

Becoming a Manager:

*A case study of first-time managers in Oslo
Municipality*

Maryam Tughra



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Department of Psychology

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Maryam Tughra

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Abstract

Author: Maryam Tughra

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Supervisor: Thomas Hoff

Despite the vast amount of research that has been conducted on leadership and leadership development, there has been a lack of investigation of first-time leadership. The first career transformation can be viewed as the most challenging one, because, besides learning through experience, it involves a psychological adjustment. Since this is the starting point of all leadership and leadership development, it needs to be understood better in order to be managed properly. The purpose of the current study is to gain insight into how Oslo Municipality's first-time managers experience their first managerial role. Through semi-structured qualitative interviews, three first-time managers' perspectives regarding of their first leadership role were elicited, as well as their feedback about the types of challenges and struggles they encountered in this transition. The interviews were analyzed by means of template analysis, which indicated an interpretation of the first-time managers' challenges and struggles in four primary areas: 1) The transition from individual contributor to manager and self-view as a leader; 2) Learning to cope with stress, loneliness, and redistribution of time and delegation of tasks; 3) Becoming familiar with Oslo Municipality as employers; and 4) The role of support, follow-up and feedback. Their experiences add nuances to our understanding of new managers' perspectives on becoming leaders for the first time. Based on the analysis of the empirical data, as well as evidence-based support from previous research and literature, the current paper may further contribute to designing appropriate leadership developmental initiatives that take into account the first-time managers' standpoint in Oslo Municipality.

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Drammen, 15.05.18.

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Introduction

Leadership is viewed as a source of competitive advantage (Avolio, Avey & Quisenberry, 2010) and, accordingly, interest in leadership development appears to be at its peak (Day, 2000; Collins, 2002). Good leadership is so sought after that leader development has become a lucrative market and organizations invest large sums to develop their managers (Rønning, Brochs-Haukeland, Glasø, & Matthiesen, 2013; Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017;). The results from The Administrative Research Institute's (AFF) leader survey show that 71% of leaders in Norway have participated in some sort of leadership development program during their career (Rønning et al., 2013, p. 447). It is also estimated that Norwegian companies spend about half a billion Norwegian kroner (NOK) annually on managerial coaching (Rønning et al, 2013, p. 431). Researchers have warned that Norwegian organizations spend large amounts of money on ineffective programs (Rønning et al., p. 432). However, both researchers and practitioners also argue that managerial skills are important for businesses to succeed in today's dynamic and competitive commercial environment (Avolio et al., 2010; Rønning et al., 2013; Lacerenza et al., 2017;). Therefore, it seems reasonable to invest in appropriate programs for developing leaders and leadership.

Although the subject of leadership and leadership development has attracted a vast research portfolio, there is still need for more evidence on the practical aspects of leadership. This is especially the case for the leadership development of first-time managers, because little research has been conducted in this area. First-time managers undergo a fundamental change in identity and perspective when they become leaders (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005). Thus, this transition needs to be better understood in order to be appropriately managed. Moreover, the first career transformation in one's career is said to be the most demanding one because it involves psychological adjustment and the new skills required are learned primarily through experience (Hill, 2003).

Background to the study

“When I started here, I felt different from the other managers I met because I felt I came straight from the floor and was now going to perform some tasks that seemed really distant.”

The above quotation illustrates the major career transition that one of the new managers at Oslo Municipality experienced after being promoted to his first managerial role. The transition from being a specialist to becoming a generalist often requires new managers to engage in significant role transformation that calls into question their self-concept and self-awareness (Lord & Hall, 2005). Promoting brilliant performers to managerial roles is a common practice in organizations, and often involves promoting individual contributors to more generalized roles. It is almost expected, yet often little attention is paid to the altered sense of identity and role changes that follow this transition (Dale & Haaland, 2005; Dale, 2014). According to Hill (2003) many first-time managers fail to make the transition to their new identities. This could be due to the fact that they had previously learned to do the work themselves, whereas they are now dependent on others' work efforts in order to be successful. Furthermore, the new managers must now produce results by motivating others and winning their trust and respect, and finding the right balance between delegation and control (Hill, 2003). Research conducted by Dale and Haaland (2005, p. 19) indicates that the transition to the first managerial role is of fundamental importance for the design and development of the leadership role and identity. Their research also demonstrated that leadership and first-time management was not a topic of concern either for the managers themselves or for their employers (p. 19). Consequently it can be said that, when the transition process is not managed properly, organizations risk losing learning opportunities that are crucial in the early phases of becoming a manager (Dale and Haaland, 2005; Dale, 2014).

Aim of the study

The purpose of the current study is to gain insight into the everyday experiences, challenges and struggles of first-time managers at Oslo Municipality. In this way, the aim is to provide insight into how Oslo Municipality's new managers experience their first managerial roles. Their experiences from participation in the leader development course, "Leader for the first time in Oslo municipality", will also be taken into account as part of their overall leadership experience.

Research questions

In light of the above, the following research questions were formulated for this study:

- How do first-time managers perceive their first leadership roles?
- What kind of challenges and struggles do first-time managers face in their first leadership roles?

Moreover, an evidence-based approach was adopted for this study. This involves utilizing the best available research on organizational practice by combining multiple sources of information.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six main chapters. The first chapter contains an introduction to the overview of leadership and leadership development theory as well as clarifications of some concepts which are central in the present study. To address the research questions, chapter two contains an overview of the theoretical knowledge within the main areas that are relevant in the area of first-time leadership and leadership development of first time managers in Oslo municipality: leadership in a Norwegian context, leadership development, and, becoming manager for the first time. In chapter three the methods for the research is described which explains data collection and the analysis approach, as well as quality of research and ethical considerations. In chapter four, the results are presented based on empirical data conducted from interviews. In chapter five, results from chapter four are discussed, together with limitations of this research and practical implications of the current research. Conclusions are found in chapter six.

Clarification of concepts

Evidence-based human resources practice

Evidence-based practice involves applying the best available research in organizational practice by combining multiple sources of information (Briner, Denyer, & Rousseau, 2009; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2008). It involves being aware of the theoretical and empirical anchoring of what you do and knowing why you do so. In an organizational context, the distinction between research and practice can be reduced by applying an evidence-based approach that

can help in making favorable decisions and guiding the organization's leadership development strategy.

Leadership versus management

Leadership and management are usually referred to with the same word, “*ledelse*”, in the Norwegian language. This can result in the concepts of leadership and management being confused in everyday language, but several literary works clarify the differences between the two, particularly in terms of their differing focuses (Arnulf, 2012; Day, 2000). According to Arnulf (2012, p. 7-8) “leadership is about influencing commitment and cooperation towards a common goal” while “management, or administration, is about rules, procedures, routines, systems and how work should be organized”. However, there are inconsistencies in how the concepts are used, even in the English language (Day, 2000). Scholars tend to use the terms in differing ways while theorizing about the same topic. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the expressions will be used interchangeably to ensure that important sources do not get left out.

Leader development or leadership development?

Researchers have recently begun to differentiate between leader development and leadership development (Day, 2000). According to David V. Day (2000) leader development represents training initiatives aimed at individual-level concepts, in which the emphasis is on the individual's self-regulation and reflection on one's leadership role. On the other hand, leadership development requires a more integrated approach that is concerned with “the interplay between leaders and followers and socially-based concepts” (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Thus, it can be said that leadership developments increases the “social capital” of an organization, which makes it possible to understand and respond to challenges with cooperation and willingness to change (Arnulf, 2012). However, often the terms are used interchangeably. It is also possible that leadership training programs combine elements of leadership development at an individual level with an integrated approach that also includes interaction between leaders, followers and socially-based concepts. Hence, for the purpose of this study, literature based on both terms will be examined and the results will be presented interchangeably.

Theoretical perspectives

In this chapter, some theories and concepts that underpin this research project will be reviewed. Several theories and concepts in leadership development, namely leadership in a Norwegian context, leadership development and becoming a manager for the first time, will be presented.

