

Table 2: Development through the lenses of the tripod and DAC

In the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concepts of shared and distributed leadership have started to emerge within leadership literature (Gronn, 2002; Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006; Day, Gronn, Salas, 2004). Whereas Drath et al. (2008) describe leadership in the perspective of the tripod to be dependent of asymmetrical influence to some extent, Ensley et al. describe shared leadership on the other hand as “... a team process where leadership is carried out by the team as a whole, rather than solely by a single designated individual” (2006, p. 20). Seeing such contexts where there is no asymmetrical influence among the members as emerging, the perspective of the tripod hinders it from treating them as leadership.

	Tripod	DAC
Leaders having asymmetrical influence on followers	Per definition leadership	Can be seen as leadership as long as the main focus is producing DAC and as long as the asymmetrical influence is not so skewed that it hinders producing DAC
Collectives without asymmetrical influence	Per definition no leadership (leaderless context)	Can be seen as leadership, for instance in peer contexts where influence alternates between members who share work to produce DAC

Table 3: Asymmetrical influences of the ontologies

#### 2.3.4.1 Outcomes of practicing DAC

The DAC perspective of leadership calls for all members of a group to partake in a widespread agreement in regard of direction and to further organize and coordinate their knowledge and competencies as a way of aligning with the collective decisions. Thus, there is a need for a relocation of power and decision making that might differ from the traditional perspective of the tripod. Organizational settings where there is discretion can also be seen as decentralization of decision making, which according to Lazear and Gibbs (2014) means that the decision making is relocated from the control of leaders to the hierarchical level of workers. They further say that where there is a high level of decentralization of decision making, the workers are in possession of empowerment and autonomy. Hackman and Oldham (1976) argue that this is one contributing factor that engenders the sense of responsibility, while also contributing to increasing the level of job satisfaction and the quality of job performance, in addition to decreased employee turnover and absence. It is further advocated that this also can increase the motivation coming from within the workers – the intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another behavioral mechanism that somewhat goes hand in hand with empowerment is trust and reciprocity. Trust can be seen as a guiding behavioral instinct, and people receiving trust tend to return it (Berg, Dickhaut & McCabe, 1995).

According to Fehr and Falk (2002), workers who are experiencing trust in a job context have the propensity to put more effort into their job performance, as a way to reciprocate it, either towards a leader or in-between peers.

### **2.3.5 Leadership as purpose**

Leadership as purpose is included because it links to both tripod and DAC ontology. Purpose sheds light on nuances between the ontologies and informs DAC. This chapter reviews its literature and points towards the important links to the ontologies relevant to the research question. A visualization of tripod vs. DAC vs. purpose is included in this chapter to clarify the term purpose's position.

By looking at the definition of leadership, Grint (2005) proposed four main ways that leadership has mainly been understood and referenced to, later acknowledged by further research by Jackson and Parry (20011). These four ways of understanding leadership is leadership by person, result, position and process, and in order these four pose the questions of who is the leader?; what does she achieve?; where does she operate?; and how does she operate? This shows how broad the term leadership is. However, recent studies argue that there should be a fifth 'P' in Grint's definitions of leadership; Leadership as purpose (Kempster et al. 2011). This research follows the moral based upon the Aristotelian philosophy called *telos* by Alasdair MacIntyre. *Telos* is when humans contribute to the good of humankind (Kempster et al. 2011). A person will feel purposeful and fulfilled only if they work and move towards their *telos*. Naturally, this is problematic for employees in companies, where a common approach is that the best thing a company can do is gain profit. In this regard, Kempster et al. argue that *telos* "... becomes increasingly secondary to the primacy of external goods." (2011, p. 322). Examples of this are key performance indicators, action plans and balanced score cards, where it appears that the company is aiming for purposes, but heavily rely those purposes on external goods.

Before the theory delves deeper into leadership as purpose, it is important to know that this aspect views leadership as a social construct (Kempster et al. 2011). Meindl and Ehrlich (1978) researched a notion they called the 'romance of leadership'. This research utilized a Romance of Leadership Scale, which through their analysis discovered a consistent pattern of follower behavior (Jackson & Parry, 2011). The scale determined that when employees were

left with few alternatives, they would typically disclaim responsibility to leaders and that this romantic tendency was most effective in extreme cases of success or failure. The research did not aim to oppose leadership, rather bring new light to theories that are not leader-focused, and doing so by arguing that the phenomenon of leadership is dependent on followers/collaborators. In other words, the romance of leadership emphasizes leadership as a social construction (Meindl, 1995). Moreover, Grint (2005) builds further on this and argues that part of the understanding of leadership comes from where the authority is gain or given, and how this changes based on the problem to be solved: “(..) the social construction of the problem legitimizes the deployment of a particular form of authority” (Grint, 2005 p. 1475). These arguments highlight the origin of leadership, and that it is a necessary construct created by collaborators.

Drath (1998, as cited in Kempster et al., 2011) emphasizes the importance of purpose by arguing that leadership is more than a person, it is a sense of purpose and a force that gives people a common mission and direction. Furthermore, the work of Heifetz, Parameshwar and Kotter all point toward a vision/direction and ‘something more’ in their findings, as cited in Kempster et al. (2011). Through these findings, one can also look at the aspect of Bass and Avolio (1993) and their discussions of idealized vision, intellectual stimulation and goals of enhanced motivation: the transformational leader. Although, Bass and Avolio discuss the sense making activities for elucidating purpose, their research is arguably too leader-centred (Drath et al., 2008). This is an example of research that acknowledges purpose, but still remains taken by a leader-centered perspective. Another example is Smirchich and Morgan (1982), who emphasize the process of leadership as “... a way of defining reality in ways that resonate with the led” (Kempster et al., 2011, p. 324). Again, the research points towards a purpose but fails to acknowledge more than the interaction between leaders and followers. In this sense, leadership as purpose is more closely connected to a DAC ontology of the phenomena.

Through their findings of purpose and the philosophy of MacIntyre, Kempster et al. (2011: 325) propose:

*“(...) we can construct a normative leadership process that seeks to manage the meaning of follower experiences towards sustaining virtues to develop internal goods of personal excellence in order to achieve telos – a good for humans.”*

Furthermore, this leads to a paradox where only management practices of leading can allow the development of virtue practices and internal goods, in order to enable societal purpose to get a foothold (Kempster et al., 2011). Leadership as purpose is therefore a vital part in the discussion of leadership ontology, where it raises questions such as: What does it take? Why do people accept and strive for said orders? Moreover, Kempster et al. (2011) conclude that the need for leaders to engage followers in work that is purposive, yielding and in line with their telos is highly problematic when leaders are already engaged in organizational work. This leads back to their proposed paradox and that it appears as if the basic understanding of leadership depends on management and day to day work, which is contradictory to itself because a higher understanding of leadership has nothing to do with management, and everything to do with perceptions beyond the management scope. In table 2.4, the connection of purpose to the ontologies is presented.

	<b>Tripod</b>	<b>DAC</b> →	<b>Purpose informs DAC</b>
Leader development vs. leadership development	Often seen as the same, as leader and leadership are used as synonyms. Often sees the leader as the one and single individual who executes leadership (Drath et al, 2008; Rost, 1997).	Distinguishes leader development from leadership development, because each can occur without the other.	Contains elements of both tripod and DAC where the development is based on achieving telos.  Purpose contains a paradox where one must search for “something more”, while reaching common objectives as KPI and numerical targets.
Leader development	Often referred to as leadership development.	Developing one’s individual competencies with respect to taking on a leader role. Can occur without developing the leadership culture, and thereby without developing the leadership.	Reaching purpose goes towards a transformational leader with Idealized visions.
Leadership development	Development of individuals’ skills and competencies, often synonymous with leader development (Brungardt, 1996; Rost, 1993).	Development of the collective in which leadership takes place – developing beliefs and practices, and thereby the leadership culture. Can occur without developing people in leader roles, but <i>not</i> without individual development. Can occur in peer-like settings and self-managed teams, as DAC calls for no leader or follower roles.	Personal excellence in order to achieve telos. A development that contains the aspect of tripod language yet expands the border closer to DAC in the explanation of telos: “something more”, “an inner force” to achieve good for humans.

Table 4: DAC informed by purpose

Although, the work of Kempster et al. (2011) is influenced by a tripod language, their research points heavily towards a DAC ontology. Leadership as purpose is focused on the

outcomes, the beliefs and telos. By comparing the tripod and DAC, it is evident that the paradox of purpose is a good supplement in the research of the leadership phenomenon and it does so by shedding light on the nuances between the ontologies. The regard for telos contributes in the discussion of the ontology.

## **2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter reviews the literature relevant for this dissertation's problem question of implementing DAC. First off, the traditional leadership ontology, called the tripod, is presented. The key elements here are leaders, followers, and shared goals, and this is seen as seminal works on which the modern DAC ontology is further developed from. Arguments for why Drath et al. (2008) see the tripod as limited and not suited for future development of the leadership theory is then presented, followed by a presentation of the DAC ontology in regard of the new developed framework for leadership and its most essential elements. The chapter further explains reasons why seeing leadership in the lens of DAC might be a better fit for future leadership studies. Kempster et al.'s (2011) idea of seeing leadership in terms of purpose is viewed as an alternative point of view.

## 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology chosen to answer the question: *How can producing outcomes of DAC be implemented as leadership in the daily operations of an organization?* The methodology also explains how the following sub-questions were answered: *What might the implications of implementing DAC be? What does further exploration of the leadership phenomena through a DAC lens yield?*

First, the research paradigm is presented and justified with its implications outlined, followed by arguments to why the specific research methodology and research method was chosen, as well as a presentation of what data were collected and how this was done. Furthermore, the sample is presented, before the processing and analysis of the data is described. The importance of trustworthiness and ethical issues and the researchers' reflections around these aspects related to this dissertation are presented at the end of the chapter. The objective of this chapter is to explain justified choices of research that acknowledges its implications.

### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The nature of the research questions takes on a broad scope, looking into a phenomenon. Reaching conclusions is based on how the researcher views her own reality. This is the concept of paradigms. A paradigm can be seen as a worldview. Thomas Kuhn introduced the term paradigm in the early 1960s, and it can be described as a representation of people's norms, standards, myths, perspectives, theories or ideologies, and the accepted procedures that guide the way they think and act (Gummesson, 2000, as cited in Mangan, 2004). Paradigms are not immutable, however, and Kuhn further presented the term paradigm shifts. When researchers start to realize anomalies or new phenomena that they cannot explain by already existing models, the necessary call for replacement of conceptual models is paradigm shifts (Hairston, 1982). Researchers choosing to conduct qualitative research influence their research by carrying with them their paradigms to the inquiry, as people view the world in different ways (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

When speaking of paradigms or worldviews, one might discuss the terms ontologies and epistemologies. Ontology is the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being, or

simply the study of what exists (*Ontology*, n.d.). Creswell and Poth (2016) state that the ontological issue is related to the nature and characteristics of reality, and that researchers doing qualitative studies embrace the idea of various realities. Qualitative researchers aim to report these various realities through different quotes from different individuals and thereby presenting different perspectives. Epistemology is the philosophical study of the nature origin and the limits of human knowledge and may simply be described as the theory of knowledge (Stroll & Martinich, n.d). Qualitative researchers, with the epistemological assumption, attempt to come as close to the researched individuals as possible, and do so by conducting research in the field or the contexts where these individuals live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

According to Mangan (2004), there are two different paradigmatic positions that are often seen as antithesis: positivism and phenomenology. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, social scientists started disputing against positivism, and argued that while that perspective was all about objects outside of people's minds, social sciences was about people's behaviors stemming from within their minds, and also that it was impossible to distinguish between the researchers and what/who was being researched (Mangan, 2004). As a result, the new paradigm of phenomenology was applied to social sciences. In the phenomenological paradigm, the world is considered socially constructed and subjective. The science is moved forward by human interests, and instead of focusing on facts like the positivistic paradigm, it focuses on meanings and seeks an understanding of what is happening (Mangan, 2004). Creswell and Poth (2016) and Johannessen et al. (2004) describe phenomenological research as a perspective on qualitative research that focuses on describing the nature of a specific phenomenon by exploring the experiences and understandings of people within a specific group in regard of the phenomenon.

Phenomenology can, together with some other philosophical approaches, be seen as subject to the broader perspective of interpretivism. What is central in interpretivism is the notion that the social reality is ever changing, and that in order to understand the reality one has to understand how individuals interpret and view specific social phenomena (Jacobsen, 2005).



RESEARCH PARADIGM	OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH	METHODS	DATA COLLECTION
Positivist/ Postpositivist	Experimental Correlating Reductionism Theory examination Causal relative Determination Regulatory	Quantitative methods tend to be predominant, but qualitative methods can be used	Experiments Half experiments Tests Scales
Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Naturalistic Phenomenological Hermeneutic Interpretivist Ethnographic Theories Creation Symbolic interaction	Qualitative methods dominate, but quantitative methods can be used	Interviews Observations Document reviews Visual data analysis
Transformative	Critical theory Neo-Marxist Feminist Critical race theory Freirean Participatory Emancipatory Advocacy Empowerment Change-oriented Interventionistic	Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods	A wide spectrum of measures, a special need to prevent discrimination
Pragmatic	Action consequences Problem focused Pluralist Focused on real-world practice Mixed methods	Qualitative and/or quantitative methods can be used. They are conformed to concrete research questions or aim	There can be used measures from positivist as well as from interpretivist paradigm

Table 5: Research paradigms (adapted from Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018)

Historically, interpretivists argued that the natural sciences were different from mental and cultural sciences, where the natural science were searching for scientific explanations while the others were searching for an understanding of social phenomenon's meaning (Schwandt, 1994). Thanh and Thanh (2015) say that an interpretive paradigm lets researchers explore the world through their studies' participants and how they perceive and experience the world. As a way of finding answers to their inquiry, these researchers utilize those perceptions and experiences to create and interpret their understanding from the data collected. Interpretivists accept different viewpoints from different individuals, which is quite opposite of positivists, who usually only accept one truth. Rather than doing research in rigid ways, interpretivists meet the reality from subjects, often individuals of specific groups or cultures who own their experience (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

ASSUMPTIONS	POSITIVISM	INTERPRETIVISM
Nature of reality	Objective, tangible, single	Socially constructed, multiple
Goal of research	Explanation, strong prediction	Understanding, weak prediction
Focus of interest	What is general, average and representative	What is specific, unique, and deviant
Knowledge generated	Laws Absolute (time, context, and value)	Meanings Relative (time, context, culture, value bound)
Subject/Researcher relationship	Rigid separation	Interactive, cooperative, participative
Desired information	How many people think and do a specific thing, or have a specific problem	What some people think and do, what kind of problems they are confronted with, and how they deal with them

Table 6: Key differences between positivism and interpretivism (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2009, cited in Dudovsky, J. (n.d.))

