

Training by the dashboard lights: Police training officers' perspectives

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Abstract

Officially sanctioned workplace learning is an increasing trend. In the workplace, and particularly in emergency response contexts, success with workplace learning is an unquestioned goal. In order to achieve this goal, many workplaces utilize the general model of partnering trainees with more experienced personnel. This is the most salient feature of an Australian state's police probationary twelve-month operational training program, known as the First Year Constable Program. This paper analyses the perceptions, constructions and understandings of 13 police trainers in a regional headquarters of a state police service, regarding some important aspects of first year constable training. The data illuminated a group of police trainers who enacted their own experiences of being trained as a basis for how to approach training. The participants showed variability in how they reported what they saw as important to promote during training, and seemed to derive little direction from training policy or established and mandatory workplace competencies. The paper argues that these officers operated with a skewed application of the cognitive apprentice model of teaching. It shows, for example, that scaffolding in a relatively chaotic environment is highly problematic. Highlighted are several implications for workplace training in emergency response settings, particularly in the area of how the training is being coordinated and how practice is being shared and improved.

Key words: adults, cognitive apprenticeships, police, training, workplace learning.

Introduction: Learning through practice in emergency training contexts

Numerous authors note the problematic nature of learning for effective performance in emergency situations and in environments where these learning events occur (for example, Goldman, Plack, Roche, Smith and Turley, 2009; Harris, Simons and Carden, 2004; Lundin and Nuldén, 2007; and Taber, Plumb and Jolemore, 2008). In addition to the aspects of danger, chaos and varied instructional approaches that are frequently raised by researchers, factors such as the demand for situational responses and containment can obscure the opportunity for a trainer to provide instruction and compound the difficulties of learning on-the-job for emergency personnel. Trainers lacking instructional skills training may not helpfully distinguish between the training and operational roles, and the frequent need to respond, almost spontaneously to an immediate operational imperatives may limit the ability for trainers and learners to optimise learning opportunities. Consequently, the quality of these situations as opportunities to learn may not be best understood or realized through teacherly processes.

What follows is an analysis of police trainers' accounts regarding the efficacy of operational training practices as opportunities for learning. The analysis provides insight into some critical contextual influences characterising on-the-job operational training for first year constables during their twelve-month probationary training period in a medium sized police station. Some authors note the central role that needs to be played by more informed others, such as trainers. For instance, Goldman, Plank, Roche, Smith and Turley (2009, p. 570) claim that 'For chaotic workplaces to be rich learning environments, the characteristics and facilitators of different learning episodes need to be recognised and steps taken to maximize learning from each episode'. Yet, concurrently, Seezink, Poell and Kirschner (2009) hold that there has been little empirical research conducted on processes of competence development in practical settings generally. Certainly, it seems few rigorous examinations of how police trainers and learners are responding to the demands of emergency learning environments have been conducted. As such, limited information exists

as to the factors driving, inhibiting or otherwise molding the practices of police instruction and what shapes learning in operational situations. For police services this situation leaves unchallenged some of the foundational assumptions upon which the training program is premised and renders questions of performance, quality and support for improved teaching-learning outcomes difficult to formulate and consider.

The study contributes to knowledge regarding the important attributes of workplace learning in emergency response environments, particularly police training environments. It primary argues that within a regional context of this particular study, a skewed model of cognitive apprenticeship exists. Further, that this model offers a position from which to offer critical inquiry into the operational training setting for first year constables.

These data illuminated a personal set of pedagogies or individual sets of action theories used in the day-to-day training of first year probationary police officers, by Field Training Officers. What is argued in this case, is that despite the training of first year constables being undertaken using a prescriptive curriculum, training was actioned by an uncoordinated set of personal pedagogies developed and deployed by police training officers. When these practices are engaged with alongside the teaching model of cognitive apprenticeship, we see that these practices appear to be operating to one side of the traditional model. Although, this is possibly a response to training within emergency work environments, the findings offer a catalyst for the possible future adaption of this model to emergency work training environments. It is not the intent of this research to identify the merit or demerit of these engagement strategies, but to firstly, highlight the practices and challenges associated with police training as articulated by the trainers themselves, and secondly, to illuminate some implications that these data have for police probationary training.

Workplace learning

Workplace learning is usually defined as learning that arises through participation in workplace activities and directed to outcomes associated with

situational practice, for example, learning on-the-job about how to do the job. However, some authors challenge the notion of mere participation being enough to promote the kind of learning necessary to develop expertise in practice (for example, Billet, 2001b; Paloniemi, 2006; Schultz, 2005). The general impetus of these challenges is to espouse the need for the development and enactment of a deliberate and structured approach to workplace learning that uses an array of supportive learning strategies to enhance the experience of learners.

