In-field training in the police: learning in an ethical grey area?

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Abstract

Purpose – Although workplace learning is an important part of professional learning, little is known about the unethical aspects of workplace learning. The present study describes students learning experiences from in-field training in the police. The paper examines how workplace learning can challenge proper ethical professional development, and thus becomes a question of ethical concern.

Method – The study is based on open-ended questions in a questionnaire among Norwegian police students (N=277) who had ended their one year's in-field training and had returned to campus for the third and final year of police education. The data are analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis.

Findings – The paper presents two findings. First, the students learn best from assignments that push them beyond their comfort zone. Second, students struggle with their own expectations of themselves as police officers. The findings suggest that workplace learning leaves students aspiring to demonstrate their capability to be a police officer, rather than focusing on *learning* to be a police officer.

Practical implications –The study can provide organisations as educations, public services and businesses with better understanding on how to enrich learning in their on-the-job training manuals and programmes in order to evolve ethical professional behaviour. Ethical considerations can help leadership to improve efficiency and performance at the workplace.

Originality/value – How the potentially unethical aspects of workplace learning can influence the profession's ethical attitude, is an understudied topic in studies on learning to become a professional.

Keywords – Professional socialisation, police, professional ethics, workplace learning, professional identity.

Paper type – Research paper.

Introduction

The purpose of the human service professions[1] is to help those they serve with their difficulties and often complex life problems. The exercise of professional competence, authority and power often happens in relation to people who find themselves in exposed, critical and vulnerable situations. Considering this, conducting professional work requires a conscious engagement with professional ethics (Colby and Sullivan, 2008). This should also be an important topic for professional higher educations, the purpose of which is to develop and cultivate students' ability to reflect critically in order to see the importance of protecting and cultivating core ethical values of the profession (Dige, 2014, p. 4).

It is widely acknowledged that learning a profession requires both a theoretical and practical approach. Professional socialisation through workplace learning involves the formation of both a self and a professional identity in a complex interplay between cultural norms, values and communities (Trede, 2012; Zegwaard *et al.,* 2017). However, the emergence of a professional identity is not necessarily conscious, nor purposefully chosen (Trede, 2012, p. 159). An adjacent issue to professional identity, is the question of moral agency. Being a moral agent entails moral orientation and sensitivity towards ethical problematic situations (Miao *et al*., 2020) as part of the profession's mandate, task and role. Development of moral agency in a professional setting needs practical training, ethical reflection and critical discussion, which is known from the field of healthcare and education (Monteverde, 2014; Vanlaere and Gastmans, 2007; Carr and Steutel, 1999). As Zegwaard *et al.* (2017, p. 145) point out, students as critical moral agents in the workplace, has been little studied, and there has been less attention on understanding police students' as moral agents in workplaces. The present paper focus on the *potentially* unethical issues of learning a social profession, such as the police, through in-field training and hence the importance of being able to critical reflection whilst in the workplace.

Background

The context for the present paper is police education, the organisation of which varies in western countries (Belur *et al.,* 2019; Hove and Vallés, 2020). Police education at the Norwegian Police University College (NPUC), where the present study was conducted, provides a three-year Bachelors' programme comprising in-school education and in-field training (IFT). Students attend the first and third years on campus (in-school education), while the second year (ten months) is spent at a workplace where the student is paired with a tutor.

The authors of the present paper have taught police ethics-courses at NPUC for several years. When teaching ethics, the aim is not only to give students knowledge about ethical theories and principles, but also enable them to transfer this knowledge into morally sound actions and judgments in their professional roles. This approach to ethics means that a proper understanding can only take place when you know what to do and you are able to act according to this knowledge. As with any practical discipline, the students need experience and practice to develop their sensitivity to ethical situations in order to be competent moral agents. If students lack understanding of how to identify and reflect on situations that could be ethically problematic, they will probably continue a practice that could be ethical questionable (Trede, 2012, p. 160).

