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## **Learning how to lead police investigations**

### **Abstract**

The aim of this article was to investigate how police investigation leaders learn leadership and whether the facilitation of learning activities and learning methods could bridge the well-known gap between the teaching and learning of leadership. Using action research, we conducted a ‘i-leader’ learning pool’ consisting of police investigation leaders, providing interactive and collaborative learning activities, that included reflection, knowledge sharing and social support. The participants were receptive to this learning initiative, but they also argued that “learning by doing” is most important because it allows for communication and cooperation with colleagues in the context of their everyday leadership practice. They acknowledged the need for reflection and argued that the pool provides important reflection time, which they lack in their everyday practice. They also found the learning methods, particularly the ‘group supporting method’ and the new network useful for their own leadership development. However, using these new learning methods ‘back home’ was more challenging. Also, Further, the participants did not have the time to prioritize and develop this new network. Providing learning methods and building a network takes time and must be relevant for their everyday leadership practice. The significant of their leadership practice and how to practically accumulate experience as the basis for reflection was thought, but still needs to be applied in their leadership. Bridging the teaching and learning gap is not just about providing learning and reflection methods, but it’s about learning how to apply new knowledge through experiences, where reflections ensures that learning in practice not being ‘due to change’.

### **Keywords**

learning, leadership in practice, police investigations, knowledge, communities of practice

## **Introduction**

Internationally, the police faces new types of terror threats, new technology, immigration and new forms of crime, where the police literature argues that increased complexity and new ways of conducting police work strongly challenges police leaders capacity to learn (Flynn & Herrington, 2015; Martin & Mazerolle, 2015; Herrington & Colvin, 2015; McLeod & Herrington, 2016; Roberts, Herrington, Warwick, White & Day, 2016). In Norway, the terror attack at Utøya/Oslo in 2011 lead to the Norwegian Police Service (NPS) being heavily criticized for their leadership culture and attitudes. Several reports lead to the police analysis resulting in the police reform in 2016 (and still ongoing). Additionally, with a particular focus on police investigations, the reports such as 'The Police investigative interview methods' (Attorney General, 2013) and 'Investigations in the Police' (The Police Directorate, 2013) revealed major challenges and expressed concerns about police competencies in police investigations, the competencies of leading police investigations which resulted in the investigation programme called 'The Investigation Boost'. The Investigation Boost emphasizes national standards and annual training to ensure the quality of crime investigations. Checklists and manuals typically describe necessary practice and annual training programmes to facilitate training in practice to ensure "close" deviations of established standards as crucial for succeeding with the police reform. One major concern was that senior investigating officers were recruited after years of practicing as investigators but without any formal requirements or education on police investigations. Another major concern was that no single investigator was deemed to be responsible throughout the whole investigation. And finally, leading police investigations where mostly about being an experienced investigator, then addressing leadership qualifications on how to lead police investigations.

A great emphasis is placed on the need for research on investigation leadership and knowledge-based investigations as the basis for improving quality and practice in the police reform. The Police University College already provides education for investigation leaders (chief investigators), for example through the experience-based master degree that began in 2015, but with ongoing discussions on the extent to which such education should include "training" or provide "practice", to demonstrate that the knowledge that is acquired can be used in practice (Myklebust 2009; Rachlew, 2009; Nilsen, 2015; Fahsing 2016). However, the Police Directorate moreover insists that learning how to lead police investigations to be ensure through leadership courses for police investigations, which we believe is problematic as no evidence of the effect that leadership courses have on leadership performance is provided (Neyround,

2010). What we address in our research is the lack of theories beyond the general leadership and management development literature (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Arnulf et al., 2016; Mabey, 2012; Sutherland, 2015) by proving learning methods in the courses to increase our understanding on how to gap the bridge between teaching leadership and learning leadership in practice. So instead of disconnecting learning from the social and cultural contexts in which leadership is performed is known, we believe that by using action research we can contribute with more knowledge on how leadership is learned. The argument is that learning to lead is about knowing how to address different situations in social relations involved in the activities of practising police investigations (Shotter & Cunliffe, 2003; Armstrong & Mahmud, 2008; Kempster, 2009) where learning leadership is about relationships, identity, power, legitimacy, sensemaking and dialectics (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe, 2009; Filstad, 2014). Hence, Herrington & Colvin (2015) forefront the need of police leadership capabilities and different forms of leadership as shared leadership and context-dependent leadership, grasping the complexity of police leadership with all its problem solving, operations, investigations, relations with subordinates, sensemaking, commitments and managing and facilitating change processes and the ‘here and now’ (Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2013; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007).