The different paradigms obviously call for different ways of conducting research.

Interpretivism is found to be a good fit with the research of this dissertation, as it is looking for an understanding of how workers in an organization perceive a leadership ontology and what their perception of its implementation and implications is. The phenomenological paradigm, as one of the paradigms belonging to the family of interpretivism, is the approach chosen for this research. Leadership and the perspective of DAC is understood as a phenomenon, and this dissertation is not looking to find answers that can be measured or seen as an absolute and objective truth, but answers derived from the perceptions, experiences, meanings and understandings of involved actors. A major implication of working with this worldview is that the researcher does not search for one truth, or one correct answer.

### 3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is determined by the research paradigm and the worldview. Being that the DAC ontology is a new and not very widespread knowledge, the research methodology chosen for this dissertation is an explorative research design. According to Johannessen et al. (2004), an explorative design study is looking to explore a phenomenon that is either unknown or not well known. It aims to attain better insight and understanding of

the phenomenon in focus. This dissertation aims to look at how DAC can be implemented in an organization, and what the implications might be. Leadership in the sense of the DAC ontology is unknown to most people and conducting a study with this in focus calls for an explorative design to achieve the necessary insight into the phenomenon. Due to this, many of the major decisions regarding which direction this dissertation should be heading were made along the way of working with it, as a result of the knowledge and insights attained as the study progressed. Both the focus of the dissertation and the research question were changed after digging deeper into leadership literature and gaining new perspectives. It is important to keep in mind that qualitative data from explorative research designs cannot be seen as a statistically generalized truth, but that it can contribute to a general thesis of the reality of the phenomenon (Johannessen et al., 2004). This is why the methodology is both exploratory and phenomenological. The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to explore humans and their experiences and understanding of a phenomenon (Johannessen et al., 2004). The phenomenon is leadership, and because DAC is an alternative way of thinking of leadership, the explorative and phenomenological methodology is utilized.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method is informed by the paradigm, and a qualitative method was chosen for this dissertation. The qualitative method is one of several paths to scientific knowledge, and the method is usually applied when the field is lacking previous research and the researcher is searching for deeper understanding of complex relationship (Ryen, 2012). The goal is to understand phenomena in their natural setting, or interpret them based on opinions people prescribe them. Furthermore, the qualitative method aims its focus towards processes, opinions, analysis of text, the informants themselves and small samples (Thagaard, 2009). The qualitative method is typically conducted through interviews, stories of lives, diary-notes or focus groups. Interviews were chosen to collect data for this dissertation.

The purpose of utilizing interviews in a qualitative method is to gain deeper and more thorough insight into a phenomenon, which could be hidden in surveys or other qualitative methods (Ryen, 2012). The goal is to understand the recipient's perspectives (Postholm, 2010). This is why the researcher aspires to collect data from the recipients' natural context. However, a qualitative method utilizing interview in this manner will always have a small bias due to the nature of such a data collection and analysis, and it is therefore important that

the researcher is transparent. This is evident in this thesis, where the collected statements from the analysis is directly referred to the appendix and its original language and form.

Through interpretivism, the pathing of this dissertation's research has been altered as new knowledge has been acquired. The road to the appropriate method has therefore been dependent on new knowledge and continually evaluated. The problem questions and strategy of data collection has been adjusted throughout the process of data collection. From a perspective of natural science, this could be interpreted to threaten the trustworthiness of the research. However, this flexibility is the main advantage within qualitative methods (Johannessen et al., 2004). This advantage builds on the fact that the research at all times is open to new knowledge, which can lay the foundation for new problem questions. Based on this advantage, it is rather a threat if the case is that all choices are made before the research has begun.

When researching and aiming to attaining new knowledge, there are two general approaches to reasoning: inductive and deductive (Hyde, 2000). For deductive reasoning, the researcher has already chosen an established theory or generalization before collecting data and sticks to a process of testing theory to see whether it can be applied to particular instances. For inductive reasoning, the researcher sticks to a process of building theory, which commences with observations of specific instances, and looking to establish generalizations about the particular phenomenon being researched. For this dissertation there are no presented hypotheses that needs to be tested or verified, and thereby the deductive approach does not fit well with its research. The extreme version of inductive research analyzes the phenomena in question without any form of theory, and incrementally builds relevant theory based on the data collected. The phenomenon of DAC being such an unfamiliar field of the leadership literature, calls for an approach that while still relying on some basic theory, also seeks theoretical conclusions based on the empirical data. The inductive research approach is therefore chosen for this dissertation, although not at its extremity, totally independent of theory prior to the data collection.

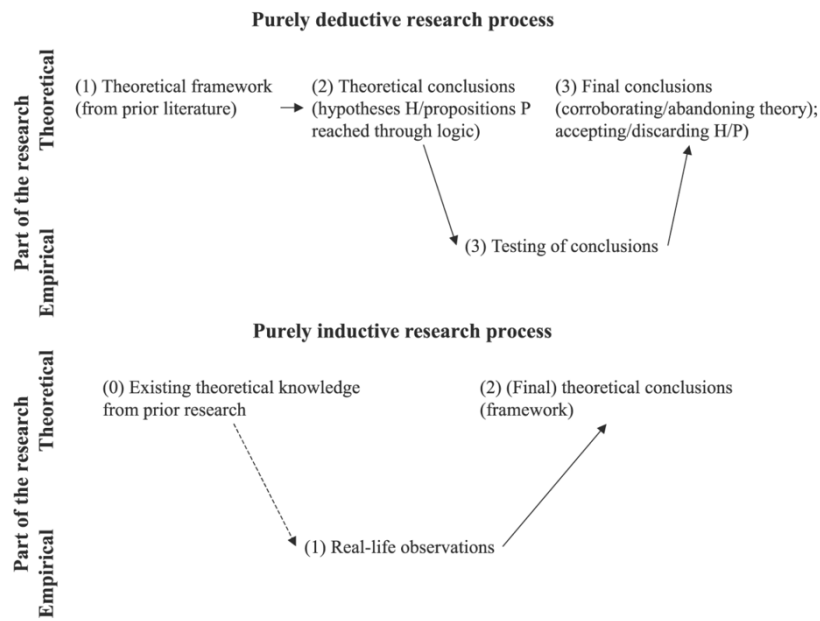


Figure 5: Purely deductive and inductive research processes (van Hoek, Aronsson, Kovács, & Spens, 2005)

Based on the theory revolving the methodology and the appropriate methods to conduct the research, interviews were chosen as the best fit for extracting the empirical data. For phenomenological research, the data collection often finds place through thorough interviews with people who are involved with or have experience with the researched phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Johannessen et al., 2004). For this dissertation, these people of interest are individuals who have experienced leadership and who have some assumptions to how a new leadership ontology can be implemented.

For the interpretive approach, the interviews are the basis for the results and analysis. According to Johannessen et al. (2004) there are five steps of the analysis: **1)** The researchers develop an overall impression of the interviews. **2)** The researchers recognize and target different phenomena that are significant for the respondents. **3)** The researchers conduct a systematic analysis of the phenomena that are significant for the respondents in order to look beyond the information that is presented in the interviews. **4)** The interviews are processed from the respondents' colloquial linguistics to professional terminology. **5)** The researchers must summarize the interviews, and based on them make a generalized structure. For each step it is important to return to the raw data and make sure that no significant data has been omitted.

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION

For the qualitative research of this dissertation individual interviews were conducted. As this qualitative research is of a phenomenological research design, individual interviews seemed the best fit as it extracts how the respondents construe a phenomenon (Jacobsen, 2005), which in this case is the phenomenon of leadership.

The interviews consisted of 17 questions with some sub-questions where necessary. Some questions in particular were worded slightly different depending on whether the respondent was appointed a formal leader role or not, in order to customize them to these two different perspectives. The questions were open-ended, meaning that they could not be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', which obviously would have limited the value of the information. For the very same reason, there were also no response alternatives. By taking these measures the interviews were better facilitated for the individual perspectives and interpretation to shine through.

The respondents were sent an information sheet beforehand, which gave a brief summary of the project and what its aim is. As the topic of leadership literature in general, and the DAC ontology in specific, is something that most people are not familiar with, it was crucial to introduce the respondents to the leadership literature that is relevant for this thesis. The information sheet contained an informative text describing both the traditional tripod ontology and the modern DAC ontology, and also why there might be a need for a new ontology.

In addition, the respondents were also sent the interview guide consisting of the questions beforehand, so that they could approach the interview as prepared as possible. The interview guide consisted of a structured design so that the questions were asked in an intended order and not randomly. Each of the aspects or topics of the interview were handled one at a time, instead of jumping back and forth between them. However, it was expected that the respondents might give answers that touched on the same aspects of other questions. The different aspects that the interview guide was looking to cover was respondents' view and perception of the leadership in regard of the tripod and the DAC ontology; their view and perception of purpose related to leadership; and their view and perception of direction, alignment and commitment. These are aspects that relates to the focus and research question of this dissertation, and which is based on the literature presented in the literature review.

The interview sessions were flexible and scheduled completely after the desire of the respondents. Each interview was scheduled to last between 20-40 minutes. Initially, the plan was to conduct these interviews face to face at the offices of the respondents. However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak during the winter/spring of 2020, the interviews were limited to be held by online video calls. It is of importance to establish a high degree of trust and openness in such a conversation (Jacobsen, 2005), and therefore video calls where the interviewers and the interviewee could both see and hear each other was preferred. As the respondents were all using Microsoft Teams at their workplace, this was the most natural option to go with as they were already familiar with it.

The interviews were recorded digitally, so that the focus during the interview process could be fully devoted to the respondents and their answers, instead of taking notes underway. The recordings were transcribed soon after the interviews were conducted, and then the digital recorded files were deleted. This was a great opportunity to process the interviews and the results they gave, while also starting the thought process of the dissertation's analysis. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the transcripts are written in Norwegian. However, the quotes from the interviews used in this dissertation is translated to English.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

Sampling is to take a subgroup from a chosen population and can be a mean to make interpretations or generalizations about the sample (Taherdoost, 2016). There are generally two main techniques for sampling: probability or random sampling, and non-probability or non-random sampling. When using probability sampling, the probability for an item in the population to be chosen for the research is the same for every item within the population, and they are chosen randomly. One might choose items by conducting a random number generation in a computer program to choose the sample (Zikmund, 2002, as cited in Taherdoost, 2016). Brown (1947) stated that the probability or random sampling is the method that gives the least bias, but that it has its weaknesses by being the method that gives the most costly sample in regard of the energy and time spent by the researchers for a given level of sample error.

According to Taherdoost (2016), non-probability or non-random sampling is often used in relation to case studies and qualitative research. He further presents this sampling method as one often used when researching small samples and when exploring real life phenomenon instead of making statistical inferences regarding wider population. The generalizability of the findings extrapolated from a given sample is decided by the representativeness of the sample (Short, Ketchen & Palmer, 2002). Research intending to generalize the findings across various types of organizations or industries calls for a heterogeneous sample, while a homogeneous sample is better suited for research where internal validity is in focus.

The sampling in qualitative methods is purposely driven (Jacobsen, 2005), and the sample must thereby consist of respondents who meet the desired prerequisites to contribute to the research. To be able to explore the DAC ontology in terms of how it can be implemented in a large organization and what the implications might be, this dissertation looks at the importance of getting a sample of participants who are best suited to help illuminate and explore the research question. The respondents were 3 workers who have been appointed formal leader roles and 3 workers who do not have any formal leader roles. In collaboration with the contacts within the designated organization the respondents were chosen on the basis of their positions and involvement in the organization, as well as how they were considered to contribute with trustworthiness. The contacts connected with the potential respondents by email.

By attaching the project's information sheet as well as the full interview guide already in the first mail correspondence, the potential respondents were able to decide straight away whether contributing to this project could be of any interest to them. One person chose to not participate in the project, and another person with a similar role and characteristics was contacted with success. All six respondents who chose to participate showed interest in the project and the research question and seemed happy to contribute to the dissertation, while also expressing that they found new ways of thinking of leadership to be an interesting theme. This was reassuring in terms of any insecurities regarding their willingness and dedication to participate.

A sample of six respondents must be said to be a small sample, and being a phenomenological study, this sampling approach aligns with the way Taherdoost (2016) presents non-probability sampling. This dissertation does not aim to generalize results across different firms and



industries, as that would be a project that would be limited by the time available for conducting this dissertation. However, it is considered a contribution to the discussion about a modern perspective of leadership – DAC – and how its implementation and implications are expected to occur in a large and innovative organization.

Respondents with different formal roles or positions were necessarily chosen in order to get as broad of a sample as possible, while still as relevant information as possible. Even though the DAC ontology discusses leadership without focusing on people in the formal roles of leaders and followers, it is of interest to see whether there are differences in how these two already distinguished groups of people see a potential implementation of DAC and its implications. As people from these two groups might have a different perspective on leadership, it is interesting to see whether this might correlate with their perspectives of implementing DAC.