The present study shed light on how IFT in the police can convey unethical learning situations which can influence the students' development of moral agency and hence professional development. The paper presents an overview of how students describe their learning experiences from in-field training. The analysis provides descriptive meaning aiming to outline some of the more problematic issues of workplace learning in the police. By combining social learning theories and professional ethical perspectives on learning a profession, the paper opens up for a fruitful discussion on how to study ethics in learning a profession.

Some remarks on becoming a professional
Research has shown that being a participant in the police workplace has a significant impact on the student's professional development (Campbell, 2009; Charman, 2017; Harris *et al.,* 2004; Heslop, 2011; Winnæss *et al.,* 2020). According to Lave and Wenger (2011, p. 53), participating in a social practice, "implies not only a relation to specific activities, but also a relation to social communities". Hence, becoming a member of a community in order to learn, entails involvement with the organisation's everyday life and activities, as well as performing new tasks and developing new understanding (Lave and Wenger, 2011). Social practice in new work environments implies engagement, belonging, inclusiveness and the construction of new identity becomes inevitable (Blåka and Filstad, 2007; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002; Lave and Wenger, 2011). Workplace learning involves participating in various communities, where newcomers will feel accountable to their new colleagues, as well as other communities with which they interact (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002). In this case, the in-school education is as a significant community which the students, at least formally, belong to and relate to whilst in practice. Other communities that students take part in belong to the social world outside of the

police. As stated by Gherardi and Nicolini (2002, p. 421), learning in the workplace implies both belonging to and positioning oneself within a discourse of communities.

The aim of workplace learning has mostly been about making the newcomer 'work-ready' (Zegwaard *et al.,* 2017), focusing on the acquisition and application of the knowledge and skills needed to operate as a professional. Dall'Alba (2009) reminds us that the 'work-ready' attitude is not enough when learning a profession. Professional development "involves not only what we know and can do, but also who we are (becoming)" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 34). This implies the ability to think critically and reflection and "to navigate the ethical challenges and shape the organizational culture of the future workplace" to become profession-ready' (Zegwaard *et al.,* 2017, p. 145).

The student already has certain characteristic traits and motivations, which are then educated and developed within the collective practices belonging to the community. When considering the transformation of the self in the development of professional ethics and attitudes during IFT, virtue ethics, which emphasises that learning to be virtuous always takes place in a community, is a useful approach (Annas, 2011, p. 21; Oakley and Cocking, 2001). The importance of the community for the formation of a person's moral agency, has also been observed in an organisational setting by Solomon (1992) and Hiekkataipale *et al*., (2019). If learning the attitudes takes place in a community it follows that the community has a significant role to play in forming who we become. Some communities promote ethical characteristics, while other impede them. Awareness of what characterises the communities the students engage in during IFT is important to better understand some of the possible unethical sides of learning to be a police officer. Nonetheless, given that the students have an inner drive and aspiration to become a police officer (Chan, 2003; Charman, 2017; Hoel and Christensen, 2016), IFT should focus on the best context to facilitate the transition from student to profession-ready, where the "focus on becoming, not simply knowing as an end in itself" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 35) is emphasised.

Police work, ethical grey area and learning culture
It is well-established that what motivates and controls the police officer's behaviour, is the community of practice and peer-groups and not the larger organisation (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni, 2005, p. 297). To better understand how the future police officer can be affected as a moral agent, insight into the impact of variables on professional ethics, e.g. characteristic of police work and learning culture, is necessary.

Police work is a highly law-regulated practice, yet the law does not regulate every aspect of it, thus police officers' discretion plays an important part in police work (Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017). The execution of police work varies "from the good and correct to that requiring punishment, and between these two extremes, we find grey-areas, from the unfortunate and inexpedient to the improper, reprehensible or unlawful execution of their duties" (Myhrer, 2012 cited in Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017). An example of a grey area is when the police "stop and search" arbitrary people. "Stop and search" can be executed without a legal reason but rather based on the person's "look, social status and other markers" (Solhjell *et al.,* 2019, p. 7). This indicates decision-making on a personal and immediate level (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni, 2005), which can threaten the citizen's rule of law. Though "stop and search" may not be illegal, one can ask whether it is good police work (Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017). An ethical grey area is characterised by ambiguity of what is the right thing to do, which is a decision that calls for a cultivated moral agency.