Motivated by the call for more research on how police leaders learn (Mead, 2002; Pearson-Goff and Herrington, 2013, 2014; Flynn & Herrington, 2015 and Haake, Rantatalo & Lindberg, 2015) our aim at providing new knowledge on how to bridge the “teaching and practice” gap in learning leadership, we conducted action-oriented research with police investigation leaders, analysing how they learn by extended the more traditional class room teaching by providing learning methods for reflection, networking and investigations. The aim of this paper is therefore analysing how investigation leaders learn leadership, including both the teaching of leadership but also investigate possible links between the teaching of leadership and the learning of leadership through everyday practice as leaders.

### **Learning how to lead police investigations**

Most of the literature on police leadership revolves around a leader’s personal traits and skills. Police leadership is about the individual police leader is, their ethics, their capacity to serve as a role model, their communication skills, their ability to engage in critical thinking, trustworthiness and legitimacy – and not what the individual police leader do (e.g., Bratton & Malinowski, 2008; Eterno & Silverman, 2010, Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014; Haake et al.,

2015).

Mead (2002) argues that to ensure the quality of leadership in the police, learning about leadership theories is not enough, nor is leadership about the police leader personal characteristics per se. What really matters is how each police leader understand and improve their own unique practice as a leader (p.191), accounting for the unique context of policing (Cockcroft, 2014), and different forms of leadership dependent upon leadership level. A literature review on police leadership in UK, USA and Australia provided by Pearson-Goff & Herrington (2013) distil previous research on police leaders' activities to problem solving, creating a shared vision, engendering organizational commitment, caring for subordinates and managing change. They argue that police research to a large extent follows the mainstream literature on leadership without sufficiently addressing what constitute police practices. Exploring how learning in these practices will be a result of social relations with peers and their employees, where learning happens in these social practices through operations and activities involved to solve tasks to ensure good police work is limited (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2004; Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White & Schedlitzki, 2013; Mabey, 2012; Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014; Sutherland, 2015).

Herrington & Colvin (2015) forefront the importance of leadership capabilities, to perform typical management tasks through organizing, budgeting, staffing as well as leadership tasks such as reflective, strategic and analytic tasks. How police leaders learn necessary capabilities depends upon how the organization learn, as contra-dependent (Flynn & Herrington, 2015). The need to shift focus from learning police leadership solely through courses, to account for learning leadership through practising leadership, the complexity of the relationships between leaders, followers and organizational context and/or culture are fully addressed by combining the two (Carroll, Ford & Taylor, 2015).

Combining the two is recognized in the learning literature where Sfard (1998) address teaching leadership as representing the individual acquisition metaphor and learning in practice as the participation metaphor, warning about using just one. The relevance of learning through teaching or learning in practice, instead of being contradictory can be complementary, for instance by combining the two with reflection (Elkjaer, 2004; Filstad, 2016). Practising leadership do not automatically result in learning, but reflection does, to ensure new capabilities and knowing. Through joint inquiry among participants or/and reflective thinking, is where reflection serves as the basis of learning (Elkjaer, 2004; Boud, Cressey & Docherty, 2006).

Schafer (2009) also argues that successful learning methods should include reflective learning and action learning but also learning for peers and police leaders, as well as facilitated learning in syndicates. Meaklim & Simms (2011) find that learning from one's peers and learning other relevant disciplines helps to reflect the reality of the work situation in public organizations. Janssen, Smet, Onghena & Kyndt (2017), studying Belgium police inspectors, outline feedback and reflection to be good predictors for learning. The nature of leadership calls for an understanding of the complexity on how leadership is learned, not just in one "arena", but in a combination of several arenas, acknowledging that leadership is situated, relational, it might be distributed, leader and expert processes co-exist, it's embedded in multi-processual routines, rather than being separated as either individual learning or learning from experience (Carroll, 2016).