### **3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The different choices and decisions made in regard of methods will to some extent affect the quality of the research, and thereby affect how the dissertation manages to give good answers and arguments related to the research question. Busch (2013) state that the choices made regarding methods will also play an important role in terms of the extent one can value the findings and results. According to Elo et al. (2014), the right terms (validity, reliability, rigor, trustworthiness) for assessing the validity for qualitative research have been highly debated. For this dissertation, the term trustworthiness, developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Elo et al., 2014), is chosen as it comprises “The most widely used criteria for evaluating qualitative content analysis (...)” (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). For qualitative research, the aim of trustworthiness is to substantiate the findings as noteworthy, which according to Elo et al. (2014) is particularly important for inductive content analysis whereas categories occur from the raw material without a categorization matrix based on theory.

When determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research, there are several factors that are important, such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Elo et al., 2014).

*Credibility* refers to how well the analysis address the focus of the research (Polit & Hungler, 1999, as cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), and can be seen as a term corresponding

with the positivist concept of internal validity (Rolfe, 2006). Internal validity is about whether the results are perceived correct and valid, depending on whether the respondents have provided a true rendering of the reality, and whether the researchers' rendering of the data is correct (Jacobsen, 2005). For this research, the respondents' ability to give trustworthy renditions was important. All respondents must be said to be hands on and strongly connected to leadership in the perspective of the DAC ontology, and thereby considered to be valid sources for information. The open-ended questions in the interviews and referring to the interview participants subjective perspectives is also considered to strengthen the validity of the data.

One factor that might cause an effect for the credibility is that respondents need to set aside time to both prepare for and conduct the interview. People using their time at work to participate in a project from an external third part can easily be understood to not devote much thought and time to the project, as they might not see any personal gains from it. In an attempt to overcome this issue, the interview guide introduced information about the thought behind this project and the reason they were asked to contribute to it. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), researchers can better explore the research question from different perspectives by selecting respondents with different experiences. For this dissertation, respondents were chosen from two different pools, both workers who are appointed formal leader roles and workers who are not, in order to increase the possibility of exploring the implementation and implications of DAC from different perspectives.

*Transferability* deals with how the findings are transferable to other settings and groups than those of the current research (Polit & Hungler, 1999, as cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), and can be seen as analogous to the positivist concept of external validity (Rolfe, 2006). Jacobsen (2005) describe external validity as dealing with the generalization of the results, and whether they can be transferred to other samples and situations. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) state that it is ultimately up to the readers to decide whether the results can be transferred to another context, although the researchers might give suggestions regarding the transferability. They further recommend a thorough presentation of the findings together with good and relevant quotes in order to increase the possibility for transferability. This dissertation is based on data that is not confidential. This means that the respondents could potentially be asked in the future by other researchers and further research can be done by looking at the respondents in a different set of times. This way, the respondents chosen can be

utilized as a focus group and this enhances this dissertations transferability. Furthermore, this dissertation includes suggestions for further research.

*Dependability* refers to the extent the data stay stable and unchanged over time and for various conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). According to Rolfe (2006), dependability relates to the positivist term reliability. Busch (2013) sees reliability as something that is connected to the measuring quality, in other words how good one is to measure what is actually being measured, and thereby whether the data registered can be trusted or not. Johannessen et al. (2004) point out the possibility of conducting the same research at different points in time, as a way to verify the research. If the results to some extent can be said to be the same at different points in time, the research appears to be reliable at least in terms of results staying consistent over time. Due to limited time, conducting a repeated research was not possible for the research of this dissertation. It is therefore not possible to say that the results would remain consistent over a longer period of time, which is one factor that may or may not affect the reliability of the data collected for this dissertation.

As DAC is such a new and unfamiliar topic, the respondents may or may not have changed their perspectives on its implementation and implications if they were to dig as deep into the DAC literature as possible, given other circumstances. The information sheet given to them prior to the interviews was well considered and contemplated, but still needed to touch base on the most basic and fundamental elements of the ontologies due to respect of the participants time constraints. A more devotion to the literature from the respondents could or could not have resulted in different perspectives on the dissertation's focus.

However, some measures have been taken to secure some degree of dependability. It was of importance to maintain a neutral approach and perspective throughout the interview sessions and to not guide the respondents in the directions that might be desired by the researchers. Asking open-ended questions and letting the respondents steer the direction of their answers were therefore important factors in terms of the dependability of this dissertation. By recording the interviews, transcribing them, and then controlling that the transcriptions and the recordings conformed, the dependability of the collected data was maintained. The

respondents were also given thoroughly written information about the aims of this project, so that there was a focus on transparency regarding what they were participating in.

*Confirmability*, which can be seen as neutrality, deals with the objectivity of the research, and to which extent the findings can be confirmed or substantiated by other, independent researchers (Elo et al., 2014). Tobin and Begley (2004) state that one concern with confirmability is whether the interpretations are clearly extracted from the data, and not figments of the researchers' imagination. Thus, one major issue related to confirmability might be how the researchers' own perspectives and perceptions of the topic in focus potentially can affect the interpretations of the responses. Digging deep into literature related to traditional leadership ontology and the more modern perspective of the DAC ontology can cause a biased perspective on the topic, and thereby affect the way the data are interpreted. This has been a focus of importance while working with the treatment and analysis of data for this dissertation.

It is also suggested that to enhance the comprehensivity and to serve reasonable interpretation of the data, the analysis should be conducted by two or more researchers (Burla et al., 2008). Graneheim and Lundman (2004) advocate the value of dialogue between co-researchers to indicate credibility and confirmability of the research. For this dissertation, both researchers have analyzed the recorded interviews and the transcripts, first individually, and then by coming together and comparing the interpretations. This is in line with the recommendation of Rodham et al. (2015), who say that all researchers working on the analysis should listen to the audio recordings. Otherwise, they see the potential downside of researchers superimposing their interpretative bias onto the data. Through comprehensive dialogues the findings have further been discussed in light of the relevant literature.

### **3.8 ANALYSIS**

A content analysis was chosen to view and analyze the data, in accordance with chosen paradigm, methodology and method. The purpose of a content analysis is to gain insight in the text-material as it is presented by the respondents (Postholm, 2010). According to Krippendorf (2004), six questions must be addressed. Their answer for this analysis is presented:

1. Which data are analyzed?
  - a. Six recorded and transcribed interviews
2. How are the data defined?
  - a. Interviews conducted over Microsoft Teams
3. From what population are data drawn?
  - a. Employees in the organization TietoEvry, three in official leader-roles and three not.
4. What is the relevant context?
  - a. Respondents are experienced in the subjects of question
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?
  - a. One and the same organization
6. What is to be measured?
  - a. Thoughts and perceptions of the ontology of leadership and the implementation of DAC in addition to its complications

Furthermore, the content analysis follows the five steps presented in the research design. Specifically, for the content analysis, four main steps were utilized (Malterud, 2003):

1. Overall impression and summary of meaningful content
2. Codes, categories and terms
3. Condensation
4. Summary

Step one is reading through the interviews with a purpose of an overall impression and understanding. One claims that all the parts of the interview is connected, and gaining an understanding is therefore not possible until the researcher has read the interview at least once. According to this, the research conducted in this dissertation was to read over the interviews, gain an overall impression and summarize the meaningful content. Comparisons between the interviews were made, and the aim was to find the central message of each interview, and an understanding of what each respondent was answering.

In step two, the researchers aim to find meaningful elements in the data that are of relevance to the problem question. Text-samples of this relevance were identified and then its content and true meaning were analyzed by coding. The coding approach is used to discover the essence of the respondents' statements. The codes are links in a chain of an interpretation process (Malterud, 2003), and the codes in this dissertation was conducted in three steps. Open code is the understanding of what is being said, focused code is the understanding of what is lying underneath the statement and the theme is the essence of what is being addressed. Closer to the text and manifest content, one finds the lower levels of abstraction. As the codes narrows down the essence, and reflects on the latent meaning of the text, the abstraction increases. The higher level of abstraction is needed to discuss a phenomenon such as ontology of, and understanding of leadership.

The condensing, or step three, is a process where the researcher collects the codes and part of the text that is coded and finalizes the increased level of abstraction (Malterud, 2003). The researcher expresses psychologically and directly her understanding of the codes and the true meaning of the data. This is done by extracting the abstract coded phenomenon and themes, looking at this through the scope of relevant theory. The goal is to enhance the strength of the research and gain relevance that can further be built upon, both for the discussion of this dissertation and for future research of the phenomena.

Step four is to summarize and re-contextualize the collected data in order to discover new terms and descriptions (Malterud, 2003). Through the process of analysis, one might discover new contexts or patterns that did not stick out when collecting the data, and therefore it is possible that certain terms and codes must be customized or adapted. For this dissertation, these subjects and terms that appeared underway were both based in the related literature and in the respondents' own vocabulary.

In addition to the phenomenological approach there is also a contextual organizing of the data. Through such a contextual organizing, the researchers are not exploring all data through the same lenses, but rather exploring certain parts or contexts (Johannessen et al., 2004). This is a comprehensive approximation method where the researchers are able to look for what is remarkable for a particular context. When telling stories through sociological or psychological terms, the respondents are seen as means to understanding aspects of their behavior or the existing institutions (Johannessen et al., 2004). The results and discussions presented in this

dissertation is essentially a comprehensive approximation method. However, a method of cross-sectionally organizing the data is also used. Using this method allows the researchers to index the data and according to Johannessen et al. (2004), such indexing can be done by tagging different statements in order to identify certain subjects or themes in the data collected.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research has to comply with ethical guidelines (Johannessen et al., 2004), and this dissertation is in line with general research ethical guidelines, compiled by De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene (2016). The project is also registered at NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data). Furthermore, the recorded interviews were deleted after they were transcribed. The respondents were informed about the purpose of this project and the opportunity to stay anonymous. Their first name is what defines each respondent in the content analysis.

The interview participants received the interview guide by email prior to the interviews, so that they could prepare in advance (See Appendix B). All the respondents were asked to confirm that they wanted to participate. Their consent was fully respected by making sure that they were informed that they could withdraw from participating any time, even after the interviews were conducted. If a respondent were to reach out to withdraw from the project, this wish would be fulfilled without any further questions, and the person would not be contacted again. Potential respondents who after receiving a second email did not answer back, were then considered not wanting or not having the opportunity to participate and would not be contacted again.

### **3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter explains the world view of the researchers and why a qualitative method was chosen. The research design is explorative, but the explanation of the analysis is based on systematically appropriate method of gaining reliable information through an explorative and qualitative design. This dissertation acknowledges the consequences and face criticism regarding biasedness and interpretation. The trustworthiness and ethical considerations are

addressed, and the research is aiming to be transparent where the authors' interpretation naturally colors the analysis. Additionally, the process of the data analysis is presented.



# 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results from the qualitative interviews, extract the most important findings and discuss the findings in light of the literature and problem question of ‘How can producing outcomes of DAC be implemented as leadership in the daily operations of an organization?’, with following sub questions of: ‘What might the implications of implementing DAC be?’ and ‘What does further exploration of the leadership phenomena through a DAC lens yield?’ The different themes are presented in their own forms, by content analysis, where some statements relevant for the specific themes are displayed. The identified themes link directly to the problem question. Their findings and links that lead to their discussion are visualized below. Although each theme link more to one of the three elements, they are all of relevance to each part of the problem question.

<b>Limitations of the tripod</b>	→ Sub question 2: Exploration of leadership	Findings of each theme are analyzed	Each theme is then discussed in light of the literature and research question
<b>Leadership development</b>	→ Main question: Implementation		
<b>Implementation of DAC</b>	→ Main question: Implementation		
<b>Implications of DAC</b>	→ Sub question 1: Implications		
<b>Leadership culture</b>	→ Sub question 1: Implications		
<b>Purpose</b>	→ Main question: Implementing		

Table 7: Visualization of conducted content analysis, including links to problem question

The forms of the content analysis also consist of coding, both open codes and focused codes. The open codes are an interpretation of how the different contexts and situations unfold, and the focused codes are an interpretation of the framework, regarded as a categorization. There is also a presentation of the condensations of the statements related to the different themes, where the respondents’ general perspectives and meanings regarding them are displayed. The discussion follows the content analysis, utilizing the theory to view each analyzed theme

through a DAC lens. The chapter ends with a larger visualization of how all the themes are presented and connected, clarifying the conducted research and discussion.

## 4.2 FINDINGS

The findings of the research were sought by the purpose of gaining answers to the research question. The chapter is containing a content analysis for each theme that is found to be of relevance to the research question. Each content analysis identifies and legitimizes a theme through coding, categorizing and condensing. A focused code is used for categorization. Altogether, the findings resulted in 6 different themes, and in line with a qualitative analysis, the phenomena of DAC and leadership are discussed by each theme below each content analysis.

### 4.2.1 Results of content analysis

The most obvious themes for the content analysis were the ones that are termed *'Implementation of DAC'* and *'Implications of implementing DAC'*, which directly connects to the research question, where the main focus is to explore how DAC can be implemented and what the implications might be. Furthermore, there were other themes that were of interest in terms of substantiating conclusions. It was of value to see how the respondents viewed the traditional tripod ontology, and whether they acknowledged any *'limitations of the tripod'*, which is one of the main reasons why a new leadership ontology is called forth. The theme *'Leadership development'* was given attention as a way to understand how the respondents viewed the development of leadership and also how this could affect an implementation of a new leadership perspective. *'Leadership culture'* was also a theme devoted attention, as it must be seen as the very foundation for executing leadership. The theme *'Purpose'* was of interest as a way to see how the notion of meaningful work relates to the new ontology, and whether the term telos yields any value to the discussion of the leadership phenomenon and DAC. Each theme is presented by its content analysis, and the process of its outcome is visualized. The condensation of the theme - the overall understanding- is a text below each box of result that views the statements as whole and includes a discussion for each theme in accordance with a qualitative content analysis.