Leadership in a Norwegian context

Leadership has been a natural phenomenon in human lives since the beginning of time, and is a widely discussed and popular topic (Bass & Bass, 2009). It is defined in many ways. One of these definitions is that leadership facilitates results with the help of others (Arnulf, 2012). Much research on leadership is based on the underlying assumption that it is the most important factor in explaining an organizations' success or failure (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2002). Bass and Bass (2009) noted that supervisors do indeed make a difference in employees' perceptions of equity in the workplace, and that this is more important than issues of pay and long working hours. Because successful leadership appears to be a promising means of ensuring an organization's overall success, the interest in leadership continues to grow in all areas of society. However, some critics have argued that the outcomes of leadership are a "romantic fiction" that exists only in the eye of the beholder (Meckling & Jensen, 1976; Arnott, 1995; Pandey, 1976; Pfeffer 1977, as cited in Bass & Bass, 2009). From their point of view, the effects are due to historical, economic or social forces (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Hofstede (1980) has carried out extensive research into the differences between cultures, focusing on how the leadership and management aspects work on the basis of cultural differences. Based on surveys conducted by employees in a large multinational company, representing in 40 nations, Hofstede (1980) developed four behavioral areas in which the differing cultures vary: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity. The Norwegian culture is characterized by "feminine" values such as caring and cooperation, rather than "masculine" values such as competition and a focus on task solving (Hofstede, 2001, cited in Rønning et al, 2013, p. 78). Egalitarian values are therefore central to Norwegian society, as well as other Scandinavian countries, which are

characterized by lower power distance between leaders and followers, flat hierarchies and a dynamic balance between leaders and followers (Hofstede, 2001, as cited in Rønning et al., 2013, p. 80). The combination of these factors makes it clear that leadership behavior that is consistent with equality, and involvement and cooperation is highly valued and respected in a Norwegian context (Rønning et al., 2013, p. 80). Accordingly, the leadership survey by AFF showed that Norwegian leaders had a clear preference for recognizing leadership behavior that is transformation oriented (Rønning et al., 2013, p. 208). In addition, Norwegian leaders are careful about exerting their authority, because their main focus is usually not on being authoritarian. Thus it is common for them to call their employees, or subordinates, “colleagues” rather than subordinates (Rønning et al., 2013). These factors could make the leadership role more complex because the leader must balance the employees’ freedom and autonomy, equality, and what he or she wants to achieve as a leader (Rønning et al., 2013).

Transformational leadership refers to the extent to which a leader is able to inspire and challenge subordinates while providing an overall goal and the ability to set a good example (Arnold, Randall & Patterson, 2010; Rønning et al., 2013; Bass, 1990; Avolio & Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership has been shown to be a significant predictor of employees’ experienced job satisfaction (Yang, Wu, Chang, & Chien, 2011). Yang and colleagues (2011) noted that this could be through the effect of modeling, intellectual stimulation and support, but also due to the leaders’ charisma and motivation to inspire. Transformational leadership is a positive form of leadership that emphasizes positive relationships between leaders and subordinates, in which the leader is as an inspiration and role-model (Rønning et al., 2013, p. 208). There are many empirical research papers that demonstrate that transformational leadership is the most effective form of leadership compared to other forms (Rønning et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2011; Arnold et al., 2010). The ability and motivation to inspire and set a good example is at the core of the transformational leadership style.

“Trust reform” in the Norwegian public sector

Oslo is the capital and the most populous city in Norway and constitutes both a county and municipality (Thorsnæs, 2018). Oslo Municipality consists of about 52 departments, which have about 52,000 employees and 2,500 managers (B. Aakre, personal communication, February 28, 2018). To meet the needs of this huge portfolio, one must relate to the political guidelines (B. Sviggum, personal communication, March 01st, 2018). In late 2016, the

governing mayor of Oslo, Raymond Johansen, planned on introducing trust-based management and leadership as a guiding principle in all Oslo municipal departments (Ruud, 2017). Since then, it has been agreed that “less emphasis will be placed on control, detailed reporting, and measurement of activities”, and more emphasis will be put on trust-based management and trust culture that all district councils will have to follow (Ruud, 2017).

Trust is an essential element when discussing leadership theories. The development of a trust-based culture is based on the premise that most managers and employees will always seek to do their best (Kuvaas, 2017). This implies that managers and employees must experience a high degree of autonomy and low levels of unnecessary controls in the workplace in order to achieve their goals (Kuvaas, 2017). According to Kuvaas (2017) there is robust research support for the benefits of trust-based management. In their study, Robinson and Salamon (2008) found that the more trust managers invested in their employees, the higher revenue and improved customer service they received. They also argued that increased personal responsibility and degree of autonomy affected the relationship positively. Another study that examined the effect of perceived trust on employee work outcomes also found support for their hypothesis (Lau, Lam, & Wen, 2014). The researchers found that employees’ perception that their supervisors trust them, enhanced their organization-based self-esteem, which further led them to perform better in the workplace. Trust can therefore be a potential predictor of multiple desirable outcomes.

Research into leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships also provides strong empirical support for the effectiveness of trust-based leadership (Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017; Kuvaas, 2017). Kuvaas (2017) argues that “the very basis of a so-called high-quality LMX relationship is that the follower trusts his or her leaders, which in turn is dependent on a type of leader behavior that signals trust in the competence and motivation of the follower”. Furthermore, the main finding of an extensive meta-analysis of more than 3,300 individual studies and nearly a million observations also showed that “the association between various types of leadership behavior and follower work performance, as well as a number of other beneficial outcomes, is in large part explained by the quality of the LMX relationship” (Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017, p. 582-584).

The Agency for Improvement and Development (UKE) in Oslo Municipality have thus developed a leadership development course, “Leader for the first time in Oslo Municipality”,

where the first-time managers are introduced to the essential notions of trust-based management and leadership (among other topics). The purpose of the course is to prepare first-time managers for their new role in a politically-driven context so that they can confidently handle the transition in the new role, as well as to become familiar with Oslo Municipality as employer and its organizational culture and values (B. Sviggum, personal communication, March 01st, 2018).

Leadership development

There is no widely accepted definition of leadership development (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016; Arnulf, 2012; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Leadership development is often described as “any kind of maturation or developmental phase through life that promotes, encourages, and helps the expansion of the knowledge and expertise needed to optimize a person’s leadership potential or achievements” (Arnulf, 2012, p. 110). There are a number of well-known organizations that offer leadership training, such as Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning, Dale Carnegie Training, and Wilson Learning (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Organizations can choose from a variety of activities aimed at developing leaders, where the intention is to increase the participants’ knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation and self-image (Avolio et al., 2009).

However, many studies conducted on leadership development are unable to demonstrate an effect (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016). Recent research by Lacerenza and colleagues reported that only 13% of organizations believed they had done a quality job of training their leaders (Shwartz et al., 2014 as cited in Lacerenza et al., 2017). Hence, organizations continue to report a lack of leadership skills among their leaders (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Consequently, popular press articles often suggest that leadership training programs have little effect on leadership skills (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Only a few controlled studies have been conducted on leadership development effectiveness. These studies showed variations concerning the effect of leadership development. According to Kuvaas and Dysvik (2016), the biggest effect of leadership development is the so-called “Pygmalione effect”, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy that can impact perception of own

leadership performance. Managers may unconsciously consider a leadership development program more effective than it actually is in order to justify the direct and indirect costs of the program for organizations (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2012).

Recent research indicated that leadership development could be a profitable investment for an organization (Avolio et al., 2009, Arnulf, 2012; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016). A more recent meta-analysis by Lacerenza and colleagues (2017) also produced some optimistic findings about the effectiveness of leadership training. They provided substantial evidence from 335 leadership training evaluation studies. They reported that such leadership development programs were indeed effective and should be used across a variety of domains. Their findings suggest that “leadership training programs can lead to a 25% increase in learning, a 28% increase in leadership behaviors performed on the job (i.e., transfer), a 20% increase in overall job performance, an 8% increase in subordinate outcomes, and a 25% increase in organizational outcomes” (p. 1700).

However, it is also apparent that an unreflective use of leadership development, that is not carefully considered and altered for its purpose, is not useful and has therefore no effect (Arnulf, 2012; Avolio et al., 2009; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Leadership development programs must be properly evaluated and their designs demand strict requirements (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016). The findings by Lacerenza and colleagues (2017) also suggest that the extent to which a program is effective is related to various design, delivery, and implementation elements. According to research, many practitioners experience the evaluation of leadership development measures as a demanding task, and they therefore choose not to evaluate them, which could be a major weakness with respect to their effect (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016; Arnulf, 2012).