Aristotle argues that neither theory nor human skills result in good and knowledgeable actions; instead, wisdom is situational, and being wise is a result of experience. Aristotle claims that there are three types of knowledge. '*Episteme*' is theoretical, truthful and rational knowledge. '*Techné*' involves human skills and the principles of performing necessary actions, and '*phronesis*' is practical wisdom that ensures good actions. Hence, an investigation of how leaders learn is necessarily embedded in what they learn, and whether the knowledge is tacit or explicit, theoretical or practical, all of which are integrated and socially constructed in a leader's knowing. For investigation leaders, the "episteme" could be based on theoretical research-based knowledge about leadership and management, which involves, for instance, decision-making, power, ethics and communication. '*Techné*' represents their practical skill and how "episteme" must be related to action. '*Techné*' embraces practical skills and vocational education. Aristotle calls such a practice '*phronesis*'. For investigative management, this may be related to specific process management tools or different types of quality systems. In the form of knowledge '*phronesis*', the ethical and political dimension is emphasized in action as practical and ethical wisdom (Hovdenak, 2014). For investigators, this will be about assessing the individual phase and decision in an investigation based on actual facts and ethical considerations. Accordingly, "episteme" and '*techné*' are both sources of knowledge and must interact to ensure the development of professionalism and professional judgement (Hovdenak, 2016).

## **Methods**

We used action research methods within a learning and knowledge-based approach to study the learning processes and how investigation leaders develop their leadership (Sverdrup, 2002).

Teaching leadership courses at the Norwegian Police University, and one of the authors being an experience investigator and investigations leader, the research project was motivated by the ‘Investigation Boost’ described earlier to ensure good police investigations in the Norwegian Police Service and simultaneously how to develop good leadership courses and learning methods to ensure good police investigation practice. The research project was organized as an “investigation leader pool”, in which we provided learning methods for reflection, networking and knowledge sharing, including the learning method called “group supporting methodology” (Askeland, 1995). Our goal was to provide some of these learning techniques and methods, while the participants in the pool were responsible for organizing the activities themselves. Our action research is based on interaction and collaboration through dialog, facilitation and agreed work distributions between the researchers and participants (Eikeland, 2017). The link between action research and the Aristotelian interpretive work provides conceptual tools for mainstreaming and developing action research (Eikeland, 2017).

We provided a call for police investigators to police leaders in one large police district in Norway. Police investigators then applied for participation where their leaders made the final decision and selected eight of their investigator leaders (hereafter referred to as i-leaders). The i-leaders lead all forms of criminal investigations, including rape, murder, sexual violence against children, organized crime and white-collar crime. The group of participants consisted of five men and three women. All participants were responsible for major investigations in practice, including planning, organizing, identifying work tasks, distribute work tasks, and ensure high quality investigations and daily practice in the investigations and for each of the police investigators. That means that for all of them they were leading police investigators which had another leader as their personnel leader, and where the investigation group would vary concerning size, time schedule, geographic localization, who that was part of the investigation and what type of crime they were investigating. Four of them have completed the i-leader course at The Norwegian Police University College previously and all but one also had some former management education.

We conducted interviews and observations for our research to explore what constitutes and characterizes the i-leaders’ learning and knowing within the pool as well as in their everyday practice and through formal learning activities such as courses. Our purpose was two-fold: the first was to determine how these learning initiatives influenced the participants’ learning and knowing, and the second was to provide participants with learning methods as learning tools

for future use in their daily practice as leaders. An important task in our project was to test educational learning techniques in the “pool” that could address a more practical context. Hence, four of the meetings focused on the use of these learning techniques. The idea is for a group of professionals to meet on a regular basis to learn together and to support each other. The meeting was based on a fixed schedule. They followed the steps of a concrete cooperation model, a so-called “group supporting methodology” (Askeland, 1995). The process consists of three activities, which are as follows: 1. reporting good news since the last meeting, 2. a focusing time and 3. a learning session”. The contents of the different sessions were arranged in advance. The goals include learning, which is primarily experience-based, with a focus on 1. new ideas and professional renewal, 2. practical help and 3. social support. The time frame for each meeting was approximately five and a half hours. The four meetings involved from four to eight participants. Absences were largely due to the emerging and critical need to prioritize police investigations and crimes, which is not easy to predict. Two-thirds of a meeting's content was dependent on the participants' active input in the meeting, and thus absence influenced the content of the meetings.

We began our data analysis by reading the transcription of the interviews, the notes from the participants and our own researcher notes from our observations. Our research methods are characterized as a combination of action research, as we influenced the results by facilitating activities, and participative observation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) However, to some extent, we also simply observed and conducted interviews without interfering. Obviously, we affected the participants through dialog, our facilitation of activities and how distributed responsibilities where agreed upon through the researcher and participant collaborations, which characterizes action research. Our influence as researchers where accounted for in our analysis. We found that using open and axial forms of coding to identify categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) were fruitful, helping us to avoid making pre-interpretations of the data. Following a pattern-matching logic (Yin, 2003), we explored whether the categories on how i-leaders learn could be explained by the relevant literature in analysing the results.

