

Lack of police integrity, corruption: how does it work and how can one intervene?
Suggestions for a training program.

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Introduction

Corruption is a subject that receives a lot of attention. Everybody agrees about its destructive character and is convinced something needs to be done. However, one hardly ever finds an answer as to how this should be done. A lot of discussion is given to procedural solutions and how to improve repressive methods. We however will take a strict preventive stand geared at individual attitudes. Why does corruption still exist, when everybody agrees that it shouldn't? How does this process work? And how can training programs assist in preventing people from slipping down the slope?

We will start with presenting our general theory concerning corruption-prevention. The theory encompasses a definition of corruption and an explanation about the corruption process. By showing how this process takes place, we will show how to intervene. For this the basis concepts of our training model are given.

Then we will discuss management implications of our model. We will focus on specific management skills in order to prevent people from slipping down. Furthermore we will present a model to analyse and judge ethical situations in order to improve decision-making. This model can be used before and after a decision was made.

Assumptions

It is important to mention that our focus on corruption is an educational one. How can one support corruption prevention programs through training sessions? This focus means we had to start with several assumptions. These are:

- A training program can never stand on its own; it has to be embedded into a broader corruption-prevention strategy
- A training program can only be successful if one takes an individual point of view; what can people do to prevent themselves from slipping down the slope? So we do not discuss behaviour of corrupt colleagues, we discuss our own choices and behaviours. For an effective training program insight and skills must go hand in hand.
- An in-company training program must be offered to all members of a given team; both employees and management.
- No police officer joins the police to purposely show corrupt behaviour.

Corruption

In literature a lot of effort is given to the definition of corruption. In order to be able to prevent corruption we must first decide what it is we wish to prevent. The definition we use is:

” A favour for a favour in return, due to which the organisation is damaged in reaching its goals and which has to be kept secret.”

It is not very likely that someone shows corrupt behaviour from one day to another. There is always a gradual process that comes first. Often this is referred to as the ‘slippery slope’ from which people can ‘slide down’ because of a (possibly temporary) decreased awareness for integrity. The slippery slope however, is not necessarily a slide. Once on it, does not mean one will certainly slide all the way down. During this process there are several moments where people can get hold to the process and find a plateau.

How does this corruption process start and develop itself? This can easily be shown by splitting up the formerly mentioned definition into the elements of which it consists. The elements are four:

- doing somebody a favour (the person is able to do someone this favour because he/she works within the police)
- receiving a favour (and thus personal gain); the favour is received because one works for the police. The received favour is related to the offered favour
- damage to the organisation
- secrecy

Only in a situation in which all four elements can be found we define this situation as corrupt. In a situation where one, two or three of the elements count someone is in the corruption process. Every element in itself concerns behaviour which easily has to do with a lack of integrity. However, for the first element (doing someone a favour) this is only the case when it concerns a favour which this person was not allowed to do.

By splitting up the definition into several elements we can easily show how the process can start: with every element separately (in other words, corruption always starts with a lack of integrity: ‘one is on the slope’).

This means the initiative can come from both sides, and a received favour can later be found to be related to an expected offered favour. E.g.

- a police officer decides not to fine a friend who drove too fast
- a police officer receives a discount at the Chinese restaurant
- a police officer writes too many hours
- a police officer has a drinking problem which he keeps secret to the organisation

These are of course no examples of corruption; they can however, be starting points of the corruption process.

One can say that any element is actually a decision: will I do someone a favour, will I accept a favour, am I willing to damage my organisation, do I have something that needs to be kept secret? If any of these questions can be confirmed one finds himself in the corruption process. This means there is still a possibility to intervene.

By defining the corruption process as a decision process one can show that it is a process where one can intervene.

Apart from that; it shows that it is a gradual process. One takes a decision to write too many

hours at one stage, and then nothing happens. At another moment this same person is offered a discount. At again another moment this person might use too much force while arresting a suspect (without telling his manager) etc. All these situations are unrelated. The process however has started. Chances have increased that a moment will come in which all elements count. The acceptability of these examples is not the topic. Moral standards are not the point; what is the point is the possible effect of a certain decision. In what way can this decision influence future decisions?

How is it possible that people take these decisions?

How can people get themselves in a situation where they take these decisions? For example; how is it possible that people are willing to damage their organisation?