### 4.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE TRIPOD

Theme: Limitations of the tripod		
Statements	Open code	Focused code
Finn: "... it [leadership development] is in constant change, and the leaders are sent to training to develop. All the time leaders are trained according to the philosophy that is current at the moment."	Training	Leader-centered focus
Ingrid: "... I've sort of had an experience of salvation by this [DAC]. It's time to move on. The relationship of 'boss' and 'submissive' have been going on for a long time now, so I believe that's smart."	Change	Towards a new paradigm
Marius: "... of course, after charging your batteries at leadership training for a day or a couple of days, you're full of energy and ready to try some new kind of leadership. But shortly after you might be forced back into old habits because the scope of the work is so big, and decisions have to be made. But TietoEvry is not to blame, I believe this is just what's normal in the industry."	Training	Leader-centered focus
Vidar: "In the early 2000's, I worked at one of the bigger financial enterprises, and then it was clearly a more traditional style of leadership, and sometimes influenced by fear, where you had to make sure to not leave work before your closest leader did etc. (...) in the short run it [tripod] can be effective, but in the long run that type of leadership won't be able to take advantage of the full potential in the organization."	Fear Exploit potential	Negative effects of formal leaders and followers
Vidar: "Initially, if one half of the group is heading out on a different path than the other half (...) there'll always be situations where you have to make decisions regarding short or long-term paths. If there are disagreements regarding which path to follow, this can mean conflicting interests or agendas, which again can give internal struggles affecting both the organization and the clients."	Internal disagreements, repercussions	Skewed power distribution

Table 8: Limitations of the tripod

#### 4.3.1 Findings

Table 4.2 highlights some of the statements made in relation to the theme 'limitations of the tripod'. Some of the questions asked were: *"Do you personally think of leadership in the form of a tripod?"*, *"Does leadership require leaders?"*, *"How do you think leadership within your firm can be developed?"* and *"Do you think that producing DAC is a better way of executing leadership?"*

Most of the respondents talked about a leader-centered focus. As shown in the discussion of the theme 'leadership development', Finn talked about how only leaders are sent to training in order to develop according the philosophy being current at the moment. Marius explained how leaders who have been through courses and training related to leadership sooner or later might be forced back into old habits of executing leadership as a result of the scope of their work being too big. Such situations might be explained by too big of a pressure on that one formal leader, so that he or she does not manage to combine both the mundane work tasks and practicing newly obtained styles and knowledge of leadership.

Vidar told a story of a former workplace where the style of leadership was much more of the traditional tripod format with a skewed balance of power and influence, and that this created some fear among those workers (followers, by the tripod analogy). Being in awe of your leader might engender the feeling of stepping up your performances to ensure always exceeding the expectations. On the other hand, constantly transcending performances might also be wearing one down. Vidar felt that such a relationship between leaders and followers and such type of leadership was not ideal in a long-term perspective, as he did not see it suitable for reaching the organization's full potential. Ingrid expressed that she felt the tripod leadership style needed to be challenged, seeing that that the roles of 'boss' and 'submissive' have been used for a long time. She said that it was time for a change, and that producing DAC could be an even better way of executing leadership.

Vidar further mentioned the issues of conflicting interests and conflicting agendas. For the tripod framework, seeing members of the same group wanting to head in different directions is obviously a big challenge for successful leadership. As he mentioned, this will not only have a directly negative impact on the organization but might also affect their clients and harm the relationship between them. Internal struggles might cause big repercussions, especially when working closely with customers.

#### **4.3.2 Discussion**

One of the main reasons why Drath et al. (2008) state the urge for a new ontology of leadership is the limitations that the tripod ontology causes. The narrow focus on leaders and followers and seeing people in the formal roles of leaders as the origin of leadership, is highlighted as some of the downsides of the traditional leadership perspective. In the interviews, it was expressed that only leaders were sent to training for development, and that such training happened all the time, corresponding with the philosophy being present at the moment. Furthermore, it was said that leaders often lost their motivation and eagerness to practice this newly obtained knowledge due to being forced back into old routines. Whereas the focus of the tripod only facilitates for leaders to train and develop in regard of leadership, it is easy to see that if that *one* particular leader is held back from executing newly acquired kinds of leadership, this affects the whole group. One leader losing focus means that the entire group misses out on the potential of his or her training and development.

However, with the DAC framework, this responsibility for obtaining and executing new leadership knowledge is shared by everyone involved in producing outcomes of DAC. Thus, making it less dependent on that single leader being able to maintain focus and motivation to pass on and distribute this new knowledge. According to Drath et al. (2008), to change the way leadership is being executed, it is not sufficient to change the beliefs and behaviors of those individuals in authority positions. The beliefs and behaviors of *all* members who support and maintain the way leadership is practiced must be changed. Implementing the DAC perspective would mean to involve all these members in training and developing, building a much more solid foundation for development, with a shared responsibility throughout the group.

The leader-centered focus of the traditional leadership style was further highlighted, with a story from another company where the clearly distinguishing between leaders and followers was to the extent that it sometimes created fear among the workers. Of course, seeing that the DAC perspective also allows for leadership to be executed with people in formal leader roles as long as one produces outcomes of DAC, this ontology might also experience a distinguishing between people in formal leader roles and the workers within the group. However, as Drath et al. (2008) point out, DAC only recognizes this as leadership as long as the asymmetrical influence within the group is not so skewed that it prevents the production of DAC. A work environment which facilitates for asymmetrical influence in the favor of leaders to the extent that fear occurs among the group members is arguably not a climate where the workers best can reach their fullest potentials. Vidar stated that the traditional style of leadership might be effective in the short run, but that it will not facilitate for utilizing the full potential of the organization.

In light of the responses in the interviews, one might see DAC as a more fitting framework for leadership. The importance of the members of a group sharing the same understanding of the group's strategy, vision and aims etc. was acknowledged. Of course, even though DAC calls for the concurrence regarding direction, there is still the possibility that conflicting interests and disagreements between group members occur. However, removing the aspect of leaders solely deciding what the group is aiming for and instead involving all actors limits the possibility of conflicting agendas as more voices are heard and accounted for.

The tripod framework is obviously the leadership perspective that all respondents have best knowledge of, even though some of them stated that they feel they are experiencing some extent of DAC. They are thereby all qualified to give renditions of this framework, and by analyzing these there are some restraints or disadvantages that sticks out, and that might be compensated for with the DAC framework. The most obvious limitation seems to be the overly leader-centered focus, which is repeated throughout the interview sessions, and a recurring factor in several of the analyzed themes. The tripod issue of one supreme leader losing focus on leadership leading to the entire group losing focus on leadership might be dealt with by the shared and collective focus on leadership in the DAC framework. This may be one of the implications of implementing DAC, and the same can be said about the tripod issue of different group members choosing different directions, leading to conflicting agendas.

**4.4 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Theme: Leadership Development</b>		
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Open code</b>	<b>Focused code</b>
<p>Finn: “Leaders and workers come and go, this is an organism almost like a bacteria, it is in constant development. (...) So yes, it is in constant development and the leaders are sent to courses and develop themselves. Constant development of educating leaders according to the philosophy chosen at that time. So yes, it is in constant change.”</p>	<p>Courses, education, change</p>	<p>Cultural approach to leadership development</p>
<p>Ingrid: “I think leadership and training of leaders should improve. It's also the lower level of leaders who has employee responsibility and their training is too poor. If you're strong in your field of area, you're suddenly a leader, but that doesn't mean you're any good at personal leadership. (...) That's why leaders should have a better training.”</p>	<p>Levels of leaders and their training</p>	<p>Academically strong vs. being a good leader</p>
<p>Bente: “As I said, we've had this program in Evry, before the merger of Tieto and Evry, and that worked out really well. It was a leadership development program where leaders from the very top and all the way down to the lowest levels of HR managers participated and got to share the same values. It is pretty important that you're able to have the same values throughout the entire company, and that we're handed the right tools to deal with difficult situations.”</p>	<p>Courses, education</p>	<p>All leaders acquiring the same values</p>
<p>Marius: “(...) both lifting up potential leadership styles from employees - this is where we have the most to gain - all the way down to having employees affect leadership, most commonly the closest leader who you report to. (...) but it is very dependent on the leader and her style of leadership.”</p>	<p>Leadership styles, influencing one's leader</p>	<p>Power-balance of influencing leadership</p>

<p>Vidar: “(...) I’m sure you must be able to identify the informal leaders if you are to succeed as a leader, and you have to make sure to get the best out of them and make them all head the same direction. If not, you’ll see a lot of internal struggles trying to reach those actually listening to the informal leaders.”</p>	<p>Influencing leadership</p>	<p>Identifying informal leaders</p>
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Table 9: Leadership Development

#### 4.4.1 Findings

Table 4.3 is highlighting the statements of the respondents regarding leadership development.

The respondents were asked: *“How do you think leadership within your firm can be developed? Do you think there is a need for it to develop?”*, *“Is there some sorts of training that needs to happen more often?”*, *“Do you think people without formal leader roles should be involved in or have some influence on leadership development?”* and *“Are there any actors in particular that needs to develop in order for the leadership to develop?”*

Ingrid expressed the feeling of a need for leaders to receive better training. One of her arguments was that academically strong workers often are promoted into formal leader roles, while still not possessing good enough leadership skills. She specifically mentioned the lack of leadership skills in terms of personal management as being a challenge. She further noted that in such an industry as the IT and software, employees might be extremely good at what they do, yet such “nerds” that they almost do not relate to or socialize with others. It seems clear that it can be an issue if formal leaders find it hard to be social around coworkers. In the tripod perspective, this seems to be a bigger issue. With DAC implemented, the strong need for that one individual to take charge and thereby relate to everyone else decreases. When there is a call for all members of a group to come together in mutual agreements regarding the direction and alignment, the pressure on that one person who might not have the necessary people skills vanishes as there are several people who must take responsibility. On the other hand, one might see that in groups where this is a personality that is highly represented, like for instance in the IT industry, it can also be an issue if the majority is having trouble relating to each other and socializing.

Furthermore, Bente talked about a leadership program that had been a success, where leaders from all levels of the hierarchy participated. Thus, all leaders throughout the entire company are able to obtain and share the same values. She noted this as important, as all leaders

thereby are given the same tools in order to approach tough situations, because she believed there is always someone who has to deal with difficult situations occurring. Marius saw embracing potential leadership styles from coworkers as something the organization really could gain something from, in addition to workers being able to affect leadership by reporting to their closest leader. However, he noted that it all comes down to the person in that formal leader role, and how he or she executes leadership.

Notably, the respondents were talking about what their staff in official leader-roles could improve on, or that they had to improve. Through the focused codes, arguably some of the underlying subjects to their thoughts of leadership development were how to influence leaders, a cultural approach to the development and that being academically strong was not a guarantee for a well enough educated leader. It is clear that when asked about leadership development, the respondents went on to talk about the development of leaders, and that they immediately thought of leadership development as developing leaders. Finn talked about the organization as being in constant change, and that there is a constant development of educating leaders, who are sent to courses and training. Vidar talked about a good recruitment process in his business unit, where young potential leaders are spotted early on and a mentoring solution is intended. Initially, however, none of the interviewees signified the notion of people without formal leader roles contributing to developing how leadership is executed.

The respondents did not mention the opportunity of all employees contributing to developing leadership until they were specifically asked to reflect upon it. Vidar acknowledged people without formal leader roles - the informal leaders - as a decisive factor and argued that leadership development is dependent on bringing these informal leaders into the light of the organization's values and goals. Otherwise, he expressed, there is the possibility of the outcome being internal conflicts regarding reaching out to everyone in the group and making them head in the same direction.

#### **4.4.2 Discussion**

The primary research findings shows a strong and almost exclusively focus on the development of *leaders* and is in line with the secondary research findings regarding the tripod ontology, which often sees leader development and leadership development as the same, and also tends to use the terms as synonyms, according to Rost (1997). Furthermore,



the perspective of the tripod tends to see leadership being executed solely by leaders, and that developing leadership is about developing leaders' individual skills and knowledge (Brungardt, 1996; Rost, 1993). Some of the respondents actually expressed that they felt the DAC perspective already exists to some extent in their organization. However, none of them seemed to view leadership development as development of the entire collective related to leadership, which is how leadership development is seen in the perspective of DAC. Sending people in formal leader roles to attend courses and training is merely seen as developing leaders and not necessarily developing the leadership, which calls for development of the beliefs and practices of everyone involved in producing DAC (Drath et al., 2008).

On the topic of Vidar's acknowledgment of people without leader roles and his expression of a possibility of conflict, one can see that this is an issue that executing leadership by producing DAC seems suitable to take care of, as one of the main pillars for that framework is to come to mutual agreements regarding the aims and goals of the group's shared work, and thereby the direction.

It is clear that since DAC does not rely on the individual leaders' way of executing leadership, some of the issues regarding whom is to be involved in maintaining and developing leadership and to which extent they should be involved thus would be avoided. However, there are also ways that leadership in the tripod perspective can deal with these questions. Marius highlighted the aspects of bringing up new styles of leadership from employees without formal leader roles, and also facilitating for workers to affect leadership, for instance by reporting to their closest leader. What ultimately makes this a success or not is the context and conditions for leadership that are present in the group. Whereas DAC is fundamentally dependent on the common leadership beliefs and practices (constituting the leadership culture) of the collective and making mutual agreements on direction etc. (Drath et al., 2008), the tripod can also facilitate for such shared decision making, helping leadership to improve. Nonetheless, when this mindset is not an underlying element of the leadership framework and not something that is paramount in the way everyone involved thinks of and acts out leadership, the potential pitfalls and the propensity to shy away in tougher times are definitely present. Therefore, a framework that sees maintaining and developing leadership as something that perpetually involves developing every member of the collective, seems better suited to serve improvement of leadership.

