

CHAPTER 7

Leading and Managing Interaction Under Risk in the Police: What May Be Some of the Underlying Conditions for Learning from Experience?

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Abstract: Leading interaction under risk is one of the aspects of being a leader in the police. After the 22nd of July 2011 Norwegian terror attacks it has been pointed out that the main explanatory factors as to why interaction under risk turned out as it did not necessarily was due to the lack of resources, previous evaluations or government plans but rather the lack of living up to these. In organisation theory, - psychology and management literature, it is customary to distinguish between expressed and actual ways to manage and lead, as well as between the structural-instrumental and the institutional perspective. These strands of research address how the difference between general and overarching political aims and the execution of the same aims in practice neither may be neither uncommon nor unexpected. However, is it possible to expect more agreement between aims and actual behaviour? If so, what may some of the underlying conditions for leading learning from experience be? This chapter discusses what some of the underlying conditions for leading and managing learning from experience in the case of interaction under risk in the police may be. Specifically, conditions of learning located *between* the expressed and executed, that is, *between* the institutional and cultural.

Keywords: *Samhandling*, interaction, police, organizational learning, experienced based learning, leadership, unforeseen.

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Introduction

In the Official Norwegian Report that followed the acts of terrorism in 2011, one of the main explanations proposed was that “resources were not able to find each other.” (NOU 2012:14:134, chapter author’s translation) One example given was when police personnel were unable to attain resources (i.e. boats) that were available at the scene, and coordinate themselves with the situation at hand. Proposed explanations were the lack of appropriate tools (e.g. joint communication platforms), and the quality of the police work performed. While cross-national exercises have been held in Norway (with Swedish colleagues), including joint communication platforms, there seems to have been less work done on the performance of cooperation under risk, and especially cultural explanations of this (Fimreite, Langlo, Læg Reid, & Rykkja, 2013; Johannessen, 2015). Cultural traits and the characteristics of the organization or institution have been shown to play a part in the quality of coordination in crisis management (Christensen, Danielsen, Læg Reid, & Rykkja, 2016). However, there is still no single optimal “solution or coordination formula that can harmonize competing interests, overcome uncertainty and ambiguous government structures, and make policy choices that everyone will accept.” (Christensen, Danielsen et al., 2016:330) In other words, there is no standard system that is best for dealing with emergencies in general (Christensen, Læg Reid, & Rykkja, 2016b).

At the societal level, the most serious situations are, fortunately, a rare occurrence. The importance of being able to lead and manage these events *when* they occur is, however, enormous. A lack thereof can lead to declining confidence in the principles of democratic governance and government (Læg Reid & Rykkja, 2014). The problems of governmental planning have been described as “ill-defined,” as they “are never solved” and are at best “only re-solved – over and over again.” (Rittel & Webber, 1973:160). Furthermore, securing public safety has been described as a “wicked problem”, as it intersects sectors, institutions and organizations (Christensen, Læg Reid, & Rykkja, 2016a). A specific challenge is that this type of work may “fall between different jurisdictions and organizations,” which may again result in a situation where the direct treatment of safety issues is

perceived as the “responsibility of none.” This may cause the unwanted consequence that necessary security measures are not implemented (Christensen et al., 2016:34). In addition, solving difficult problems by applying the formula of searching for information in order to understand them and then re-solve them, “does not work.” (Rittel & Webber, 1973:162). A potential way to go about this is to approach a given task, “reducing street crime” for instance, using “realistic judgement, the capability to appraise ‘exotic’ ideas” along with “trust and credibility” between the persons involved, and a willingness to try one possible approach, “OK, let’s try that.” (Rittel & Webber, 1973:164). However, even though these may be well-known moves within academia, Ritter and Webber emphasize that they may be less welcomed among public authorities and head managers in the public sector, as they may be “liable for the consequences of the actions they generate” (Rittel & Webber, 1973:167) to a greater extent. What does such an approach demand of police leaders and police organizations?