For this, one can appoint several risk factors. These risk factors increase the likelihood that someone will find himself in a situation where one or more of the elements can be found.

These risk factors are many, but some examples would include:

- problems at work
- reorganisations
- unstimulating exemplary manager behaviour
- bad career opportunities
- group pressure
- private problems (alcohol, drugs, financial)
- the police culture (code of silence)
- contacts with criminals

In any situation one can simply count how many risk factors there are. The more risky a situation is, the greater the chance of slipping down. This does not mean one will slip down; it only increases the chance. Again, it is not a slide.

But then still; why do people do this? Why do not all people who are in 'risky situations' take decisions like these? What do the people who do 'say' to themselves?

There seem to be two ways as to how people slip down the slope.

The one has to do with police culture; some unethical behaviours are simply not recognised as unethical. For example; When it comes to the choice between integrity and loyalty, the average police officer will choose for loyalty.

The other has to do with ways as to how people tend to justify their behaviours in order to maintain a positive self-concept. Possible justifications are:

- everybody does this once in a while
- it was just some minor information

--> in this way the behaviour is turned into a bagatelle

- hey, look at the management and what they do!
- I was forced to do this

--> in this way the responsibility for the behaviour is minimalised

Intervention

So, how can one intervene?

By gaining insight in ones own decision process and through being able to turn this insight into practice.

- Do I take a decision?
- What is the decision?
- What is the effect of this decision?

Then one can decide to change the decision, and thus either prevent oneself from starting to slip down, or to prevent oneself from slipping down all the way.

What does this mean for a training program?

The training should improve moral intuition, moral judgement capacities, self-insight, assertiveness and skills. By taking all these elements into account, one provides participants with means to improve their cognitive moral skills and to improve their social skills how to deal with difficult situations. We very much believe the one cannot go without the other. Knowing what to do has to go hand in hand with knowing how to do it.

This means a training program should encompass the discussing of ethical situations (often dilemmas) in order to increase insight and the practising of skills.

Skills that need to be trained are:

- openly discussing situations and norms and values that guide the decisions in these situations
- practising assertiveness techniques; how to 'say no' to an offer in such a way the relationship with the other is undamaged (to doing a favour, receiving a favour, damaging the organisation)
- practising openness; how to disclose a certain decision (say no to the secrecy element)

Insight and skills training are general ways to prevent oneself from slipping down. Regardless of whether one is a practising police officer, a civil servant working for the police or a police manager.

However, a police manager does have an extra responsibility. Not just to prevent him/herself but also to support their colleagues not to slip down. The police manager has a responsibility as an example to his or her employees but also in creating an atmosphere which stimulates openness.

Management implications

In police culture of non-involvement it is not often normal to talk about someone's behaviour.

There is talking and talking. We often discuss someone else who is not there at the moment and we don't talk with some one. Or we hear everything, see everything but stay quiet. Or at the other hand we haven't heard anything, seen anything, but we can easily talk about it. In this culture it is rare that policeman talk to their colleagues about their conduct or even misconduct.

But when policemen do, they are starting with talking about misconduct even though it is not very clear what in some cases the standard will be, or not anyone in the department knows what rules they must obey. I will show you the way it goes.

- To confront
- To agree

- To discuss
- To say

The question is that often managers start with talking to someone about something, although it isn't very clear what the rule or value is. It is only useful to call someone to account for something if it is clear what the agreement is to do in certain circumstances. This is only possible when there is enough and thoroughly talked over the subject. To make something a subject of discussion it is really possible when everyone in the organisation can freely speak out. So we believe that you have to start bottom up: first say "I think" and the others will flow the same. Then to discuss: what do you think about it? Thirdly you can say: "so we think about it the same way, and when you finally reach this stadium you can confront you colleague with: "I thought we had an agreement".

I will mention a example: It is forbidden to accept gifts from the people you serve. But what do you do when a thankful citizen offers you flowers to express his thanks because you helped him. What do you do when you know the gift is of a value of lets say 15 dollars. And what do you do when he gives you 10 dollars cash. A cup of coffee. Etc. etc. We believe it is wise to discuss these matters and together you decide the borders of what you accept or not. Or perhaps you agree upon the fact that you have to discuss it with your chief and you can only accept a gift with at least one colleague present. We don't believe in the zero-rule. You don't take the professional policeman serious when you just forbid him something. A professional is used to take decisions. At the other hand it is clear that dilemma's on the street are often not as clear as policy-makers want them to be.