Leadership development of first-time managers

Leadership development is a big billion dollar business in Norway (Rønning et al., 2013) and worldwide (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Research shows that Norwegian companies expend a great deal of effort annually to develop their managers, and that it has also become a huge business (Rønning et al., 2013). However, many of the leadership developmental programs have been shown to be a waste of large sums of money due to ineffective measures (Kuvaas

& Dysvik 2016; Rønning et al., 2013). Much of the literature on leadership development emphasizes that the information produced by research is not adapted to the practical focus of managers (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2016). It can therefore be assumed that leadership practice in businesses is not affected by research.

Traditionally, the aim of leadership development initiatives has been to develop leaders who are already in charge (Haaland & Dale, 2005). While so many resources are used on established leaders, there are hardly any initiatives aimed at first-time managers (Haaland & Dale, 2005). Research show that it is at the early stage of one's leadership career that behavior patterns are formed and when the development of a leader's personality begins, and these will follow the leader throughout his or her career (Haaland & Dale, 2005). However, little attention has been paid to the initial stage of leadership development (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2012; Haaland & Dale, 2005). Consequently, Haaland & Dale (2005) argue that the more unfortunate patterns that have been established in an earlier phase of one's career, the greater the need for reparation and correction in later phases.

As leadership development is associated with training in which the goal is to become better in one's current leadership role, it is a common requirement that one has to have been in such a position for some time in order to be able to participate in such leadership development programs. For many leaders, this will be too late if the purpose of the program is constructive development and learning (Haaland & Dale, 2005). This is especially the case for managers who are in their first managerial positions. Haaland and Dale (2005) argue that the transition from being an individual contributor to becoming a manager is a rather vulnerable process, especially because this is when the basic leadership identity is formed. According to Haaland and Dale (2005), a leadership development program for new managers would mean that the organization was working on developing leadership behaviors and skills from the bottom level, and that the delegates would possibly become candidates for other higher leadership positions in the organization's future (Haaland and Dale, 2005). It is therefore important to work on developing the new managers from the beginning, because it will help them to become confident in their new roles and identities in the difficult process of identity change, which can be characterized by much stress and confusion.

Deficiencies in leadership development initiatives

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, today's leadership development practices could be said to have a somewhat limited value. Generally, the problem lies in its integration with the everyday job tasks and priorities (Haaland & Dale, 2005). The most basic problem of leadership development initiatives in the form of courses and programs is their limitation concerning their applicability to the participants' job tasks. Consequently, the meta-analysis by Lacarenza and colleagues (2017) suggest that organizations should identify intended outcomes before developing a leadership training program, because "training design characteristics affect each outcome differently" (p. 1704). Thus, the focus should be on how leadership development initiatives can be incorporated into an organization's general strategy and its HR systems, and thereby into leaders' everyday work lives. First-time management is only one of many issues concerning an organization's way of organizing the development of its leaders and resources. As first-time managers could be the organization's future leaders, the leadership development initiatives for first-time managers should be the starting point for all leadership development initiatives (Dale & Haaland, 2005).

Becoming a manager for the first time

Much of previous research and literature on leadership and leadership development is generally about what characterizes good leaders, how a leader should be, what they should do and how we can understand leadership (Hill, 2003). But how does one become a good leader? According to Hill (2003) and Haaland and Dale (2005), the goal is described but the way to get there is largely unknown. This was a main argument of both Hill (2003) and Dale and Haaland (2005), who chose to focus on first-time leadership. Because this is the starting point of all leadership and leadership development, it needs more research attention. Hill (2003) and Haaland and Dale (2005) have indicated some key challenges that are associated with first-time leadership, or management. These will be reviewed in paragraphs below.

Role-change identity transformation and the learning process

Becoming a manager for the first time is about disengaging from one's previous role of being an individual contributor, and starting to reframe one's understanding of one's new role and

responsibility. This involves taking on a whole new identity. From being a star individual contributor to taking on role of which one has no previous experience involves assuming a whole new identity and perspective in a context in which the failure rate is high (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005).

First-time managers often expect to struggle with the formal aspects of the managerial role, such as budget and financial management, and learning to use various systems (Haaland & Dale, 2005, p. 12). Moreover, the managerial role often involves coping with dilemmas that require learning to get along with others, conflict resolution, communication, and the understanding that others look at you differently than they did before (Haaland & Dale, 2005). Hence the process becomes a psychological adjustment, a transformation, in which the first-time managers eventually develop a whole new identity (Hill, 2003). These learning processes are individual and often associated with stress, sleeplessness, and sometimes burnout (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

According to Haaland and Dale (2005) first-time leadership, or management, can be seen as a transition that has three phases (p. 22-23). The first one is the *separation* phase, in which one is detached from one's previous identity. Second is the *transformation* phase, in which one disassociates oneself from one's previous identity and starts working on establishing a new identity. Last is the *integration* phase, in which one (re)integrates into the new social group and thereby gets a rather stable grip in the new role and identity. Haaland and Dale (2005) observe that the transformation phase is perhaps the most dramatic one, because in this phase the consequences of the transition becomes visible (p. 22). Furthermore, the transformation phase becomes the actual threshold between the identity that the leader disassociates from and the new identity that he or she is going to develop (Haaland & Dale, 2005). As the leadership role is extremely visible, even a small mistake can have consequences for the whole organization. For this reason, the process of becoming a manager may be even more complex. Haaland and Dale's (2005) research shows further that first-time managers feel that there is room for certain errors in the new role, but that they are often expected to be much more confident in their roles than they really are.

Self-concept. One's self-view as a leader may become an important aspect of one's identity that will influence further access to leadership knowledge, the formation of goals and interpretations of social reactions (Lord & Hall, 2005). One's self-concept can be viewed as

the sum of knowledge one has about oneself, which arises from one's experiences of how one reacts to the behaviors of others and how others react to one (Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004, p. 827). As leaders develop, there is a shift in focus from individual to collective-level identities (Lord & Hall, 2005). The social processes may serve to validate the leader's self-view as a leader, and it will be difficult to establish this self-view if attempts at leadership are not accepted by others. New leaders are supposedly concerned with learning leadership behaviors and being seen as leaders by others (Lord & Hall, 2005). Although first-time leaders are sensitive to social feedback concerning their new roles, research by Lord and Hall (2005) shows that their primary concern is to be recognized and accepted as leaders. Hence, appropriate development initiatives can help the integration of leadership skills with identity, which may result in a satisfactory manner of leading. Furthermore, the improvement of leadership skills will be influenced by individual differences in personality, emotion regulation, identities and values, which are outcomes of both the cultural context and personal experiences.

Stress, emotion and conflicts. First-time leaders usually have a great desire to succeed in their new roles. Feelings of stress associated with the new identity and role in the workplace has been shown to be immense, especially for first-time leaders (Hill, 2003). This was demonstrated by Hill's (2003) survey, the respondents to which experienced the transformation as overwhelming, confusing and stressful. Haaland and Dale (2005) also reported that first-time leaders experienced the leadership role's integrated stressors while struggling with the socialization process. Furthermore, their survey results indicated that first-time leaders reported felt lonely, insecure and stressed, because they lacked the appropriate competency and knowledge to handle the situation. A lack of follow-up and support from the employer can further produce role uncertainty and role conflict, as has been shown in a number of leader surveys across countries (Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Arnold et al., 2010; Lindorff, 2001; as cited in Rønning et al., 2013).

