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THE ROLE OF CULTURAL AND TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN POLICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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THEMES

- Professionalisation
- Organizational Justice
- Personal and Codified Knowledge
- Challenges



THE PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- Multiple definitions of professionalism (Sklansky, 2014)
- Most include:
 - Code of Conduct/Ethics
 - Commitment to the use of expert knowledge
 - An element of self-regulation
- In the England and Wales context:
 - The Code of Ethics
 - The PEQF
 - Evidence-base to inform knowledge and practice



ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE

- The concept of procedural justice is widely used in police research (see Bradford 2014) and helps us to understand legitimacy in respect of the impact of procedures on external audiences.
- ‘Procedural justice’ and ‘Distributive justice’ together constitute ‘Organizational justice’
- ‘Organizational justice’ draws on Adam’s ‘Equity Theory’ (1963) and suggests that employees need to perceive an organization as just for it to function effectively.
- This concept has been applied previously to the policing context (for example, by Myhill and Bradford, 2013)
- When officers feel involved in decision-making, and feel listened to, they feel empowered, put more effort into their work and are more likely to engage positively with organizational changes.



THE NEW POLICE CONTEXT

- Policing as knowledge work (see Ericson and Haggerty, 1997)
- Actuarialism and the 'paper burden' (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997))
- Thompson and Heron (2005) explore this relationship between organisational justice and knowledge work
- Shift from context of work (the public sector) to the nature of the work
- “In knowledge-intensive firms that rely primarily on the problem-solving capabilities of their employees for long-term success, the quality of internal relationships becomes central to organisational strategies to achieve knowledge creation and appropriation” (Thompson and Heron, 2005, p. 383)
- If organisational members perceive the organisation to be fair, knowledge will be shared more effectively.



WHAT CONSTITUTES KNOWLEDGE IN POLICING?

- Eraut (2000) – the binary distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘codified’ knowledge
 - ‘Cultural’ knowledge is informal (links to discretion, the focus on experiential learning) (see Van Maanen, 1978)
 - “I want them to tell me what police work is all about. I could care less about the outside speakers or the guys they bring out here from upstairs who haven’t been on the street for the last twenty years. What I want is for somebody who’s gonna level with us and really give the lowdown on how we’re supposed to survive out there” (Officer interviewed by Van Maanen, p. 297)
- Increasingly, however, policing becomes viewed less an art and more as a science. As a result, note Evetts (2013) and Fournier (1999) we see professionalization as something that controls rather than liberates public sector organisations that go through the process.
- Thus, we see a shift toward ‘codified’ knowledge (2000) which refers to that knowledge which has been derived by formal means and which, “...includes propositions about skilled behaviour, but not skills or ‘knowing’ (p. 114)



THE EVIDENCE BASED POLICING AGENDA

- “epistemological assumptions and a police science discourse favouring scientifically tested informed policy directives” (Wood et al, 2017)
- “Would such a knowledge base as proposed under EBP reduce the need for officers to utilise discretion or would it merely mean that discretionary decision-making was informed by a different form of knowledge.” (Williams and Cockcroft, 2018)
- A view that quantitative research has greater inherent value than qualitative (Hesketh and Williams, 2017)
- ‘What works’ versus ‘what matters’ (Punch, 2015)
- Whilst the College of Policing has tried to portray EBP as methodologically inclusive, Greene (2014) still highlights challenges around critical context and social change.
- Can research undermine professionalism? (Thacher, 2008)



ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE REVISITED

- Need to reflect on the hierarchy of knowledge and the purpose of the outputs.
- Police reform often considered to be driven by outside forces (Fleming and Wingrove, 2017)



POLICE KNOWLEDGE

- During austerity, we have seen a predominant focus on ‘what works’
- Officers believe that these research processes minimise their experience of dealing with the issue and their awareness of the factors at work.
 - Pease and Roach (2017) – evaluations rarely derive from police experience and the choices that police officers have to make.
- The exclusionary power of scientific language creates elite knowledge with its own power dynamic.
- Knowledge often ignores context and therefore creates the illusion of generalisability.
- Experiential knowledge often provides deeper and critical insight than evidential (Van de Ven and Schomaker, 2002)
- Knowledge with no experiential context is often considered illegitimate.
- Participatory learning (Cockcroft et al 2018)

CONCLUSION

- Can we have professional knowledge that ignores the professional knowledge of the practitioner?
- Which research strategies guarantee experiential knowledge to be gathered and considered legitimate.
- What are the potential impacts to a sense of 'organisational justice' of failing to label informal knowledge as lacking in credibility or legitimacy?

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