## **Results**

Our study confirms the complexity of ongoing daily activities and routines in which leadership is learned. It also acknowledges a number of learning arenas and that there is neither a single recipe for how to perform leadership, nor a single way of learning leadership. Learning arenas depend upon knowledge and the characteristic of that knowledge, and how knowledge must be

transformed into knowing how to perform leadership. We begin presenting our data with the following story:

*Caroline leads the rape and crime investigation team. The team consists of three investigators, one administrative civilian and one prosecution lawyer. She and her team's responsibility of crime investigations cover a large region in Norway with a number of local districts. Each district has their own "crime-case responsible". She is an experienced investigator of rape in particular and finds that those with most experience are those who are identified to be i-leaders, with high expectations of doing well in their new role as leaders. She has taken the formal courses that have been provided for her, including the i-leader course that was arranged by the Norwegian Police University College. For her, it is about being safe in the leader role and being prepared, or at least having a plan. She explains: "As an i-leader you need to have experience, of course. It is quite demanding, and you need to be good at communicating and be clear on what you want and need concerning resources and location both upwards and downwards to ensure that people work well together". She follows up on processes in investigations, while simultaneously working on other priorities that are decided by her supervisor. She believes that rape investigations should be separated projects to ensure that there is a balance between investigations and another daily police work. She finds it quite impossible to combine the two. She therefore feels bad about not having enough time to read all of the relevant documents and to provide the necessary feedback. She also lacks time to learn the electronic investigation tools, to ensure better coordination, dialogs and knowledge sharing among the investigators and prosecution lawyers. She argues for her being clear on common goals and how to get people with different perspectives and responsibilities to work well together. She has a burning engagement for crime investigations and believes that experience makes her stronger in many ways as a leader. Her motivation is due to leadership being challenging, demanding and educational. Caroline needs to test out solutions and experience to find her own way of leadership. She searches for connections to understand and reflect upon practice to improve the practice. She explains having a theoretical foundation, but it is through experience that she can determine whether an implemented change is useful, through learning by doing. She believes that discussions based on experiences with her colleagues are most useful.*

We find this narrative to be a good illustration of how and what police leaders learn. We also find Caroline's story to be representative of our other informants. Hence, we use her story as a means of organizing our results. First, gaining new knowledge from leadership courses is important to Caroline, and she takes the courses that are provided to her: 'For her, it is about being safe in the leader role and being prepared, or at least having a plan'. We find this to be a question of teaching leadership and the Aristotelian 'episteme' of the theoretical and often research-based knowledge. Second, Caroline talks about how to get people with different perspectives and responsibilities to work well together and how experience makes her stronger as a leader. This is about learning through experience in the context of practice and about 'techné', where experiencing and practicing result in human skills to ensure necessary performances. Third, Caroline searches for connections to understand and reflect upon practice

to make improvements to the practice. She tries to use theories in practice and recognizes the importance of reflection to ensure the Aristotelian ‘phronesis’, the ethical wisdom, and where the trichotomy of ‘episteme’, ‘techne’ and ‘phronesis’ as ways of knowing acknowledge the significance of practice and accumulated experience as the basis for reflection to ensure learning and development by Aristotle (Eikeland, 2017). We recognize some of the same characteristics on the other participants with regards to how and what they learn:

### **Teaching leadership**

Learning leadership through formal leadership courses or more specific i-leader education, referred to earlier in this paper as teaching leadership, is recognized as being important for gaining new knowledge on how to perform as a leader. Two of the participants explain:

All relevant formal education makes me better. I obtain new knowledge and get the opportunity to reflect on own practice. But education in itself does not necessarily make you better. You have to be active and make the content your own... Theoretical input sounds good, but back at work it's easy to fall back on how you always have done things. (I5)

The i-leader course made me confident that I treat my people well, safety on how to organize larger investigations and who to contact for questions (network). Also, it is useful and important to get to know other i-leaders from other parts of the country. Part of the content is really quite obvious, but it's important to learn about leadership: how people function together and how to perform leadership (I6)