Organizational culture

Over and above the fact that first-time management involves an identity shift, first-time managers have to learn many new things in a variety of areas. This includes learning to get to know the organization and its surroundings, and potential stakeholders. One of the challenges here might be to understand and become part of the organizational culture. Organizational

culture is often compared to an iceberg, of which only 10% is visible (Haaland & Dale, 2005). According to Haaland and Dale (2005) the core culture of an organization lies in the remaining 90%, which is both invisible and indefinable (p. 39). Thus, as a leader, it becomes necessary to identify and become familiar with the cultural codes of the organization, and to behave in accordance with them (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to gain knowledge about communicating and cooperating with various people within the organization. Research by Haaland and Dale (2005) suggests that it is important for first-time managers to be humble and show willingness to learn as they undergo the transformation. First-time managers may be able to reconstruct their own perception of what it means to be a leader throughout the first year (Hill, 2003). Their perception and understanding of leadership will happen through first-hand experiences, but also through observing one's own leader. According to Hill (2003) first-time leaders are still in a basic learning process even after one year in the new role, and thus have much to learn when it comes to leadership. Further research shows that first-time managers learn much about their own self-concept and personality at the start of their careers (Lord & Hall, 2005), and this increases their awareness of own values, such as work ethics, behavioral patterns, and cooperation with others (Haaland & Dale, 2005)

Support and follow-up

There is a need for a support system in all career transitions (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005; Dale, 2014). There is a need for someone to talk to who can offer guidance, who will understand one's situation and who can help with ongoing struggles. This is especially crucial for first-time managers because learning to lead is primarily done at work. It is apparently through real problem solving and experiences that one learns how to be a leader (Haaland & Dale, 2005; Hill, 2003). Haaland and Dale (2005) argue that it is more profitable for an organization to provide systematic support for first-time leaders to and follow up on them throughout this process. In this way, organizations can gain better control of the leader development process, and will also be able to guide the first-time leaders into the desired management and leadership state and culture (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

According to Hill (2003) how the immediate supervisor treats his or her employees can be said to be the actual key driver of management development (p. 332). Support from the

immediate supervisor has a positive effect when the supervisor is available and visible to employees, takes health, safety and environmental issues seriously, provides positive feedback to employees and shows consideration for every individual employee (Arnold et al., 2010). Accordingly, Haaland and Dale (2005) report that several surveys conducted in Norway show that the immediate manager can play a central role as a chat partner, supporter and advisor. However, research show that around 60-70% of managers lack support and feedback from their immediate managers. It seems the starting problems in the leader development process occur at the initial stage, which requires a clarification of roles and tasks (Haaland & Dale, 2005). This may depend on the immediate manager's leadership style and the overall culture of the organization. The threshold will be lower for seeking help and support in a learning organization in which the immediate supervisor is known for developing knowledge and improving his or her subordinates' skills (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

Apart from the immediate manager being a main support in crucial times, Haaland and Dale (2005) argue that first-time leaders will benefit greatly from being part of a leader network. This might help the first-time leaders to develop identity and belonging in a new group, in which they will meet managers in the same situation (Haaland & Dale, 2005). Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to discuss various questions with other leaders that the first-time leaders may be uncomfortable discussing with the immediate manager. Additional valuable support for a first-time leader could be a buddy and/or mentor, who function as a dedicated person who can follow the new leader through the normal and practical routines, tasks, and procedures in the organization (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

Haaland and Dale (2005) also highlight the role of self-reflection as an effective way to improve leader performance. Self-reflection is seen to be especially important for first-time managers in the transformation phase, because this is when they are learning something new (Haaland & Dale, 2005). However, a major survey among Norwegian managers indicates that less than 20% of managers take time for self-reflection (Haaland and Dale, 2005). In other words, it could be said that the need to reflect on one's leadership role is not always prioritized because being a leader is an "action-oriented profession". Being part of a leader network and having access to a mentor may thus increase first-time managers' sense of self-reflection through constructive feedback, discussions and follow-up.

Methods

In this part, the choice of research methodology for the present study will be explained in addition to description of the recruitment- and selection process of participants, data collection, ethical considerations and analytical approaches.

Qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach, in the form of a case study, has been chosen to examine how first-time managers in Oslo municipality experience their first leadership role. Primary goal of a qualitative research study is to explore the meaning of a social phenomenon, as experienced by those who are involved, in great detail (Willig, 2008). This method makes it possible to have an open approach where different understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon studied can be obtained in its natural context. A qualitative approach also allows increased proximity between the researcher and participants in order to obtain in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied. This could be beneficial in studying the leadership development process from the first-time managers' point of view.

Semi-structured interviewing. Based on the present study's main purpose and its focus on each individual first-time manager's perception of the leadership development process, it has been considered appropriate to carry out in-depth interviews in the form of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview is a commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology (Willig, 2008). It is compatible with several methods of data analysis and is easier to arrange than other forms of qualitative data collection (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews give the researcher the opportunity to hear participants talk about specific aspects of their life experiences (Willig, 2008; Flick, 2007). It also allows the researcher to work on an interview guide where topics and a number of main questions are outlined in advance. In this case, the interview topics are derived from previous research and literature on leadership, leadership development and becoming manager for the first time.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited on the basis of participation in the leadership development course "Leader for the first time in Oslo Municipality" which is developed by

Agency for Improvement and Development in Oslo Municipality. A total of 3 out of 13 participants volunteered to be part of this study.

Selection. The participants in the present study consist of new managers in the municipality of Oslo in their first managerial position. All participants had little or no experience as managers when they completed the leadership development course- except for one who had some managerial experience in the past. Furthermore, there was a mix of both internally and externally recruited managers. Both genders were represented.

Data collection

In total, three interviews of the participants were carried out. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 40 minutes to one and a half hour. During the interviews, an audio recorder was used to capture the interview content as well as some notes were taken in form of keywords. In order to carry out analysis of the data, it was necessary to audio record the interviews (Willig 2008). The purpose of recording the interview, as well as the use of it for transcription, was explained to participants in advance. By using audio recorder, it became easier to follow-up relevant information along the way while concentrating on the content of the interview and let the conversation flow naturally (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Prior to the interviews, the participants were sent an interview guide along with a form for informed consent in which the purpose of the study was repeated. They were also informed about anonymity, confidentiality, the interview participation being voluntary as well as the opportunity to withdraw before, during and after the interview. All participants agreed to participate by signing the consent form.

Interview preparation. All interviews started with a brief introduction of the project and its purpose. The participants were then informed about anonymity and confidentiality. Then the participants were asked some introductory questions, such as: how long they had worked in Oslo Municipality and what job tasks they had. This was to get the interview started before we crossed the main part (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview guide for a semi-structured interview consists of a relatively small number of open questions (Willig, 2008). Hence, the questions in the interview session began with some general warm-up and introductory questions and continued to address more subjective experiences about leadership, becoming manager for the first time and the leadership development process.

Moreover, the questions in the interview guide included a number of pre-defined topics including reflection on own leadership role, the leadership development process, organizational culture, and the role of support and follow-up. The interview guide can be found in appendix.

Interview conduction. The interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks. The interviews were held in a meeting room at the workplace of the individual participants during their working hours. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and data was translated into English in the analysis process. This approach was chosen as it was assumed that talking in one's native language would increase the chances of a natural conversation flow and thus obtaining of richer data material.

Transcription. Each interview lasted for approximately an hour and were later transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcripts of the interviews are better suited for analysis as the collected data becomes more structured (Kvale, 1997). The transcribed interviews were sent to the participants for review and approval of the content. All participants approved of the content.

Ethical considerations

The study was submitted for approval to the Norwegian Privacy Protection Service for Research (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, NSD). The study was approved. Data collection started only after the study was approved. The study is based on voluntary participation and this was explained to all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the process. Information that could not be anonymized in a satisfactory manner was excluded from the transcription. All data and audio files were stored on a password-protected device and were deleted after the task was completed. Approval letter from NSD is found in attachment.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is chosen as the analytical approach in this study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method of finding and organizing patterns of content and meaning in the data material (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It helps to identify, analyze and report trends in the data across the interviews. Thematic analysis approach has been considered appropriate as it fits

well with the contextual construction of this research. Contextual constructionist research assumes that all knowledge is dependent on its context and standpoint (Willig, 2008). Due to a large extent of literature and previous research on leadership and leadership development, a theoretical approach to the analysis was considered appropriate. Hence, a rather theoretical form of thematic analysis, called Template Analysis, is chosen. Based on existing research and literature, some topics were predefined in the analysis process. This is a key aspect of Template Analysis where one is allowed to develop a template for encoding (Brooks, Turley & King, 2015). The use of such predefined, a priori codes, helps identify topics strongly expected to be relevant to the analysis (Brooks et al., 2015). Definitions of individual topics prior to the analysis process are then used on the rest of the data and further revised and refined (Brooks et al., 2015). Thus, the use of this method have made it possible to capture important theoretical concepts that could clarify the research question (Brooks et al., 2015). Although Template Analysis is a more theoretical form of thematic analysis, the present study have used elements of both induction and deduction in the analysis process. In the interview guide, questions were formulated on the basis of relevant themes from the theory review. These have helped shape the categories that have emerged in the analysis. However, the analysis has also been data driven and open to other categories beyond the interview guide.