According to Bishop *et al*. (2006) workplace learning is related to the issue of culture(s). The authors highlight how culture can both support learning and hinder learning. Organisations can be "innovative" as well as "inert" and hence "closing off many learning opportunities" (Bishop *et al*., 2006, p. 20). Various organisational studies have shown how the police is not able to learn from mistakes because the police do not ask fundamental questions, enhance critical nor ethical reflections regarding potentially causes for wrongdoing or mistakes (Wathne, 2012; Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017). Another hinder of learning is what Wieslander (2018) claims to be the "(hidden) silence" among officers. Wrongdoings are not reported due to the strong impact of the culture on informal norms and hierarchical structures concerning learning. Wathne (2012, p. 705) claims that due to the police's self-understanding it can be a hinder to admit mistakes as it becomes a form of 'latent professional shame'.

At an organisational level, police students find themselves between formal guidelines and cultural norms and practice. The abovementioned research and given the police powers, implies that the organisational challenges can have ethical implications for the development of moral agency within the police.

Method
Participants and procedures
The participants were Norwegian police students attending the third and final year of their police education at the NPUC. Of 706 police students who had completed their IFT, 302 were asked to participate in the study, and 277 volunteered. The sample contained 120 women and

150 men. 220 students were between 21- 25 years old. 186 students were placed in police stations in towns and cities, and 91 students spent their in-field training in rural police stations.

In accordance with the ethical criteria for research (see Norwegian Center for Research Data, https://nsd.no/nsd/english/index.html) the students were informed about the study's theme and purpose, and that participating was anonymous and voluntary. Those who consented to participate completed the survey during a classroom session. The survey took place three months after completion of the IFT. The survey was distributed via NPUC's web-based survey system in autumn 2019.

Survey

The questionnaire was developed by the author who conducted the study. It had 11 questions, both open and closed. The questions used in the present study was the open response categories asking the students about preferences, and what they found most challenging during IFT, e.g: 'What type of assignments did you like the best, and why?' 'What type of assignments did you like the least, and why?' and, 'What challenges did you experience as most demanding, and why?' These questions invited the students to elaborate on their answers. An advantage of this was that the analysis could be conducted by using a qualitative method which could provide a descriptive understanding of potentially latent ethical issues concerning IFT. The responses to each question were transferred from the web-survey system into Word documents.

Analysis

The text was analysed by means of a qualitative, inductive content analysis approach inspired by Malterud (2012). The process of the analysis goes through three steps.

First, a pre-reading of the text was made to get a general pre-understanding of the material which revealed connections that later guided the formulation of codes and development of meaningful themes. The second step identified units of meaning which were coded. Then the codes were further analysed and interpreted by looking for connections that contributed to descriptive meaningful themes which "elicit the essence of the participant's experiences" (Vaismoradi *et al.,*2016, p. 102). The third step of the content analysis was to further interpret the themes and relate these to established knowledge. For the present paper we draw on social learning and ethical theories and research to support the development of the study's storyline (Vaismoradi *et al.,* 2016, p. 106).

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of the study is that it points out the crucial role social learning perspective plays concerning the community's impact on the development of moral agency among police students. Still, analysing data from the open response category does not provide in-depth insight to the phenomenon, hence limits an increased understanding of the students' experiences of the learning process. However, by using the most elaborated text, made it possible to undertake a content analysis. Though the study did not ask the students specifically about ethical consideration, some of the questions did not rule out ethical reflections and thus it is interesting that they did not provide ethical considerations on their preferences for learning touched the issue of practice in ethical grey areas. To get a deeper understanding of ethical learning dilemmas, moral agency and powerful relations, future research is encouraged to explore this by means of appropriate research methods, e.g. focus-group interviews with and/or observations of students attending in-field training.