Formal education is about being safe in the participants' leadership role, obtaining self-confidence on how they perform as leaders; however, it is also about having the opportunity to reflect upon one's own practice compared to those of others. It is important to note that they find the new knowledge that they obtain through courses difficult to transfer to their leadership practice; however, they find their reflection and discussion with colleagues to be helpful in that respect. They find that education, and the courses that they take, their “profession days” as well as written material, all to be fruitful to gain new knowledge and to be updated. Some of them explain:

I'm conscious about being updated and acquire new knowledge. Important in order to recognize the practical use of education, as it must be used to some extent in practice. (I2)

I want formal education to get a theoretical foundation and sharing experiences with others for my i-leader role. To me leadership is about interpersonal relationships and compassionate activities, about being there for each other. Through education one can learn about what traps to avoid and get a better understanding of the whole organization...I don't have time to read literature, my knowledge is mostly based on experience.(I6)

The i-learning course resulted in new thoughts and reflections, I became more conscious on own manoeuvre space as i-leader and I got a better understanding of the role. (I1)

### **Learning in practice**

The participants argue for learning the most through practice, i.e., learning by doing. It is also in practice that they seek to find ways of using the knowledge that is obtained in other learning arenas. In regard to gaining new knowledge on how to perform as leaders, they often refer to colleagues and their formal and informal relationships with them. Some of them explain:

I learn first and foremost through discussions and conversations with experienced i-leaders, police investigators and prosecution attorney...It is much learning in the weekly conversations with crime technicians and their information and reflections from the crime scene. Here we discuss relevant problems and considerations for further progress in crime investigations. And also informal, occasional meetings in the corridor and in the canteen are important arenas for knowledge acquisition and experience-based learning. (I1)

I learn best from leading in practice, "Learning by doing". Does this work, does this not work – what needs to be changed? I try to keep myself updated through KO:DE, especially on profession resources, articles and relevant books as origin for improving practice. If we are to be better, we need more systematic learning. Not just one "academic" day which tend to be more receiving then activating. (I2)

I call it learning by doing. That means that I learn most through daily work. It is always new assignments which needs a different approach. I learn a lot from those around me; find that they have a lot of knowledge. It can be as easy as lunch conversation about tasks, to exchange information and experience from different sources, but concerning tasks and more general on investigations. (I7)

They call for more opportunities for formal training on larger investigations, as such cases involve greater complexity from which they find they can learn the most. In such a context other colleagues are more easily accessed, and they can learn from different approaches and discuss possible solutions. They all agree that there is 'a lot of competence' in the different departments, and being constantly on a busy schedule, it is about taking advantage of that competence by sharing knowledge. Several of them are conscious of seeking advice, discussing possible solutions, but at the same time, they are aware that they are not good at learning from others' experience and reporting on that. Instead, they are concerned that a busy schedule tends to repeat their previous methods of solving problems instead of developing. Two of the participants explain:

I focus on finding out things for myself, to seek information and knowledge. For that I use our support system and web-based support. And I seek advice from other i-leaders in the old district. This is an informal network that I use in my daily work. Besides that, I find that I learn continuously through the investigation work. But we are not good at telling each other about

what we have learn and experienced. I would have preferred to learn from bigger investigations, but we seldom have those (I4)

I learn the most when I work on assignments and meet challenges that I need to find solutions. Especially important is good colleagues I can contact, both in the team, at the office, or outside the office. I am not good at obtain new knowledge on my own. My experience is that I have extremely knowledgeable lawyers that I can ask. Especially in the initial phase of the investigations when things happen very fast and you must take immediate actions as i-leader. Then it is ok to listen to other peoples experiences. (I7)

### **Learning through reflection**

Our informants report on the possibility of reflecting outside of their everyday practice. For the most part, such reflection is possible only when they attend courses or obtain education, or other formalized activities. Additionally, some use colleagues for the opportunity for reflection, while others do so on their own. Then, they talk about the exchanging of their experiences from other investigations that provides the most important opportunities for reflection. Some of them explain:

After working hours, I think back on today's work and reflect on what went to my satisfactory and what I could have done different. The I-course at the Police University College provided me with new thoughts and reflections, a more distinct understanding of my role as i-leader. (I1)

I expect to gain new perspectives on how to organize and lead investigations when attending the i-leader course at the Police University College...Evaluation of conducted investigations can also provide learning. The leader of the investigation can introduce with positive and challenging accomplishments in the investigation and open for discussions on further consciousness and concrete learning points. (I2)