There is no clear consensus on how a Template Analysis must be conducted, hence this study have followed some guidelines proposed by Brooks and colleagues (2015). These steps can be tailored to each project's needs and can be both viewed as guidelines as well as rules for how such analysis should be conducted. The following steps describe how the analysis were conducted based on Brooks and colleagues (2015)'s six procedures for Template Analysis:

1. Get to know the data. The topics of interest for first-time managers' role-change transformation, regarding leadership, were identified before data collection started. These were identified mainly in accordance to Hill (2003) and Haaland and Dale's (2005) research regarding first-time managers' challenges and struggles in their first leadership role. The interview guide was designed in accordance to these. The data was further transcribed verbatim, which made the analyze process easier afterwards (Kvale, 1997).

2. Preliminary coding of the data. Topics of interest were initially noted from Hill (2003) and Haaland and Dale's (2005) research literature on first-time management. In accordance

to the main topics identified from previous research and literature, the data material were further coded by taking notes on subjects of interest throughout the transcriptions.

3. Organize the topics in meaningful groups. The topics were sorted out and some of them were combined together into possible main themes.

4. Define the first coding template. The first coding template was defined as a change in perspective and the transition of going from an individual contributor to becoming manager. This template further included aspects of self-concept and self-view as leader and also the practice of authority and influence.

5. Use the initial coding template on multiple transcripts.

6. Finish the template and use it on the entire set of data. Final themes and subthemes were defined and named. Four main themes emerged from the topics: Role-change transformation, learning, organizational culture, and, follow-up and support. Under these main themes, twelve subthemes were identified which are listed on table one in results section.

Validity, reliability and transparency of the research

The paper has focused on minimizing issues related to the study's validity, reliability and transparency throughout the research. Validity refers to the degree to which a study reflect the specific concepts it aims to explore or measure (Willig, 2008). Many of the questions in the interview guide was designed as open-ended to obtain rich and complementary answers in order to increase the study's validity. On the other hand, reliability refers to the study's consistency: the extent to which a research instrument yields the same results if repeated (Willig, 2008). The use of voice recorder and transcription of interviews could further increase the research's reliability. Qualitative research is, however, less concerned with reliability issues as its purpose is more on studying certain experiences in great detail (Willig, 2008).

Openness and transparency of a research is central when assessing the quality of the study and the strength of its validity and reliability (Flick, 2007; Jacobsen, 2015). The stages in the research process have thus been described and explained thoroughly, which reflects the transparency and openness of the research. The researcher has further an ethical responsibility to report knowledge that is as verified as possible (Kvale, 1997), thus the

transcribed interviews were sent to the participants for review and approval of the content. This was to ensure that the participants were familiar with the statements before it was published in the paper. All participants approved of the content in the transcriptions.

Results

The main findings from the interviews will be presented in this chapter. The primary focus will be on the participants' subjective experiences of their first-time managerial role and identity transformation. In order to protect participants' identities and increase anonymity concerning their gender, the direct quotations have been mixed up arbitrarily. This also applies to the use of language concerning their gender.

The analysis of the empirical data represents interpretations of the phenomena being studied. These will be evaluated in the context of previous literature and research studied for this paper. The results presented are therefore an interpretation of the findings and have been analyzed, using quotations from participants illustratively. The purpose is to address the research questions, which are reviewed below.

- *How do first-time managers perceive their first leadership roles?*
- *What kind of challenges and struggles do first-time managers face in their first leadership roles?*

Furthermore, the participants' experiences of participation in the leader development course "Leader for the first time in Oslo Municipality" will also be taken into account as part of their overall leadership experience.

Becoming a manager for the first time

In the interviews with the first-time managers, their perceptions of their new roles as first-time leaders at Oslo Municipality were examined. The focus was mainly on their role-change transformation in relation to their everyday challenges and struggles as new managers. In the final analysis, the topics were related to the four topics covered, namely the "role-identity change transformation", "learning", "organizational culture and first-time leadership development" and "support and follow-up". Each of the four main themes has sub-themes that elaborate on the content (see table below).

The table below presents main themes and sub-themes identified before- and after analysis of the data and previous research literature using Template Analysis.

Main Themes	Sub-themes
Role-change Identity Transformation	Transition from individual contributor to manager Self-concept and self-view as a leader Influence and power
The Learning Process	Redistribution of time and delegation of tasks Communication Stress, emotions, conflict-resolution
Organizational Culture	Relevant leadership theories Oslo Municipality as employer: governance, values, management documents and management system
Support and follow-up	Immediate manager support Feedback, follow-up and support Networking

Role-change identity transformation

Previous research indicates that one of the key challenges first-time leaders experience is the fact that they have to learn to lead others instead of doing the work themselves (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005). It can be quite challenging at first when one changes from being an individual contributor to becoming a leader. The data collected from the participants indicate that first-time leaders experience this role change in differing ways. However, there turned out to be quite a lot of similarities between first-time managers in terms of the challenges that they had encountered in the course of this transformation. As one participant commented:

“In a way, I’ve just been thrown into this role without any particular overlap (...) I have to seek that knowledge myself. No one says, ‘here are your tasks’. I have to figure it out myself.”

The above struggle could also be said to be due to a lack of role clarity or having difficulty defining one's role, as one of the participants mentioned:

"I'm used to doing many tasks in here [...] things that take quite a lot of time that I really need to spend on other things, and I think it was a bit difficult to set limits for myself and, like, delegate it away and be clear in my role."

Another participant shared a similar opinion about the transition. In this case, the struggle seemed to be because of changes in perspective. It could be said that this manager was in the transition of changing her perception of herself and the world around her by learning from experience and social situations. The focus at this stage is on moving away from "doer" and becoming a manager of people (Hill, 2003). According to Hill (2003) leadership is about "managing context" and, to understand this notion, first-time managers must "accept the more fundamental idea of managing group performance, not simply individual performance" (p. 111). The quotation below indicates that this first-time manager was on the (right) track after gaining some experience:

"Throughout this year and a half, there has been a lot going on in my head. I had not been a manager before and now I'm in charge of staff responsibility and everything. [...] What I see as perhaps one of the challenges is to be able to see the individual versus the group ... where to have or move my focus. I try and try to move it more and more to the whole group."

The quotation below shows that the social processes may have served to validate the leader's self-view as a leader (Lord & Hall, 2005). In this case, the leadership development course might have helped to integrate the leadership skills with identity, which is content with research by Lord & Hall (2005). This could be said to be influenced by the cultural context combined with personal experiences:

"Probably one of the things that I have achieved from both the leader development process and course is to place myself in this leadership role. Because one is not suddenly another person but one has a different role. And that there has actually been a focus to work with this role transformation, and to 'take the lead' ... I think that has been very positive".

Authority and influence. Practicing authority seemed to be a challenging aspect of the managerial position. Some participants reported that making decisions was challenging, especially in the beginning:

“Making decisions [...] it took some time to get used to it.”

According to Hill (2003), one of the aims that first-time managers have is to start learning to exercise authority. In the cases studied for this paper, considering that it was in a Norwegian context characterized by the values commensurate with that the society, it cannot be said that the participants were reluctant to exercise their formal authority or to gain control. Rather, it can be said that they were ready to establish a trust-based relationship with their subordinates:

“You must trust that they (employees) are doing their best for you and the company [...] trust that you have people with special skills that you do not necessarily always possess as their leader.”

The above quotation can be linked to Hill's (2003, p. 23) results, in which the first-time managers described their role as “consultative” and not authorities. The primary goal here seems to be exercising influence over people, instead of exerting authority, by motivating and developing subordinates towards the organization's objectives:

“As a leader, I am very concerned for us all to work together. We are not the boss or subordinates, but we work together. And if I can manage to influence and help them to reach their goals, that's the most important thing for me. And, of course, then at the next moment, the company's goals, as it often hang together. That's important for me.”

Here, it becomes clear that leadership behavior that is consistent with equality, and involvement and cooperation is highly valued and desired in Oslo Municipality, as it was found across the country in previous research findings (Rønning et al., 2013).

Self-view as a leader. Based on the data, first and foremost, the role-change transformation was about gaining confidence in the new leadership role. For many of the participants, this indicated a different self-view from what they were used to. This means to understand that

one is no longer an individual contributor, and one has to be able to put the old job routines behind, and rather spend more time on the new tasks that are part of the management role and/or responsibility. Some of the participants expressed the need for some kind of “leg-up” that could increase their confidence in order to be able to practice and place themselves in the new role.