Results

The analysis generated two findings: students learn best from assignments that push them beyond their comfort zone and students struggle with their own expectations of themselves in becoming a police officer. In the following the two findings are elaborated.

Students learn best from assignments that push them beyond their comfort zone

The empirical material shows a variation in what type of police assignment students preferred. Students reported enjoying traffic assignments, operative, tactical assignments, search and rescue operations, drug related police work, as well as preventive work among young people. The analysis shows that *how* the assignment generated learning, seemed to be more important than the particular type of assignment. As a student said: "Having thought about this with hindsight, it wasn't necessarily the actual type of assignment that I liked, but rather that I had addressed it in a good way". Furthermore, an important issue that emerged from the data was that most of the students preferred assignments that generated excitement, stress and a high pulse rate, taking the students out of their comfort zone. A student wrote that: "I won't hide the fact that I liked jobs with a lot of 'fizz'. Those where the adrenaline is pumping and you are way out of your comfort zone". Another student claimed to like best: "In general, assignments that were exciting and which made my pulse race and made me concentrate." Assignments that took students out of their comfort zone, were experienced as a test of

whether they were able to function under stress and pressure. For instance, a student wrote the following:

> I liked jobs that tested me. Example. A man was punched down in broad daylight and hit his head on the tarmac and was unconscious and bleeding. That situation tested my ability as a police officer – it was stressful and there were lots of things to think about.

Another said: "I liked jobs that involved high-speed driving and where it kicked off best because I found them exciting and they tested how I cope under time pressure and stress". And a third reported: "Jobs where I really felt tested, and where I helped to solve the problem in the best possible way".

The analysis points out three factors that played a significant role when describing what the students preferred in action-oriented assignments. The students experienced (i) being mentally and physically *challenged*, (ii) *mastering* the situation, and (iii) *learning*. Thus, the analysis indicates that the reason why they preferred the action-oriented assignments was not necessarily the action in itself, but rather that they, through these assignments, became an active participant who successfully solved the assignments which they learned something from.

The students' preference depended on the learning outcome. The survey did not ask students *what* they learned, but a reasonable interpretation of the data shows that they learned about themselves as police officers. For example, several students claimed that assignments characterised as action-oriented taught them whether they were able to master the police role, or not. Students said:

> Jobs such as fires, suspicious deaths, traffic accidents, things like that that required a great deal of work and gave you the opportunity to test out the things you had learned in B1, and to follow the matter from first to last. It was those jobs that gave you the sense that you were getting the hang of it, whilst, at the same time, one learned about one's own capacity and ability to grow.

> The hectic, challenging and exciting jobs. Where a lot happened. I feel that I learn a lot from such assignments, because I have to work under pressure. It gave me a sense of mastery to know that I got to do the police job in its entirety.

Drugs: you have to use little signs and symptoms, read the person, talk to them, dig around a bit, sneak your way into explanations and finally make decisions. It was a challenge at first that left me stressed and uncertain, but which I eventually learned how to do it.

These quotes illustrate that even though they were pushed out of their comfort zone students experienced learning as long as they were able to exercise their knowledge and skills. What they take from such assignments, is that they are ready to work as a police officer. An adjacent issue to this is that the students seem to emphasise *their own* learning outcome, rather than bringing in the ethical aspects of the methods they practiced, in order to learn. An example of this is the use of 'stop and search', reflected in the following quotes:[2]

I really liked shifts when we read up about someone in the police system and then went and banged on their door and talked our way into an arrest or search [in order to learn].

I liked best when we stopped cars for whatever reason in the night as a way of *training* and as a way into searching (Authors' italics.).

These two quotes show that the tutors construct learning situations, as there is not a justifiable reason to "stop and search". Despite that 'stop and search' is much debated as unethical police practice (see Bowling, 2007; Solhjell *et al.,* 2019) students did not seem to consider the possible ethical aspects of stopping arbitrary civilians with the intention of hunting for potential criminals. The analysis shows that *how* police students experience their learning is by direct involvement in situations that provide immediate feedback on how they manage the action- and crime-fighting aspects of police work.