It is better to guide the policeman with a set of standards. And afterwards, this is a often forgotten one, just ask him what he has done in a particular situation, he has to take is responsibility. "I thought we had an agreement!"

By the way: A rule being laid on top down results in a expression I once read of a police-officer who said: "When they (he means senior police-officers) are talking about ethics they always mean our ethics and not their ethics."

This means that the assessment model we present goes further into the first two steps To SAY and to DISCUSS. At the end it offers the management also an possibility to find out what steps need to be taken.

You often hear the phrase: "You are 100% honest or you are not" Can this be true? Can someone be under all circumstances be 100% incorruptible. If an individual policeman tells me that he is 100% ethical, I become suspicious. He must be robo-cop. This seems to me a black and white situation in which I don't believe. There are a lot of grey situations. After all we use the word corruption-process, it is an way of slipping down the slope. But I don't think that you slip automatically all the way down as soon as you start drifting. The fact is that everyone can be at his own anchor. The task for the management is to find this anchor-point before it is to late. Or to show where the anchor must be dropped. It is not allowed to use criminal information for other purpose than police-matters. I know that and I will obey that rule. But than I move to another town and I want to know who lives next door. Or my beautiful daughter takes her new boy-friend home. Are you going to find out whether the new neighbours or the boy-friend has criminal records. Most policemen do. Every time you decide to consult the records you know that it is wrong. But is it non-ethical? The problem is that you just went trough an anchor point. This

makes it almost easier to go through an next anchor point. What are you going to do, when your brother asks the same. When you do, it is just a bit closer to the black-decision, next time it is your best friend, or the friend of your best friend and at last this friend pays you for police-information. Than it is real corruption.

Being ethical means in the first place that you are willing to think about it systematically.

At first you have to decide whether some conduct is good or bad. That is something completely different than to find out if some has exceeded the law. We use the outline, made by John Slater of the Metropolitan Police. It shows that when you act according to the books, rules and procedures you don't have to act moral right. When you judge ethical behaviour you do not only take into account the correct/incorrect use of the law or other rules. You take also in consideration good and bad behaviour. In this scheme it is possible to act against the law, but we can speak of moral right behaviour.

It is just the point that rules don't give all the answers, It is the right between the rules to answer the question if something is moral right or wrong. The quadrant at the top left and the bottom right doesn't give any trouble. Good and correct is ethical behaviour. Incorrect and bad is often corruption. But the two other parts we can discuss. Correct enforcing the law, but bad police work is fining a pregnant woman for speeding while she rushes to the hospital to deliver her baby. The wrong is wrong mentality.

In the quadrant good police work but incorrect enforcing I have a problem. I don't know of my example is the right one but when I discuss this matter with my students I often hear that this is a real problem for police-officers. Good police work but incorrect enforcing is e.g. let a neighbourhood know that a incest-offender is going to live next door. This means that in police work there can be a dilemma in braking rules in order to act moral justified.

Other points of discussion are the special aspects of and dilemma's in modern police work and police-management. The special police-subculture and the fact that a police-officer runs enormous professional risks, he is sometimes very vulnerable.

Our police-officers stand in the middle of it and have to find a way out. They have to make black and white decision. How can we help them and ourselves?

In the first place you have to strengthen his capacity to defend himself mentally. He has to deal with all kinds of tolerances, frustration, ambivalence, stress etc. Secondly management should encourage talking about dilemma's, and so gaining insight into moral judgement and moral choices. Thirdly you, as manager must avoid the situation that you pass judgement on the matter when you are just discussing it. Postpone your opinion otherwise you don't encourage a free and open discussion. Truth is an process. Give your co-workers full play. This seems simple, but our experience is that it is sometime the most troublesome. Even for myself.

We will therefor present a model to analyse and judge situations in order to improve decision - making. This model can be used before and after a decision was made. Hopefully it helps to find the defining moments.

Assessment-model

The model we present is divided into 5 different steps:

1. What do you think of the matter in the first place, When you hear of the case what were your first thoughts. What does your intuition say?

