Chapter 10

Reflections on the findings

This study started off with the aim of comparing the various police services and analysing what had been achieved in the area of training and education in these police services. The study had as its main aim, understanding what the officers at the respective police jurisdictions understood to be important aspects of their training and education. The officers own perspectives on the content, method, curriculum and courses was documented taking into account their opinions on 1) what is currently being offered by the training/educational institutions and 2) what changes are required in policing. During this process, using the hermeneutical perspective, the participants of the study were encouraged to think about all of these issues in a critical fashion. What is the new contribution of this study to the field of police education and training and what significant issues should be taken note of by designers of police education/training?

In earlier chapters, we differentiated between training and education and what the pundits defined for these

areas (Kilup,1983; Muir, 1982; Froyland 1991). One of the clear findings in this comparative analysis is that for most police officers, there is no real reason to differentiate between these two components. The participants in all jurisdictions with the exception of Singapore indicated throughout the focus group meetings that they did not see much difference in understanding how training was different from education. In Singapore, the groups identified that junior officers should be trained and senior officers should be trained first and then provided chances to further their thinking through education. The competency based educational system that is being designed throughout the world does not differentiate between training and education in the same way this was done in the past (Knowles, 1990). Any designer of police education should take note of this. The findings of Hoover (1975), that many police academies disguised training as education has been modified in current police academies where the trend seems to be to not distinguish clearly between training and education. Training subjects in many organisations (not just police organisations) are incorporated to provide credits towards degree and even post-graduate programmes. This raises a very important issue with regard to the methods of training and education that should be employed by both

training units and universities. This being the case, our initial decision not to be tied down to terminology but to examine the 'process of learning' can now be justified as the participants in our study did not want to differentiate between training and education. Thus the first issue of significance that should be taken note of is that in the current environment, training and education go hand in hand and should not be seen to be very different. The credit based system of education that most universities have adopted, provides recognition for training. The value of training has increased as it is now seen to be an integral part of any skills based educational qualification.

All participants in this study discussed the methods and processes employed to train/educate police officers. The initial research indicated that using adult based processes should be taken into account when training/educating in changing environments (Brookfield, 1987). The educational theory of pedagogy was discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis and one question in this study related directly to this theory. The participants were asked about the processes that they saw as being fit to enhance their understanding of the subject matter that was being presented to them.

The process outlined by Knowles (1990) and Smith (1982) indicate that there must be certain qualities, characteristics and implications of adult learning that make adult learning different from learning by children. All focus groups in this study were conducted by the researcher with the aim of understanding if these principles applied to police education/training. What can be concluded from the summaries of all the focus groups is a very clear indication by the participants that adult learning principles are important in their context of learning. This is not expressed directly but an analysis of the comments made during the focus group meetings and in subsequent interviews indicate the following:

- All participants want to be in control of what is presented to them in their training/educational programmes. Even though police organisations are very hierarchy based, there was a clear need by the participants to feel that they had been consulted on the content of the training/educational programmes

- All participants expressed a desire that their past experiences should be taken into consideration when training/educating them. This is in line with the main characteristic of adult learning principles ie. adults need to feel that their past experiences are not devalued or ignored. All of the new and creative way

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designed by universities to offer credits within degree and postgraduate programmes for previous study at training institutions is based on this premise.

- All participants expressed interest in task orientated subjects ie. conflict resolution, investigative skills. This is another characteristic of adult learning and the participants in all of the focus groups from all jurisdictions expressed more interest in task orientated subjects.

- The participants saw themselves as being capable of self-direction and this is one of the characteristics of adult learning. Interestingly, not all of the participants expressed this view, especially when they were from a controlled environment like Singapore. The participants from Canada and Hong Kong were more enthusiastic about distance learning and self learning programmes, when compared to their Singaporean counterparts.

The significance of the above findings must be incorporated into guidelines for presenters and curriculum developers. What are the implications for presenters and curriculum developers in police education/training?

The first implication is to treat police students as adult learners. This is happening in some jurisdictions but a brief analysis of the materials supplied to police students at the various police training schools does not indicate that this is consistent. The students in Hong Kong and even in Ontario spend many hours involved in activities that may be significant to their trainers (ie drill training) but do not encourage adult learning behaviours. There may be immense benefits in such activities and it may be advantageous for the instructors to be aware of adult learning principles that could be incorporated in such areas as drill training. The principle to apply is that police students should be treated as learners and the instructor is a learning reference for the participants and not a traditional instructor.

The second implication is in relation to the constantly changing nature of policing work. This characteristic of policing would make a formal, rigid curriculum worthless in many areas covered by police instructors. It could be argued that policing by its very nature, requires constantly updated and changing training curriculum. This fits in extremely well with principles of adult learning as outlined by Knowles(1990) most recently, and by other

andragogy theorists such as Alford (1968) and Barry (1978) in the past. It could be argued that police instructors must keep asking their learners what should be included in their learning. This is what most participants in all of the jurisdictions that were looked at by this study indicated - they would like to make strong contributions towards the curriculum and be included in deciding what should be taught at the police academies.