I have positive experience with following up on court cases I have worked with previously. However, in my line of work now I don't have the time. It is too many cases and too much to do. Network is very useful. We can exchange experience and see how others solve the same challenges differently. That is, a good arena for discussing investigations. I have shared my experience on paroles which has been positive. (I6)

They also discuss the importance of evaluating, giving feedback and sharing experiences from investigations. However, several of them express their concern about not being good at sharing their own experiences. Some of them explain:

I try to give feedback, men should have used more time on that. We are not good at giving feedback. We good have extended the morning parole, with tips for approximately 15 minutes or look at one or two police interviews. We have room for that and that is something we should be better at. (I4)

We have to find connections and understand and reflect on practice in order to learn and change practice. For example, on hypothesis thinking. If we can discuss experiences, that works best... Network of people working on the same tasks. Listen to each other's experience and challenges,

to understand each other's everyday practice. But it can also be frustrating when we all strive with the same challenges, for instance lack of resources without any possible solutions. (I5)

We have evaluated larger investigations, which have been useful. But I find that I am not good at evaluating myself, and I do not ask for feedback from my investigators on my leader role. I am not good at giving feedback on my investigators daily practice either. I have given feedback a few times on police interviews which was not very enlightening, and that worked well. (I7)

Our results show how the different learning arenas will support i-leaders' total learning in different ways, and what they learn is especially dependent upon how they learn. Before we present further discussion and our results, it is important to present the results from the i-pool and learning methods that were used, to the extent to which it provides a fruitful learning arena for the i-leaders.

### **Results – the i-pool and the ‘group supporting methodology’**

In facilitating the i-pool to ensure learning and reflection and to construct a network of i-leaders, we obtained several important insights on the network's success. First, the participants were very positive to be able to learn and use the learning method that was provided by the techniques of the “group supporting methodology”, which they found to be a good learning tool. One of them explains:

The i-pool we tried out were interesting... nice to meet others with similar tasks. Opportunity to get feedback on your own issues. It also provides a deeper understanding of each other's roles. Everyone has their challenges and we can learn from each other's knowledge and experience. I also like the composition, with people from different workplaces and slightly different experience. I like the structure of the meetings; definitely transferable to sharing in your own workplace. 4 meetings a year is ok. Important that someone has a specific responsibility for running such a network. Even on a busy day (or especially on a busy day) it is important to think about learning and development. Otherwise, we will repeat old ways of solving things. (I1)

The participants' concerns were related to the size of the group (they did not want it to be too large), and they argued for a more homogeneous group and perhaps a more locally anchored network. One of the participants explains:

The testing of support group methodology is fundamentally a good form of work, but in my opinion, the group should be more homogeneous, even if established across jobs. Group members should have the same work with the same function / tasks. Ideally the group can consist of 6 people who meet once per. quarter. There may also be a current methodology for sharing experience, etc., on the station. (I2)

They also found that the agendas must be known in advance so that they could be able to prepare and that everyone must contribute and be active to ensure the network's intentions. One of the participants explains:

Experience from the support group methodology is partly positive, but that such an arena is used even more systematically...that the agenda for the whole meeting is known in advance so that one can prepare for themes and inputs, and not just throw out "everything" there and then. Not sure if such a methodology will be used after this testing... if such a group is to cover the entire district). Everyday eats us; if it is to be prioritized in the future, it must be set aside for time, and it must be anchored and maintained by management. (13)

Our ambition was to create a self-running network where we did not interfere too much on either the agenda or the tasks, cases and practice that the participants wanted to include in the network. In practice, that was for the most not possible. They soon called for structure and leadership of the network to provide agendas and to indicate what they should do and when. They further outlined the importance of support from their leaders to participate. One of the participants explains:

The mix of people in the group was OK, exciting with new people, from other parts of the district and with slightly different backgrounds. Should this continued, a locomotive is needed when you (the researchers) pull out. Easy to choose otherwise if you do not put on pressure and create expectations. The idea of establishing an e-pool should be further developed. (14)

## **Discussion**

We find that our action research is fruitful to explore how learning how to lead police investigations involves both teaching, learning through practice and where the bridging between teaching and practice best can be ensured through reflection. The teaching of leadership relies on theories that are universal, general and normative, but without the necessary link on how to be applied in practice (Nilsen, 2015; Fahsing, 2016). How to investigate possible effects of the teaching needs to be investigated in accordance to the content of the courses and their teaching activities to provide need knowledge on what teaching that provides good opportunities for future leadership learning in practice. We therefore argue this to be the very essence of our study and provide knowledge for future studies on how teaching leadership effects police leadership. Learning leadership dependent upon the assignments that are to be solved, relations with involved participants and distributed work tasks, and what that accounts for qualifying police investigations depend upon the "do's and "don'ts" of the police culture