“I think that if you have some sort of self-confidence and humility, and you are open to learning what you are not so good at, you can easily find a way to handle most of the situations.”

The course was perceived positively in terms of building confidence and self-esteem when undergoing this transition. One of the participants mentioned:

“Instead of going around and being afraid that they had chosen the wrong person for this (managerial position), I gained the self-esteem that almost only has to come from within. That seems to have been established following the course.”

The quotation above may indicate that for this first-time manager, participation in the course was perceived as a feedback on being accepted and recognized as a leader, which is said to be the primary concern of new leaders (Lord and Hall, 2005).

Learning

In order to be an effective manager, one must have a balanced view of one’s motivations, abilities and limitations (Hill, 2003). For first-time managers, this is gained through challenges and hardships (Hill, 2003). In this way, one is able to learn more about one’s strengths and weaknesses, and thus mature in the managerial role.

Role strain, stress and time pressure. Some of the first-time leaders expressed a sense of time pressure and feelings of stress, considering the time they had to fulfill their tasks. For example, they struggled to delegate tasks in the best way possible way.

“To make the time up ... The fact that I work shift means that I have little time to do the tasks that I am assigned to and, on top of that, there are many responsibilities to consider in this role (leader).”

Previous research shows that managers who are task-oriented find both organizational changes and having to deal with employees more stressful than managers who are people-oriented (Rønning et al., 2013). Because the first-time managers were previously in a job in which they were specialists in their fields, it might be challenging to change their perspective from being task-oriented to people-orientated. Hence, a major learning factor becomes to leave behind one’s specialty and focus more on the role of leadership.

Loneliness. Loneliness and feelings of being “alone on top” were challenging for some of the participants. This was the case both when the person was previously an individual contributor and became a manager of past co-workers, but also when the managers were recruited from another department.

“I also think it’s been challenging to feel a bit alone ... like, I have no one to play together with in team unless I go beyond my limits [as a leader]. [...] I cannot discuss matters with anyone in here. I must be loyal and faithful, considering (employee) confidentiality and so forth.”

This struggle seemed harder for the participant who had been promoted from his previous position. In this case, the participant had established close bonds with past co-workers and was used to seeking their support and help. The lack of such support and companionship also made the transition phase harder, because the new manager could not communicate the same way with past co-workers:

“When you're struggling at work, you're used to talking to someone about it [...] I had some colleagues whom I worked with for a long time and we were very close. Suddenly I could not go to them with my problems as I did before. [...] I still think sometimes that ‘why can I not talk to her about this?’ So I would say it is a lonesome job in comparison to being a subordinate.”

As mentioned earlier, it is clear that factors such as role uncertainty, role conflict and role overload are viewed as key stressors. Loneliness can also be a stressor, because it represents a set of strong feelings and emotions resulting from basic social needs not being met (Rønningen et al., 2013). First-time managers expressed that they had to learn to detach themselves from their subordinates and the close bonds that they had developed in the previous job. Since they were used to seeking support and companionship from these past co-workers, they now felt isolated and lonely, which could in turn result in stress.

However, the first-time managers did not only experience challenges and struggles in their new roles. Some of the leaders expressed a great deal of enthusiasm, such as expressing that they were actually enjoying the responsibility and the challenges that accompanied a leadership position. According to Hill (2003) this is referred to as “the fundamental shift in their self-concept” (p. 172). However, such feelings surfaced after some time, when the leaders had started to become confident in their new roles. One cannot be certain whether it could be linked to participation in the course, but some of the participants expressed the following:

“It has just been a job so far but I think it’s starting to be fun now.”

This excitement was also linked to the amount of knowledge gained and also that the participant had become familiar with the practical aspects of being a manager.

“When you are a manager for the first time, you have not been in so many situations yet, so you do not know what you need. But when problems first arise, at least I know that there are some ways to solve them. Also, you gain some knowledge about where and who you can ask too.”

It also emerged that meeting other managers who were in the same situation had a good effect on learning. In fact, most of the participants experienced this as the biggest outcome of the learning process.

“I think meeting others in a similar situation had as much effect as what you learned in that course.”

The value of meeting other leaders in the same situation was especially important for those who did not have access to an adequate support system at their workplace. Thus, participating in this course helped them in to realize that they were not alone in their struggles:

“Meeting others in a similar situation has taught me that I believe anyone can be a leader if one has the necessary features. There was a broad range of different people who were in that course and we all had some common features. One does not need to be the stereotypical leader or manager that I might have imagined.”

Most of the participants also highlighted the importance of the practical aspects of the course. They appreciated the way the course was designed; combining both theory and the practical aspects of leadership, which in their opinion made it more useful in solving real work-related issues. Reflecting on own leadership and giving feedback was also seen as useful and motivating:

“A lot of the (course) program was about cooperating with others, which involved working in groups to reflect about own leadership style/role and giving feedback to each other... and I think that was a very motivating part of it and that it was not just about the theory that was taught”.

In this case, it could be said that the leadership development course is perceived to be valuable because of its relevant design, content and implementation regarding participants' job tasks. These factors were also found to be crucial in evaluating leadership development initiatives in previous research (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2006; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Organizational culture

According to Haaland and Dale (2005), internally recruited managers might have an advantage in their first managerial role because they are already familiar with the culture in the organization. However, Haaland and Dale (2005) also point out the negative side of this familiarity, namely that it could inhibit their willingness to learn since they might have

already found their place in the organization. Thus, they might not show much enthusiasm or willingness to learn more about the organizational culture.

The results from interviews show that the internally recruited leaders indeed expressed that they were previously familiar with the organizational culture. The quotation below is an internally recruited manager's opinion of his former leader's leadership style, and thus modeling of it.

“I experience that in our department we have a trust-based culture. [...] I feel that I have had a good training in the department by observing other leaders, and I have appreciated the way I have seen them practice leadership.”

On other hand, an externally recruited manager expressed that it was important to educate managers so that all the leaders would have a similar leadership style at Oslo Municipality. As this participant was recruited externally, his amount of knowledge about Oslo Municipality and its leadership requirements were limited. Thus, it was important to gain the proper knowledge on trust-based leadership and what this meant in practice. However, the participant did express that there was a strong focus on learning leadership in their organization:

“I find that there is a great focus in our organization that all [the leaders] should basically lead in a similar way. It is important that the entire organization and all the managers make this practice as similar as possible, at least principally, as we differ in personality.”

In order to achieve this goal, the externally-recruited manager meant that educating managers was an important factor in order to enable them to become familiar with Oslo Municipality and to become part of its organizational culture. Also, the part of the course that focused on leadership theory concerning trust-based leadership was experienced as an important outcome, both for externally and internally recruited managers. The course focuses on both the theoretical and practical sides of what trust-based leadership means for Oslo Municipality leaders:

“I hope Oslo Municipality wants us, not just new, but all managers at Oslo Municipality, to practice management reasonably similarly and equally, and in order to get this done you have to start from a point of educating all managers in general.”

“I think there’s something about understanding concepts, for example trust-based leadership and management. Now I understand what it is. Not necessarily concretely, but as a general concept. We learn about things in the course that others [intern recruited managers] have gained knowledge of through experience or courses, as well as through common understanding.”

Other participant expressed a positive view on achieving this goal through the leadership development course:

“ [...] discussing what trust-based leadership is, and the things that are important to Oslo municipality, which are highlighted in the course [...] some reflections have been made around it concerning what it means in practice and that one can speak about it with others. It seems it was a great way to include the leadership theory in such a short course because it would have been too much if they went very deeply into it.”

From the different quotations, it could be indicated that most of the first-time managers’ found the theoretical aspect of the course that focused on trust-based management and leadership quite useful. The purpose here was to prepare first-time managers for their new role in a politically-driven context by becoming familiar with Oslo Municipality as employer and its leadership culture and values. It could thus be said that the participants indeed understood the notion of trust-based management, which may further predict multiple desirable outcomes on their job performance (Robinson & Salamon, 2008; Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2016; Kuvaas, 2017).