On the other hand, as Ingrid mentioned, different personalities might play an important part in developing leaders and might also affect development of leadership. If a team or a group are performing really well yet consisting mostly of such members that Ingrid described (having a hard time socializing with and relating to their peers), developing leadership in terms of implementing the DAC ontology may not be the best fitting solution. However, Drath et al. (2008) do not discuss whether there are any factors regarding contexts like this that will make implementing DAC more suitable or not. For such groups of people as mentioned above, the fellowship and contributing to coming to widespread agreements in terms of how the leadership is to be executed might have a countervailing effect and act more like a burden stealing their focus. The DAC ontology of Drath et al. (2008) presents good solutions and answers to why such a framework should be applied but fails to address that it might not always be applicable and how to deal with potentially challenging contexts.

It is clear that as a result of experiencing leadership in the form of the tripod, the respondents are stuck in the mindset of solely developing leaders as the way to develop leadership. Some of them expressed the feeling of DAC being present, but the distinction of leader development and leadership development is clearly not present. Still, some of the respondents acknowledged that it is important that everyone involved in a team or a group must be able to influence the leadership. This is of course one of the most fundamental leadership beliefs that constitutes a DAC leadership culture (Drath et al., 2008), and thereby one of the first steps that must be taken in order to implement DAC.

#### 4.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF DAC

<b>Theme: Implementation of DAC</b>		
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Open code</b>	<b>Focused code</b>
Finn: "That's part of what is challenging about the DAC-model, an organization cannot be so big that it devours its own self in it [DAC-model], but it must be patient enough to discuss the matter to its end, so that everyone pulls in the same direction"	Approach DAC with care and precision	For success: Embrace the philosophy
Marianne: "(...) I do think, definitely, that gaining more knowledge of how the work should be conducted on both group- and individual level is necessary for people to understand their role even better [In DAC-model]. But we need frameworks and structure around us, perhaps HR"	Knowledge about DAC, framework	Flow of information
Ingrid: "Definitely on the lower levels [implementing DAC], that should work well. I just can't liberate myself from the organizational map we currently have. (...) In one way, it would all be one level for everyone, equally, with as many rights and duties, but no."	Lower levels	Position of DAC

<p>Bente: “On a low level, it could work where you have autonomous small groups on 10 people, but in an organization with 24.000 employees? No”</p> <p>Marius: “I think it [DAC model] has value, and it has been a few philosophies tested throughout the years, down to detail-control with free teams for example. I think there's no correct answer, you need a set of tools, and be conscious about those tools, using those purposely. (...) As part of a greater set of tools, I do think it [DAC model] can bring value to the firm.”</p> <p>Vidar: “I would say the previous leadership style had its advantages where you had more focus on the corporate. Execution arrives quickly, when you have a strict top-sided leadership style. (..) But you also lose, call it: the inherent within the individuals that make them work harder. (..) If you have a coach or DAC approach, you will gain highly performing team by making them more self-driven (..)”</p>	<p>Lower levels</p> <p>Using DAC with purpose</p> <p>DAC vs. more strict hierarchical leadership</p>	<p>Position of DAC</p> <p>DAC is one part of leadership</p> <p>Benefits of DAC</p>
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Table 10: Implementation of DAC

#### 4.5.1 Findings

Table 4.4 visualizes the respondent’s ideas of how a DAC model could be implemented. The respondents were challenged in regard to their thoughts around the leadership ontology, and how DAC could function in their daily work. The questions asked were: “*Do you think the DAC ontology contains any relevant theory and can it bring value to the discussion of leadership?*” and “*Do you think a DAC model could be implemented in your organization?*”.

The respondents acknowledged the theory as valid and were aligned in their answers for the most part, for how such a model should function in the organization. The main point being that DAC is a great tool for groups and teams on the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, their answers were in agreement that ideas of DAC such as shared leadership, no formal leaders and a looser hierarchy was difficult to picture on the higher levels of the organizational map.

Marianne, Ingrid and Finn recognized the importance of the implementation process. They argued that such an implementation is highly dependent on the information given, that the philosophy must be embraced with precision and that the framework for the employees must support such a model and give room for the freedom it entails.

Notably, Marius is careful in his approach to a fully implemented DAC model, and argues that the DAC ontology is a philosophy that can be seen as a tool in a larger equipment used for leadership. Furthermore, he values the importance of being conscious about the toolset, and conscious about the definitive leadership practices one must foretake.

The very implementation of DAC displays some different thoughts. Although the respondents agreed that it should function on the lower levels, they all had problems visualizing a fully incorporated DAC model across the organization. Vidar was more entailed by the DAC thought process and emphasized the coach approach and the thought process, and less on how the system and organizational map would function.

#### **4.5.2 Discussion**

Implementing DAC would be to incorporate DAC into already existing ideas, combining leadership theories and practices to hit a style of leadership that fits. By looking at the essential elements of the DAC framework, adapted from Drath et al. (2008), one can argue that a careful approach to DAC in the leadership context aligns with Marius' statements. Utilizing DAC as part of a greater set of tools is on the path of understanding DAC as a comprising component of leadership beliefs, practices and long-term outcomes. However, implementing DAC is closely connected to its theory of leadership practices, and this is where the respondents' answers point towards the lower levels of the hierarchy in the organization. This means that although the respondents believe that DAC can be implemented in a certain position, it is contradictory to what a DAC-implementation fathoms: "all leadership practices targeting production of DAC are equally important" (Drath et al., 2008). This does not mean that DAC will fail because respondents limits its implementation to certain levels, but that it becomes significantly harder to implement because of a sense of reluctance on higher hierarchical levels.

Moreover, in addition to the reluctance, the respondents struggled to picture a DAC framework across the entire organization. This arguably points towards a short-term thought process of the respondents. A longer-term idea of DAC is the attainment of the purposes and longer-range goals of the collective (Drath et al., 2008). And through the essential elements of the DAC framework, one can see that more factors than simply producing DAC like technology, competitors, social changes etc. counts in the longer term. The analysis of the implementation of DAC is limited. This is a factor to consider in the discussion however, because it implies that the respondents were too limited in their view of DAC and stuck to a tripod thought process. For instance, the respondents were challenged to the extreme where the researchers proposed ideas of zero formal leaders, to try and spike the thought process about leadership without formal roles. To a very small degree did this achieve its purpose; the

respondents simply frowned, got confused or were determined that formal leaders was necessary. The purpose of the challenge was to interest thoughts about how leadership itself, the phenomena, would occur under new circumstances, but yielded poor answers. The respondents struggled to think outside of formal corporate frameworks. They looked at issues with DAC and their ideas of its implementation was aligned to those of Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010), where a concern for practicing leadership in such a collective manner is that it can generate a form of chaotic state and everlasting meetings.

On the other side, however, the fact that the respondents acknowledged the freedom DAC could give, the coaching and human aspect implies that many of the essential aspects of DAC (Drath et al., 2008) were covered. In light of this, one can argue that the respondents were more capable of implementing DAC than first evident. This is also due to the fact that DAC incorporates the tripod, expanding on it and acknowledging it (Drath et al., 2008), and that is arguably what the respondents are doing on this subject. They visualize the essential elements of DAC, placing them within their work situation, while still showing concern for where the tripod limits the view of the field.

#### 4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING DAC

<b>Theme: Implications of implementing DAC</b>		
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Open code</b>	<b>Focused code</b>
<p>Finn: “On my hierarchical level, I think we’re already using parts of this (...) parts of the framework (DAC) can relatively easy be implemented and wouldn’t have major implications on a day to day basis, other than more ownership to your own workday and thereby more interest in contributing. But I don’t think they would even dare to implement it throughout the whole company.”</p>	<p>Some presence of DAC, Negative to fully implementation</p>	<p>Feeling of ownership</p>
<p>Finn: “In companies with so many hierarchical levels of leaders as we have, I believe there’s 5 before you reach those on the floor who actually executes work tasks, there wouldn’t be a need for all those leader salaries, but one would replace them with groups of people discussing the same things and making the same decisions before one executes the work tasks (...) So, I don’t know whether that means more or fewer employees, or more expensive or cheaper solutions.”</p>	<p>Excessive leader salaries</p>	<p>Leadership ontology</p>
<p>Finn: “Yes, if everyone involved is pulling in the same direction you won’t have to spend a lot of time on leadership, because everybody knows where they’re heading and can go straight forward. (...) it can be of great value that the group doesn’t have to ask leaders about this and that and for permission for everything. (...) However, it can also turn into a whole lot of internal political issues, such as “we’ll rather discuss these matters now instead of delivering what the clients ask for at the moment”. There are both positives and negatives about it.”</p>	<p>Lesser time spent on leadership  Internal politics</p>	<p>Empowerment  Internal struggles</p>

<p>Marianne: “It [the entire group sharing the same understanding of their strategy, vision and goals] is important, but difficult. We’re all individuals seeing the reality from different perspectives. (...) To ensure that there’s a mutual direction and goals takes a lot from the whole group, so yes, I believe it’s beneficial, yet not always easy to manage.”</p>	<p>Different perspectives</p>	<p>Challenges of DAC</p>
<p>Bente: “I believe our customers would experience issues, because when they come to us and report that we haven’t done a good enough job, who should they talk to? Who would stand up and really face adversity in case of a crisis? (...) All over Norway people are being temporarily laid off now, so which of the informal leaders would raise hands and say, “I’ll go and select those to lay off”? (...) So, when things are going great, it is not a problem to not have a formal leader, but when the going gets tough, no one wants to volunteer and deal with the unpleasant.”</p>	<p>Leadership in crisis, Informal leaders facing adversity</p>	<p>Challenges of DAC, Responsibility</p>
<p>Marius: “I believe it (DAC) could fit in very well in creative jobs, and I also believe it could work for very robust and long living teams. (...) It goes to show that even though the closest leader is on vacation for 4 weeks or on sick leave for 6 months, things are still fine. But things must be oriented underway, and it all comes down to decisions regarding directions and strategies and things like that. From my experience, the employees can handle the day-to-day.”</p>	<p>Some industries better suited, Not so dependent of formal leaders</p>	<p>Best suited for creativity  Strategy and direction</p>
<p>Marius: “I have had so-called self-managed teams (...) where you realize that two people in the team can’t stand each other and can’t work together, but you know that they’re both extremely good at their jobs. It all comes down to personalities. (...) So, you can try this (DAC), but it can’t be forced upon any industry or group.”</p>	<p>Some industries better suited</p>	<p>Internal disagreements</p>
<p>Vidar: “... by choosing a direction, spending time on listening to suggestions, sort out the alignment and then sow motivational seeds to create behaviors that comes from within the workers, and not just something they feel obliged to do. And that can occur with involvement, so that they feel ownership at the end of the day are motivated.”</p>	<p>Leadership style</p>	<p>Involvement, Feeling of ownership</p>
<p>Vidar: “... you allow more empowerment and release more energy from the individuals.”</p>	<p>Leadership style</p>	<p>Empowerment</p>

Table 11: Implications of implementing DAC

#### 4.6.1 Findings

Table 4.5 presents some of the statements that the respondents gave regarding potential implications of implementing the DAC framework. The respondents were asked: “*Do you think the daily operations in your firm would change if the DAC framework was implemented?*” Overall, the views regarding implications were to some extent divided.

Finn stated that he felt such a mindset and thinking of leadership as a way of producing direction, alignment and commitment, was something that his department was already using, but only partly. He therefore felt that implementing DAC would not affect him to a great extent. However, he had a negative point of view regarding implementing DAC throughout the entire organization. He saw issues in regard of the whole organization restructuring while

still being an operative company. It is plausible to believe that turning everyone's mindset around in terms of how they think of but not least act out leadership would take up a lot of their time and a strong need for patience, which one might not always find the right time to carry out. Still, he and others saw implementing DAC as something that could bring some benefits, such as contributing to more ownership to one's work, more empowerment and more reason to wanting to partake at work. Finn further mentioned the way DAC could affect excessive leader salaries, whereas leaders might be substituted for groups of people who together need to make the same decisions. In some cases, this is obviously true. A smaller team or group that are somewhat executing the same tasks or working with the same things, and who thereby are really coherent in terms of their direction, alignment and commitment, would seem very facilitated to operate without one formal leader. However, as he also pointed out, this seems most suitable on the lower hierarchical levels, as there will always be someone higher up in the organization who needs to be responsible for the bigger picture.

Marius emphasized that some industries might be better suited for the mindset of DAC, especially industries where the work is more creative, and the employees might be thinking more outside the box. However, he also saw it as a fitting solution to TietoEvry's more innovative teams and solutioning teams. He also pointed out that it could work well in the long haul. Some of the other respondents also focused on the aspect of time, where it might be better suited for long-term perspectives, where one really must be patient enough for the restructuring. Marius further advocated that groups working without a leader have previously turned out really well, at least on shorter terms where leaders are gone for vacations or due to illness. However, teams operating short terms without one individual leader might not experience real issues during that particular time period. Additionally, it is likely to think that this one individual leader (according to a tripod framework) prior to vacation or sick leave has already made decisions in terms of where they are heading and coordination of knowledge and competencies, so that this is not something that the members of the team really need to consider when working in the leaderless context. A short period of time working without the leader who is in charge of the group cannot be seen as equivalent to coming together and produce DAC as a collective.

Some of the respondents further expressed some issues they expected to be occurring if implementing the DAC model. Marius noted that for groups of people working together to achieve what they are aiming for, different personalities might play a major part in their

success. This was also seen as a decisive factor regarding the respondents' views on leadership development. Other respondents pointed out that DAC can also lead to issues regarding how to deal with clients, especially in those contexts where one relies more on shared leadership and executes leadership without formally appointed leaders. Bente argued that when in case of a crisis, it can be an issue that no one wants to voluntarily take the needed responsibility if there are customer complaints that needs to be taken care of. Another issue for leadership in such a leaderless context that was brought to attention, is the current affair of layoffs due to the outbreak of Covid-19, and how this can be handled without a specific person being in charge.