(Cockroft, 2014; Herrington and Colvin, 2015; Filstad et al., 2018). The importance of reflection, as a way to bridge the teaching and practising of leadership, but also as a way to ensure learning through practice is our most important contribution. It involves both reflections as important part of the teaching of leadership and providing opportunities for reflection on own leadership, preferable together with peers. The importance of reflection becomes even more evident in helping what kind of learning arenas that's important dependent upon what kind of knowledge the i-leader needs to develop in his or hers leadership.

However, the Norwegian Police Service rely on teaching i-leaders leadership, often after being police investigators and having experience in leading investigations without any formal training. The participants acknowledge the importance for leadership courses as being important to "update" their knowledge, supporting them and helpful in becoming more conscious and safe in their own leadership. They also report that formal leadership courses provide them with the opportunity to reflect upon their own practice and their colleagues' modes of practice. However, they also confirm the need for new approaches to how leadership is learned, by shifting from teaching leadership to learning leadership through practice. According to Aristotle, it's about moving from 'episteme' on what to do, to 'techne' on how to do it. Practical knowledge focus on the concrete and the unique as context-dependent, but without reflections on practical knowledge, practical knowledge can be wrong, unhealthy or limited. The link between general theories as evident (episteme) and practical knowledge (techne), 'fronesis' is about when you do it, as a question of timing.

Learning that is obtained beyond the context of formal courses is initiated by our participants by using other leaders as role models. Several of the participants outline the importance of having access to experienced and competent i-leaders but also colleagues who represent other professions, for instance, prosecution lawyers or police investigators in the National Criminal Murder Investigation Service (Kripos). Promising learning methods among police leaders are therefore found to include learning from peers and other leaders, reflecting on one's own practice and learning from practices that are other than their own, in practising and getting enough experience to develop their own unique practice (Gaston & King, 1995; Meaklim & Simms, 2011). This is in accordance with a number of scholars arguing that learning and knowing are embedded in social practices at work and therefore what constitute the police practice and culture will strongly influence what kind of leadership that is learned (Shotter & Cunliffe, 2003; Elkjaer, 2004; Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Armstrong & Mahmud, 2008; Kempster,

2009; Raelin, 2016; Filstad, 2016). It is about what capabilities the leader need to learn (Herrington and Colvin, 2015). This should be quite recognizable and has been pointed out by leaders for decades on how they learn, but unfortunately, and also being the case in the Norwegian Police Service, learning leadership is purely facilitated through education and leadership courses. Learning in practice and reflections to ensure learning and new knowing is therefore up to each leader, it's informal, and often due to chance (Filstad, Karp & Glomseth, 2018).

Our participants argue that they learn leadership through practice (learning as doing), but not solely as experience, but by thinking and reflecting upon what works and what does not work, using hypotheses, trying things out, determining their own way of performing leadership, considering what others have done before, being in dialogue with colleagues to ask questions and glean good ideas. They recognize that experience does not automatically result in either learning or knowing. Instead, they recognize the importance of both theoretical knowledge, learning through practice and reflection to ensure learning and new knowledge to become the best possible i-leader.

Reflection, as previously mentioned, is not facilitated for, neither by the i-leaders own leaders nor by the i-leaders themselves. The reason for this can be twofold. One is due to time and resources, but we also find that the participants are somewhat unsure and believe that they lack knowledge of how to provide good arenas for reflections. They all report not being good enough in providing feedback, which could provide possibilities for reflection. They discuss issues that pertain to parole, which could easily be used for reflection, as well as “professional and/or assignment gatherings”, which should involve concrete cases to reflect upon their own practice. However, they report that nothing happens once they are “back on track”. However, several of them refer to informal networks or work-related arenas as the opportunity to reflect and discuss experiences. We believe that we have identified a pattern where reflection, to the extent that i-leaders reflect together with others, is reflection on practice, that means they evaluate an investigation when it is closed. They did not give any examples of reflecting in practice, that means possibilities of reflections while the investigations where still ongoing. It is the reflection on experience that enables learning by going back and focusing on what happened and evaluating an experience again. Reflection in practice, however, means taking a step back to create meaning of what happened and of the experiences of the involved actions, which are part of the collective ability to question assumptions that are taken for granted, and at the same time

lead necessary processes. Hence, reflections are most fruitful when connected to the in practice (Boud et al., 2006; Raelin, 2001). The challenge then is when leadership courses are not connected to the i-leaders' everyday context. But at the same time, our participants find that it is when they attend courses or other learning activities away from everyday practice that they have the time to reflect.