Leading interaction at risk in the police

Leadership is often defined as the process whereby one “individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” (Northouse, 2013:5). The key elements of this general definition may be found in a definition applied by a Leadership Academy for Policing: “the ability to effectively influence and combine individuals and resources to achieve objectives that would be otherwise impossible.” (Gibson & Villiers, 2006:6). An equally common way of describing the role of a person that is employed to influence a group towards such a goal is the distinction between management and leadership. According to Pierce and Newstrom (2011), “an effective manager...needs good managerial skills, and if they are managing people, possessing good leadership skills will be beneficial,” and vice versa, an effective leader “most likely will need good managerial skills.” (2011:xi). It is also common to distinguish between leadership that is characterized by viewing the process of influencing a group towards a goal primarily through the use of transactions, from leadership that leads towards a common goal through the use of vision and inclusion

of employees' views (i.e. "transformational leadership," see e.g. Pierce & Newstrom, 2011). Police leadership is described as neither of these styles exclusively, but rather as a combination of both (Cockcroft, 2014). Despite being described as having a preference for transactional leadership (Silvestri, 2007), some parts of police work may also be associated with transformational forms of leadership (Silvestri, Tong, & Brown, 2013). The dichotomy between transactional and transformational leadership in the police therefore "fails to recognize the nuances of organizational life," and a synthesis of the two leadership models may be a way to overcome these criticisms (Cockcroft, 2014:12).

In addition to the individual roles of leader and manager, leading and managing interaction under risk is influenced by contextual factors such as political aims. What is often the case with complex public-sector objectives is that they may include inherent contradictory demands (Agevall & Jenner, 2016; Granér, 2016). Thus, in addition to leadership in general, leading and managing interaction under risk in the police is also influenced by its context within the public sector. It is also characterized as a form of leadership that has been labelled "operative," in the sense that it potentially includes leading and managing in a context that may pose a threat to the lives of civilians and personnel (Olsen & Eid, 2015). Despite the fact that leadership within the police may be seen as existing within organizational structures that may show similarities to the military, the fire department, as well as the Foreign Service (Gordon, Clegg, & Kornberger, 2009; McKay, 2014; Rothwell & Baldwin, 2007), one challenge is often the described gap between "street cops" and "manager cops" (Reuss-Ianni, 1983/1999). This implies that police employees, despite the structure of their work organization, do not necessarily do as they are told (Andersson & Tengblad, 2009). Furthermore, knowledge-led policing may be questioned and even stopped, on the basis of a police personnel's experience-based knowledge, and professional opinion and judgment (see e.g. Gundhus, 2013).

The Unforeseen

As previously mentioned, some of the most severe cases may also be the rarest. The concept of "the unforeseen" (UN) describes "...any act that

is relatively unexpected and occurs with relatively low probability or predictability to those who experience and must deal with it.” (Kvernbekk, Torgersen, & Moe, 2015, 30, translated by the chapter author, see also Chapter 1). Examples of how it may be possible to learn from past experiences when preparing for DU are “unannounced exercises,” performed without preparation (Torgersen, Steiro, & Saeverot, 2013:2). The result of such exercises may not necessarily become visible or known to the participants until after the exercise itself, which places emphasis on the role of discussion and reflection. Experiences from planned crisis management exercises on a national level between the Norwegian Police Service, the Norwegian Armed Forces, and other parts of national security (Exercise [Øvelse] Tyr), have shown how having the operative leader (e.g. the Chief of Police), request of his/her colleagues that they play the part of a “critical friend,” may influence decision-making and the potential to lead learning from experience (Rosø, 2014).

However, opening up for critical questions alone is not assumed to be sufficient to lead and manage interaction under risk, and influence the ability to lead learning from experience. Particularly in the police it has been shown that opening up for critical input may be challenging because addressing past issues; for instance, actions that are not illegal but still unethical, may expose and potentially self-incriminate police personnel (Hoel & Bjørkelo, 2017). The legal framework that surrounds and is an inherent part of police work may thus potentially hinder leading and managing learning from experience, in the case of cooperation under risk. Other potential obstacles may be interpersonal factors, such as a form of “institutional shame,” as police employees, by definition, do not perform illegal acts (see e.g. Wathne, 2012). Furthermore, the surrounding factors of police work may create a situation in which addressing past experiences is not necessarily straightforward (Valland, 2016).