Some respondents saw *increased* responsibility as one of the positive implications of implementing the DAC ontology. Finn mentioned that with everyone pulling in the same direction, one will need less time discussing leadership because one will actually know where one is heading, which makes the process more comprehensive and calls for the individuals to take more responsibility for their own situation. Furthermore, Ingrid stated that it would turn out for the better if everyone gets the feeling of being a part of leadership and thereby gets the feeling of responsibility for what is being done in the organization. She also expressed her strong faith in cooperation, solidarity, and the feeling of shared responsibility within a group, and presented these factors as the ones she saw as most important in order for an organization to be successful.

#### **4.6.2 Discussion**

The respondents' concerns regarding implications of an implemented DAC framework are shared by some leadership theorists (Drath, Palus and McGuire, 2010; Crevani et al., 2010; Lindgren, Packendorff and Tham, 2011). Marianne and Marius expressed that different types of perspectives and the composition of people within a group can be a potential issue for producing outcomes of DAC. It was mentioned that for leaderless contexts, a decisive element in achieving the main targets of the group can be the different personalities of the involved members. When coming to mutual agreements is such an essential aspect as in the DAC framework, the clash of personalities who are not able to get along can be a reason why production of DAC turns out as not successful. This can be more of a problem in a DAC framework than in the traditional tripod framework, where these divergent workers do not need to relate to each other in the same way. It was also mentioned that after the implementation of DAC the different personalities within the groups might not have been



taken account for in terms of how well the groups are composed, and that composition seems to be significantly important as DAC is an open framework. Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) acknowledge this train of thoughts and state that when implementing an entirely new way of thinking of and acting out leadership one might have to replace existing members who do not hold the necessary beliefs in regard of producing DAC. As Marius mentioned, you can always try to implement DAC, but it cannot be forced upon everyone.

Finn further argued that relying on coming to mutual agreements around important decisions to the extent that DAC might need can result in discussions and debates that ultimately have a negative impact on the daily operations. Time consuming discourses might be of a hindrance to delivering to customers on time, for instance. In accordance with Finn, Marianne also expressed that sharing the same understanding of a group's strategy, vision and goals is important, yet difficult, as the different perspectives of everyone involved have to be taken into account. The works of both Crevani et al. (2010) and Lindgren, Packendorff and Tham (2011) display some concerns regarding the DAC ontology, somewhat along the lines of these responses. Their concerns revolve around the fact that this new framework focuses on leadership in terms of a consensus or mutual agreements approach, while it is seemingly neglecting disagreements of arguments and different perceptions of everyone involved in executing leadership, which is not unlikely to occur in a group with many different personalities. Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) acknowledge that a negative stereotype of executing leadership as a collective activity can be chaos and endless meetings, which aligns with the responses related to prioritizing discussions and coming to agreements on every decision. Finn worried that DAC might cause internal political issues, where one might rather spend time discussing occurring matters and issues instead of actually delivering what the clients need at that moment.

Furthermore, Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) also highlight the stereotype of a lack of accountability, where putting everyone responsible paradoxically can make no one responsible. This is in line with what Bente expressed. She pointed out that such a perspective of leadership as DAC, and the responsibility that might follow, can create issues for the customers. There might be reluctance within in the group in terms of taking charge of dealing with correctives and improvements regarding customer complaints. She further expresses concerns about the very current issue of layoffs, and how a lack of responsibility turns into an issue in such challenging situations. It is thereby acknowledged that such a collective

approach to leadership might work smoothly when there are no big issues. However, the case of no one volunteering to deal with the unpleasant struggles when there are tougher times is seen as a plausible implication. Along the lines of this presumption, Crevani et al. (2010) also express a concern regarding the DAC framework and its implications, whereas its focus on the successful production of outcomes and the beliefs and practices that contribute to it, might neglect the occurrence of failure in terms of absent or diverging leadership practices.

Empowerment was mentioned by some respondents as an implication that is in contrast to the traditional leadership. It seems clear that allowing and even demanding all members of a group to participate in coming to a widespread agreement regarding the direction, making them come together to organize and coordinate their knowledge and competencies, and thereby facilitating for their commitment to what the group ultimately is trying to achieve, can be an extra boost to the collective performance and the individuals' motivation. Vidar highlighted two of the DAC pillars, direction and alignment, as means to create motivation coming from within the members, and that by involving everyone in such a manner will create the feeling of ownership to their work. This aligns with some of the behavioral mechanisms from secondary research findings that can be seen in relation to implementing DAC. Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) state the positive effect of empowering workers to act out leadership, which leads to workers seeing themselves as creators and initiators. Lazear and Gibbs (2014) see jobs with a high level of decentralization of decision making as being in possession of empowerment and autonomy, which further can give an increased sense of responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and increased intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Finn talked about how participating in a group and feeling that you are contributing will result in a huge boost for everyone involved as one gets the feeling of ownership to the group's common goals. He also talked about the struggle of superior visions and goals coming from the very top of the organization, because they tend to be fluid or vague. He saw implementing visions and goals within a department or a group as a way to cope with this issue, thus obtaining more ownership to the aims and avoiding divergent directions and personal goals. According to Carsten et al. (2010), empowerment climates where power, knowledge and information is shared among the members of an organization can have a positive effect on job performance, where ownership is one of the contributing factors. However, they acknowledge that implementing processes that initiates empowerment, like for instance self-managed

teams, can experience issues of reluctance in terms of members who are predominantly passive in contributing to the collective. Obviously, this can be an issue for DAC. In accordance with this, as a positive implication of implementing DAC, the sense of increased responsibility is of relevance. This sense was solely thought of as something positive amongst the respondents, and it sheds light on the personal aspects of a DAC framework. Theory suggests the same (Drath et al., 2008), where participation, belonging and responsibility, amongst other factors, are strong and positive consequences of a DAC framework and thought process.

#### 4.7 LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Theme: Leadership culture		
Statements	Open code	Focused code
Finn: "... at least up till now, it's been up to the formal leaders to run the leader education programs and which philosophies they possess. And there's been many changes through the years regarding which philosophy one believes the company should correspond with."	Leadership style	Formal leaders deciding philosophies
Finn: "It [leadership development] also depends on the culture of the countries, now our top management is Finnish, so the culture is surely going to change in that direction. (...) Norwegian culture is different from Swedish culture, for instance, regarding how much faith one has in leaders. (...) At the end of the day the leaders are responsible, while in Sweden people traditionally have more faith in the leaders, in terms of a leadership culture."	Local differences	National cultures
Ingrid: "... it is great that people have new perspectives [DAC] as well, that's good for us. It is great that someone stirs it up. I really believe in cooperation, solidarity and that everyone gets the feeling of shared responsibility. I believe that is the most important thing in order for an organization to excel. This has made me realize that my leader is really good."	Change Characteristics of culture	Leadership beliefs
Marius: "... [for a DAC ontology] you need a set of tools, and be conscious about those tools, using those purposely, and not only because a philosophy is being forced upon you, which often happens in a company; someone have been taken some courses and have experienced a personal awakening, while others really can't make any sense of it."	Enforced philosophies	Top-down leadership
Marius: "... we're a stock-based company, we're not a democracy, right, and people tend to forget that sometimes. You can't make democratic decisions all the time. We're an AS [Ltd.], and we have to make sure that the shareholders can make some return on their investments, and thereby some decisions just have to be made."	Non-democratic	Shareholder-focused
Vidar: "... there's recently been a merger, where Tieto and Evry merged around new year, and as a result of that the playbook has changed. And there might have been a new focus on what one might call DAC, the characteristics of leadership. (...) It seems as we're heading in a direction where we're more steering clear of the traditional leadership style."	Change of culture	Towards a new paradigm

Table 12: Leadership culture

#### **4.7.1 Findings**

Table 4.6 displays some of the statements that were given in regard of the theme ‘leadership culture’. There were several questions that led to answers where the respondents talked about leadership culture. Some of the questions asked were: *“Do you think the DAC-framework could bring value to the topic of leadership?”*, *“Do you think the daily operations in your firm would change if the DAC framework was implemented?”* and *“How do you think leadership within your firm can be developed?”*

Neither of the questions asked them directly to reflect on leadership culture, but most of the respondents referred to this theme, either deliberately or subconsciously. Some of them mentioned philosophies, and that it’s something that has been introduced to them from the top levels of the hierarchy within the company. Finn talked about formal leaders as the ones who decides which philosophies to adhere to. He also stated that there have been several changes over the past years when it comes to which philosophy to stick to. Marius talked about how philosophies can be enforced upon workers from higher up in an organization, and the issue of people not even understanding it. It seems clear that the philosophies and culture is something that does not arise among the workers, but that it is something that they are told to adhere to from formal leaders high up in the organization.

Another factor being mentioned that relates to leadership culture is the fact that there are different cultures in different countries. Vidar argued that the merger with Finnish Tieto, which took place a few months earlier, had changed the playbook at the company. Finn further pointed to the fact that the company’s top management is Finnish, and that the culture is likely to transform into something more along the lines of Finnish culture. Ingrid expressed that she was happy that a new perspective of leadership, DAC, was introduced, and that she welcomed change. Vidar also expressed the feeling of the organization changing from a more traditional style of leadership to focusing on something more along the lines of DAC. It seems fitting to shift from the traditional to a more modern leadership ontology, as secondary research findings advocate that DAC integrates across various cultures (Drath et al., 2008).

The respondents also brought up the term democracy. Finn talked about how he felt there was a common understanding in terms of direction and that everyone was to some extent contributing to leadership. He continued about how this really depended on the mutual

agreements of a democracy, where enough people have to agree on the decisions made. However, it was pointed out that due to Tieto-Evry being a stock-based company, this affected the way one could approach the internal governance. It was said that shareholders have to be a priority, and thereby a fully implemented democracy could not coincide with that. Whether or not the respondents felt the presence of democracy, it seems that it must be understood as being present only at the lower levels of the organization or limited for the different teams or divisions.

#### **4.7.2 Discussion**

The views from the respondents regarding philosophies being enforced from the top and downwards are not in line with how the DAC framework sees leadership culture. According to this framework, it is the culture within the organization, and not the individual leaders, that must be understood as the origin of leadership (Drath et al., 2008). The primary research findings show that leadership culture at TietoEvry is something that has its origin from formal leaders. Eckert and Drath (2009) describe leadership culture as the pattern of basic-shared assumptions that a group both have to apply and teach to potential new members, in order for the group to execute leadership. While the behaviors of leaders and followers in the tripod can be individual, the leadership practices (which together with leadership beliefs constitute leadership culture in the DAC framework) are behaviors of the group and collective enactments. This can for instance be patterns of organizational routines that both include and surpass the individual behaviors (Drath et al., 2008). People in the roles of leaders are seen as contributing players in acting out leadership. As mentioned in the interviews, some of the workers in the organization might not even understand or grasp the meaning of the philosophies they are assumed to follow. This is something that can be dealt with by applying a new leadership paradigm, such as DAC, where the collective is so essential. By collectively coming to agreements regarding philosophical aspects such as the direction of the group, and which beliefs and practices to adhere to, one might steer clear of issues of workers not being able to make any sense of the philosophies. Involvement of all participating actors seems key in establishing and evolving leadership culture.

The recent merger with Finnish company Tieto was mentioned as a factor that either has or is likely going to affect the culture within the organization. According to Drath et al. (2008), the tripod framework calls for a re-interpretation of leadership when crossing cultural borders. This is a result of the different perspectives for the different countries and their respective

cultures. How big of an impact the changes of culture at TietoEvry will cause is unclear. What is clearer, however, is that applying the DAC ontology which sees outcomes of leadership as the main focus, provides what Drath et al. (2008) describe as common ground for understanding leadership. This will allow for the different leadership beliefs and practices to vary for the Norwegian and Finnish culture, while still remaining the overall framing of leadership. It might also still facilitate for developing common practices and behaviors across these different cultures. This goes to show that an international organization such as TietoEvry, dealing with different leadership cultures for branches based in different countries, can be better off with implementing a DAC ontology.

The internal governance was also brought to attention, and the feeling of democracy being present was divided among the interviewees. Finn expressed the feeling of the daily operations being affected by the common understanding of which direction his group was heading and that his peers were to some extent participating in executing leadership. Marius did not seem to share this perception. He said that they were not a democracy due to the fact that the organization is a stock-based company. Thus, he saw that there is no room to fully establish the decision making of a democracy, as there are shareholders' interests to take into account when making major decisions.

However, it seems that the different hierarchical levels of the organization might call for different types of governance. It is clear that such a large company cannot rely on settling on mutual agreements across the entire company. In the hectic schedules of such an organization there is doubtfully not enough time for such a process, and not everyone is qualified to partake in such big decisions. Drath, Palus and McGuire (2010) presented chaos and endless meetings as a conception of collectively practicing leadership. While it seems inevitable to have a skewed power balance and decision making throughout the entire organization in terms of settling on major and comprehensive outcomes, the need for democracy seems to be more apparent for different levels in the hierarchy. For teams and divisions within the organization to be able to produce outcomes of DAC, achieving widespread agreement in the collective regarding the mission and goals is fundamental in setting the course. It would therefore seem that executing leadership according to the DAC ontology necessarily calls for a democracy. However, as Drath et al. (2008) point out, organizations where there are some formal leaders who have asymmetrical influence on the workers and who make decisions regarding the bigger picture can still be producing DAC. What ultimately matters, is that the

asymmetrical power and influence must not be so skewed that it works against DAC production.