Leading police investigations is action-oriented, a swift and urgent activity, which is close to practice and operations. This is recognized in our study, where the i-leaders also engage in practical investigation work. They report hectic and complex working hours, with many cases to review, and many activities happening simultaneously. They strive to obtain sufficient resources, prioritize among the most urgent and serious crimes, securing the "right people", getting people to know each other and to work well together to reach common goals, to balance between the larger cases and smaller cases and/or everyday police work, all within the frame of a new reform that focuses on improving police investigations. It is in this "muddy" terrain that the i-leaders manoeuvre to find their role in how to optimally perform leadership. This might be why they call for more structure, clear orders, and goal-orientation, when it comes to the 'i-leader pool'. So, instead of bridging the teaching and learning gap between learning from formalized courses or, in this case, a formalized network, we might have ended up with a new formal setting for teaching knowledge outside the i-leaders' everyday practice and trying to formalize a network that should have its value by being informal. Wenger (2003) argues that what constitutes an informal network that he refers to as a 'community of practice' (CoP) can help our understanding of the immediate challenges of creating an i-learning pool network.

CoPs refer to groups of people who spontaneously and informally are bonded through a shared concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who depend on their knowledge, their thinking, sensemaking, experience and learning and their expertise in an area of ongoing social interaction (Wenger, 2000; Lesser & Everest, 2001). The defining characteristics of communities of practice are 1) a sense of joint enterprise (bound together by collectively developed understanding of their community and how to hold each other accountable for same); 2) mutual engagement (interactions, established norms, and relationships of mutuality that reflect these interactions; and 3) a shared repertoire of communal resources that include language, routines, artefacts and stories (Wenger, 2000; Hislop, 2004). Developing a community of practice takes time, it is typically initiated by a core-group, its drive is that people identify with each other and create an identity on which the network is based. And most

importantly, it is informal. Our informants refer to colleagues and informal network, which can typically be characterized as communities of practice. Important, then, is the extent to which an i-pool, as it is formalized, can support other communities of practice. Filstad (2014) finds that the interplay between communities of practice and a formal coordination network of practice to be crucial for effective knowledge flows. That means that an i-pool's success depends on the extent to which it connects or interferes with other informal communities of practice of which the i-leaders are a part. The i-pool network, in relation to different informal communities of practice and other formalized learning activities, will be important to address in the further development of the i-leader pool.

## **Conclusion**

Our aim was to investigate i-leaders learning processes, responding to a call for more studies on how police leaders learn. The gap between teaching leadership and learning leadership is well-known in the literature, but where we find Aristotle trichotomy of ways of knowing to be fruitful to address the importance of balancing different learning arenas dependent upon what kind of leadership capabilities and knowing that the i-leaders need to develop in their leadership. It is about balancing the what, the how and the when, dependent upon what assignments to solve and what kind of leadership the assignments require. To ensure this trichotomy, we conducted an 'i-learning leadership pool' to investigate the i-leaders learning processes through action research. This pool, which consisted of eight police investigation leaders, facilitated opportunities for learning, reflection, knowledge sharing, practical support, social support. The participants were motivated to learn and share knowledge. However, due to urgent work assignments, their work priorities often obstructed their participation. They acknowledged learning mostly through practice and experience and in relationships such as through communication and cooperation with colleagues. However, time for reflection (for instance providing feedback or learning from experience) they found to be limited. As such, the pool provided opportunities for reflection upon their own practice compared to those of others. They had the same experience with i-leader courses. The courses provide opportunities for reflection and comparison, often leading to self-confidence and safety in their own leadership practice. Creating a network through the i-leader pool takes time, and to succeed, it must build on some shared concern, a set of problems, a passion about a topic, on-going social interaction that is close to the relevant practice and, most importantly, a core group that initiates the informal interactions (Wenger, 2000). This was not the case in our i-learning pool, but our

participants reported being part of other communities of practice in their everyday practice, which obviously will “compete” with how the i-learning pool develops further.

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