Students struggle with their own expectations of themselves as police officers
The analysis shows that the majority of the students expressed ambiguities in their student role during IFT. Several reflected that it became a question of belonging and of negotiation of their role. The analysis points out that the students' biggest challenge was to define their role in the workplace. For instance, a student observed that: "It was difficult to find 'my place' not only as a student, but also as a policeman". The following elaborates on how this challenge is expressed by the students in various ways.

A student claimed it became demanding to have their behaviour scrutinised by everyone:

> I found, in fact, simply being a student the most difficult. To have someone evaluating you, keeping an eye on you and forming an opinion about the work you do. How you talk to the public, what solutions you arrive at and your appearance.

This quote indicates that the workplace has a critical gaze on the students, monitoring and controlling all aspects of the student's behaviour. A possible unintended consequence is that the student did not experience leeway as a learner. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that the students experienced seeking acceptance and inclusion as a colleague through performing daily tasks as a fully-fledged police officer demanding. The most challenging, as a student said, was: "That the work I did be good enough – that I was not the weak link in the investigation". This expectation to produce good work was enhanced by the workplace, which added to the students' own expectation:

> As there was a lot of investigatory work there, the biggest challenge was to contribute good enough work to the investigations. I felt that I was given a lot to do and this left me feeling responsible for that and striving to do as good a job as my colleagues.

Students reported various challenges relating to their high expectations of their own performance. Some students claimed that it became challenging to impress the colleagues: "I had many nice and experienced people around me who I looked up to and wanted to impress." Another said: "….to show those at headquarters that I had a role in the police, I thought that I mustn't do anything wrong. And so I put a lot of pressure on myself". Despite the strong desire for acceptance and to belong to the community, this became conflictual because the students realised that they lacked both knowledge and experience. However, some students tried to pretend to not be an ignorant newcomer: "[It was a challenge] to get into everything one should and not to seem as 'wet behind the ears' as I was." The students' aspiration to perform indicates that they identified with the more experienced and competent police officers, yet did not feel accepted. Some students even claimed that they disliked being addressed as "the student".

> I found it, especially towards the end, especially challenging to be seen as 'the student'. I wanted – more and more- to be a real resource for the team, and I did

become that in the end. But, even. Then. There were those who still called me 'the student'.

While the students had a strong desire to be accepted as a team-member, the awareness of being a student led to tensions which they had to negotiate and address for themselves:

> The challenge I struggled most with was accepting and remembering that I was only a student in practice and that it was not intended or expected that I should know the solutions to each and every problem or task. I compared myself a lot with the graduated police officers who had worked for several years and had much more experience than me.

For several students it became difficult to cope with this tension regarding their new role, and for some students this had a negative impact, which became a source of disappointment: "I so wanted to succeed, and felt prey to feelings of failure and underachievement." Another student said: "I had overly high expectations of myself, which left me disappointed if I wasn't shown the things I could be good enough at or could do. If I didn't succeed it felt like a defeat".

Although it is well-know that being a member of various communities generates challenges, these findings provide insights in to how these challenges are manifested from the perspective of police students. They describe the workplace and the peers as monitoring and controlling of their behaviour and they strive to live up to their own expectations, performing at their best. Additionally, the students claim to learn best from assignments characterised by stress and high pulse. To sum up, these are all situational contexts which can impede the students' social and cognitive resources needed for ethical reflections and considerations regarding good police practice.

Discussion

In the following the potential ethical implications of the findings concerning the students' development as moral agents are discussed. The discussion will relate to the previously presented theory aiming to explain and understand the challenges of becoming a professional.