By having a look at how the respondents view the leadership culture they are surrounded by, there are some observations that are interesting in point of both implementation and potential implications of DAC. By virtue of being a stock-based company, it was expressed that TietoEvy cannot rely on a democratic governance and that DAC would be a challenge to apply high up in the hierarchy of the organization. What this means in terms of implementation of DAC, and what also correlates with recurring points of views, is that the respondents found it to be necessary to take place at lower levels. Preferably in separate teams or divisions. Furthermore, changing the leadership culture in terms of replacing existing beliefs of a leader-centric focus seems to be an imperative first step in an implementation process. In terms of implications, DAC is said to yield a common ground for cultural borders. Pending to see whether the cultural differences of the two merging companies will cause a challenge, TietoEvy seems to gain from managing potential cultural issues through the DAC framework.

#### 4.8 PURPOSE

Theme: Purpose		
Statements	Open code	Focused code
Finn: "Even the lowest of worker should know the bigger picture of what Toyota is producing to the world, and then you feel like you're contributing to something. And when that feeling is present it may be of great importance, but each person does not need the same strengths or same level of contribution at all times."	Example Toyota	Contribution to the bigger picture
Marianne: "We are all individuals, perceiving reality from our own perspectives, and it can be colored by many different things. If you're unsure about your job or if you feel incompetent in certain areas, then securing common direction and goals it demands a great deal from the entire group."	Individual perceptions	Benefits of aligning employees
Ingrid: "It is important, and I think it is for most people, that what you deliver is of best possible quality. Is it not important for you whether you're in the right or wrong spot? It's part of feeling responsibility."	Individual responsibility	Work-pride
Bente: "I think most need a work that has meaning. You have studied Maslow's pyramid like the rest of us. It is evident that meaningful presence is of essence, so if you're working with something and you know it has purpose, it is easier to be at work. So for all participants in the group, it is important to know what the production is for, why we do what we do and why it feels right."	Criteria for meaningful work, example of Mazlov	Meaningful work
Marius: "I have led organizations where they [Employees] haven't seen how important they are in the greater picture. But when I've put myself into their situation	Workers understanding	Seeing your own alignment

and acknowledged and explained that okay, this is our piece of the puzzle, and without our piece, it all comes down. (...) and people who have been working with it for years, suddenly sees a light, and goes: “aha, is this what we do, is this where we come in””.	their own participation	and contribution
Vidar: “I think that if you only attend your job to claim wages, it will spiral itself in the form of you losing energy, more often doing a worse job, at least on long term, and you’re neither in a good relationship for your co-workers.”	Result of not feeling something more	No purpose

Table 13: Purpose

#### 4.8.1 Findings

Table 4.7 regards the idea of the importance of meaningful work. The respondents were asked about their ideas of purpose: “Do you emphasize “purpose”? How important is “purpose” in your work? How do you think your co-workers view “purpose”? The term purpose was explained beforehand to the respondents. Although the coding revealed purpose as a theme, the research was open to different interpretations, regardless of the fact that the respondents were asked straight-forward about it. The analysis reveal that the respondents were taken by an individualistic approach to meaningful work. Obtaining a purposeful work was regarded as different for all employees. In particular, Bente who compares the need for meaningful work to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Marius explains how the lack of purpose functions and that people light up when explained their position in the firm, gaining a higher sense of purpose.

#### 4.8.2 Discussion

The most important aspect of purpose is arguably the paradox, where a take on leadership through purpose is dependent on management and day-to-day work (Kempster et al., 2011). The statements utilized to code purpose in this content analysis do not reveal the respondents thoughts regarding the other side of this paradox; these are simply the parts where the respondents really put themselves in the situation of thinking about what purpose meant to them, and the consequences of not feeling that their work was meaningful. However, in the interviews the respondents are aware of their systematic approaches that undermine telos such as key performance indicators (KPI) and objective key results (OKR). Vidar reviews this paradox: “(...) KPIs, OKRs etc. that are part of both enhancing, but maybe also undermine some of the potential that exists in a co-worker, but you also have this called team-perspective. If you have a top-sided traditional method, then the employee would relate to closest leader and mechanisms of control, but if you have a coach-leader or a DAC approach, you will gain high performing teams because they become more self-propelled(...)”. Although the respondents acknowledge the paradox (without the researcher informing them), they barely take implementation of producing DAC as leadership connected to purpose into regard.



Through the scope of the research question, purpose offers a view to leadership closely connected to the DAC ontology, but the content analysis of purpose fails to reach conclusive information to the research question. This is largely in part to low information given to questions that the philosophy of MacIntyre proposes: What does it take? Why do people accept and strive for said orders? (Kempster et al., 2011).

Although the information given to these questions are low, Marius arguably answers part of what it takes, when explaining that understanding one's own position and participation is necessary to achieve meaningful work. One must know what one's own piece of the puzzle does and what that production yields, to achieve purpose. This thought process is closely linked to telos and the constructed normative leadership process. Arguably this part of purpose is the exact same as one of the three pillars to produce DAC; aligning the work. Aligning co-workers so they understand exactly what benefits they bring, equals to “(..) *manage the meaning of follower experiences towards sustaining virtues to develop internal goods of personal excellence in order to achieve telos - a good for humans*” (Kempster et al., 2011). The respondents were heavily taken by thoughts about work with or without purpose and what this means, but the fact that the constructed leadership process to achieve telos is regarded to some degree is evidence of important information that sheds light on the problem question. When leading, as in Marius' case, becomes to allowing development of virtue practices and internal goods in order to get a societal foothold, one has achieved the goal of the constructed normative leadership process, and this implies that the DAC ontology, through the lens of purpose can be implemented. The fact that the respondents heavily consider both sides of a workforce with or without purpose reveals implications of this area.

#### **4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the findings from the interviews have been presented, together with the discussion, which sees the responses in the light of the relevant theory regarding the DAC framework, and the research question. This chapter is visually summarized by an organizing of the most important elements. The visualization of all the content analysis views the most important aspects of each theme's findings and discussion. Most notably are the key points of discussion, a short summary of the discussions that pulls forth the authors views of theory compared to respondents' answers. The key points are spearheading the foundation of a conclusion together with all discussions.

THEME	FINDINGS	DISCUSSION	KEY POINT OF DISCUSSION
Limitations of tripod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tripod perspective needs to be challenged</li> <li>• Skewed power balance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too leader-centric</li> <li>• Better with a shared focus of development and shared responsibility</li> <li>• Very skewed power balance not suitable for utilizing the full potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One supreme leader losing focus on leadership can mean the entire group losing focus on leadership</li> <li>• Diverging/conflicting agendas might occur</li> </ul>
Leadership development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to influence leaders</li> <li>• Seen as developing leaders</li> <li>• Different personalities might be decisive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saw developing leadership as developing leaders</li> <li>• Although some claim that DAC is to some extent already implemented, they do not distinguish between leader and leadership development</li> <li>• Some acknowledge the importance of everyone involved influencing leadership development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stuck in the mindset of solely developing leaders to develop leadership (tripod)</li> <li>• Improving/developing leadership better facilitated for by the DAC ontology</li> <li>• Acknowledging collective influence is one of the most important steps for implementing DAC</li> </ul>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower levels of the organizations</li> <li>• Marius argued implement and use DAC as part of a set of tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing to the framework of ‘essential elements of DAC framework’</li> <li>• Respondents had an arguably limited view of DAC’s implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of reluctance → Harder to implement</li> <li>• Concerns for chaos</li> </ul>
Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views were divided</li> <li>• Positive implications: more ownership, more empowerment, more responsibility</li> <li>• Negative implications: issues regarding internal politics, different/diverging personalities not suitable with DAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition of teams/groups is essential</li> <li>• Very time consuming, might affect daily operations</li> <li>• Responsibility paradox</li> <li>• Suitable when things are going great, but how does it deal with tougher times?</li> <li>• Increased motivation and performance through empowerment, ownership, and responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A restructuring calls for patience and thorough facilitation</li> <li>• The responsibility paradox must be dealt with</li> <li>• Might neglect failure</li> <li>• Feeling of contribution is important</li> </ul>
Leadership culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company playbook changed through a merger</li> <li>• Statements of leadership were linked to democracy and Norwegian values</li> <li>• Large corporate, stock-based company. Visible in respondents’ answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAC: Culture is leadership, formal leaders are not → Some employees might not know what philosophies the organization is operating under</li> <li>• Applying DAC can yield common ground in cultural borders such as the merger from jan. 2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A need for strengthened philosophies through a mutually constituted leadership culture</li> <li>• Unclear impact of DAC on a cultural level</li> </ul>
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents were taken by an individualistic approach</li> <li>• Respondents reviewed the situation with and without purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPI and OKR may undermine purpose</li> <li>• Low level of information regarding the connection to an implementation of DAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAC ontology can be implemented through alignment. Supported by content analysis of purpose</li> <li>• Paradox of talking DAC, but keeping KPI’s and OKR’s</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents were heavily taken by the implications of a lack of purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligning employees to see the bigger picture of their work</li> <li>• Achieving a constructed normative leadership process to reach telos by aligning employees</li> </ul>	
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Table 14: Visualization of the content analysis

The key points of the discussions show that the content analysis raises many questions. The respondents were careful in their approaches, and comparing this to the theory gives discussions that imply a successful incorporation of the DAC framework and thought process. However, there were points in the findings where the respondents were lacking in their understanding of DAC. The implementation of DAC was particularly vague, where the findings almost solely pointed to certain positions of the hierarchical levels, revealing that an embraced thought process of complete DAC was difficult because of a sense of reluctance. The implications review the responsibility paradox and was overall enlightened by both positive and negative consequences.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Burns summarizes the difficulty of the leadership phenomenon well: *“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth”* (Burns, 1978, p. 2).

The need for new exploration of leadership is present, and the main take, utilized by this dissertation, is the DAC framework presented by Drath et al. (2008). Producing Direction, Alignment and Commitment is to execute leadership. It is a framework that challenges and incorporates a claim of a more common and traditional way of thinking and acting leadership; that leadership consists of leaders, followers and their common goals. This dissertation has been written with a DAC-oriented language, referring to DAC as leadership, to challenge the ontology, the respondents from the data collection and the discussion of the findings.

The problem question at hand is consisting of three main elements; implementation of DAC, implications of this implementation and further exploration of the phenomena leadership seen through the lens of DAC. The discussion of this dissertation regards leadership through this lens and yields a new perspective on leadership theories by utilizing qualitative data from an organization. The basics of the DAC lens are the ‘essential elements of DAC’, and most importantly when exploring the leadership phenomena is the claim that “all leadership practices targeting production of DAC are equally important” (Drath et al., 2008). By utilizing the findings of the content analysis, it is evident that the mindset of producing DAC, no matter the practice, is existing. This dissertation can conclude that the DAC lens yields: an understanding of employees’ willingness to believe in a broader scope, employee’s own understanding of participation in leadership and a personal perception that grasps the phenomenon leadership in a more complete way than previous ideas of tripod.

The second element of the problem question is the implementation of a DAC framework and thought process in an organization. The findings revealed that it was primarily problematic for the respondents to visualize their organization fully incorporated by a DAC framework. An implementation of such a scale seemed to spark concerns for chaos. The discussion shed light on a problem with current thought process; the respondents were arguably limited by the tripod, and struggled both to visualize and conceptualize the implementation of DAC. However, the findings also revealed that correlating with recurring points of views, the

respondents found it necessary to implement DAC on a lower scale, suggesting that part of such an implementation was already conducted. Furthermore, changing the leadership culture in terms of replacing existing beliefs of a leader-centric focus seems to be an imperative first step in an implementation process. In addition to the aspect of culture, the paradox of demanding a more open-minded DAC-approach while keeping KPI's and OKR's is present. Vidar acknowledged that such elements might undermine the idea of implementing DAC. At this point, the respondents had shown reluctance and two main difficulties with visualizing an implementation of DAC. At the same time, the findings supported an implementation of DAC through alignment. Both the themes of culture and purpose yielded discussions that had the respondents think differently. The data shows that when not facing direct questions of implementation, it is easier to visualize and conceptualize how a DAC thought process should function, and this dissertation can conclude that despite reluctance and limitations of the tripod, there are results that support an implementation of DAC through the lower levels, through a cultural approach and through the liberation of a tripod mindset, all evident in the data.

The third element of the problem question referred to the implications of an implemented DAC framework and thought process. The conclusion of what the implications are, is not summarized in one sentence at the end of this paragraph; it is rather a notion of all the elements that an implemented DAC framework and thought process would entail. Replacing the fundamental framework for leadership in an organization and thereby reestablish the mindset of how everyone involved thinks of leadership is obvious to bring about some implications. Through the findings, the respondents expressed some divided views regarding both positive and negative presumptions. The implications were evident in most themes of the content analysis. Notably, on the theme of the implementation, respondents quickly jumped to positive and negative sides while struggling to fathom the implementation itself. This speaks volumes of how the respondents viewed DAC and that the leadership phenomena came second to concerns for current state of being.

However, the findings revealed that the respondents saw positive outcomes of DAC such as more ownership, empowerment and responsibility. The positive outcomes of implementing DAC were primarily on a personal scale, where the respondents acknowledged that a high level of decentralization of decision making by being in possession of empowerment and autonomy can yield an increased sense of responsibility and ownership. This aligns with the

theories of Hackman and Oldham (1976). Furthermore, through the cultural approach and the new merger of Tieto and Evry they are pending to see whether the cultural differences of the two merging companies will cause a challenge. TietoEvry seems to gain from managing potential cultural issues through the DAC framework because it would yield a common ground and set cultural differences aside. The more problematic outcomes of implementing DAC were both on the personal and the organizational level, as opposed to the positive outcomes, which were more or less only personal. The main concern was the responsibility paradox where the respondents had no faith that individuals would volunteer to take responsibility when things went poorly, but leap to take responsibility when things went well. Moreover, they emphasized that leadership closer linked to democracy take more time and that more voices should be heard. This is supported by criticism that DAC is facing (Drath, Palus & McGuire, 2010), where endless meetings and chaos are the main concerns. Moreover, an implication was the fear that not all personalities were suited for fellowship of DAC, and especially not leaderless contexts.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future dissertation students:

The work of completing a dissertation is an educational and time-consuming process. This dissertation is based on a paradigm that allows for consistent reevaluation of the problem question. However, the main recommendation is to develop the problem question early and review the literature at a stage where one can utilize the literature to form a problem question. It is vital to understand that the problem question lays the foundation for how the research should be conducted and which fields to explore. Furthermore, this dissertation recommends careful treatments of leadership definitions. It is a field covered in disagreement and vagueness by scholars from all over the world. It is also a field with extensive material, so one should critically review relevant literature. As a last point, it would be interesting to combine leadership studies with quantifiable material, especially combining quantity and quality utilizing mixed methods. This dissertation recommends building upon the work of qualitative interviews, looking at leadership through a DAC lens, and one way to do so is to include quantifiable data.