This is exceptionally important when it isn't clear what is right or wrong from the start. It can start by wondering what had happened. Your experience tells you something is wrong. There is an alarm-bell going somewhere in your head. Something very interesting is said by Prof. Wissema about ignoring these warning signals. You ignore them or you just miss them when there is too much groupthink in the organisation or too much autocratic decision-making. Other explanations are focussing on one problem, being in a hurry or being impatient. Stress and tiredness are other elements. Important psychological explanations are ego, power and recklessness.

2. Defining it as a decision-process you have to find out what the decision-moments were/are. Of course it is clear that you have also concentrate on acts, what did police-officers do. But it is, we believe (from the point of view that every police-officer has in the end a personal responsibility for his own ethical behaviour) better to distinguish the decision from the act. In this way you can detect risk factors and elements in a given situation and therefor assess the consequences.

3. The third step is to define the values and standards involved. We distinguish into personal values and norms, relational norms, professional values and common values and norms. Of special importance is the connection between the norms and values and being a police officer. As a police-officer you can take advantage of the situation, you can abuse your power, or breach the trust of the public. Notice that there can be dilemmas between those norms. What will you do when you have build up a good relation with fringe youth groups in your neighbourhood and your colleagues don't believe in your approach and brutalise them.

4. The fourth step is to find out what interests are involved And what interests are pursued, further who meets with advantages and disadvantages. You can distinguish ego-interests, group-interests and common good. To distinguish this interests it helps you to understand the actions and to compare the pro's and cons. This means that to analyse someone's behaviour it is enough to take into consideration the actions or omissions, but also the intentions, consequences and the pursued interests

5. Next you have to decide if one's behaviour is his responsibility. There for you have to take into account the sense of freedom to decide what you have decided. In police terms your discretion. This can depend on your experience, skills, education etc. We do not believe in shifting the responsibility upon another, your chief, the organisation or your upbringing etc. Although it is possible that others have some responsibility, personal or because of their position in the organisation. E.g. it is clear that the structural absence of leadership is of negative vital importance in the police-organisation (in every organisation, I think). If this is the case it has to be taken into account when you finally judge the matter yourselves. Other factors are if the consequences were foreseeable or even unintended.

6. The last step is to decide what you are going to do now. Therefore there are several possibilities.

The last step shows us both two functions of the model. On one side it offers the opportunity to decide what you are going to do about the dilemma you are facing. Should you accept the gift, should you do it this or that way. In short it gives an answer to act moral. Secondly, it provides especially managers a guide to decide what decision should be taken. Take into account that it is

not always easy to know what to do when you just find out that what you supposed to do was not right or legal.

The most principal distinction you can make is between repressive and preventive action. Training, cultural en structural changes in the police-organisation, but also other strategies are important.

On the repressive side several decision lines are open:

1. You can investigate further, because you want to gain some more information.
2. Secondly you can ask a second opinion of a colleague or your chief. Perhaps you ask advise of members of internal affairs
- 3 In the third place you can decide to record the result of your decision/investigation to use it somehow later on.

In the end there are (combinations) of the following 5 ways open:

1. Do nothing personal against the subject
Perhaps you can tighten the regulations or discuss it in meetings in your department
2. You can choose to coach the individual or the group. The purpose should be to clarify the standards or to fix the standards
3. The third possibility is to have an official conversation to let your co-worker know that this is not the way he should act and that he will face consequences next time.
4. You can decide to take the disciplinary way. Which means that you use disciplinary police-law, which in the end can be followed by disciplinary action, e.g. ,reprimand or the severe punishment being dismissed.
5. The last way is to start a criminal investigation against the police-officer, which means the police-officer is a suspect of a serious crime.

Being open, being tolerant, participation, objectivity and rationalise reduce the chance that you ignore the warning signals of the start of a corruption process, especially in your department
By using this model you can think systematically about ethical subjects, you can face all possibilities and consequence, but far more important you have raised a set of standards te discuss moral behaviour openly and intensive.

We come to an end of our contribution. It is correct that there is an enormous emphasis on prevention of corruption. We believe corruption-control can only succeed when prevention is upgraded. We say there is a special need for the development of skills. Do not take for granted that every police-officer or every police-manager has the knowledge to do the right thing in the right way. Attention for skill-development deserves an full place in management responsibility.