Dilemmas behind Bars

A realist evaluation of an ethics training program for prison officers in two Belgian prisons

M. van Dijk

Boomjuridisch Antwerpen



Published, sold and distributed by Eleven P.O. Box 85576 2508 CG The Hague The Netherlands Tel.: +31 70 33 070 33 Fax: +31 70 33 070 30 e-mail: sales@elevenpub.nl www.elevenpub.com

Sold and distributed in USA and Canada Independent Publishers Group 814 N. Franklin Street Chicago, IL 60610, USA Order Placement: +1 800 888 4741 Fax: +1 312 337 5985 orders@ipgbook.com www.ipgbook.com

Boom Juridisch Antwerpen ISBN 978-94-6451-119-2 ISBN 978-94-6451-219-9 (e-book) NUR 824 D/2023/15251/09



Eleven is an imprint of Boom uitgevers Den Haag. ISBN 978-90-4730-175-2 ISBN 978-90-4730-176-9 (e-book)

© 2023 M. van Dijk | Eleven

This publication is protected by international copyright law.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the entire process of writing this book, I've thought many times about writing this section. I would not have been able to complete the process without the help of several important people, whom I would like to explicitly thank here. First of all, I would like to thank my promotor, Jeroen Maesschalck. I met him a little over five years ago when I was still a recent graduate in forensic psychology from the Netherlands. My background was different from most of his previous PhD students, but he gave me the chance to explore new topics and managed to completely turn around my view on qualitative versus quantitative research. For that, I am grateful, as it has given me a much less limited view on what good research is. I am also grateful for the many feedback opportunities I got from him throughout this process – even though I have definitely lamented the large number of comments at the time – and the thoroughness with which Jeroen has read every chapter of this publication. Second, I want to thank my co-promotor, Tom Daems. I have had interesting discussions with Tom throughout the process of writing this book. He has helped me find my way in the prison literature and always had good reading recommendations. His comments on the drafts were always very insightful. In addition, the encouraging comments he also left on every draft of this publication really helped me to believe in myself and in my work. I also would like to thank the advisory committee and examining board of my PhD. I received lots of constructive feedback and help from them.

Second, I owe a lot to the two prisons who participated in this study. Implementing the training program in such a context was no easy feat. Because the names of the prisons are not disclosed in this book, unfortunately, I cannot name any of the individuals who were involved in this implementation. That does not mean that I do not owe them my sincerest gratitude. In particular, I would like to thank the governing team of both prisons as well as the two planners who were tasked with organizing the training sessions with me. Both governing teams really believed in this study, which gave me the confidence to continue even when things were difficult. With regard to the planners, I have had many phone conversations with both of them when trying to plan the sessions. They devoted a lot of their valuable time to arranging this for me. In addition, I would like to thank all of

the prison officers who were involved in this study and made time to involve me in their world. I also want to thank all of the trainers involved in the training program. It wasn't always easy, and despite that I think all of you did a great job.

Third, I want to thank my colleagues at LINC. It's impossible to name all of you, but I have experienced so much friendship and general helpfulness during my time at LINC. I would like to name a few individuals in particular. Jonas, thank you for reviewing the statistics in this publication multiple times, despite being so busy yourself. Donatella, thank you for reading this entire study in your first two months at LINC (sorry!) and giving me valuable feedback. I also need to thank you so much for taking the time on helping me with the formatting. I am certain your own PhD will be great. Monique, I want to thank you for your general kindness, advice and for all the writing sessions we had together at the end of this publication. I am not sure how I would have coped without you in those final weeks. I also owe gratitude to Laura, Geertjan, Pieter and Ruben, who were involved in the course "Gevangenisstraf als doorleefde realiteit" with me. Being involved in that course, and all the activities we undertook together afterwards, truly put things into perspective for me and gave me a much-needed break from research-related things every Monday. I also want to thank the members of my team: Heidi, Lore, Jynthe, Stien and Charlotte, thank you for making my days here so much more fun. Last but not least, I reserve the utmost gratitude for Astrid and Silke. You know why; but in addition to that, you were the best colleagues I could have imagined. You befriended me when I came here from the Netherlands on my own and I don't know how I would have finished this publication without you.

Fourth, I would like to thank my friends. I owe gratitude to all of you, but I want to name a few people in particular. Isabelle, I don't think anyone understood me in the way you did, given that we both started our PhDs at the same time. Thank you for listening to all of my complaining, especially in the final months, and for going through this process with me. I want to thank Chris for giving the best pep talks in the world and for supporting me, always, even at odd hours. I would also like to thank my DnD group (Benjamin, Gino, Lukas, Ruben, Stan and Yoni) for much-needed distraction and pep talks on Thursday nights. Finally, I want to thank Rona for her support and blatant honesty whenever I need it.