In arguing for the concept of a workplace learning 'curriculum' Billet (2001b, p. 144) discusses the role of workplace experts in guiding novices, asserting that '... to realise its full potential, the guided learning role will require expert workers to be intentionally and thoroughly prepared as learning guides'. Analogously, Harris, Simons and Carden's study (2004, p. 215) of how probationary constables experienced efforts to support their learning in the circumstances of policing work, identified probationers most frequently reporting the senior partner '... has the biggest influence on their learning...'. Further to this, a study by Goldman, Plack, Roche, Smith and Turley (2009, p. 570), into how resident doctors learned in chaotic hospital emergency room environment reinforced the critical role of the workplace-learning guide. In their investigation, they found:

The relationship identified by the participants as most important to their learning was the one they had with the attending physician who set the tone of performance expectations, provided practice opportunities, issued 'clinical pearls', acted as a role model, got the participants excited about learning, and reflected on cases with them (The absence of these behaviours were also identified as detractors to resident learning.).

So, the above suggests that the role of the expert is considered paramount, but so too workplace practices. Billett (2004a, p. 319) in characterising workplaces as learning environments labeled workplace participatory practices as 'key pedagogical devices'. Lundin and Nuldén (2007, p. 233) noted '...the curriculum for teaching limits the participation of the learner...' and Billett (2001b) described the necessity to make hidden knowledge associated with expertise accessible to learners. On a larger scale Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) identified the socialisation of individual tacit knowledge as the first stage of an organisational learning spiral.

The theme of making knowledge and expertise visible to learners is central to the model of teaching known as cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown & Holum, 1991). Traditional apprenticeship is the notion of learning from under the wings of a master in trades such as plumbing and carpentry, but it is also common practice in professions, for instance, the article clerk aspiring to become a solicitor. These apprenticeships are where the learner observes and participates in the process of work, usually from beginning to end; a process imbedded with real world tasks and products. Cognitive apprenticeship augments the demonstration and practice of skills in traditional apprenticeships with the aim to develop conceptual understanding and cognitive skills. Its aim is to make explicit the types of thinking and reasoning behind particular skills and any accompanying response to tasks and problems. Collins, Brown and Holum suggest that this model supports novice learners in developing their reasoning abilities by making the expert thinking of the master/specialist visible. The central teaching strategies to cognitive apprenticeships are: the partnership with the learner in which the specialist models the tasks to be performed; the specialist scaffolds the students accomplishment of tasks through providing a variety of supports and, the specialist coaches through observing the learner as they work and facilitates approximations of the task through giving feedback to the learner with the aim of revealing their own thinking processes. The aim is to prompt the learner to compare the specialist's thinking with their own thinking (reflect) in order to identify gaps and strengths. As learners gain more proficiency, the specialist reduces or fades their position to a less central one.

The above cited literature surrounds the intent of this research. If the key to comprehensive and successful learning at work is through the use of participatory practices and, explicit and implicit expertise, perspectives by trainers themselves stand as important conduits into developing deeper understandings of workplace learning. There appears an acceptance of the position that trainers occupy a critical role in supporting and guiding the learning process, it therefore seems important to understand further how their knowledge and skills are being deployed during mentoring or training, and in this instance the police emergency setting. With a positive valence given to

learner perspectives in emergency settings, it is timely to highlight the trainer's voice on the matter of on-the-job learning. This is also a necessary ingredient in the triangulation of issues important to operational learning for improved quality of learning outcomes and continuous improvement. The following explores just that, police trainer's perspectives on the day-to-day training they deploy. These trainers' perspectives are analysed through the deploying of the cognitive apprenticeship model of teaching as mentioned above.

Contextual setting for this study

The setting for this study is a district police station located in a regional Australian city. The training staff complement of this station comprises 35 designated as Field Training Officers (FTOs). They work directly with a similar number of First Year Constables (FYCs).

Upon graduation from a six-month recruit-training program, at one of two police academies in which recruits begin their career development in the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for policing, all police recruits enter a probationary operational (on-the-job) training period of twelve months as FYCs. Their training through this period is premised on the achievement of competency-based measurements with satisfactory performance across twenty-four areas of competency required prior to confirmation of FYCs as sworn-officers. Evidence of competency is progressively recorded in the individual's learning portfolio. The twelve-month operational period involves FYCs being partnered with the more experienced FTOs and engaging, as a two-person car crew, in the full ambit of emergency response duties. This twelve-month period of operational training is presumed to provide a graduating officer with the basic knowledge and skills to function relatively autonomously and effectively with variable supervision (QPS, 2010). The one-on-one trainer (FTO)-trainee (FYC) relationship is, therefore, the most dominant and critical feature of an FYC's training period and many trainers see the police car as a mobile classroom. It was the frequent and centralised position that the police car took as a mobile classroom, often also anecdotally referred to by participants as 'the office', which inspired the title of this paper.