Support and follow-up

Research shows that new managers must be prepared to seek help when they encounter struggles and challenges (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005). Here it becomes important “to

devote time and energy to building a network of relationships from which they can derive support, feedback and advice” (Hill, 2003, p. 237). According to Hill (2003) first-time managers tend to avoid their immediate managers in critical times, which they should not do, because the immediate manager holds the best view about the managerial work. All the participants in this study expressed that the need for follow-up and support in their first managerial role was crucial. It can also be said that the new managers were mostly dependent on their immediate managers’ follow-up and support in order to improve as leaders. Since the leadership development course “Leader for the First Time” is an open offer for Oslo Municipality’s employees, it means that this is not something that is mandatory for new managers. Some of the participants participated in the course because it was suggested during follow-up sessions with their immediate managers. Other participants experienced no such follow-ups with their immediate managers, and therefore had to search for such courses themselves and find it on their own. In these cases, no initiatives were taken to follow-up on the first-time managers, either from their immediate managers or human resources (HR) departments. The lack of follow-up and support from immediate managers was seen as a big weakness, because in their opinion it could further increase the effect of leadership development:

“There is no one in charge of follow-up, or the development of new managers. I think that’s a weakness. [...] The follow-up that I have received, I had to look for it and ask about it myself, in a way. I did not get a buddy [...] I think that it [the follow-up process] could have been done in a different way by my employer, for example by means of a number of regular conversations or at least occasional phone calls.”

For another participant, the follow-up by the immediate boss came after a year of working as a manager. This participant highlighted the positive outcome of such follow-up and also admitted that not many new managers received this opportunity:

“I did not have any follow-up in the first year, but after that we got a new boss and this leader was a bit more ... what should we say, the previous one was a bit exhausted and had too much to do while the new one took charge ... and it has been very positive for me. [...] I have a network around me of other managers, which I also think is very positive. I also know that it’s not something everyone has. It seems, in a way, that I am very lucky. I have many opportunities around me for receiving both feedback and support.”

The challenge in leadership development is to help managers learn from on-the-job experiences and to provide the right types of resources, skills and attitudes that are crucial for the role assigned (Hill, 2003). Previous research shows that many organizations indeed neglect opportunities related to first managerial roles (Hill, 2003). According to Hill (2003), immediate managers and human resources managers must manage this unique opportunity in a thoughtful way, which can in turn result in a huge amount of human capital for the organization. However, one of the participants in this study said that s/he did not receive any follow-up from the immediate manager. This participant expressed feelings of disappointment, and associated it with weaknesses within the leadership development process. It was also mentioned that no time had been set aside to focus on leadership development:

“I think that if I had been followed up by my manager, or by the HR department, or whoever was responsible for following up on the onboarding process of new managers [...] because you get caught up in the job tasks, but if the leadership development course was in a continuous development process and there was a time set aside to focus on it, then I think that perhaps it might have strengthened the effect of leadership development.”

When organizations do not provide systematic support for first-time leaders as it is interpreted from the quotation above, they will miss on guiding the new leaders into the desired managerial and leadership state and culture which may result in less profitable outcomes both for the organization and the individual (Haaland and Dale, 2005). Other research also highlights the role of feedback as a necessity for any kind of leader development (Day, 2001). Feedback is said to be one of the strongest tools available to promote learning (Haaland & Dale, 2005). According to one of the participants, the role of feedback was indeed related to development and improving as a manager:

“It is clear that, if you want to develop, you need to get feedback. If not, then you will be on the same track all the time and make the same mistakes over again and again.”

Learning through experience is about seeing one's own tracks in the organization. By observing others' reactions and the impact of one's decisions (Haaland & Dale, 2005), one will eventually receive feedback on how well or badly one has led. Often it will be difficult to

see the influence that one has and, consequently, receiving feedback becomes crucial (Haaland & Dale, 2005). The absence of follow-up and feedback motivated some of the course participants to arrange a meeting at which the plan was to build a network for all first-time managers. This shows the importance of feedback and the continued follow-up of new managers:

“Some of us from that course have taken the initiative to meet the whole group again. Now we will meet soon and plan to build a network for each other. It’s private, but we’ve contacted UKE to get recommendations on how to arrange it.”

Haaland and Dale (2005) conclude that one cannot assume that other people will understand one’s need for support and/or when one is going to need it (p. 179). Therefore, first-time managers are encouraged to take the initiative in order to obtain the necessary support in the learning process, which might include coaching, guidance, training, or network participation. The authors also report that (only) about 37% of Norwegian managers feel that they get support in their jobs. Accordingly, Haaland and Dale (2005), Dale (2014) and Hill (2003) stress the importance of having a coach or a mentor. Findings from their research show that managers who have had this opportunity, report gaining immense benefit from reflecting with and receiving support and feedback from an experienced and skilled supervisor who serves as a coach or mentor in the workplace. However, none of the participants in the study reported having such a coach, although the need for feedback was highlighted.

Discussion

The focus of this paper was on gaining insight into the everyday experiences, challenges and struggles of first-time managers at Oslo Municipality. The focus was on examining how first-time managers perceived their first leadership roles, and the types of challenges and struggles they encountered therein. Their experiences of participation in the leader development course “Leader for the first-time in Oslo Municipality” were also taken into account as part of their overall leadership experience. In this part of the paper, the results that emerged from the empirical data, based on the research problem, will be discussed.

Based on the analysis of the results, it has been shown that there are many experiences related to becoming a manager for the first time. However, there are certain aspects in the results that stand out and which it would be appropriate to discuss further.

Role-change identity transformation

Some similarities were found among the participants in the study with respect to the transition from being individual contributors to becoming people’s managers. For example, they had to let go of their previous identities as individual contributors, which meant putting the old job routines behind them, and start focusing more on being people managers, and thus achieve results through others. Most of them experienced their new tasks as somewhat unclear, as opposed to what they were used to when they worked as individual contributors. This view is in accord with Haaland and Dale’s (2005) findings, which indicated that the identity-role change transformation was a critical stage due to one’s lack of experience. In this context, some participants mentioned that the leadership development course had been a useful repetition of important topics (e.g. self-concept). For other participants, the course content helped them to gain more self-confidence and increase their self-esteem in relation to finding their places in the organization and thereby focus on the correct aspects of it. The leadership development course might have further helped to integrate the leadership skills with their identity, which is content with previous research by Lord & Hall (2005). Their participation in the course may have been perceived as a feedback on being accepted and recognized as a leader, which is said to be the primary concern of new leaders (Lord and Hall, 2005). Furthermore, the role of authority and the influence that they now had on others

became crucial because the first-time managers were not used to being the decision makers and having authority. The course content also focused on the role of power and authority, and some participants highlighted the usability of the practical aspects of it (e.g. conflict resolution and the delegation of tasks). It also became clear that leadership behavior which is consistent with equality, and involvement and cooperation is highly valued and desired in Oslo Municipality, as previous research showed across the country (Rønning et al., 2013). Overall, the course content seemed to be valuable in helping them to understand more about who they were becoming as leaders.

Learning

The first-time managers had to learn to cope with mainly three types of stressors: time pressure, role strain and loneliness. As organizations become more dynamic in today's competitive environment, research by Hill (2003) showed that managers were being assigned increasingly more responsibilities earlier in their careers. Accordingly, the participants in the present study also expressed feelings of being overwhelmed with the number of tasks they had to handle in too little time. They also reported "a sense of isolation" from previous colleagues; they felt the absence of warm relationships with them, which had been important to them. These feelings are commensurate with Hill's findings: "During times of transition people feel lost as they find themselves without a clear reference group by which to identify appropriate values and norms" (Hill, 2003 p. 183). In this context, all of the participants were of the opinion that meeting other managers in the same situation had an excellent effect on their learning. Through conversations, problem-solving of real work-related cases and teamwork, they come to realize that they were not alone in their struggles. Giving feedback and reflecting on own leadership was also perceived as a motivating part of the course, which eased their tension. After some time and experiences, the first-time managers were starting to learn how to cope with situations previously beyond their control, and were now starting to actually enjoy the responsibilities that came with the managerial role. It could thus be said that the leadership development course was perceived to be valuable because of its relevant design, content and implementation regarding participants' job tasks. These factors were also found to be crucial in evaluating leadership development initiatives in previous research (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2006; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Organizational culture

As the first managerial role is crucial for learning the basics of how things work in an organizations, in this stage the first-time managers are probably most open to experiences and learning (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005; Dale, 2014). Regardless of whether one is internally or externally recruited for a managerial role, it becomes necessary to identify and become familiar with the cultural codes of the organization, and to behave in accordance with them (Haaland & Dale, 2005). The first-time managers valued the effect of education on developing an organizational identity and thus becoming part of the organizational culture. For internally recruited managers, observing other leaders in the organization had made a big impact with respect to the kind of leaders they were going to be. Since the course focused on trust-based leadership as the main form of management for Oslo Municipality leaders, the participants appreciated that it was taught from a practical perspective. This was especially important for externally- recruited managers, who did not have the same background in Oslo Municipality as internally recruited managers. Understanding the notion of trust-based management and knowing how to practice its aspects at work may further predict multiple desirable outcomes on their job performance (Robinson & Salamon, 2008; Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2016; Kuvaas, 2017). For all the participants, the course was perceived as highly relevant in preparing themselves for their new role in a politically-driven context and familiarizing themselves with Oslo Municipality as an organization and its leadership values and culture.