Fifth, I owe special gratitude to my family. Bas, Leonie and Martijn, thanks for always looking out for me and being there for me. Myriam and Willy, thank you for always being optimistic about my abilities and for taking care of Iris sometimes so I could finish this publication. Mom and dad, I cannot describe how much of this publication is the result of your unrelenting belief in my abilities. That does not apply only to this publication, but starts way earlier, when you supported my decision to attend my chosen high school. All those evenings helping me with homework, bringing me forgotten laptops and calculators and telling me I could do it culminated in me being able to write this book. I cannot thank you enough.

Finally, I would like to thank two more special individuals. Bart, I owe you so much gratitude. You took over all of the household tasks while I was going through the final stages of this book and throughout my pregnancy. You never complained, gave me never-ending pep talks even when I wouldn't listen, discussed Moral Foundations Theory with me when I couldn't figure certain things out and played Streets of Rage 4 with me to get all the frustration out. I cannot thank you enough. The final person I would like to thank is my daughter Iris. You are now only four months old. Still, you put everything into perspective already. I'd like to say that we wrote much of this book together, and I love you so much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List o	of abbrevi	ations	15
Gloss	sary		17
Intro	duction		21
1	The et	hical dilemmas of prison officers	31
1.1	The po	ssible sources of prison officer value tensions	31
	1.1.1	Role ambiguity and conflict	32
	1.1.2	Relationships with broader society	35
	1.1.3	Relationships with managers and more experienced	
		colleagues	37
	1.1.4	Relationships with colleagues	38
	1.1.5	Relationships with prisoners	40
1.2	Value	tensions	44
1.3	Ethical	dilemmas	46
	1.3.1	Definitions	46
	1.3.2	Existing typologies	48
	1.3.3	Moral Foundations Theory	49
1.4	Conclu	ision	50
2	Realist	t evaluation	53
2.1	Realist	evaluation: specifying context, mechanism and outcome	53
2.2	The choice for realist evaluation in this study		59
2.3	Conclu	ision	60
3	Progra	Program outcome	
3.1	Why not unethical behavior?		63
3.2	Ethical competence		
3.3	The eth	nical competence framework	66
3.4	Transfe	er	70
3.5	Conclu	ision	71

4	Contex	ct	73
4.1	Totality and temptations for misconduct		
4.2	Legal framework		
4.3	Organizational context factors		81
	4.3.1	Prison conditions and work environment	81
	4.3.2	Ethics management	83
	4.3.3	Hierarchy and bureaucracy	86
	4.3.4	Relationship with management	87
4.4	Group context factors		90
	4.4.1	Relationship with society	90
	4.4.2	Attitudes towards prisoners	90
	4.4.3	Prison officer subculture	91
	4.4.4	Professional orientation, working styles and duality	93
4.5	Individual context factors		98
	4.5.1	Moral identity	99
	4.5.2	Coping strategies	100
4.6	Conclu	ision	103
5	Interve	ention: An ethics training program for prison officers	105
5.1	Types a	and approaches of ethics training	105
5.2	Ethics	training and evaluation	107
5.3	A brief	overview of "what works" in training programs	109
5.4	Choices in the design of an ethics training program for prison		
	officers	3	111
5.5	The tra	ining program as administered in the current study	113
	5.5.1	Before the start of the training	113
	5.5.2	Training content	115
	5.5.3	Feedback to management	120
5.6	Conclu	ision	121
6	Mecha	nisms and conceptual framework	123
6.1	Explaining ethical competence		123
	6.1.1	Social learning	123
	6.1.2	Enabling and constraining mechanisms	129
6.2	Explaining transfer		149
	6.2.1	Psychological safety and direct and observational	
		learning	150
	6.2.2	Motivation	151
	6.2.3	Time hurriedness	152
6.3	Conclu	ision	154

7	Metho	odology	155
7.1		rch design	155
	7.1.1	Research methods	156
	7.1.2	Adaptation of De Schrijver's ethical competence	
		framework for this study	158
	7.1.3	Case selection and sampling on multiple levels	161
7.2	Data c	ollection	174
	7.2.1	Work floor and training observations	174
	7.2.2		181
	7.2.3	Questionnaires	189
	7.2.4	Additional data	191
7.3	Data a	nalysis	192
7.4	Ensuring the quality of the research		197
	7.4.1	Triangulation	197
	7.4.2	Audit trail	198
	7.4.3	Member check	198
7.5	Limita	tions	198
	7.5.1	Case and sample characteristics	199
	7.5.2	Interview data	199
	7.5.3	Organizational difficulties	200
	7.5.4	Researcher influence	202
7.6	Resear	ch ethics: Protocol and personal reflections	203
	7.6.1	Informed consent	203
	7.6.2	Privacy and confidentiality	206
	7.6.3	Avoiding harm	210
	7.6.4	Ethical dilemmas and personal reflections	211
7.7	Training for management and training and coaching program		
	for wi	ng officers	217
7.8	Conclu	asion	219
8	The et	hical dilemmas of prison officers	221
8.1	Balanc	ing one's own authority with the prison hierarchy	221
8.2		ssing colleagues' behavior	222
8.3	"Us ve	ersus them"	223
8.4	Dealin	g with outcasts among colleagues	225
8.5	"Piles	of dirt" and professionality	226
8.6	Rule e	xceptions, reports and isolation	227
8.7		side vs. outside tension	230
8.8	Conclu		231
9	Result	s of realist evaluation in pilot prison A	233
9.1		ption of prison A	233