Methodology

This project was a qualitative study with an interpretivist perspective (Neuman, 1997). That is, its aim was to seek insights from the trainers' perspectives into a number of aspects of how training practice is deployed within the chosen setting. Hence, data informing this study were the voices of the FTOs describing personal constructions of training of FYCs in the operational environment. This research was guided by the question: What are the key influences that shape the interactions of Police trainers whilst training or supervising First Year Constables during operational training?

The selection of participants was purposive (Wiersma, 2000) to ensure that a range of both operational and operational-training experience was represented. Thirteen designated Field Training Officers, ranging in length of service from two – 30 years, were interviewed. The experience of seven of the officers ranged between two – five years service and the other six ranged between 11 – 30 years police service. Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales, 2007) of one and one and a half hours in length were the primary data gathering activity. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

To analyse the data an iterative process was employed (Simons, Lathleen & Squire, 2008). Each of the interview transcripts was first read for an overall understanding of the particular participant's responses to all questions. Each interview was then re-read question by question to identify significant statements and words by each participant. These responses for each participant were collected and analysed thematically (Boyatzis, 1998).

Individual participants are referred to using a code. The code consists of the use of two letters for rank followed by years of service. A constable with five years service is identified as C05; a senior constable with 10 years service by SC10; and a Sergeant with 20 years service by SG20. Where an officer had policing experience prior to joining the QPS, this is represented by a superscripted '+' or '++', for example SC15⁺⁺ represents an officer with extensive policing experience

before joining the QPS and CO3+ represents a Constable with some prior experience.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the sample size and the specific context, a lack of comparative research into trainers' perspectives of training and the self-reporting of participants. The representation of FTOs was small, 13 were interviewed. They provided with a regional specific view of their experiences in conducting police training that occurred within one large regional police station. Their views on first year constable training may have been influenced by regional constraints not sort nor articulated at interview. The breadth and scope of responses would have been richer if, for example, a metropolitan police station of similar size was engaged. The results of this study are therefore not meant to be generalized, but offer specific contextualized perspectives that can be used as comparative data in relation to other regions and contexts.

There was a lack of emergency trainer perspectives in the existing research. This led to an inability to compare the findings. This position marked the need for further research into the area. This is of particular note given the attention that workplace learning is attracting in relation to the need for the continued education and training of workforces (Billett et al., 2011).

All data consisted of self-reports obtained through a series of open-ended questions within semi-structured interviews. This, endemic within qualitative methodology, offers in itself a potential limitation. These officers may have experienced selective memory, they may have attributed positive experiences to their own agency and negative experiences to the 'system', and exaggerated or embellished their stories in order to present to the researchers a particular reality with a valence toward, for example, themselves as hard workers operating under pressing conditions. In order to seek balance, the interviews were conducted with both researchers present offering insider and outsider influences. The insider influence offered by a serving police officer, one who knew the terrain and job requirements. This invited a more balanced telling of

the experiences of police training. Whilst the outsider influence, that of an experienced researcher, offered a means through which to take further/deeper the experiences of these participants, possibly beyond those elements which are greyed out by them being too familiar with the context.

Findings

The results of this research are expressed in relation to the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participant FTOs. These are reported as the outcomes of their training, personal constructs in relation to the training, personal pedagogies, difficulties experienced in training, timing, collaboration, and comparisons with each other.

The important outcomes for FYCs

Responses from participants typified the very high level of importance on generic skills (Curtis, 2004). For example, communication and what might collectively be referred to (within the operational policing context) as problem-solving skills - making critical assessments of situations as a guide to acting or responding.

For almost all of the participants, these skills seemed to resonate as a significant attribute of the 'basic ability to be able to police' (CO3). Nine of the officers spoke specifically in terms of communication being critical, essential or 'the biggest one' (SC26). Others spoke of the right mindset (SC7) and of the need to be confident. Confidence was consistently spoken about in terms of: having a presence at jobs that was appropriate according to the particular circumstances; assertiveness without aggression; and openness. The vital importance placed on these skills in everyday policing, seemed to be clearly reflected in SC15++'s experience:

... there are some people in this job who are actually targets and you wouldn't want to work with them you know they're targets, a target is one of those persons who are going to attract the bad vibes ... by way of uh not being able to negotiate not being able to communicate... and you do the talking you know because things can go bad in a flip of a coin. .. It's negotiation.

