1. **Description of Corruption Behavior**

   The behavior desirable to be changed in Thai culture is the common bribing of public servants which is a part of the bigger set of government corruption. Bribes are illegally accepted payments for services. Bribery benefits corrupt officials to achieve private financial gain and for the briber to either gain outcomes faster than others, to motivate the officials to turn a blind eye on illegal conduct or to buy influence with monetary power. In the following we differentiate between the bribing behavior of poorer people (‘Type A’ behavior) and members of high-society (‘Type B’ behavior) involving political corruption (Mutebi, 2008). For limiting the scope of this script, cases of officers soliciting households for bribes are not included.

2. **Explanation of Corruption Behavior**

   Corruption is regarded by the majority of Thais as legitimate which is a major cultural determinant for action. As bribing behavior is generally rewarded it is, according to Thorndike's Law of Effect, repeated and socially reinforced. Conditioning to bribery starts early as primary school by teachers accepting bribes from the parents to pass their children, forming early causal antecedents. The locus of control shifts for the briber from an external institution and its objective norms - with outcomes based on perceived luck (Weiner, 2010, p.30) - to a personal relationship with the bribed official and shared subjective norms which are far more controllable. Corrupt behavior is highly successful as it moves the prospect of achieving one’s goals to within the person. Since bribing is, despite its common appearance, still a risky business it is a difficult task. Attributing an internal causal locus for success leads to high personal pride for the briber (Weiner, p.31), besides the externally gained incentives. Self-ascriptions and attributions are skills, ability or personality. Primary motivation for bribing behavior is extrinsic since the rewards are external. Motivation and subsequently cognitive situational focus (Borgida & Mobilio, 2000, p.349) is amplified if the goal is based on social pressure (Armitage & Christian, 2003, p.190) and includes interest of the family or an associated group.

   For **‘Type A’-behavior** the bribed official is in control of the briber who is at the situational mercy of the officer in charge. This lower-level corruption is seen as an incentive for low-paid government servants to make money easily by soliciting bribes from others or accepting bribes. Incentives on both sides are relatively small and the process is seen within mutual subjective norms.

   For **‘Type B’-behavior** the bribed official is controlled by the bribing aristocrat if he has the influence and socio-political power to threaten the officer in charge directly or indirectly. Monetary power is thus not sufficient. Since incentives and goals at stake are far larger, the corrupt official will have to share the bribe with involved colleagues. Since aristocrats in Thailand are in the controlling position they may withhold bribes if outcomes are not to their satisfaction. Strong attitudes of high-society persons attesting their own subjective right of the law favoring them make them a strong predictor for corruptive behavior (Armitage & Christian, p.188). Actual determinants are however the involved intentions such as plans to circumvent the law (p. 190).
3. **Causes of Corruptive Behavior**

From a behaviorist-cognitive perspective corruption is learned behavior. The behavior is pre-conditioned by the cultural practice of the exchange of favors. The corresponding cognitive set confirms the legitimacy of subjective norms and strengthens self-efficacy as individual behavior is reinforced by social context. To keep the locus of control on a personal level is in congruence with practices in a socio-centered culture. Behavior is encouraged by injunctive and descriptive norms (Nigbur et. al, 2010, p.262) falling into congruence.

From a humanistic perspective, in particular Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970), corruption arises by the need to satisfy physiological- and safety needs. In a society where basic needs are not met, needs of higher orders such as self-esteem and self-actualization cannot be addressed successfully. If a government official is paid too low and has to worry about livelihood then this supersedes higher-order norms of moral and personal integrity. In order to empower people to reach self-actualization, basic needs need to be met first; otherwise a person is forced to revert to strategic behavior which is merely instrumental (Lars & Oliver, 2010).

4. **Strategies for Change**

To change ‘Type A’ behavior, officers need to be paid decently in order to eliminate the motivation to collect bribes to make a living. However, in poorer countries with extended social context no money paid is probably ever enough. Decent salary is nonetheless a contributing factor as it eliminates a primary need that can be exploited. The training of officers in anti-corruption policies and practicing corruption-situations via role-plays can change both the mid-set and conditioned behavior of government staff (Toropov, 2011). The intensity, regularity and follow-up of such training are essential for reinforcement conditioning on individual and group level. Incentives need to be given in the context of staff’s anti-corruption performance. Punishments for officer’s non-compliance, such as exemption from bonuses, salary cuts up to dismissal need to be set out to assign validity for the consequences of illegal- or obstructing conduct. For bribers the threshold of engagement can be raised by prior briefing on government policies and warnings. For the situational setting an open architectural office layout which makes ‘secret deals’ impossible can add tremendous value. To process legitimate urgent requests, based on evaluated priority, without resorting to bribes by setting up a counter for emergency cases can re-condition long-term social behavior. This could be introduced in a more gentle and spiral pattern of change (Prochaska et al., 1992). A newly found causal stability serves as the basis of reliable expectancy shifts (Weiner, p.31).

To change ‘Type B’ behavior is difficult. Corruption can only be stopped when leaders in top-positions are themselves not corrupt; otherwise bribers simply circumvent lower-level government staff to negotiate with their superiors directly. For staff to move into senior positions by merit, with a proven track record, prevents the practice to buy corrupt people into leading positions and enforces long-term social change. Whistleblower policies can effectively protect staff in inferior power positions but then again, such frameworks only work when top-management itself is reliably demonstrating integrity.

To build a broad consensus between government, the private sector and civil society is a facilitating process to constitute rational consensus as the guiding normative cognitive and behavioral set (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Asian Development Bank, 2007). The last decisive issue on the topic is a number game. More than 60% of all Thais shockingly regard a corrupt government as acceptable (Bangkok Post, 2012) according to a very recent poll conducted by the Assumption University of Thailand (ABAC). This reduces the outlook of fighting corruption on top-level government level significantly. It is a prerequisite that in order to fight corruption, corruption itself needs to be identified as anti-social and anti-ethical behavior to set a base for motivational change. Such information can be provided for the public via suitable educational campaigns and programs.
References