Support and follow-up

All of the first-time managers highlighted the importance of support and feedback at the start of their managerial roles, especially from their immediate managers. Some of the participants had access to a network of support and feedback, while others did not have this opportunity. When organizations do not provide systematic support for their first-time leaders, they will miss on guiding the new leaders into the desired managerial and leadership state and culture (Haaland and Dale, 2005) which in return, may result in less profitable outcomes for both the organization and the individual. Course participation further motivated and inspired most of the participants to build a network for all first-time managers, with which they could meet regularly to discuss topics of interest. This initiative showed how much the first-time managers valued the role of support, feedback and continuous follow up in their leadership

development process. In order to change and grow as leaders, managers must collect feedback from various sources and analyze their behavior, attitudes and values (Hill, 2003, p. 305-306). Because the role of feedback is a necessity for any kind of leader development (Day, 2001), the lack of such support or a feedback system was seen as a weakness within the leadership development process. As research by Hill (2003) and Dale and Haaland (2005) indicated that only 37% of Norwegian managers felt that they received support in their jobs, it was suggested that first-time managers should take the initiative themselves in order to obtain the necessary support and feedback in the learning process. The reason for this was that others (e.g. immediate managers, HR department) may not always understand the situation the first-time managers are in (Haaland & Dale, 2005).

Practical implications

Certain practical implications have emerged from the empirical data and will be presented with a focus on the leadership development *needs* of first-time managers in the Oslo Municipality. These practical suggestions will be presented on the basis of the results and discussion that emerged from the empirical data, as well as evidence-based support from the previous literature and research reviewed for this paper.

As this study has focused on the journey of the first managerial position and the challenges and struggles that follow, some interesting opinions and criticisms have emerged. First and foremost, there is a strong need and desire for closer follow-up and support from superiors. Most of the participants interviewed for this paper expressed the need for *a coach*, or *a mentor* who could follow them throughout their first year as a new manager, and offer first-hand support and follow-up when needed. Almost none of them experienced having such support in their first year, despite the fact that the positive benefits of such support are shown by previous research (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005; Dale, 2014). Secondly, the participants expressed a desire to be part of *a network* through which they could frequently meet other new managers and discuss topics of interest. Furthermore, the majority of the participants were of the opinion that the leadership development course, “Leader for the first-time in Oslo Municipality”, was of great benefit to them as first-time managers. Hence, they expressed a desire for an *extension of the course*. Also, they suggested that *the course should be a mandatory* part of the onboarding process for every new manager at Oslo Municipality.

Overall, the needs expressed above say something about first-time managers' points of view, given this new role, and constitute potential improvement suggestions for Oslo Municipality to consider when designing onboarding processes and leadership developmental initiatives for their new managers.

Limitations of the study and future research

The interviews gave a rich picture of three first-time managers' experiences related to becoming manager for the first time, and further yielded many relevant findings which indicate that the chosen research design was appropriate. However, the results of this study must be seen in light of its limitations. It should be noted that the participant selection was limited as the study is based on a study of three cases. Three cases studied for this paper do not constitute a basis for representative results and thus cannot promote generalization of the results. Findings from qualitative studies are, however, not thought to be transferable to the whole population, but they are rather meant as descriptions, concepts or theories that are applicable within similar contexts (Malterud, 2001).

The validity of the study depends largely on the interviewees' own descriptions. Such descriptions might be subjective and thus may change over time according to contexts. The responses obtained in an interview might therefore be at a considerable distance from reality (Hermanowicz, 2002; Jacobsen, 2015). Also, each participant was interviewed once and it could therefore be assumed that there still are uncovered topics related to the field. Verbatim transcripts and multiple reviews of the data material help to increase the validity of this work. Further, this study has mostly been an individual work. The categorization of the data material may have been influenced by this, as well as by the researcher's theoretical assumptions. In order to get a better understanding of a social phenomenon, it should be studied from different perspectives by, for example, triangulation of different methods of data collection and analysis (Willig, 2008; Flick, 2007). For example, using observation as a supplement to interviews would further allow researchers to explore participants' external behavior and internal beliefs (Alshenqeti, 2014, p. 43). Therefore, it would be a good idea for future research to focus on using more than one method of data collection that would help obtain richer data and further validation of the research findings.

Transparency is one of the most important requirements for all research (Flick, 2007; Willig, 2008) which deals with the methodological choices. This involves giving the reader an understanding of the research process and how these are communicated: the research is design, the way it is carried out and the analysis process. To achieve transparency in this study, a detailed description of data collection process has been provided. The method chapter thus describes the coding process, presentation of methodology and the method for analysis. Further, in the result section, direct quotes from participants have been used for further analysis and discussion. The use of unchanged quoted from the interviews increase the transparency of the study and provide less room for subjective interpretations.

It is, however, up to the reader to evaluate whether the results can be generalized to another situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Description of the study's participants, their context and research process are therefore intended to help the reader evaluate the findings that can be transferred to its own context. As well as comparison between study's findings with theory and empiric. The themes have also helped to show whether the findings of the study can be transferred to other situations. The present study might provide useful information in regards to further study topics in the field of first-time leadership as it has described interesting aspects of the first-time leadership processes. As there is little research conducted in the area of first-time leadership, especially in the public sector, further research is needed.

Conclusion

This study has contributed in raising knowledge about Oslo Municipality's first-time managers on their experience of becoming a manager for the first time. In light of the empirical results conducted through semi-structured qualitative interviews, and their interpretation in the discussion, it is clear that becoming a manager was perceived as a challenging transition for most of the first-time managers interviewed for this paper. Most of them were promoted from their previous jobs as individual contributors. It was evident that they did not quite realize what challenges and struggles a leadership position involved, as has also been shown in previous research on first-time managers that took the role-change transition into account (Hill, 2003; Haaland & Dale, 2005). Through experiences and hardships, they came to understand what it really meant to be a manager. For instance, it involved putting behind old job routines and starting to focus more on gaining results through others. In the beginning, they struggled to define their job tasks and experienced self-doubt, time-pressure and loneliness, which led to job stress. They also encountered expectations above their capacity and were given certain responsibilities before they felt confident enough to handle them. A lack of feedback and follow-up from their superiors, feelings of isolation from their previous coworkers, and not being part of a network made the transition more challenging.

In the meantime, their participation in the leadership development course "Leader for the first time in Oslo Municipality" was perceived as helpful in terms of coping with the challenges and struggles mentioned above. Previous research on leadership development has shown that such courses have positive results when they are appropriately designed to meet the needs of the participants' everyday job tasks (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2008; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Consequently, after some time and experience, the first-time managers had learned to cope with situations previously beyond their control, and had started to actually enjoy the responsibilities that came with the managerial role. Most of the participants were of the opinion that their role-change transformation could have been efficiently handled if the challenges and struggles that they encountered had been addressed with sufficient support and follow-up from their superiors or the HR department. As leadership skills and behavior are learned best through on-the-job experience (Hill, 2003), the participants expressed a desire for continued learning and development of their leadership skills. Thus, the importance

of fostering a knowledge-development culture within the organization through continuous feedback, support and follow-up of the first-time managers was further emphasized. Since the first managerial role is the starting point of all leadership and leadership development, the results from this study increase our understanding of leadership and leadership development from the standpoint of new managers. Thus, the present study further contributes in designing and managing of leadership developmental initiatives that take into account the first-time managers' standpoint in Oslo Municipality.

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