Only four of the participants specifically nominated law and procedures as important outcomes. Six informants also articulated these outcomes indirectly; 'knowing what to do when we get to a job', 'ability to do a job satisfactorily', 'what we can do when we head to a job' and 'correct procedure'. Three made no mention. For the most part, along with an intuitive feel for each situation, law and procedures seemed to be considered an integral (if not under spoken) part of what was considered policing ability.

Interestingly, only one of the interviewees (SC7) spoke of the competencies (contained within the First Year Constable Program Learning Portfolio) as being the desired outcomes at the end of the twelve-month operational training program. As well as confidence and correct procedure the officer identified '...what we cover in the training package itself when they leave ...when the first year can achieve, or have achieved those goals and can do so confidently is an end result.' (SC7).

Primary, in these voices emphasised a proficiency in getting policing done, particularly around making successful policing judgments and accompanying actions. The central skill that was nominated was communication; communication as an essential for gathering information and for disseminating appropriated policing responses. Other outcomes of training such as the production of 'correct' thinking or mindset, and the deploying of certain policing knowledge including relevant law, were considered as important, but were positioned slightly below communication. The use of a prescriptive list of policing competencies was considered less frequently articulated by these training officers.

The personal constructs that enable the promotion of successful outcomes for FYCs

Almost all of the participants referred to personal experience as a significant influence on their perceptions of what was important to achieve during training and how to approach training. SC30 recalled strongly and fondly the authority, leadership and work ethic of his female mentor (some 30 years ago) during his

journey as a novice, and spoke of his desire to emulate the experience for his trainees today. Other officers recalled experiencing more or less effective mentors during their probationary period, and spoke of subsequent choices to emulate what they had experienced. Some officers referred to their own constructions of a 'what makes a good police officer' or understandings of 'what is expected of us'. CO4+ explained that what he emphasized in training was strongly influenced by his own trials and tribulations '... where I've come unstuck with a few things, where I've got myself into trouble, I'll explain those sort of things to them, take care do it this way.' For the greater part, officers did not elaborate on the origins or evolution of their individual conceptions of 'a good police officer'.

CO5 reported how intuition and job outcomes influenced his focus. He described that although he did not know for a fact he supposed it was by feel from experience, from personal satisfaction of how a job was done and from a view of customer satisfaction that he knew what was right to focus on and promote through training. SC15++ took a very pragmatic view of the question and responded that what told him the things he focused on were right was that '... at the end of the day I go home without the uniform ripped, torn or bloodied ...'. In response to questioning on this theme, only two officers SC26 and CO4 referred to the learning portfolio as being any sort of touchstone for instructional practice. CO4 referred to going 'a bit off the book' SC26. She made a distinction between training and teaching – the former seen as shaping existing knowledge, the latter as telling them from scratch. She saw her role as both, indicated that during her training she 'went back to the book' to see what needed to be covered during the period that the trainee was with her.

Perhaps conceptualizing researcher prompts in a different way and thinking along more individualized lines, CO4 and CO2. Five officers responded that they were guided as to what was right by making performance assessments of trainees. CO4 focused on 'what they are lacking ... you can sort of work on that area. I just assess each person and go from there.' CO2. 5 gauged '...with them their understanding with a particular matter ... whether you think they are right

with it.' SC17 also spoke about using his observations of performance as a guide as to what was right to focus on, however his comments seem to hint at concerns about middle ground between satisfactory performance of a task and inability to perform a task. He suggested the need to sometimes delve more deeply when he said:

That's why it is extremely hard cause how do you figure out that if they say they are as good as gold and you say the paperwork is fine that is probably as far as it goes, well if you know someone is struggling and you say how are you going and they say fine with that ... I've discovered that some of them you have to dig through that cause you get some people that say yeah I'm good with that and they're not. If they have gone through the whole process well and with confidence then you probably don't need to be going over with them too much there. I mean if they are just simply scratching their head well you need to go through the whole thing with them.

Of these personal constructs on what enables the successful training of constables, these training officers made it explicit that their experiences as a trainee (and police officer) impacted on how they conduct training. The role of past mentors, personal judgments on other police actions, learning from past mistakes and successes, and in two cases, explicitly using personal indicators of trainee performance and the learning portfolio, all served as markers of their implicit personal pedagogies.