Recommendations for practitioners:

Drath et al. (2008) state that they hope the DAC ontology will raise new questions for exploration and advancing the theoretical understanding of leadership. This dissertation aims to have achieved that task, primarily looking at how DAC would function on a physical plane in an organization. Further questions of DAC are needed, however, and this dissertation especially recognizes the need for quantifiable data. Most importantly on the quantifiable scale is the need to regard leadership in a statistically significant amount of organizations. However, as leadership is a poorly understood phenomenon, further deep-delving questions of leadership through the DAC lens must be asked, before one can resort to the quantity. In addition to this, this dissertation boldly claims that to further enhance DAC's challenge onto the tripod, researchers must regard leadership through the DAC lens, consistently challenging the ontology and the perception of the tripod to further understand the phenomenon of leadership.

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## 8 APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Informasjonsskriv angående deltakelse i intervju for masteroppgave

*Hvordan kan et nytt perspektiv på utøvd ledelse implementeres i det daglige arbeidet til en bedrift, og hvilke følger/konsekvenser vil dette føre til?*

#### Bakgrunn

Vi er to studenter ved Universitetet i Stavanger som skriver en master i økonomi og administrasjon, med hovedfag i strategi og ledelse. Masteroppgaven vår tar for seg et nytt og moderne perspektiv på utøvelse av ledelse som går ut på at ledelse kan både diskuteres og utøves uten fokus på ledere, følgere, og deres felles mål, som er grunnsteinene i klassisk ledelsesteori. Dette nye perspektivet på utøvd ledelse kalles DAC, og handler om hvordan man som gruppe kan utøve ledelse gjennom å produsere Direction, Alignment og Commitment. **Direction** (retning) handler om enighet rundt hva gruppen prøver å oppnå sammen. **Alignment** (justering) handler om koordinasjonen og organiseringen av kunnskap og arbeid innad i gruppen. **Commitment**(forpliktelse) handler om hvorvidt de individuelle medlemmene av gruppen prioriterer gruppens suksess fremfor personlig suksess.

Vi ønsker å undersøke hvorvidt et slikt perspektiv på utøvd ledelse lar seg implementere i en bedrift, og hvilke følger det eventuelt vil gi.

#### Hvorfor er du en aktuell kandidat til vår studie?

For å undersøke tematikken bak vår problemstilling ønsker vi å intervju flere ansatte i en bedrift som er innovativ. Gjennom våre kontakter ble TietoEvry et naturlig valg.

#### Hva vil det si for deg å delta i vår studie?

Vi vil gjerne intervju deg over Microsoft Teams. Vårt intervju er antatt å vare i 20-40 minutter. Vi vil stille deg spørsmål rundt dette nye ledelsesperspektivet og hvilke tanker du som ansatt og som del av en gruppe gjør deg rundt dette temaet. På forhånd vil du få tilsendt

en intervjuguide med alle spørsmålene samt en kort informasjonstekst om de to perspektivene på utøvd ledelse (det tradisjonelle og det moderne). **Bedriften og informantene som har deltatt KAN anonymiseres i oppgaven.**

Det vil bli foretatt et lydopptak av intervjuet som deretter vil transkriberes. Vi vil behandle dataene konfidensielt og i tråd med Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD). Både lydopptaket og den skriftlige versjonen av intervjuet vil slettes ved prosjektslutt, som er 15. juni. Vi er veldig fleksible og kan tilpasse oss når du ønsker å bli intervjuet.

Vi håper du har anledning til å delta.

Med vennlig hilsen

Magnus Øvstebø og Simen Fogstad Eielsen



## Appendix B

### Intervjuguide: Ledelse og nye tankeganger om ledelse

Dette er et intervju designet for å avdekke tanker, meninger og refleksjoner rundt ledelse/utøvd ledelse. Det kan være en god idé å ta noen notater eller tenke litt over spørsmålene før selve intervjuet. Små oppfølgingsspørsmål kan dukke opp underveis i intervjuet.

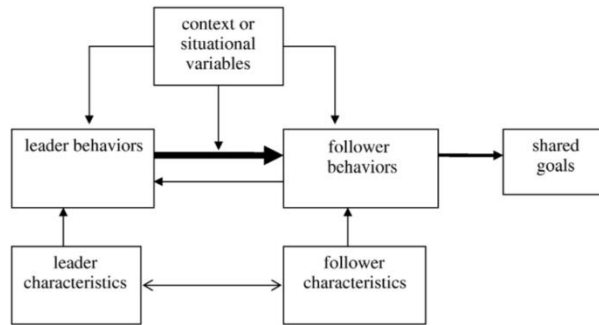
Intervjuet er antatt å vare i 20-40 minutter. Grunnet utbruddet av Covid-19 vil intervjuet bli holdt over Microsoft Teams. Det vil bli foretatt et lydopptak av intervjuet med den hensikt å transkribere det. Opptaket vil bli slettet umiddelbart etter transkriberingen. Både du og bedriften du jobber i kan bli holdt anonym ved ønske. Intervjuet og databehandlingen vil foregå i tråd med Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD).

Intervjuet vil i utgangspunktet holdes på norsk, men kan også gjennomføres på engelsk om ønskelig. Masteroppgaven vår skrives på engelsk, så vi gjør deg derfor oppmerksom på at vi må oversette deres svar etter vår diskresjon.

#### Intervjuinformasjon

For å forstå tematikken som ligger til grunn i vår studie er det viktig å forstå ordet ontologi. Ontologi defineres av Bokmålsordboka (Språkrådet) som læren om tingenes eksistens, vesen og egenskaper. Det Norske akademis ordbok definerer ontologi som en formell representasjon av et sett begreper (med mellomliggende relasjoner) innenfor et kunnskapsområde.

Det tradisjonelle perspektivet på utøvd ledelse kan forklares av tripod-ontologien. Denne ontologien ser på ledelse som grunnfestet i et forhold. Helt enkelt kan ledelse sees på som en tripod (et trebent stativ) bestående av de tre enhetene leder(e), følgere, og deres felles mål som de ønsker å oppnå. Utøvelse av ledelse må da sees på som utøvelsen av ledere, følgere og de målene de har til felles. Dette rammeverket av tripoden kan tydeliggjøres gjennom modellen utarbeidet av Drath et al. (2008):



*Tripod-rammeverket (Drath et al., 2008)*

Dette intervjuet handler om dine tanker og meninger rundt en ny ontologi som kalles DAC-ontologien. DAC-ontologien ser utøvd ledelse som utfall eller produkter av ledelse. Disse utfallene/produktene av ledelse er Direction (retning), Alignment (justering) og Commitment (forpliktelse):

- **Direction** (retning) handler om enighet rundt hva gruppen prøver å oppnå sammen.
- **Alignment** (justering) handler om koordinasjonen og organiseringen av kunnskap og arbeid innad i gruppen.
- **Commitment** (forpliktelse) handler om hvorvidt de individuelle medlemmene av gruppen prioriterer gruppens suksess fremfor personlig suksess.

Med denne nye ontologien kan utøvd ledelse diskuteres og gjennomføres uten at det er snakk om ledere, følgere og deres felles mål, som er de grunnleggende enhetene i den tradisjonelle tripod-ontologien. Istedenfor å se på individuelle personer i rollen som en leder som utøver ledelse, handler DAC-ontologien om at grupper av mennesker sammen kan produsere DAC. Det er samhandlingene og interaksjonen mellom personene i gruppen som skaper DAC.

De viktigste elementene i DAC-ontologien er:

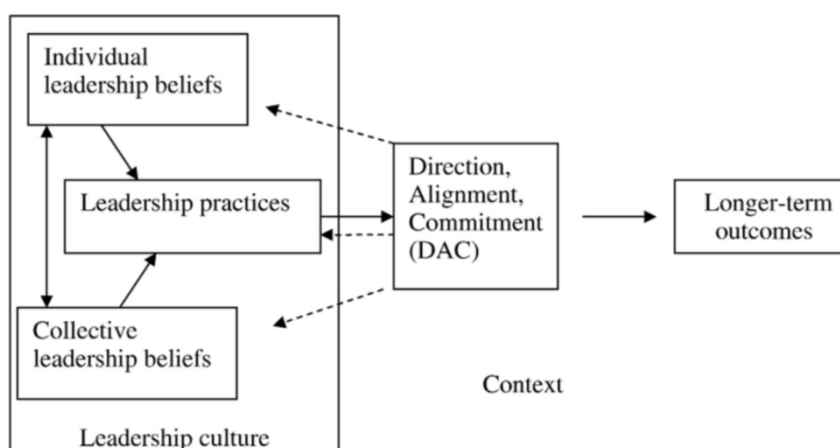
**‘leadership beliefs’ (tro på ledelse):** det er viktig at alle i gruppen deler den samme troen på ledelsen som uøves innad i gruppen.

**‘leadership practices’ (ledelsespraksis):** dette er leadership beliefs satt i verk, med andre ord hvordan ledelse utøves i praksis.

**‘leadership culture’ (ledelseskultur):** ledelse har sitt utspring fra ledelseskulturen, og ikke fra enkeltindivider i roller som ledere. Alle deltakere i gruppen påvirker ledelseskulturen.

En av grunnene til at dette nye perspektivet på utøvd ledelse blir presentert er fordi noen forskere (Drath et al, 2008) mener det er bedre egnet til å diskutere og utøve ledelse ved fremtidige kontekster. Et eksempel på en slik kontekst, som disse forskerne mener er i økning, er tilfeller hvor man arbeider i grupper eller kollektiv uten at det er én utnevnt leder som utfører ledelse, men at gruppen utøver ledelse sammen, såkalt ‘shared leadership’.

Dette DAC-rammeverket kan tydeliggjøres gjennom modellen til Drath et al. (2008):



*DAC-rammeverket (Drath et al., 2008)*

Når vi i intervjuet spør om å implementere eller innføre DAC sikter vi til å tenke på utøvelse av ledelse som utfall av DAC. Dette ledelsesperspektivet sier at ledelse er noe du gjør eller deltar i, for å produsere utfall av DAC. Når vi i intervjuet spør om implikasjoner av DAC mener vi konsekvensene eller følgene av en slik tankegang.

# Intervjuet

## 1 INTRO:

### 1.1

Navn (kan være anonym)

### 1.2

Din tittel i bedriften (kan være anonym)

## 2 DIN ROLLE I BEDRIFTEN

### 2.1

Kan du utdype hvorvidt du er ansatt i din rolle på grunn av dine resultater og bragder eller hvordan du jobber? Hva er grunnen til at du er ansatt i den rollen du er?

### 2.2

Vil du si at din rolle produserer noen av utfallene av DAC (direction (retning), alignment (justering) eller commitment (forpliktelse))? I tilfelle, hvilke(n)?

## 3 LEDELSE OG DAC-ONTOLOGIEN

### 3.1

Hva betyr ledelse for deg i din arbeidshverdag?

### 3.2

Ser du personlig på utøvd ledelse i form av tripod-ontologien (tre enheter: leder(e), følgere, felles mål)? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?

### 3.3

Tror du ledelse kan utøves uavhengig av ledere? Krever utøvd ledelse individer i rollen som ledere?

### 3.4

Føler du selv at du er med på å utøve ledelse?

### 3.5

Tror du DAC-ontologien har noe for seg og at den kan bringe noe av verdi til temaet ledelse?  
I tilfelle, hvordan og hvorfor?

### 3.6

Tror du DAC-ontologien kan innføres i din bedrift? Hvorfor/Hvorfor ikke?

### 3.7

Kunne DAC-ontologien medført noen verdi til din bedrift?

### 3.8

Tror du de daglige operasjonene/arbeidshverdagen i din bedrift ville blitt forandret hvis DAC-ontologien ble implementert/innført? I tilfelle, hvordan? Hvis ikke, hvorfor ikke?

### 3.8 Eller mer generelt:

Hvilke følger/konsekvenser tror du det ville blitt hvis DAC-ontologien ble innført i din bedrift?

### 3.9

Hvis bedriften din ønsket: hvordan kan den implementere en DAC tankegang? Hvor er det bedriften din gjenspeiler og snakker om ledelse? Kan slik informasjon kunne endres til en DAC-ontologi?

### 3.10

Hvordan tror du utøvelse av ledelse kan utvikles i din bedrift? Er det noen spesielle aktører som må utvikle seg for at utøvelsen av ledelse skal utvikles?

**3.11 Med 'purpose' menes en idé om «noe mer», «noe utover det normale arbeidet», «selvtilfredshet».**

Vektlegger du 'purpose'? Hvor viktig er det for deg å ha 'purpose' i ditt arbeid? Hvordan tror du dine kollegaer ser på 'purpose' i deres arbeid?

### **3.12**

Hvor viktig er det at alle medlemmene i en gruppe deler den samme forståelsen av gruppens strategi, visjon og mål?

### **3.13**

Tror du at det å produsere DAC er en bedre måte å utøve ledelse på enn ved den tradisjonelle måten (tripod-ontologien)?

### **3.14**

Har du noen tanker eller noe annet du vil legge til?

## **Appendix C**

Transcriptions of interviews are available upon request. Contact the examiner or supervisor for this dissertation.