Learning in an ethical grey area

The present study indicates that students preferred to learn in situations where they felt stress, were activated and aroused, which touches mental and cognitive issues (Boe *et al.,* 2020). The individuals' mental capacity can change during stress and the ability to judge the situations reduces (Boe *et al.,* 2020). Hence, the situations, or assignments students claim to learn from, can reduce the students' ability to situational awareness and to gain an understanding to make the best ethical decisions. Police work is inherently relational, characterised by day-to-day encounters which call for a procedural approach (Charman, 2017) where the police officers' communication enhances the public's experience of being treated with fairness and dignity. Here, sensitivity is an important attitude in order to safeguard ethical, legitimate practice (Dige, 2014).

Furthermore, the students claimed to learn best from assignments that, in research is characterised as an 'ethical grey area' (Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017). They even describe that situations, such as 'stop and search', were constructed by the tutors. Of course, to learn the operational skills and tactics required to undertake police work (work-ready), *real* experiences are necessary. However, it is an ethical dilemma of learning when police constructs situations which implies intervention, not required by the law, towards citizens because the human rights of the individuals are at play, even if it is justified as 'student training' in-house.

Align with this, the analysis indicates that students regard assignments as important means to prove and perform their capability as educated officers, rather than learners. Whilst on patrol, the student seeks to fulfil expectation of the workplace to gain acceptance, which is also supported by other studies on workplace learning (Hoel, 2019). The analysis shows that the more experienced officers became role models the students emulated. The students claimed very high ambitions and express clear expectations to themselves to work as full-fledge police-officer. It follows from social learning theories that individuals can understand best practice by participating together with role models (Miao *et al*., 2020; Hoel, 2019). Still, as Gould and Kaplan (2008) ague role models and peers can be a source not only of ethical practices but also of unethical practice. Fekjær *et al's.*, (2014) study of police students support this finding. They show that during IFT the students changed their attitude to be more in line with the negative characteristics of the street cop culture.[3] In the beginning of the police education students expressed clear attitudes supportive of the legality of police work. During IFT these legalistic attitudes gave way to judgements which can be called 'Dirty Harry' thinking, where the ends justify the means (Fekjær *et al.,* 2014). The researchers argue that the change in attitudes and values are due to the peers' impact on the students.

Research (Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017; Solhjell, 2019; Bowling, 2007) has shown that experienced police officers practice in an ethical grey area without questioning the ethical aspects of practice, neither at the individual level nor at the organisational level. Thus, and in accordance with Fekjær *et al.* (2014) it is reason to believe that training in ethical grey area later becomes part of an established (unethical) practice. Hence, what is ethically questionable is whether police students, due to the organisational challenges, are provided with resources and opportunities by the workplace to critical reflection enhancing their ethical understanding concerning police practice.

The ambiguous role of the student
Workplace learning implies engagement in various communities (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002). In this case, students take part in a formal education (in-school education) as well as in-field training which are formalised informal training. Hence, during IFT the student's position is between the formal policies and procedures of the education and profession, and the workplace's informal values and practice. Furthermore, according to Gherardi and Nicolini (2002, p. 421) it becomes important to the learner to participate in the discourse where "each community maintains its own voice while listening to the voice of the Other". This description is an ideal which in the field of policing seem to lack. Though the present study does not have data that support this, other research (Bergman, 2017; Chan 2003; Harris *et al*., 2004) demonstrate that the curriculum and reading lists at the police education is not an issue for the tutors. For instance, Chan (2003), Hoel, (n.d), Bergman (2017) and Winnæss *et al.,* (2020) show that experienced police officers and tutors, claim a negative view of what is taught at the police academy as being not relevant to the *real* police work. This indicate a lack of recognition of the other community which the student is part of, which could also imply that the student's knowledge and lived experience are not valued as well.