The personal pedagogies

The FTOs' responses seemed to consistently identify certain key components in their respective approaches to training in the operational environment. eight out of the 13 participants referred to modeling the performance of tasks ('teach by example', 'leading by example') and supporting. Some trainers indicated that demonstration by them was often a prerequisite to allowing the trainee to complete the task. Other trainers suggested they used a 'see how far they can get' approach modeling task performance after the trainee had performed an approximation of the task under supervision and stepping in only 'where it had gone pear shaped'. CO3, who was relatively new to training and candidly admitted that he had not specifically sat down and thought about training strategies or approaches, suggested that he told the trainees 'if you need help with something speak up ...but if I think you are floundering, I'm going to jump in and help you out by showing you how'. SC11 on the other hand

explained 'I get in beside them and do everything with them, I don't just walk away and leave them.' A number of the trainers expressed the idea that it was important not to allow the trainee to 'sink'. The general impression conveyed was that trainers altered the extent to which they modeled tasks and provided support based on actual observations of trainee performance.

Beyond articulating the elements of modeling, supporting and scaffolding there was some discussion by the participants about the use of questioning. CO4 who did not talk about modeling or support suggested that '...it's done through just talking about questions and answers ... mainly questions from them to me ... if I have any doubt ... then I can ask them ...'. He went on to say '... it's fair to say that when I've left a job you let them be the first to come to you with questions.' SC17 referred to discussing the job after it was finished, as did SC14 who indicated that he normally lead 'the debriefing process'. SC26, who had earlier made a distinction between teaching and training, indicated that she felt she probably asked more questions than other trainers '... because the teacher is only as good as what the student can tell them back. You only know what you've taught them from what they tell you back.'

In the above, we see responses on personal pedagogies that include resemblance to modeling, scaffolding and the use of Socratic questioning. These and other implicit and non-articulated engagement strategies all were exploited in a confluence of policing activities not yet identified as training opportunities but which impacted on the training situation by their contextual presence. In the next section we report on the difficulties these police trainers experienced.

The challenges associated with training

FTOs interpreted the theme of difficulties with training in one of two ways: i) either from the point of view of giving instruction or ii) from a personal perspective. Personally, trainers cited having to think for two people, the extra time required to complete work, and longer periods spent at the station doing paperwork as primary concerns. From the instructional point of view, trainers saw a variety of aspects of operational training as troublesome.

In particular, time constraints and the limiting effect on the opportunity to give instruction was consistently mentioned. Five trainers talked about how going from job to job limited the amount of time to talk with the trainee about what had happened at the previous job. As SC30 explained ‘...giving specific instructions while at jobs is of limited value so the best time is shortly after ... that’s the critical time, but the opportunity to speak doesn’t always occur.’ Other trainers viewed the time to discuss issues and provide instruction as being after policing situations are resolved. Many of these also noted that it doesn’t happen all the time.

Another theme that emerged from the participants’ responses was the perception of variation in the ways other trainers handled jobs. CO3 saw this variability in terms of inconsistency and as negatively impacting on his ability to train, as it was hard to teach someone how to do something if they had been shown another way. CO4 taking a more philosophical approach did not see such variation as a concern, explaining that he told trainees ‘... this is how I do it and I find it works for me ... there are other ways to do the same thing.’

This section highlighted the extra pressures experienced by trainers in taking on responsibility for training a constable in an operational environment, particularly the extra cognitive effort and emotional angst involved in having to think in an operational sense for someone who was less experienced. The apparent lack of time for adequate depth of instruction caused by operational urgency, and the voiced variation in police trainer response to operational situations, were also highlighted as challenges. Nevertheless, these FTOs still got on with the job of training. The next section illuminates some strategies that were brought to bear in achieving this end.

Strategies used in training

Timing and collaboration are features of the way these FTOs responded to the situational constraints of having to train in an active police operational environment. A key feature of what was reported as the opportunity and bases

for learning was the immediacy of experience and the collaboration between probationary and experienced officer. Previous research (Tyler and McKenzie, 2011) reported that a lot of training was conducted in the police car. This was reiterated strongly by the participants in this project. This current inquiry further revealed the thoughts of the FTOs on how time constraints forced instruction to follow jobs, rather than occur contemporaneously with jobs, if not prevented or overlooked completely.

FTOs generally described that they found the best time to discuss jobs was back in the car after the immediate response had been completed. CO6 and CO4⁺ referred to general patrol time, the space in between jobs when you were on the look out for work or waiting to be detailed the next job, as prime discussion or instruction time. However, possibly serving as a reminder of potential limitations, SC26 observed ‘...sometimes it’s the next day ... okay, what did we do yesterday?’ SC17’s perception was that training occurred whenever it fitted in and saw that filling out the learning portfolio at the end of the day was a ‘collection point’. He reflected that as well as in the car, this was a time when it was just trainer and trainee – able to take the time to go over things.