The third implication for instructors is in relation to the styles of teaching and instructing. The involvement of police students actively participating and being involved in classroom activities would be important. This finding is based on the fact that all of the focus groups identified the lack of involvement of the officers in any activity linked to the classroom. The inference from the discussion, and comments made after the discussion, indicated that the participants did not think that they had been involved or allowed to be involved actively in classroom activities. The inference one can draw from this is that the instructors and the students may not be able to break the cultural barriers that guide the standard student instructor relationship. In the past, police researchers have argued that the cultural

hierarchical barriers between ranks in the police service provided some value especially during the colonial policing times but again there is no current research to indicate if this value provides benefits in the classroom for adult learners (Alderson R, 1973; Koenig D 1982). If we are to apply adult learning principles to police training/education, this implication should be taken seriously.

The final implication for instructors is based on the focus groups comments with regard to wanting to take ownership of the training/educational process. This comment was discussed in every focus group across the jurisdictions and when the participants were probed into thinking about this it became clear to the researcher that there was a lack of understanding on the part of the students on why certain subjects were provided at certain stages of their careers.

To explain this further, as an example in Singapore, management subjects are only taught to senior officers, whereas in Ontario, management subjects are provided as part of the recruit training. There was no disagreement on the importance of the subjects but participants indicated that knowing why a subject or course was

provided at a certain stage of their career would enhance their planning process for professional development. This is a critical point, because when the planning process is explained to the participants it provides a feeling of security and trust to these participants. It provides a feeling that they are part of and in control of their career plans. In Western Australia, the police service has now successfully incorporated this into the training/education process. All officers know when they are required to participate in what courses. The most comprehensive example of this that the researcher experienced was with the Singapore Airport Terminal Services Security organisation (SATS). In this organisation, all recruits are provided with a training/education plan for their next three years upon confirmation of their posts. All senior officers are also provided with a five year training/educational plan. It could be argued that this provides the officers with certainty with regard to training/education and the current research done during the initial stages of this study indicates that this is a positive factor that enhances the training/educational value. It relates back to the ownership where the officers feel in control of their professional development plans. Travis (1995) in his study found that the New Haven Police Department of

Connecticut was the only police department that he identified (out of 157 police departments) having this pattern of professional/training/educational development plans for their officers.

Towards a Model of Police Education/Training

Chapter two of this thesis looked at the characteristics of static versus an innovative organisation. Any model of police education/training should take into account the type of organisation that the police service wants to emulate. What this section of the thesis strives to do is bring together the comments and reflections of the focus groups in their deliberations on the content and the types of courses that they felt police officers should undertake. The analysis that was presented earlier in the respective chapters will be brought together in developing this model for police education/training. While the reader should be aware of the limitations of this study in terms of participant numbers, they should also reflect on the strength of using hermeneutics as a methodology to encourage participants to think and reflect in the focus groups. As indicated in this study, the methodology can bring about critical thinking of the issues under discussion. The hermeneutics method also

provides the basis for cultural and time related understandings, both factors crucial for a comparative study across three cultures.

The two questions that I will answer in this section are:
1) What should be the content of police education based on the comparative analyses conducted in this study?
2) What courses police personnel should undertake?

The answers presented here are based entirely on the analyses of the focus groups' responses for the purposes of this study. A quick scan of the content presents us with the following subjects that the police personnel see as being crucial for their development. The subjects are not presented in any order of priority as the purpose of this exercise is to provide a list that should be modelled on the service concerned. It must be taken as a starting point for further curriculum development.

Law and Police Procedures

Practical Training ie Firearms

Police Management

Community based Policing

Investigative Skills

Conflict Resolution

Interpersonal Skills

Criminology

Ethics

Management

It is important to note that the above list is based on this study and as such the limitations relating to this study apply. The researcher has searched for previous research on this issue has come up with only one comparable study that was conducted by Froyland (1991). In this study, the opinions of both police and other citizens who came into contact with the police were asked what they thought should be included in police education materials. Previous studies in police education have all looked into how policing can be strengthen by various training improvements but none of these studies are based on asking the potential and current learners in this environment about the issues concerning curriculum in police education/training (Bayley 1994; Hoover 1975; Kilcup 1982; Mawby 1990; Scott 1986; Sherman 1978). This being the case, even

though the above list of subjects is not a surprise for anyone who understands police education/training, this list is based on the officers own perspectives of what they see as being important to their needs. The methodology also ensures that the officers have thought through the issues affecting policing in their respective jurisdictions before providing the above analysis.

The answer to the second question is also not surprising with little exception. The lists of courses that the participants of this study selected are as follows:

Legal Studies (Law)

Social Sciences (Liberal Arts)

Police Studies (Liberal Arts)

Computing (Science)

Management (Business)