One of the intra-organizational factors that may play a part in the possibility to lead and manage learning from experience in situations including interaction at risk, is the socialization process from education towards profession (Fekjær, Petersson, & Thomassen, 2014; Granér, 2004; Johannessen, 2015; Lauritz, 2009; Reuss-Ianni, 1983/1999; Roberts, Herrington,

Jones, White, & Day, 2016; Rowe, 2005). Several authors have described how Swedish police employees may be met with negative reactions from leaders and managers when attempting to address work tasks, methods and the like, that are perceived as not working well (Kjöller, 2016; Wieslander, 2016). Gendered assumptions and explanations have also been described as factors that influence police leadership (Haake, 2017). This may again limit the potential for leading and managing learning from experience under risk.

Basic police education may be described as an institutional educational practice, where language and social interaction are perceived as the basis for how a social activity is created and recreated (see for instance Phelps, Strype, Bellu, Lahlou, & Aandal, 2016; Sjöberg, 2016). An extension of the basic training is continuing and further education, for example in leadership and management. Such educational programs are based on the view of learning as a lifelong process. Although not part of the same educational pathway in length and time, continuing and further education may be understood as taking part within police organizational and institutional practice (Sjöberg, 2016). Thus, continuing and further education may both be seen as an activity and situation that takes place inside and outside “the police”. According to Roberts et al. (2016), “embedding education” during the course of professional police working life may serve the dual purpose of both increasing “leadership” in the workforce as well as ensuring that future police leaders and managers “have the high-level, critical and creative thinking skills that complex problems require.” (Roberts et al., 2016:26). In this context, leading and managing learning from experience through DU activities (cognitive, written, oral and physical exercises), may create opportunities for the participants to be affected so that they in turn can “see” their experience, and thereby enable and engage in an interaction about it. But how does this relate to leading and managing interaction under risk? Is it even possible to reflect in the moment of action, and especially when the situation is unforeseen? On-the-spot reflection may not be perceived as possible in action, as it may cause harm to both civilians and police personnel (see e.g., Bergman, 2017). In this respect, “unannounced exercises,” performed without preparation, followed by time for reflection and discussion may be of use.

However, in order to evolve, learning implies a need. Thus, even though cases and exercises of the unforeseen may be useful, learning implies a perceived need and openness on the part of participants. A “discrepancy experience” is a term used to describe a situation where an experience comes into our awareness (Lindseth, 2015). Some describe this as realizing that one’s current knowledge is insufficient; there is a lack of correspondence between what is expected and what seems to be the case in a given situation (Hugaas, 2014). A discrepancy experience is a situation “where we notice that something is not correct” and where, although our knowledge about what is going on may be good enough, we have reason to doubt (Lindseth, 2012:170, chapter author’s translation). It is this doubt that provides the grounds for the discrepancy experience and later learning. So, what does it require of leaders and managers to “see” and experience a discrepancy and be able to assist and create learning from the experience among one’s personnel? Especially when addressing past issues may be perceived as a potential threat, leading to self-incrimination and the betrayal of one’s team.

In a study that investigated police cases that were legally correct but not necessarily good police practice, the results showed that leading learning from experience mainly took the form of strategies such as “straightening up” one’s personnel through instrumental, as opposed to reflective, learning measures (Hoel & Bjørkelo, 2017). Based on the results, suggestions for a stimulating climate for reflection and dialogue around the question “*is this good police work?*”, referring to the actual case, were suggested. As a way to bring potential cases of police malpractice to the fore, it was also suggested that going through the experience of being accused might be a way to “see” and experience a discrepancy, thereby creating learning from the experience among one’s personnel, and providing a basis for a fundamental change of practice.