Collaboration between FTOs in regards to training was initiated and shaped by the performance of trainees and was on a case-by-case basis. Unless the FTO encountered a trainee who was experiencing significant difficulties or had demonstrated particularly poor performance, described by SC17 as a ‘problem child’, then conversation between trainers regarding training was infrequent. SC7 noted that for him to talk to another FTO in his team, the issue would have to be ‘glaring’. Whilst SC30 considered that the times when someone was deficient enough for this to happen was only occasionally. All but one trainer, who saw communication with other trainers occurring at least once a shift, rated communication between other trainers (about training issues) as being infrequent. Even though, FTOs generally seemed to describe a reliance on the performance of trainees, who had been with other trainers or come from other teams, as a comparative measure between themselves and other trainers.

This general description was summed up by SC30 when he explained 'Where I see their [other trainers'] assessments are always correct so from that point of view I would suggest that the way they are doing things and the way I'm doing things are very similar'. SC7 explained that he makes links back to trainers when he sees the performance of trainees who come into his team. CO5 reflected that '... comparing an FYC against another ... compared to the one you have then I assess myself I suppose.'

In the above, the participants present two solutions to some constraints placed on trainers in active policing environments: undertaking training in the controlled environment of the police car, and the intermittent use of collaboration with other trainers. Also revealed was the means through which these FTOs obtained feedback on their own effectiveness. It was reported that FTOs personally compared one FYC against another, and their level of competency was associated with who trained the FYC previously. If the level of competency was assessed as high, FTOs make a similar judgment as to the quality and expertise of the trainer who previously had encounters with the FYC being personally assessed. In the next section actual guiding strategies are discussed, and connections are made with several elements of cognitive apprenticeship.

Discussion

In regard to the actual guiding of constable learning, FTOs reported the use of modeling, supporting and coaching, and to a lesser and diminishing degree the use of questioning and reflection, to guide learner's development of competency in responding to a variety of policing situations. The commonality with regards to these elements, shown across all responses, prompts the assertion that the pattern of deployment of instructional methods demonstrated by these trainers strongly accords with the cognitive apprenticeship model (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989; Collins, Brown & Holum, 1991).

As mentioned above, this model proposes an instructional sequence involving the methods of modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading, articulation, and

reflection. Highlighted was the need in cognitive apprenticeship, 'to deliberately bring the thinking to the surface ... The teacher's thinking must be made visible to the students and the student's thinking must be made visible to the teacher.' (Collins, Brown and Holum, 1991, p. 3). LeGrand, Farmer and Buckmaster (1993) view cognitive apprenticeship as an instructional tool to develop/acquire thinking skills. The model incorporates four dimensions for structuring learning – content, method, sequence and sociology. A learner's development under this model is premised upon a linear sequencing of the model's components. The concept of sequencing applies at two levels. Firstly, at the method level where modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading and the other teaching methods follow sequentially to form a structured approach to specific learning. Secondly, in movement from relative simplicity to increasing complexity, diversity and applicability of knowledge and skills to promote a rational approach to the depth and breath of capacity required for robust vocational performance.

However, what is also revealed through the responses of the FTOs are several significant challenges within this training context to the sequential deployment of both the structural domains and the specific methods featured within the model. Trainers described how the nature of the policing response and time constraints often impacted upon the ability of a trainer to deploy a sequenced approach to instruction, or for that matter to provide any instruction at all. For example, trainers reported that some jobs require the trainee to stand in the background and just watch. SC7 explained '... there are times when you are just going to have to get into it ... once situations are resolved then is the time to discuss why I did what I did.' Trainers also consistently talked about how they found the best opportunities to provide instruction were often after tasks were completed, either in the car or back at the station at the end of shift. By far the majority nominated the car as the place where most instructional discussion took place.

FTOs' responses indicated that important coaching/instructional episodes often could not be as closely linked with either their modelling of tasks, or the actual performance by the learners of the tasks, as could be argued is implicit in the

cognitive apprenticeship model. Further, they also reported how going from job to job limited both the time available for instruction and therefore its breadth and depth. SC30 observed 'Giving specific instructions while at jobs is of limited value so the best time is shortly after ... that's the critical time, but the opportunity to speak doesn't always occur.'

The general theme to emerge from these FTOs was that their training practice was highly malleable under operational pressures and often necessarily became somewhat piecemeal. In addition, there was a feel from the responses that in having to deal with the 'opportunities' as they were dealt, there was little chance to sequence instruction from the simple to complex. Responses therefore suggested that any scaffolding of learning from on-the-job experiences, in this relatively chaotic environment, was highly 'problematic'.

FTOs talked less about using questioning techniques to engage with trainees, but, never-the-less it was mentioned specifically by several and most referred to talking to trainees at some point after jobs. Whilst a lack of articulation by trainers of questioning techniques, and for that matter reflection (as will be discussed shortly), is not absolute evidence of absence in practice - it is interesting when such relative quietness is juxtaposed with the loud and clear articulation by trainers of modeling and coaching.