Given the findings of the present study it is timely to question whether the tutors seek to stimulate ethical, critical questions concerning their own practice which open up for a discourse where the different values of the communities are openly addressed. If not, a possible consequence can be that the students' struggle with defining their role is not taken seriously by the ones who are closest to them during IFT. The implication can be that students are not provided with the resources needed to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of being placed between the two communities, which is necessary in order to develop critical reflection concerning police work and its ethical core. When difficulties and other problematic issues are suppressed, the ideal of discourses between communities as described by Gherardi

and Nicolini (2002) are not being realised. This emphasises the crucial importance of the workplace ability to ethical considerations regarding its own practice and shared values.

The importance of communities for ethical training
From an ethical perspective, the abovementioned implications of workplace learning should be a major concern for a police educational programme seeking to educate students as moral agents as being professional ready. The workplace is the context in which attitudes and values about police work are passed on to the students. As we have seen from the discussion, the students emphasise proving themselves to their colleagues, which can cause the risk of reproducing the values and practices inherent in the work culture they are part of. When this is the case, the socially generated culture is likely to be essentially conservative (Trede, 2012, p. 160). Hence, the role of higher education, to educate critically, cultural change agents, is not fulfilled (see Christopher, 2015).

For students who strive to be accepted by the workplace it can be difficult to be critical to the community of practice. The findings show the importance of the police's ability to reflect about their mandate, task and role in order for the students' learning do not come into conflict with the purpose of the police, which is not to act on behalf of oneself and community, but to serve society (Green and Gates, 2014). Given the lack of attention to in what manner the contexts shape our attitudes and values, how then can students acquire an ethical awareness of professional identity as moral agents who develop a critical view on the potential implications of police work?

Drawing on virtue ethics, important aspects of becoming virtuous are the motivation to learn and the drive to aspire. When the drive to aspire is associated with an intellectual commitment to giving reasons and understanding why something is done, it is possible to have critical reflection on the community one is participating in. The students need to see that learning attitudes is not primarily about copying what colleagues are doing, but more importantly about understanding what the point is of doing what the colleagues are doing. An important insight from virtue ethics is that the resources for the ethical development of a professional identity are already present within the moral agent (Annas, 2011). Learning the attitudes for the right reasons in the right manner will, according to Trede (2012, p. 161) give students ethical awareness in developing their professional identity. To achieve this, the student must make the attitude involved her own by being able to exercise it in a self-directed way (Annas 2011, p. 18). This self-directedness, in turn, leads to a drive to improve on what is learned from the peers. The goal is to do what is learned better and not just copy it like a

routine from the expert. When virtues are cultivated and integrated as part of one's self-understanding, they express a commitment to act in accordance with our ideals and values. This shows that the development of moral agency and the virtues is also about professional development through a personal dimension (Delattre 2011, p. 14).

We have seen from the findings that the students have high ambitions, but they struggle to find their place in the workplace. A major concern is that students' experience of this struggle is acknowledged by neither the in-field training nor the in-school education. This generates a dissonance that needs to be addressed in order for the students to develop professional readiness based on sound ethical practice. By ignoring this aspect, IFT may be a site where students, without reflection, internalise workplace habits and values.

Concluding remarks
The present study has examined how workplace learning can challenge proper ethical professional development, and thus becoming a question of ethical concern. In doing this, the paper shows the importance of taking a critical look at how professional identity is developed as part of an ongoing negotiation between the different communities where learning takes place. Because of the nature of the police work and organisational challenges, students dwell into ethical grey areas of learning due to their self-expectation, role-conflict or ignorance of the ethics of being a learner in a professional workplace community. Hence, learning a profession should not be limited to the ethics of the profession, but must also include the ethics of being a learner in a professional context.

Moral agency as part of professional identity is developed in the complex interplay with cultural values and attitudes emanating from the various communities constituting the learner's professional identity. As this paper has argued, when workplace learning results in possibly unethical practises, more research is needed into how the students can be encouraged to develop moral values and sensitivity as a professional in accordance with the high standard of any profession.

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[1] For further reading on 'professions', definitions and criteria, see Green and Gates (2014).
[2] In these two quote, "stop and search" are examples of an ethical grey area (see Hoel and Bjørkelo, 2017).
[3] For further reading on police culture, see Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (2005).