Similar to the concept of discrepancy experience, cognitive dissonance is assumed to carry with it the potential for change. The concept of cognitive dissonance describes the experience of “the gap” between, for instance, one’s behavior and one’s basic values (Elliot & Devne, 1994; Festinger, 1957). Studies have documented that being able to obtain or create dissonance can have a major impact on health behaviors as well as

political affiliations (Bernstein, Alison, Roy, & Wickens, 1997). In the case of the lack of police quality in cooperation under risk, being accused of poor quality work in a national official report is presumably a potential experience that is remembered. However, due to the interpersonal bonds between police employees, the processes of socialization and professional shame, this alone may not enable learning. Thus, experiences of discrepancies and cognitive dissonance may be examples of underlying conditions for leading and managing learning from experience in the case of interaction under risk in the police. But how?

Some argue that it is the leader and manager's responsibility to "ensure that their team gets the experiences they need to acquire knowledge." (Effron, 2008:229) However, experience in itself may not be enough to enable learning. Police leaders may therefore potentially profit from arranging "unannounced exercises" of cooperation under risk for their personnel, based on previous actual experiences, if these are followed by reflection and discussion in a climate of trust. Previous studies have documented the impact of trust in teams (Moldjord & Iversen, 2015). Trust may also play a part in building a future bridge between "knowing-in-action" and "reflection-in-action" (Schön, 1992:123). "Knowing-in-action" is how we may learn to "see" (observe), "reflect on, and describe our knowing-in-action". We can test our descriptions for example by writing down how we *usually* act in certain situations and thereafter *observing* "what happens when other people try to follow them." (Schön, 1992:124). On the other hand, "reflection-in-action" may be useful when attempting to make sense of "on-the-spot" actions (Schön, 1992:125), such as the unannounced exercises. It may also be of value in drawing attention to leading and managing based on change and complexity, rather than predictability and control; encouraging one to "...take ordinary, everyday experiences seriously," and shift focus from systems to relations, movements and "ongoing ethical and moral evaluation" (Johannessen, 2009:225). Thus, nurturing the moral paradox of police leadership may in itself "sustain movement and tolerance of the known and the unknown – the expected and the unexpected." (Johannessen, 2015:179).

Conclusion - a model

This chapter has discussed what some of the underlying conditions for leading and managing learning from experience in the case of interaction under risk in the police may be. Specifically, conditions of learning located *between* the expressed and executed, that is, *between* the institutional and cultural that deal with “wicked” problems that in themselves may be unsolvable. One of the answers may lie in a model of *Leading and managing interaction under risk in the police*, which takes into account both context and potential underlying conditions for learning from experience.

Contextual factors may include (1) leadership style, with both elements from transformational and transactional ways of leading and managing; (2) its position within the general public sector, with its “wicked problems” that may be inherently unsolvable; and (3) the influences of interpersonal and socialization processes, and professional shame. In addition to these, there is also the impact of the current reigning economic and managerial ideology (e.g. New Public Management (NPM) in public sector, Christensen & Lægheid, 2001). As a process, a preliminary model of leading and managing interaction under risk in the police will have several similarities with general models of experiential learning, (such as Kolb’s learning circle, cf. e.g., Kolb & Kolb, 2005 and Lauritz, Åström, Nyman, & Klingvall, 2012). However, in order to provide “unannounced exercises” of cooperation under risk for their personnel based on previous actual experiences, police leaders and managers may also need to take into account notions of leadership that are based to a greater extent on complexity in everyday life rather than learning as a linear and instrumental process. “Managing the unexpected is not simply an exercise in going down a checklist.” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015:vii). Simultaneously, leading and managing under risk also requires adherence to risk and action lists during crisis. To sum up, the model proposed here may potentially influence all three levels of the bow-tie model (see Chapter 1): (1) what will be interpreted as a warning sign in the future; (2) how one plans for and reacts to the unforeseen; and (3) how recovery is understood and applied in practice.

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