Goldman et al. (2009, p. 570) in referring to cognitive apprenticeships (between learning residents and instructing physicians) suggested that:

... an apprenticeship orientation to training will not be sufficient in a chaotic workplace environment; a developmental perspective is needed that ... includes the use of Socratic questioning, delivery of effective feedback, encouragement of reflection and self-assessment, and solicitation of feedback to trainers.

The clearest annunciation of the use of Socratic questioning techniques came from SC26 who in commenting in regard to effective teaching being only as good as the answers produced by students said, 'you only know what you've taught them from what they tell you back'. In contrast to that view was the description by SC7:

Look, you get back in the car, my colleague has to do certain things and then before we finish we have a quick chat, a quick de-brief about what occurred during the shift, it's not an in-depth discussion, but we are trying to gauge those key points.

Stalmeijer et al. (2009, p. 545), reporting students' perceptions of clinicians' use of the cognitive apprenticeship model, observed that:

A proposal intended to enhance modeling was for clinicians to pay more attention to explaining to students why and how they performed certain procedures. An important recommendation aimed at improving coaching concerned ways, including teacher training, to promote constructive and individual feedback.

What was reported strongly by the FTOs was a reliance on post event discussion or instruction that could occur anywhere from straight after an event to the next day, or possibly not at all. In any event, the impression raised is that there should perhaps be a strong focus by trainers on reflective learning strategies. FTOs did not relate a strong sense of engaging with trainees in a reflective way to verify and extend understandings of content and process. It must however be acknowledged, that this perception or impression was not explored further in the interviews. What is of interest is the strong articulation in the discourse of the initial and more concrete methods represented in the cognitive apprenticeship model, against the lack of articulation of the later and more abstract ones.

Perhaps at the opposite end of the scale to SC26's reported use of methods represented in the cognitive apprenticeship model is C03's observation, when asked about how he promoted the outcomes he saw as important, that 'It's not something that I've specifically sat down and had a think about', and C04+'s admission 'I probably do, but actually verbalise it - I'm not sure.' Baird's (2004) study into the application of cognitive apprenticeship learning methods by building designers acting as mentors focused on the mentor's use of the key cognitive apprenticeship teaching strategies. Baird (2004, p. 38) found that as well as subject expertise, mentors must also have '... expertise in the use of teaching strategies of a cognitive apprenticeship approach to learning'. Billett (2001a, p. 35) expressly includes the skill experienced co-workers have in sharing knowledge, i.e. direct guidance, as a key pedagogical device in workplace learning.

FTO responses conveyed a strong sense that their current practices are informed and shaped by their own experiences of being taught or of carrying out the policing role. Trainers talked about trying to either recreate or avoid some of the styles and approaches of their mentors or trainers, and of using their own understandings and constructions of what works and what does not work as a basis for teaching FYCs in the operational environment. Some of the mistakes or pitfalls that trainers feel they themselves have encountered are used as teaching points to guide first year learning toward what those trainers see as preferred outcomes. Trainers' talk in terms of having their own system, or their own feel for training and speak of their personal schema in relation to the 'basic ability to police'. Some trainers also seemed to talk in terms such as 'a good police officer' and 'what is expected of us', with a sense of concreteness. Further evidence of individuality amongst the trainers emerged when one trainer, CO4, discussed how he was comfortable with telling trainees that there were many ways to do the job and that 'his way' was only one of them. This unproblematic, and somewhat philosophical viewpoint, contrasted greatly the viewpoint of CO3 who found this to be an aspect of training that was troublesome, making it '...a bit hard to teach someone to do something if they've been shown a different way.' This stands out as an indication of the possible gap in these trainers' understandings of learning and teaching strategies.

Billett (2004b) in arguing against a view of workplace learning processes being entirely determined by circumstances of its situation (i.e. situational determinism) argues that an individual's agency creates identities and subjectivities which affect the ways the workplace is approached and understood. The data from the trainers, showing a multi-faceted employment of individual past experience within their own practice, supports the concept of the significance of the milieu of agencies within the study context. This coupled with the varied foci on learning outcomes reported by trainers, and the spectre of seemingly un-influential training policy providing little guidance, enlivens some questions with respect to the degree of overall alignment of training practices and consistency of outcomes within the study context. Parding and

Abrahamsson (2009) highlight the differences that can exist between an organizational view and a professional view of a training system. In challenging the rhetoric of a learning organization, as applied to a particular school system, the authors found that teachers practising in that school system recognized different values to those of the organisation in respect of what was important to be learned, and where, how and when it was best learned.