9.2	Possible mechanisms		
9.3	Conclu	sion	242
10	Contex	t factors in prison B	245
10.1	Totality	and temptations for misconduct	245
	10.1.1	Total features of prison B	245
	10.1.2	Opportunities for misconduct in prison B	247
10.2	Legal fi	ramework	249
10.3	Organiz	zational context factors	250
	10.3.1	Infrastructure and working conditions	250
	10.3.2	Population	252
	10.3.3	Ethics management	254
	10.3.4	Relationships with managers	264
	10.3.5	Hierarchy and bureaucracy	266
10.4	Group	context factors	269
	10.4.1	Relationship with society	270
	10.4.2	Attitudes towards prisoners and prison officer	
		subculture	274
	10.4.3	Subcultural norms	280
	10.4.4	Relationships with colleagues	284
	10.4.5	Duality	287
10.5	Individ	ual context factors	294
	10.5.1	Working styles	294
	10.5.2	Coping strategies	295
10.6	Conclu	1 0 0	298
11	Explair	ning ethical competence: Social learning	301
11.1	Descrip	otion of training groups	301
11.2	Genera	l observations on the modeling of different viewpoints	304
11.3	Session	1 (dilemma training)	305
11.4	Session	2 ('excuses' and action plans)	317
11.5	Session	3 (communication)	319
11.6	Session	4 (peer review)	320
11.7	Other e	lements of the training program and other outcomes	322
11.8	The imp	pact on rule-oriented officers	325
11.9	The impact of work experience		327
	11.9.1	The overall role of work experience in the training	327
	11.9.2	The role of experienced officers in the different	
		training groups	334
11.10	Other in	nformation related to the intervention	340
11.11	Conclusion		

12	Explaining ethical competence: enabling and constraining			
	mechar	nisms	347	
12.1	Psychol	logical safety	347	
	12.1.1	General findings on the mechanism	347	
	12.1.2	Classroom infrastructure and psychological safety	352	
	12.1.3	The role of confidentiality and bureaucracy in		
		psychological safety	353	
	12.1.4	Duality, 'strategical silence' and psychological safety	357	
12.2	Motiva	tion and attention	364	
	12.2.1	General findings on the mechanism	364	
	12.2.2	The role of hierarchy and the mandatory training in		
		motivation	369	
	12.2.3	Ventilation and attention	372	
	12.2.4	The role of stressors in motivation and attention	375	
	12.2.5	The role of cynicism, humor and rapport in attention		
		and motivation	383	
	12.2.6	Final remarks	383	
12.3	Group	polarization and bullying	384	
	12.3.1	Group polarization	384	
	12.3.2	Bullying dynamics	386	
12.4	Moral c	lisengagement	391	
	12.4.1	General findings on the mechanism	391	
	12.4.2	Moral disengagement directly targeted by the training		
		program	396	
	12.4.3	Displacement of responsibility and blaming the		
		circumstances	398	
	12.4.4	Reducing norms to facts	404	
	12.4.5	Avoidance by the use of humor and denial of		
		emotions	411	
12.5	Self-thr	eat due to loyalty to working style	415	
12.6	Conclu	sion: the CIMO-configurations summarized	425	
13	Explair	ning transfer	435	
13.1	Psychological safety and direct and observational learning		435	
	13.1.1	Psychological safety and transfer	436	
	13.1.2	Direct and observational learning	437	
13.2	Motiva	tion	439	
	13.2.1	Lack of follow-up and embeddedness in ethics		
		management	439	
	13.2.2	Ethical leadership	442	
13.3	Time h	urriedness	443	
13.4	Talking about dilemmas with colleagues			

13.5	Other f	indings related to transfer	450
13.6	Conclu	sion: the CIMO-configurations summarized	452
14	Survey	-based measurement of organizational culture and	
	ethical	competence	453
14.1	Survey-based measurement of ethical competence (ECQ)		453
	14.1.1	Linking process, response rate and coding process	454
	14.1.2	Factor analyses	456
	14.1.3	Coding process and scale description	457
	14.1.4	Results	466
14.2	Survey-based measurement of organizational culture in		
	prison	B (LOCQ)	475
	14.2.1	Response rate and background questions	475
	14.2.2	Factor analyses	476
	14.2.3	Results: organizational culture in prison B	479
14.3	Conclu	sion	484
Gener	al conclu	sion	487
Refere	ence list		509
Het gr	oene gras	S	535