These FTOs consistently referred to how much of what they did was driven by their own perception of performance issues. They talked about letting trainees tackle jobs, intervening only when they stumbled or floundered.

Correspondingly, the trainer discourse focused on how the most significant and detailed instruction occurred when problems were detected. FTOs talked clearly in terms of discussing the specifics of tasks that were engaged with, but less about making broader conceptual links. Also, they reported that interaction was generally restricted to within their particular team. Harkening back to the sense of an under-developed discourse on the more abstract methods of the cognitive apprenticeship model, concerns about the extent to which instruction is focused superficially on specific task performance, at the possible expense of deeper conceptual links, also might seem relevant.

Responses from FTOs regarding the degree of instructional interchange occurring between them suggest that trainers are deploying their particular notions of training in what might be described as relative isolation. Instructional exchanges (e.g. sharing training practices, tips, or insights) between trainers were generally reported as being infrequent, or as only occurring if trainers perceived performance issues with a trainee. FTOs suggested that such communication usually occurred only within the team and with a trainer who had worked with the trainee. The comments of the trainers suggested that, when these conversations occurred, they were focused on exploring the particular problem at hand and what had been covered rather than any general sharing of training practice. Trainers also reported that they had little idea of how other trainers went about training, but that they often made inferences from the performance of trainees who had been with other trainers.

Implications and conclusion

In consideration of the implications for training of probationary constables, it would be a reasonable claim to suggest that this analysis of data has shown a pattern of deployment that may be described as an imbalanced or skewed application of the cognitive apprentice model. These data suggested that the pressures of the emergency learning setting are a significant causal factor for the apparent imbalance. It is perhaps being accentuated by a lack of awareness by trainers regarding the patterns of their practice, the personal and cultural dispositions of trainers, and an under-developed array of appropriate instructional skills.

What has been illuminated above are FTOs who have; idiosyncratically formed and shaped instructional practices, variable levels of focus on learning outcomes, and relatively low levels of collaboration in the sharing of practice strategies, and that these operate within the dynamic attributes of training settings in emergency response contexts. When taken together, these suggest that the system of training may be characterised by a collection of personal pedagogies or individual action theories, being implemented in an *ad hoc* fashion rather than in a coordinated manner.

This study has shown, that these trainers' training practice *implied* the deploying of a cognitive apprenticeship model of teaching. Modeling, scaffolding and coaching were present albeit at an inconsistent level and fashion. Sometimes elements of the model were actioned asynchronously in relation to a learning event, and at other times not at all. It would appear that these FTOs would therefore benefit by an introduction to the cognitive apprenticeship model of teaching. The task of assimilating this knowledge into their practice, by making explicit what they already know and do implicitly would enable a less passive aggregation of pedagogies. FTO intentionality would be engaged in relation to experimenting with various teaching strategies, and provide clear concepts around teaching practice to critically evaluate their success or failure and to consider their usefulness to new situations.

The imposition of the emergency imperative within this workplace learning environment, whilst troubling or problematizing the deployment of the model, offers a focal point for these trainers to engage in the sharing of practice. They are the experts and the most knowledgeable in relation to the sequencing and actioning of policing on day-to-day bases in particular community contexts. Once an explicit understanding of cognitive apprenticeship was attained, the problem of its deployment in an operational sense stands as a challenge. It would appear to these authors, that the practice of always debriefing trainees relatively quickly after a policing event in which there was no time to scaffold or coach, would be an appropriate response to getting the most out of learning opportunities on offer through unplanned or emergency policing events. In these debriefing sessions, whether they be under the haze of the dashboard lights or not, offer trainees insight into the expert thinking that these FTOs hold, the impact of which would necessarily be the focus of further investigation.

It was not the intent of this study to label particular aspects of the trainer's approaches as inherently desirable or undesirable, either from a pedagogical standpoint or against existing governing police training policy. The aim of the study was to illuminate, from a trainer's perspective, some of the key influences on training practice in the study setting. The purpose of enacting this aim was to commence to interrogate, through an examination of the deployment of practice, some of the implicit assumptions embedded in the way FYC training is currently deployed. Whilst no direct attempt is made to generalize the discussion presented in this paper to the wider police setting, the implications are potentially important for how police are trained as a whole.

The above implications also illuminate pathways toward extending existing knowledge in relation to training in emergency training contexts. These pathways may well be explored through the following questions:

- In what way can emergency personnel trainers be better positioned to engage with the specific demands of particular workplace-learning environments?

- How can the capital represented by the diversity of trainer experience be enhanced and better utilized through professional development and improve its alignment with organizational components? And
- How can future practice be extended beyond replication to incorporate a sense of professional learning and growth to meet future demands?

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